

Wild Blueberry Innovation Challenge

The Wild Blueberry Innovation Challenge was launched on December 13 to support new, innovative packaging and value-added food products that use wild blueberries. The Department of Agriculture and the Wild Blueberry Producers Association of Nova Scotia are working together to support innovation and find new markets for the provincial fruit - the wild blueberry.

"Nova Scotia's wild blueberry sector has tremendous growth potential so we are helping the industry explore innovation that can open new



markets around the world, for both frozen and fresh food products," said Agriculture Minister Keith Colwell. "This can bring more jobs and economic prosperity to rural communities."

Eligible applicants to the

challenge can qualify for up to \$126,000, which can be used to help grow their sales, pursue new export markets and develop new products that will bring higher prices for their berries.

Successful applicants will work to commercialize their products with food scientists and technicians at Perennia, Nova Scotia's development agency supporting sustainability and competitiveness in the province's agriculture and seafood sectors.

"The province's Wild Blueberry Innovation Challenge helps Nova Scotia food

companies come up with new wild blueberry consumer products which can make our industry more sustainable in the marketplace.", Peter Rideout, executive di-

rector, Wild Blueberry Producers Association of Nova Scotia

ries are Nova Scotia's leading agricultural export valued at \$104.4 million in 2018

Information and applications are available from the Wild Blueberry Producers Association of Nova Scotia at: <https://www.nswildblueberries.com>

Tuition Reduced for International Students

By *Maurice Rees*

The International Student Program has resulted in development of international family friendships. In her presentation to council on December 3rd, Lisa Hartery mentioned one Bible Hill host family attended the wedding of a former student from 20 years ago. Councillor Bob Pash, Debert, mentioned he hosted an international student prior to development of the NSISP, and it was a great experience, with his son maintaining a friendship with the student. Pash added with the situations at the time, he did not receive a monthly stipend; footing all the bills out of his own pocket. Councillor Wade Parker stated his family had hosted an international student and spoke highly of the experience and the program.

In 2018, 27% of graduating international students remained in Nova Scotia to continue studies at university or NSCC. Hartery stated universities and colleges normally seek international students as a way to generate higher in-

come, but recently have recognized the success of the program and have made some adjustments in their tuition fees.

Wanting to get more students, Hartery said, this year NSCC has reduced tuition for foreign students from \$12,500 to the domestic level of \$3,500.

Hartery says the International Student program has plenty of room for growth and, in fact, the only limiting factor is the number of host families. She sees the program as a great economic development tool for rural areas. Some of the economic numbers can be explained: 15 students = \$325,000; 20 students, \$434,000 and 25 students, \$542,000.

In some areas, international students have organized a multicultural festival for the public; a language fair at a library and participated in local fundraisers. Those interested in learning more about the program or may be thinking of becoming a host family should visit: www.nsisp.ca or #nsisp.

NSISP = \$5.3-Million Economic Input

By *Maurice Rees*

Colchester is home to an invisible economic generator. The fact became evident when Lisa Hartery and Carlee Pedersen made a presentation to Colchester Council on December 3rd on behalf of the Nova Scotia International Student Program. The presentation was an information update and request to seek ways to collaborate for community betterment.

Each year 1500+ international students study at Junior High and High Schools throughout the province.

Now in its 21st year, the NSISP has brought over \$200-Million in revenues to the province during the first 20 years. Many do not realize the significant economic impact the NSISP has on the province, primarily in rural areas. Distribution of students is 35.29% in urban areas, while rural Nova Scotia hosts 64.71% (941 students) for \$12-Million in revenues with a net economic impact of \$14-Million.

For the CCRCE area, the annual economic impact is \$5.3-Million. NSISP is not a burden on the school system. No additional teachers are hired. With declining enrollments, the addition of international students to the classroom is in fact "backfilling" the classroom by utilizing empty seats.

In the current year, throughout the

Chignecto-Central Regional Centre for Education (CCRCE) area there are a total of 445 international students equating to 220.56FTEs from 29 countries placed in 22 CCRCE schools.

Pugwash has the highest percentage of international students per capita of anywhere in the province with 29 international students in a high school which has only 99 Canadian students. Bible Hill has the largest concentration of Junior High students in the province.

In Springhill an international student purchased a home and is entering NSCC, Springhill. Over 100 international students in the yearly Youth Expo in Brookfield, while Wendy Robinson, Mayor of Stewiacke is a host family.

International students are busy volunteering in the community such as Food Bank, Truro; Christmas Parades; in Hants North students volunteer in the community and attend many local events. Students in all areas have visited tourist attractions; local farms, museums, recreation facilities and maple farms. With their own spending money many international students join local youth groups, buy gym memberships and shop locally.

Host families receive a monthly stipend of \$650 per month for each international student. The stipend is a reimbursement of expenses, and therefore is tax-free.

Grant Presentations to Council

By *Maurice Rees*

During his appearance before council at the committee meeting on December 12th, Director of Recreation Services, Craig Burgess asked council how often they would like to have presentations from the almost twelve annual grant recipients? He stated he is in frequent contact with each of them and receives financial information annually.

In speaking on the matter, Councillor Masters said the important piece of information is to receive the Balance sheet in addition to the Income and Expense details. Mayor Blair suggested, and it was approved by council, the annual recipients should report at least once during the term of

council, unless there were significant changes in their operation.

At the November 2019 meeting Council Committee, at the request of Councillor Taggart, directed staff to review the possible installation of a streetlight at the corner of Carrobie Road and Station Road in Londonderry. The matter was investigated by staff who determined the estimated monthly cost for a streetlight is \$30 to \$40 per month depending on fixture wattage.

Council committee agreed to proceed even though Station Road and Carrobie Road are both owned and maintained by the Province. There is an existing power pole at

the intersection which could potentially be used for a light. A formal scoping by Nova Scotia Power would be required in order to confirm the logistics of the installation.

Over the last 10 years, similar streetlights have been installed by the County and funded through the general tax rate. Locations include: Greg Road at Greenfield Road; Sand Point Road at Highway 6; Great Village Bridge; Brule Shore Road at Highway 6 and Onslow Road at Old Tatamagouche Road. Staff's main concern with installing and funding the streetlight is that the County would be taking responsibility for illumination of an intersection for roads that are provincially owned.

445 International Students in 22 Schools

By *Maurice Rees*

In the past 20 years, 1998-2018, the Nova Scotia International Student Program has processed 16,315 students making significant contributions to the provincial economy. Although it is a provincial program, its central hub is at 60 Lorne Street, Truro.

In the previous 20 years, the program has generated over \$200-Million in revenue for the province. Revenue is generated via each student, through its home-government and / or the family paying tuition to be educated here.

Locally, this year, there are 445 students from 29 countries placed in 22 schools throughout the Chignecto-Central system. Additional teachers are not hired for the classrooms, because the program is "backfilling" the classroom and utilizing empty seats as a result of declining enrollment.

Here is a list of participating schools in the CCRCE and the number of students in each school: Amherst Regional High, 40; Bible Hill Junior High, 11; Central Colchester Junior High, 4; Cobequid Education Centre, 63; Dr. W.A. Macleod Consolidated, 1; Hants East Rural High, 23; Hants North Rural High, 18; North Nova Education Centre, 22 and Northumberland Regional High, 29.

Eight other schools in the CCRCE system which have international students include: Pictou Academy, 3; Pugwash District High, 31; Redcliffe Middle School, 4; River Hebert District High, 3; South Colchester Academy, 21; Springhill High, 7; Tatamagouche Regional Academy, 7, 5 and Truro Junior High, 11.

If you would like our school to have international students, or you would like to become a host family, visit: www.nsisp.ca



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