

Rees' Pieces

Confusion around Covid-19

Even though I didn't change the subject title of this column as result of Thursday's announcement, I had to change the lead-in to this writing.

Karen Casey's announcement she will not re-offer in the next provincial election, is a sad moment for Colchester North, but not unexpected. Fifteen years in politics, turning 74 in April, following a successful career in the education system which started in 1967, she has achieved much more than most of us. She was a pioneer in so many ways.

She will be missed, but deserves the time to enjoy grandchildren, and other family events she has missed over the years.

KAREN: Thank you and wishes for good health.

Now I can resume where I intended to go in the beginning.

Premier McNeil and Dr Strang have done a tremendous job disseminating information on Covid-19 and how to keep the infection rate down. Their dedication over the last 10 months has been nothing short of a miracle, because most politicians and public servants are not as forthcoming.

Nova Scotia has among the lowest rates of transmission and serious cases, other than the early mishaps at Northwood, which still accounts for the majority of fatalities. With their honesty and directness, although the public did not like what they were asked to do they paid attention to McNeil and Strang. Restrictions on shopping, dining out, visiting friends and family, participating in sporting activities, or attending sport functions caused major upheavals in normal life.

Restrictions and much heavier workloads has put paramedics, essential emergency staff, medical and staff in the provinces health centres in a very difficult position. It was not just turmoil and working restriction conditions in the workplace, but the additional stress "might they become exposed" to Covid-19, or take it home to family members.

Thankfully most Nova Scotians agreed with strict adherence to Pandemic protocols, but some of our most valued volunteers are confused and feel somewhat marginalized. We must not let that continue, as their volunteering is the backbone of many communities. I'm referring to hundreds, if not, thousands of Volunteer Firefighters and Ground Search and Rescue Units.

We need to ensure they can perform their duties in case of emergencies and train to keep them ready to react or meet to keep the unit functioning.

Throughout Colchester and Cumberland Counties, they perform a valuable service when emergencies arise. I have had overtures from a few individual members and executives, who feel they are overlooked.

I received the following information from one group referencing social distancing and number of people permitted to meet, which stated: *"After multiple inquiries, organizations such as Fire and GSAR are being told we are exempt only during emergency calls. How can sports teams meet and practice, and emergency services can't? Most volunteer Fire and GSAR services cannot run daily operations as quorums are required. Training is vital to keep these types of organization personnel and equipment emergency ready."*

I posed a question to Dr Strang during one of the frequent briefings. However, he seemed steadfast the number of people allowed in a group was ten. During the same briefing, he and Premier McNeil raised the limit (and other restrictions) from 25 to 50 groups such as sport teams, arts and culture. These groups can expand their activities, such as practice, virtual performances, but are still restricted to no fans or people in the audience.

Another piece of information filling my email inbox included the following: *"Why are Nova Scotia Ground Search and Rescue Teams restricted to groups of 10 persons for their business meetings and the training they need to conduct to be search ready. While we are allowing sports and organized arts and culture to train and practice in groups of 25 persons without practicing physical distancing?"*

We need to ensure we do not cast aside or forget the many hours of volunteering firefighters and search and rescue teams donate to the betterment of their communities.

Regardless of family events or work duties they are always there to help us during emergencies.

Thank you. We will always strive to show our appreciation.

Maurice

Letters to the editor

This is an open forum for your opinions and comments.

MAIL TO: The Shoreline Journal, P.O. Box 41, Bass River, NS, B0M 1B0
(902) 647-2968; Fax: 902-647-2194 Email: maurice@theshorelinejournal.com



Ground Search and Rescue Needs Help

By Maurice Rees

Managing one of the best community supported and best equipped Ground Search and Rescue units in the province is not an easy task at the best of times, but especially when it needs help. An outline of the Colchester Ground Search and Rescue team's needs were explained by Tom Fitzpatrick, President to Colchester Council on January 5th.

Like all volunteer organizations the need for money is high on the list, but the matter of gravest concern is adding more members, and retaining them for long periods. In summer 2020, when the team was involved in a long extensive search for a Truro youth membership was bolstered by over 20 new members, but six months later only three remained with the unit.

In his commentary, Fitzpatrick outlined members must provide their own gear, which costs between \$1,200 and \$1,700 and some have difficulty with employers approving "time away from work" with or without pay. These two factors are the biggest hindrance to recruitment and retention.

Fitzpatrick went on to explain the CoVid pandemic has played a very negative role on the unit's activities, because many fund raising activities to be cancelled or delayed, which has caused them to put equipment acquisition or upgrades and a much needed expansion to the building in Debert on hold. Funds raised from various activities are now needed for operations instead of adding to the units nest egg for building expansion. An added burden is the requirement for training to hone perishable skills takes a lot of time, but dedication to the

unit causes "burnout" of members with the added responsibility to assist with fundraising.

Fitzpatrick's detailed presentation outlined current funding challenges to include: Curtailing upgrades and purchases of required equipment; Reduced savings for capital purchases or building additions to protect the current fleet and specialized equipment; Reduced funds to do building expansion of washrooms, training rooms and storage of extra equipment.

Other contributing factors are current funding does presently allow for vehicle and building maintenance, but only the Municipality of Colchester is guaranteed funding, and still requires additional volunteer hours; No financial room for contingencies and fundraised money being utilized for operations.

GSAR maintains that sustainable funding would reduce the fundraising pressure so members can focus on the team operations; allow for upgrades to communications and technology; allow for the purchase of PPE or contribute to offset the personal PPE costs and allow for the allocation of funds to apply to capital projects.

In his presentation to council Fitzpatrick suggested there is a need for \$75,000 for future operations which would be an increase of nearly \$30,000 above current municipal contributions and his preference to establish a sustainable funding model through a variety of possibilities which could include: agreement for increased long term commitment from the four municipal units; funding per capita; or, establishing an area rate.

Colchester GSAR currently receives municipal funding

via: Town of Stewiacke asks for the team to invoice them for their contribution (\$5,065). Town of Truro requires annual application with the rest of the volunteer groups for some form of financial support. (not guaranteed). The Municipality of Colchester provides \$35,000 annually for operations as well has some in-kind contributions.

Three options were suggested for an improved long term sustainable funding model by the county's four municipal units with Millbrook First Nation agreeing to participate. The three options are outlined below:

Option #1: Current model with the Municipal Unit providing assured increased funds: Municipality of Colchester - 75% (\$35,000 to \$56,000); Town of Truro - 15% (\$7,000 to \$11,250); and Town of Stewiacke - 10% (\$5,065 to \$7,500).

Option #2: Funding Per Capita would assign a flat rate to the population in each municipality using 2016 Census. To achieve operational target of \$75,000 would see a rate of \$1.50 per person: Municipality Colchester - 36,091 (\$54,137); Town of Truro - 12,261 (\$18,392); Town of Stewiacke 1,373 (\$2,060)

Option #3: Area Rate would assign an area rate based on assessment for residential assessments only. Each Municipality would need to agree to a funding formula and assign a rate to achieve the operational target.

To achieve an area rate status GSAT would need to meet with the municipalities to discuss the rate on the current assessments.

Commencing new month, the Shoreline Journal will provide space to profile all segments of Colchester Ground Search and Rescue. The com-

prehensive monthly overview will focus on the executive, current equipment, operational team units, specialized equipment which makes the team somewhat unique; building expansion needs, equipment additions, and how general public can assist.

The Shoreline Journal

Here's where to find us:

BASS RIVER:
Bayside Pharmacy
Dominion Chair Factory Store

BIBLE HILL:
C.W. Fraser Pharmacy
MacQuarrie's Pharmacy
Kennedy's Deli - Ryland Ave

DEBERT:
Debert Mini-Mart

FIVE ISLANDS:
Masstown Market Five Islands

GLENHOLME:
Double "C" Truckstop

GREAT VILLAGE:
Wilson's Gas

MAITLAND:
Frieze & Roy General Store

MASSTOWN:
Masstown Market
MTM Retail Gas (Petro-Can)

MILLBROOK:
Super 8 Motel
Hampton Inn & Suites

NORTH RIVER:
Grant's Grocery

PARRSBORO:
CrossRoads Co-op
Ken's Grocery
Wright's Pharmasave

TRURO:
Atlantic Superstore
Best Western Glengarry
Holiday Inn

MacQuarrie's Pharmasave
(Esplanade)
Rath Eastlink Comm Centre
Colchester East Hants Health
Centre - Coffee Shop

NEWSPAPERS IN EDUCATION:
Each classroom at the following schools will receive a copy of the Shoreline Journal:

Bass River Consolidated;
Great Village Elementary; Debert Elementary;
Chignanois Elementary;
Central Colchester Junior High School;
Parrsboro Elementary and
Parrsboro Regional High School.

We are interested in placing the Shoreline Journal in additional locations. If you have a suggestion, or wish to have the Shoreline available from your store, please contact:
Maurice Rees, Publisher,
902-647-2968, or E-MAIL:
maurice@theshorelinejournal.com

Nurse Practitioners Assessments for Drivers

Nova Scotians who require medical assessments to drive now have more options to obtain that approval. Amendments to regulations under the Motor Vehicle Act came into effect December 16, allowing nurse practitioners to complete medical assessment forms for commercial driver licence applications, and drivers who have medical conditions requiring assessment.

It also allows for the completion of medical forms for drivers being assessed for accessible parking permits, the Alcohol Ignition Interlock Program and exemptions from seat belt or child restraint systems for medical reasons. "This is about streamlining the process for motorists who need medical forms to drive," said Lloyd Hines, Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal. "Nurse practi-

tioners are an essential part of our health-care system, with the advanced education and competencies needed to complete these medical assessment forms."

There are 238 nurse practitioners in Nova Scotia, about 120 work in primary care. These changes will reduce pressure on physicians who will have more time to focus on patients with more complex medical issues.

The Shoreline Journal (circ. 1650) is a monthly community newspaper serving communities along the Glooscap Trail from Truro to Parrsboro, Nova Scotia serving the communities of Belmont/Debert, Wentworth/Londonderry, Onslow/Masstown along the shore to Great Village, Bass River, Economy, Five Islands and Lower Five Islands. It is published on the last Wednesday of each month (earlier in December) with a deadline of the 20th of the month.

MAILING ADDRESS: The Shoreline Journal, P.O. Box 41, Bass River, Nova Scotia, B0M 1B0.

PHONE: 902-647-2968; **FAX:** 902-647-2194 **Toll Free 1-800-406-1426;** **Cell:** 902-890-9850 • **E-MAIL:** maurice@theshorelinejournal.com

EDITOR PUBLISHER: Maurice Rees • **ADVERTISING:** Maurice Rees • **CIRCULATION:** Maurice Rees
Canadian Publications Mail Products Agreement #40048924, ISSN #1209-9198

SUBSCRIPTION RATES:

LOCAL SUBSCRIPTIONS: B0M / B2N / B6L - \$23.00, PLUS HST = \$26.45 • **OTHER PARTS OF NS:** \$28.00 plus HST = \$32.20
ALL OTHER AREAS OF CANADA: \$50.00, plus HST = \$54.50 • **USA SUBSCRIPTIONS:** \$45.00
HST: #890564404RT001. Printed by Advocate Printing & Publishing Ltd, Pictou, Nova Scotia

All rights reserved. Material published in The Shoreline Journal may not be reproduced in any form without prior approval of the publisher.
Material to be returned to sender must be accompanied by a self-addressed stamped envelope.

1996 Heritage Award recipient. Listed with Canadian Advertising Rates & Data (CARD) and Bowden's Media Monitoring Service.

We acknowledge the financial support of the Government of Canada. | Canada

The publisher is not responsible for minor errors in ads, which do not lessen the value of the item(s). The publisher is not responsible for space beyond that portion of the advertisement containing the item(s) in error. Letters to the editor are subject to editing or rejection, must be signed by the author and contain a phone number.

