



Jessica Lynds (center) enjoys volunteering at Debert Court and she was recently lending a hand serving snacks to Laura MacKinnon and Myrna Phillips during the Christmas Party. New volunteers are always welcome and appreciated. (Harrington Photo)



Volunteers Stephanie Bilby and Emma Alexander were busy stuffing stockings prior to the Annual Christmas party for residents of Debert Court. Volunteers are welcome to help out for as many hours they wish. (Harrington Photo)

## West Colchester Arena Struggling

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The AGM is coming up in February, and from all reports, will be held third weekend in February. The Shoreline Journal contacted Randy Webb, manager, who indicated the arena has suffered a downturn, but he did not have statistics readily available. He indicated the date for the AGM would not be established until the board's January meeting.

Current board members are hoping more people will attend the AGM and volunteers will come forth to represent their community. Currently, Great Village, Debert, Belmont, Crowes Mills and Onslow don't have a representative on the board.

Area councillor, Doug MacInnes, when contacted about the arena's situation said he was not at liberty to make a statement, but indicated he is aware discus-

sions have been held, which might help increase revenues solving some financial pressure, but it does nothing to solve the lack of community representation on the board.

As background information, Councillor MacInnes said the municipality provides an annual grant to the arena for operations and assists in other ways. For the 2014-15 year Colchester contributed \$72,500, plus made an additional contribution of \$9,000 to assist with insurance costs. According to MacInnes, Recreation Director, Craig Burgess also pitched in to help providing posters and cards to asking area businesses to encourage staff to utilize the facility and sent information packages to Debert and Chiganois Elementary, plus the Junior High in Onslow.

The municipality has also helped in other ways by purchasing some public skating time; pro-

moting "pick up" hockey games for younger people, where each player is charged only \$2.

MacInnes said one thing which could be helpful for West Colchester United Arena is if a local resident would step forward to help by board by becoming a volunteer Marketing and Events coordinator, as has happened elsewhere. At another arena in the municipality, one volunteer has worked hard to get ringette and broomball going offering more opportunities to exercise and have fun. "It could make a world of difference", he said.

In praising the volunteers to do work hard to keep the Debert rink going, MacInnes said the rink is very efficient, in fact the most efficient in the county and any hockey player will tell you "Debert has the best Ice".

MacInnes feels the real problem

is the lack of community support and now is the time for communities to ensure they have a representative on the board. "Now is the time to act, not when things get worse and it's harder to correct", MacInnes said. He continued, "People who went through the programs at the arena a few years ago should start giving back. The current problems are not really the fault of the board. They have worked hard, and fund raised all the time. It's really that the communities have abandoned them".

Another resident who did not wish to be identified indicated the minor hockey program suffered a set-back a few years ago, when rep teams were eliminated from the WCRA hockey program. This took a number of the better players out of the system, permitting them to become part of rep teams in the Truro program having a negative impact on Debert's minor hockey program.

## Child Care Review Report Due This Spring

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development began a review in January to improve child care in the province. The review will focus on program quality, accessibility and funding for centres.

The review will help make child care more accessible to families, support operators in providing high quality programs that focus on child well-being and development, and support and develop the early childhood educators workforce.

"The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development wants to ensure Nova Scotia child-care operators have quality programs in place that meet the needs of all children to help them reach their full potential," said Education and Early Childhood Development Minister, Karen Casey.

The department will be consulting with child-care centre operators and staff, family home day-care agen-

cies and care providers, early education organizations, and other interested parties until March. The review will include an online survey, focus groups, and meetings with program providers and partners.

Recently, changes were

made to child-care regulations to better protect children by ensuring criminal record and child abuse register checks are in place for anyone working or volunteering at child-care centres.

Staff from the department will present a report and recommendations to the minister this spring.

## "We won't negotiate what we can't afford" - McNeil

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points, Desiree Stockermans, Operations Manager, Instrument Concepts Inc and Ocean Sonics, Great Village said persuading professionals to take a job in a small rural community is a major problem. She said they have posted ads looking for highly trained professionals, but don't get any response. They like the job, but don't want to move to a small rural community.

She suggested one area where help is needed, not just for their business, but for many areas around the province, is to promote lifestyle in rural communities, because once people get a taste of it, they really enjoy it.

In outlining forthcoming changes regarding a review of early intervention, he said the review on how to move forward will be received next week, in accordance with Education and Early Childhood Development Minister, Karen Casey's announcement the review would be completed in mid-January.

McNeil said the public perception is that at each of the boards, the central office has grown too big. During the question and answer period he was asked, if education might follow department of health in administrative changes. McNeil responded, "In health there was wage parity across the province, but that is not the case in education; contracts arranged by each of the boards vary and the boards must take ownership of what they have negotiated.

Without getting into specifics and trying reveal what might be in Minister Casey's review, he did indicate that the province "can't afford to bring in wage parity". However, he did allude to the type of changes which might be possible. "We don't need a payroll office in every community, maybe there are ways common services could be shared".

Following the meeting,



Premier McNeil chats with Mark Woods, Instrument Concepts, Great Village, at the Chamber's Annual Premier's Breakfast held at the Holiday Inn, Truro. McNeil told those in attendance, his government will not negotiate contracts with the public service that the province can't afford. (Rees Photo)

the **Shoreline Journal** attempted to determine how savings at the board level could be achieved across the province. We did find an education official, who did not want to be identified, but said, "If you take Premier McNeil's example of not needing a payroll department in every community, there probably are upwards of 50 people in the various purchasing departments across the province. They all use the same software.

There is no reason why we couldn't have one purchasing department, one person responsible for purchasing details at the board level and the remainder done in one central office perhaps eliminating upwards of 40 staff.

The official did say that to follow the Ivany Report and to rebuild the rural economy a realignment of staffing levels and restructuring departments, it would be necessary for a centralized purchasing department to be located in a rural area. With some assumptions on wage scale, a reduction of that magnitude would save around \$1.4-Million, plus extra savings for less supervision, equipment and office space.

The education official continued that additional savings could be achieved

with similar restructuring other departments.

On an Immigration related matter and the successes enjoyed by CoRDA, which was a leader in the province, Truro Mayor Bill Mills asked McNeil if there was possibility of meeting with him or Deputy to see if possible to develop a pilot project to resume those successes. McNeil responded the province has been capped at 750 per year, but they have just been advised an additional 350 were possible and he would be pleased to meet or arrange meetings.

## RASCALS to Unite Our Shore?

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at local homes or businesses; consider continuing and expanding roadside banners; initiate free book boxes in the communities and encourage beautiful, clean roadsides with the Gorgeous Gorges project.

Other possible initiatives could lobby to have the road into Five Islands Park open

year round or at least when there is no snow; consider looking at the feasibility of keeping the Elizabeth Bishop house a historic site as well as continuing to offer artist residences and could do an annual visitor brochure showing access to all beaches, trails as well as events, suppers and events and festivals during the summer.

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