

Wentworth 2014 Christmas Tree Lighting

By Hope Bridgewater

The Wentworth Christmas Tree Lighting annual event honours the memory of the late John Bagnell who was the President of the former Garden Club and who first organized the event primarily as a celebration for young children and as a start of the Christmas holidays.

Amanda Patriquin, Coordinator and Director of the ceremony and activities, sent me an excellent report of the event, and I have added comments or changes to her report for a combined final column.

The Tree Lighting was held at the Wentworth Recreation Centre on December 6th from 6 pm to 8 pm. As everyone arrived, we first gathered the children together in the middle of the floor where Sharon Miller led the children in singing Christmas carols. Then the lighting of the Christmas tree took place automatically outside with the touch of a light switch, but people had to stay inside because of the freezing rain, and they knew the outside tree was done by seeing it done symbolically on the inside stage.

Next Linda Patriquin, on stage with the children read to them the picture book titled Santa Is Coming to Nova Scotia by Steve Smallman. The Wentworth Recreation Centre this year donated this book in memory of the late John Bagnell to the CAPsite and its community library.



Amanda Patriquin, coordinator of the Wentworth Christmas Tree Lighting ceremony, with the help of other dedicated volunteers directed a successful and well-attended event at the Wentworth Recreation Centre. (Hope Bridgewater Photo)

Everyone lined up at a long table for a treat of homemade cookies made by volunteers in the community: Stacie MacLeod, Barb Palmer, Linda Patriquin, Donna Reid, Amanda Patriquin, and Carol Laird. Hot chocolate and hot apple cider was served by the volunteers in the kitchen: Barb Palmer, Sonya Seymour, Donna Reid, Amanda Patriquin and Linda Patriquin.

Santa Claus and the reindeer did not come at the scheduled time as they were delayed by the weather, and the children gathered around staff while they each picked a bag of Magic Reindeer food to take home with them, and then on Christmas Eve were to sprinkle the Magic Reindeer food outside their windows to help keep Santa's reindeer well fed on their

long journey on Christmas night.

The children had a surprise as they were told only six bags of the many Magic Reindeer food bags had a special mark on them.

Sonya Seymour, Todd Seymour and Kim Shand had made three gingerbread houses and three gingerbread trains, beautifully decorated with candy and treats. Each child looked at his bag and six children were lucky to have marks on each of their bags. Abby Patriquin, Nate MacLeod, and James Nesbit each won a gingerbread house, Jenica Bruce, and Emma Brown each won a gingerbread train.

Santa Claus and the Reindeer arrived just in time for the Fireworks organized by Ryan Palmer, Danny Palmer, and Jonathan Patriquin. Despite the weather fortunately less severe at this time, the Fireworks lit up the sky with amazing beauty for all the children, Santa Claus, and the reindeer to watch.

Then inside the Recreation Centre, each child had a turn to be on Santa's knees and tell him what they wished for Christmas. Santa Claus had help from his pal Bill Baker, Councilor for District 6, as he handed out candy canes.

A large turnout of all ages came and it was so nice to see so many from the community and area share in this special event for both young and old.

\$356,000 Per Day to Bus Students

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seize the opportunities for cost and energy efficiencies, including merging management systems, computerizing route scheduling, and adopting school-level active transportation plans. The report reveals Nova Scotia student transportation costs have increased by 11 per cent, from \$64.2 million to \$71.2 million, at a time when overall P-12 enrolment shrunk by 8.3 per cent.

The Chignecto-Central Regional School Board is typical of "Education on Wheels," with 16,800 (82.3 percent) of its 20,423 students in the 2013-14 school year riding the buses each school day. Four of the province's other regional boards bus from 85 to 96 per cent of their students to school each day. Closing smaller, mainly rural schools and bussing more students each year to larger primary to grade 8 consolidated schools or primary to grade 12 regional education centres only results in more students on buses and longer bus runs, adding to the associated costs of fuel and maintenance.

Recently, the Town and County of Antigonish have taken up the cause. Working together, the two municipalities launched their own Antigonish Community Transit service on September 15, 2014, and also submitted a resolution to the Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities (UNSM) proposing school buses be made available for the use of public transportation services. The Antigonish Municipal resolution was discussed and accepted at the annual UNSM Fall conference in November 2014 (Community Transit-Nova Scotia 2014).

The extensive report included the following 10 recommendations:

(1) Seed and support the joint sharing of student transportation services

Seize the opportunity to embrace the concept and best practice of the shared use of student transportation services, encompassing governance, facilities, vehicles, and support programs. Start by developing school district transportation management capacity, providing financial incentives and resource support to school districts and boards, enabling them to initiate amalgamated student

transportation services, preferably using the joint board consortium model.

(2) Review rural student transportation services

Assess the impact of school consolidation on student transportation costs and on student wellness and well-being, and review current funding formulas based on a population density grid.

(3) Review special education transportation services

Support the integration of special education students, both mentally and physically handicapped, where possible, into regular school bus runs, providing differential funding at a higher rate for students designated to receive enhanced special needs support services.

(4) Close the provincial school district funding gap

Address the current inadequacy of provincial funding tied to standard walk limits of 3.6 km or 2.4 km, recognizing that districts and boards are compelled to subsidize most bused students, particularly in rural and remote areas or in densely populated areas subdivided by major highways or traffic arteries.

(5) Achieve improved route management and energy efficiencies

Develop regional student transportation systems that embrace and implement leading practices, such as: Contracting out services to achieve cost efficiencies and lower costs per student;

Joint tendering bus contracts involving coterminous school districts/boards (English public, French public; special education authorities);

Eliminating the duplication of bus service routes operated by coterminous school authorities;

Implementing double bus runs and staggered school times where feasible;

Using city-operated transit systems by providing student bus passes for junior high, middle school, and high school students;

Reducing route lengths by establishing common collection points for students attending high school alternative programs and drawn from dispersed geographic areas;

Ordering replacement buses with fuel-efficient engines and engine brakes to save on fuel

consumption and reduce brake maintenance costs;

Introducing computerized route-mapping software to find the shortest and most cost-effective bus routes and safest walking routes.

(6) Support community plans for multi-modal active transportation

Embrace Community Transit-Nova Scotia and Ecology Action Centre proposals to create, preserve, and protect walkable school communities by supporting and investing in local "Safe Routes to School" initiatives, including in-school curricula, aimed at ensuring safe routes to bus stops and increasing the proportion of students walking and bicycling to school.

(7) Establish two pilot consortia as models of best practice

Initiate and fund the establishment of two pilot project models of joint board consortia exemplifying best practice in shared governance and the management of transportation services, targeted to test the model in both urban and primarily rural school districts.

(8) Examine the feasibility of a Nova Scotia-wide joint services strategy

Initiate a province-wide public discussion in Nova Scotia focusing on the feasibility of merging student transportation services between the Conseil Scolaire Acadien Provincial and its seven coterminous English-language school boards.

(9) Develop and implement reliable performance measures

Establish clear service standards for student transportation and then a set of performance measures, using established effectiveness and efficiency criteria and route-management software, tracking key indicators, including walking limits, student ride times, special program support costs, and school closure impact studies.

(10) Undertake provincial audits of student transportation services

Formally request the provincial auditor in each province to include a comprehensive audit of student transportation services in the next cycle of provincial audits so as to provide a financial performance benchmark and identify specific areas of concern and reasonable cost-reduction targets.

Bonds of Love, Bands of Love

With these diamonds and gold
To your bosom I will hold
A love forever strong and true
For my true love and only you

Two Hearts Two Souls One Love True Love

With these diamonds and ring
Of true love I now do sing
From my soul and from my heart
May our true love not depart

Two Hearts Two Souls One Love True Love

With these diamonds and pearl
From our childhood as boy and girl
May our true love over time that's grown
To this world may it now be shown

Two Hearts Two Souls One Love True Love

With these diamonds and wine
May we toast to love devine
For true love comes only heaven sent
For ours is pure as god had meant

Two Hearts Two Souls One Love True Love

With these diamonds and golden bands
On each one of our left hands
May our true love always be
The strongest love the world may see

Two Hearts Two Souls One Love True Love

God Bless and Thank-you
Thomas A. Marshall (Ex-Navy)



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