

Business Plan Presented by Peter McCracken

By Maurice Rees

October's meeting of Colchester Council included Peter McCracken's presentation of the 2022 Business Plan. The plan is described as a living document and sets out the Municipality of Colchester's blueprint for the work that will be done within the organization over the next 12 months.

It is based on the strategic priorities of Council, our operational and capital budgets, as well as other plans and strategies adopted by Council. With this plan, the Municipality will be able to make progress on its strategic goals and objectives as well as work to improve the

core services we provide.

The document has been developed under the guidance of the extended management team, and other staff across the corporation. While this document is intended to provide further direction to all staff, it also serves as a resource for the public and Council.

The 2022-23 Business Plan provides an overview of the corporate structure and departmental information, including a description of the core services provided, staffing, and budget information. The 2022-23 Business Plan is available at www.colchester.ca/reports

An overview of Colchester,

which most residents already know, describes it as a community of communities stretching over the agricultural heartland of Nova Scotia, from the Northumberland Strait, to the Minas Basin, to the border of HRM, making it the 4th largest county in Nova Scotia and is home to a variety of employment, educational, social, and housing opportunities.

In the plan, Colchester is described as a modern municipality focused on the ever-evolving needs of its communities comprising the following data:

1st Generation Immigrants
1,384 which is 3.75 % of the total population;

University Degree or Higher (Age 25+) 7,554 have College education; 8,628 are High School Graduates; and 6,062 have no High School Diploma;

Labour Force - 18,714. There are 2,733 self-employed individuals, and 2,644 working from home;

Median Household Income - \$71,017. With an average of 2.3 people per household, the average household income is CA\$86,081.55;

Population - 36,882 (2021). The population is trending upwards, it was 36,663 in 2016;

Households - 15,808. An estimated 3,945 households live below the poverty line, while 873 households have an income over \$200,000.

November 2022 the sick leave bank will start at zero and the employee will earn sick leave days at a rate of 1.50 days per month. Sick leave benefits for term, part-time and casual employees is a maximum of 95 sick days, however sick leave days will be pro-rated based on scheduled hours worked. The policy includes sick leave provisions regarding returning to work after receiving Long Term Disability or Workers' Compensation Benefits. The policy has been amended to reflect house-keeping changes to assist with the administration of sick leave and disability benefits.

of 1.50 days per month. The sick leave bank will reduce by one hour for each hour of approved sick leave. The existing sick leave benefit is 119 sick days per year and does not include a sick leave bank. Full time employees hired prior to November 2022 will receive the maximum of 95 days in their sick leave bank, less any days already taken in 2022. This will ensure employees do not have less than their current sick leave allotment.

Full time employees hired after

Personnel Policy Changes Approved

By Maurice Rees

Kelly Gratto McCarthy appeared before Colchester Council at the November 9th committee meeting seeking council's approval on changes to three policies. The personnel policies requiring changes included: Drugs and Alcohol in the Workplace; Pregnancy / Parental Leave and Illness or Disability. All requested policy changes were approved by council.

Details of the requested changes are outlined below:

Drugs and Alcohol in the Workplace Policy: The policy is being established to set expectations, guidelines, and procedures as it relates to the use of substances that could impact an employee's ability to perform their work duties safely, competently, and efficiently; applies to all Employees employed by the Municipality, and Contractors, and subcontractors conducting business with the Municipality.

The policy firmly and fairly enforces the principle that Employees must not be impaired while at

work, while conducting Municipal business. The policy strives to respect the dignity and privacy of individuals; and places a priority on treatment, accommodation and the successful recovery of Employees who have a Substance Use Disorder.

This new policy will be communicated to all employees. Members of management will receive training on assessment and de-

tection of impairment.

Pregnancy and Parental Leave Policy: Purpose - To ensure the Municipality complies with the current Labour Law of Nova Scotia and to support and assist employees who are on pregnancy, parental leave, and/or adoption leave.

Other changes apply, but the policy revision ensures the Municipality provides employees with a Supplementary Top-up benefit (17 weeks), in addition to the employee's Employment Insurance (EI) benefit. This benefit is available to those who qualify for and are in receipt of the EI pregnancy leave, parental leave and/or adoption leave. Employees who receive the top-up during pregnancy leave would not be eligible to receive the topup benefit for parental leave.

The supplementary top-up percentage amounts have not changed from the current policy.

Illness or Disability Policy: Purpose of the requested policy changes are to provide procedures and guidelines for the administration of paid sick leave for non-unionized employees and to support and assist employees who are unable to work arising from an illness or disability which is not eligible for coverage under Workers' Compensation Act, or Long-term Disability.

The revisions include: Incorporating a sick leave bank to a maximum of 95 sick leave days, at a rate

of 1.50 days per month. The recommendations from council committee must be presented to the monthly council meeting two weeks later. Although committee recommendations were covered in the November issue of the Shoreline Journal, we present them here in shorter format to accurately report on October's monthly meeting. The recommendations are:

Former Salmon River School Property - Future Use That Council directs staff to designate 40% of the lands at the former Salmon River School property for development and 60% for park/green-space; and, That staff also be directed to proceed with a Request for Proposals for the property. Opposed - Sandeson and Stewart.

EV Charging Stations Update/Upper Stewiacke - That Council approves the installation of a Level 2 EV charging

with labour shortages and a limited market for the wood.

"Our staff have been working hard to help homeowners and our community clean up, because we have employees who can operate a chainsaw safely. Like many other industries, employers in the industry are having difficulties finding skilled workers, especially in rural communities like my own".

The last few years have not been easy ones for Nova Scotia's forestry sector with skilled labour shortages. Despite that, the industry and its people continue to be resilient and are looking forward to a bright and optimistic future.

About the Forestry Sector Council: The Forestry Sector Council is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to developing a skilled and professional workforce for the Nova Scotia forest industry. Our strategic priorities are talent attraction and retention, skill development, and human resource planning. Cultivating a workforce like our forests—sustainable, diverse, and growing.

For more information, contact: Makayla Carroll, Communications & Project Coordinator, Forestry Sector Council, makayla@forestrysectorcouncil.

Wild Blueberry Extension Report

By Linda Harrington

Hugh Lyu, Wild Blueberry Specialist for Perennia gave an update on 2022 production highlights.

With sufficient snow cover in most areas, there appeared to be minimal winter damage observed in fields throughout Nova Scotia. The warm spring temperature saw plants emerge 1-1.5 weeks early in the sprout fields and bloom shift quickly to the F2 stage. The soil temperature in May was higher than the 10-year average.

There was good pollination weather and even though NS beekeepers had winter losses they were within the acceptable range for recovery.

The past year was yet another dry year but there was a timely and sufficient rain in critical development stages for most locations. The dry weather helped with low light infection, less leaf rust and low insect pressure.

There appears to be a high weed pressure in the crop fields for hair fescue, golden rod and sheep sorrel. The warm temperatures this fall plus the current shortage of pesticides could see

even further increase in weed pressure. Pesticides currently out of supply include Ignite, Chateau, Kerb, Venture L and Sinbar. There are plans to produce in the spring but no guarantee.

All regions saw higher yields in 2022, the second best ever recorded. Farmgate price is down .10/lb from last year to .70/lb.

There are now 52 weather stations set up in wild blueberry fields across the province, with 88 stations in total across all sectors. These can be viewed using the Davis Weatherlink App or by visiting www.capebreton-weather.ca. The parameters logged and transmitted every fifteen minutes include air temperature, relative humidity, wind speed, wind direction, rainfall, barometric pressure, solar radiation, leaf wetness and soil moisture.

This information is helpful in determining Growing Degree Days (GDD). The GDD, a weather based indicator, is used to estimate the growth and development of plants and insects during the growing season in order to make timely management decisions.

Recommendations from Council Committee

Each month a report containing recommendations from council committee must be presented to the monthly council meeting two weeks later. Although committee recommendations were covered in the November issue of the Shoreline Journal, we present them here in shorter format to accurately report on October's monthly meeting. The recommendations are:

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EV Charging Stations Update/Upper Stewiacke - That Council approves the installation of a Level 2 EV charging

station at the Upper Stewiacke Co-op at a cost of \$14,452 be approved. Cooper excused himself from discussion.

2022 Art Selection Committee Representatives - That Council appoints Councillors Patton and Lomond to serve on the 2022 Art Selection Committee.

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