

PHOTO FEATURE

Craft Fairs are popular any time of year. But so much more exciting during the holiday season. Merry Christmas to all!



Alexis Tonery was happy to show some of the crafts she had been working on for the Debert Craft Sale on Nov. 19th. (Harrington Photo)



Gwen Davis (right) stops to admire the gorgeous hooked rugs made by Ruth Patriquin at the Great Village Craft Sale. (Harrington Photo)



Hailey Field and Danica Congdon were happy to check out the candy bouquets at the Great Village Craft Sale. (Harrington Photo)

News from our Provincial Capital

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province...absolutely. That is why I continue to ask teachers to share their specific concerns and why I have visited classrooms to better understand those concerns. I have also asked teachers to help with the solutions. There is no question, the classroom today has many complexities and teachers need help in responding to them.

Teachers are at the heart of the success of our students. They bring dedication and expertise to their work. Students present a broad range of abilities, behavioral challenges and social issues. Teachers are often asked to respond to individual student needs for which they feel inadequate and which are beyond their training. That is why the response must be a collective one that includes health care professionals, social workers and mental health clinicians.

Teachers also need to be paid a reasonable and fair wage. The current average salary for teachers is \$76,000. On two separate occasions, the negotiating teams for both government and the NSTU reached tentative agreements. Those tentative agreements included a wage pattern that the union brought to the table. It was supported by the union leadership and accepted by the government. That wage pattern strikes a balance with what Nova Scotians can afford to pay. That wage pattern is a 3 percent increase over 4 years and has already been accepted by 9 other collective bargaining units and physicians. However, those tentative agreements were not accepted by teachers even though

their leadership recommended they accept.

Teachers have now voted to strike. As a government and as the Minister, we want to protect students and parents from this disruption to their school year. Therefore I recalled the conciliator in early November to bring both sides together again. As recently as Friday, November 25, teachers presented a new wage pattern, this time asking for a minimum of 8 percent over 4 years. This translates into an additional \$140 million dollars over the life of the contract and is well beyond the ability of the Province to pay.

Each year since we formed government, the funding for Education and students has increased. We will continue to invest in programs and supports in the classroom. Our other choice is to do as the previous NDP government did which was to reduce funding for students and programs and to increase wages for teachers by 7.5 percent for the last three years. That is not the choice of our Liberal government.

As the Minister, I continue to welcome input from teachers. However, the Union has postponed participation in meetings that are responding to the very concerns that teachers have raised. As the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, as your MLA for Colchester North and as a teacher, I will continue to be motivated by students and I invite the Union to join with me as we continue to bring about improvements in our public school system.

Karen Casey, Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development and MLA, Colchester North.

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once in a lifetime opportunity. They have committed in the range of \$86-Billion in new funding for Public infrastructure over 11 years. That is a tremendous amount of money.

I would like to suggest the Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities ask the Provincial Government to begin a long term plan to twin the remaining sections of the 100 series highways to ensure safe and efficient transportation of goods and people from one end of our province to the other. That this be funded by applications to and from this Federal infrastructure program as well as with tolls or gas tax increases. Yes I said tolls or tax increases!

So while you are ranting about how insane I am let me lay out my reasoning.

It is critical we can transport people and goods safely! It will be difficult to grow existing business and development new without modern transportation. Given the financial challenges our Provincial Government currently faces, the expectation they could undertake this with current revenue is truly not realistic. Therefore we must consider some alternatives. History has shown transportation has been critical to the growth of our country. We need to think outside the box to ensure this happens.

From a West Colchester prospective, why would I care? Well, I remember very well, when my family was growing and we were racing back and forth to Truro with our children, it was a nightmare! Especially in the winter and spring as we dodged pothole and uneven pavement, snow and slush, that the plows could not plow off, risking life and limb and beating the devil out of our vehicles. We are fortunate today. We have a reasonably good trunk road from Truro to Masstown and from Glenholme to Parrsboro. This is a result of good strong work and support by our MLA's first Bill Langille and now Karen Casey. They began and followed a long term plan and stuck with it and deserve the recognition for this. However these road conditions will not last forever.

Regardless, if it is this current government or some future

Government they will always be challenged to spend limited resources in the best place. As the death toll continues to grow on these two way traffic main or 100 series highways the pressures will increase to twin.

When this happens where will the funding come from to maintain the current roads we require if we have any hope of growing or maintaining rural communities?

Now let's consider the economic spinoff of this. There will be a very, very significant cost to this. Realistically, I cannot even guess, but expect it to be in the billions. This work will happen in rural Nova Scotia. One of the driving forces of economic growth in Halifax is the multi-year, multi-billion dollar ship building contract. Think about the benefits of a multi-year, multi-billion dollar highway improvement project to the economy of rural NS.

Clearly, there will be some pain in the tolls or in an increased gas tax, however I think with this unprecedented federal infrastructure funding currently available now may be our best opportunity to act.

I would also like to reiterate a comment made in a meeting with a Nova Scotia Senator this week. He reminded me when the federal government introduced the program to distribute the federal portion of the gas tax to Municipalities across Canada as a stable long term funding source for Municipalities, it had negative effect on highways, the intended use of this gas tax. In Nova Scotia there is what we call a service agreement which identifies who is responsible for what services.

For example, the province is responsible roads and the Municipality is responsible for waste water. The feds gave Municipalities their share of the gas tax and we spent it on projects (very much needed) like wastewater treatment plants. He suggested we had actually siphoned money away from its intended use. He may be correct, however, in the end we need to look toward the greater good and I feel this may be our best opportunity.

Tom Taggart, Councillor District 10, Colchester County

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Mattinson. The city of Miramichi has done a great job in revitalizing their airport and we can take some lessons and advice from them as we work on doing the same with our Municipal airport in Debert. There were two main reasons I wanted to meet with Dale, one being the similarities between the Miramichi Airport and the Debert Airport. The Miramichi Airport is the former site of CFB Chatham, a military base, which closed in 1996, after military units were moved to other bases. There is one abandoned runway within the airport which is still used for local glider operations by the Air Cadets. Any of this sound familiar?

The other reason for sitting down with their manager was the fact they recently installed a new GPS/WASS instrument approach system. This is one of the first steps we need to take in Debert to make our airport feasible and active. Dale was extremely helpful in providing me with detailed design work and cost evaluations which will help save taxpayers a considerable amount of money and the municipality a considerable amount of time moving forward.

Instrument approaches are procedures used by pilots in conjunction with their flight instruments to safely navigate through cloud, fog and other adverse weather to locate an airport and safely land. As of now if a pilot was in a situation where they couldn't land let's say in Halifax and they had to look for an alternative Debert wouldn't even come up as choice because we don't have an instrument approach system.

In other words in the aviation world we are not even on the map at this time. I want to change that! With the location, great weather and the closing of many smaller airports in Atlantic Canada we have had many inquires from private investors looking at the Debert Airport. We need to invest into the infrastructure to attract these investors. The other component to these airport upgrades is the repaving of the main runway. These investments will create jobs and opportunities for our youth so they can stay here at home and enjoy the same lifestyle we have all be fortunate to enjoy.

On another note you're going to see a photo in this edition of the Shoreline I took of an illegal dumpsite in Debert. I can't even start to express how much this irks me. We have one of the most state of the art balefill facilities in the entire country and residents pay for garbage disposal within Colchester County. This provides them the convenience of bi-weekly roadside pickup. This year the municipality even changed the items allowed each pick up day to include one large item rather than waiting for Fall Clean up.

Still though we have residents who out of total disregard for the environment consciously decide to dispose of their waste in our forest. I'm going to request council seek legal advice on setting up trail cameras in locations known to have had repeat occurrences of illegal dumping. So the next time someone decides to dump their garbage in the forest and back roads of Colchester County I hope they remember to smile as they may very well be on camera.

Doug MacInnes, Councillor District 9, Colchester County

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