



After the Parrsboro Christmas parade, Santa visited the Hall to meet the young kids, and those who remember when they were young. (Lawrence R Nicoll Photo)



Santa waves for the grandparent taking a picture after the Parrsboro Christmas parade. (Lawrence R Nicoll Photo)

Posted Speed Limits a Concern

By Maurice Rees

Across the province parents are expressing concern about three matters which have an impact on student safety in and around schools. The concerns are: students walking along highways where sidewalks do not exist; school bus designated stops for drop off and pick up and posted speed limits variances - depending if a rural or urban area.

At November Colchester Council meeting, Councillor Mike Gregory, Tatamagouche area raised the matter he learned that buses can only pick up students at designated stops, which in many cases forces students to walk along busy highway from their driveway to a designated location. Gregory pointed out the matter is not unique to Tatamagouche, but exists across the province. In some cases students have to walk approximately 500 feet to get to the bus.

Parents second concern is in rural areas, students must walk along the edge of busy highways, because sidewalks do not exist. The problem still exists in more urban-like areas, because only more established areas have sidewalks, and as urban sprawl increases with new housing there are many areas without sidewalks.

Not having a uniform speed limit for all school areas is another major concern. According to provincial laws or policies speed limits in some areas are 30 Km/h, but other areas have a posted school area speed limit of 50 Km/h.

To illustrate how it works, the difference is based on rural and urban. Most highway in rural areas have approach-

ing speeds of 80 Km/h, but in a village or town the normal street posted speed is 50 Km/h on approaching roadways.

As result of concerns from Colchester residents, Mayor Blair added "Posted Speed Limits" to Colchester's committee meeting on December 15th. Mayor Blair noted there is varying speed limits for school areas, and it is a concern to many parents.

In areas where posted speed limits are less than 50 Km/h, the school area limit reduces to 30 Km/h when children are present, whereas if the normal speed limit is in excess of 50 Km/h (rural areas normal speed is 80 Km/h). 80 Km/h speed limit reduces to 50 Km/h, when students are present.

At Mayor Blair's request council approved sending a letter to various government officials including the Ministers of NSTIR and Department of Education expressing council's concern. Speaking on the matter, Deputy Mayor Geoff Stewart said a few years ago he was faced with the same situation, but was told the 50/30 split existed and neither NSTIR or Education would be seeking changes.

Perhaps more common or unique this year a fourth concern has started to gain momentum. Councillor Victoria Lomond, councillor for Colchester District 10 informed council this fall a shortage of bus drivers has resulted in no buses to transport students on seven days one month and five days without bus the next month. She expressed concern missing an average of 1/3 of the time was unacceptable.

Cumberland Busy with Health-Care Recruitment, Retention

(Editor's Note: This subject is so important, we did not edit or change the press release)

At a meeting on health care in Springhill on Dec. 8, 2022, Cumberland region mayors were disappointed more information related to local efforts pertaining to health care around physician recruitment and retention were not highlighted.

"It was disappointing the members of the community who were at the meeting were not enlightened about the efforts underway in the Cumberland region as a joint effort between our three municipalities and volunteers within our communities," Cumberland County Mayor Murray Scott said.

"It's why Amherst Mayor David Kogon and I feel we need to speak out to let people know there is a concerted effort throughout the Cumberland region to recruit new physicians and non-medical health-care professionals and to retain the ones who are already here."

Scott and Kogon pointed out three committees have been working diligently for several years to recruit and retain physicians and other health-care professionals, including nurses and other critical health-care staff.

Kogon said the local effort to support physician recruitment began in 2018 with the creation of a physician recruitment committee led by Amherst physician Dr. Janneke Gradstein.

"It started when we in Amherst were approached by the medical staff at the regional hospital," the Amherst mayor said. "At that time, there were 41 physician positions in Cumberland County with 29 at the regional hospital and 12 peripheral physician positions. Out of that were 20 vacancies.

"Our efforts were successful in that we were able to reduce the number of vacancies to nine."

Its success and the realization nurses and other health-care professionals also needed help with recruiting and retention resulted in the original committee evolving to include the original physician recruitment committee, a physician retention and appreciation committee and a non-physician health-care professional recruitment and retention committee.

"Our success was recognized to the point our three municipalities made a presentation to the Nova Scotia Federation of

Municipalities talking about our methodology and how we experienced success," Kogon said. "I was also asked to make a presentation to the Atlantic Mayors Congress. We've been recognized for being successful."

The committees have experienced a lot of success and Nova Scotia Health has been very supportive of the work taking place in the Cumberland region. That's why Scott and Kogon were surprised when there was no mention made of that work at the meeting in Springhill.

"Nova Scotia Health has been very good to work with and they have been very supportive of the efforts we've been making locally to attract physicians and other non-physician health-care professionals," Kogon said. "At first, they said we couldn't recruit health-care professionals because they would be employees of Nova Scotia Health. You can appreciate and retain them, but you can't recruit them. They've come around and will let us recruit people and encourage them to apply. They've been very helpful."

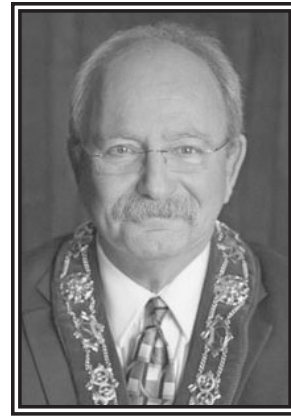
Scott said all municipal leaders in the Cumberland Region are appreciative of the collaboration between the local committees and the provincial health authority. He's looking forward to that continuing.

"We continue to be willing to work with the health authority and we're looking forward to continuing that co-operation and collaboration," Scott said. "We've had a lot of success working together and we look forward to improving the relationship."

Kogon said the committees have been busy doing a variety of initiatives including providing welcome baskets to new recruits while each new professional is welcomed personally by the committees. At the regional hospital, units are recognized for their efforts with an espresso machine that rotates among the units in recognition of their work.

The medical staff host parties and social events to assist in retention efforts and increase morale while the regional hospital's social committee is supported by the three committees to help celebrate Christmas and other seasonal events as well as multiculturalism.

The physician recruitment committee supports site visits



Mayor David Kogon



Murray Scott

by interested doctors while committee members go to national recruitment events. Kogon has attended a national family medicine meeting, the Canadian Psychiatric Association meeting to assist with recruiting psychiatrists to the Cumberland region and has attended the Dal Family Medicine weekend in St. Andrew's, N.B., with Cumberland County being a gold sponsor this past year.

For non-physician positions, gift cards have been given out for Christmas and there have been professional recognition days within each department, while the committees try to stay in touch with local students who are studying in various health-care fields.

The staff lounges at the regional hospital have also received facelifts through the efforts of the Non-Physician Health-Care Recruitment and Retention committee.

In addition, a recruitment and retention website has been created for the Cumberland Regional Health Care Centre and new websites are being proposed for the hospitals in Parrsboro, Pugwash and Springhill.

Earlier this year, elected officials in the Cumberland region formed a leadership committee with other partners to discuss health-care issues and provide suggested solutions to the health authority.

Both Amherst and the Municipality of Cumberland are applying to the Office of Health-Care Professionals Recruitment Health and Wellness for funding that could see each community receive up to \$100,000 for future recruitment efforts.

Individuals and organizations have also supported recruitment and retention efforts through the Cumberland Health Care Foundation. Among those

to support the initiative was the Community Credit Union, which donated \$5,400 toward physician recruitment, while Taylor Ford of Amherst also made a \$5,000 contribution.

While a health-care crisis was averted through the efforts of the three committees back in 2018, Kogon stressed the importance of continuing to recruit and retain doctors and other critical health-care professionals.

"It's not an acute crisis right now, but we also know we have family physicians in the area and others who are getting older and with an aging population the change in how health-care is provided you sometimes need to have two to 2.5 positions to replace one retiring physician," Kogon said. "It's a constant activity to maintain what we have."

Amherst and the Municipality of Cumberland have also come together to fund a two-year community navigator position with each municipality providing \$50,000 per year. This person will support the municipalities' goal to increase recruitment and retention of physician and health-care professionals to the Cumberland region.

The community navigator will play a crucial role in recruiting and welcoming health-care providers and their families to the area and ensuring that health-care professionals integrate well into the community by providing supports with housing, employment, social and cultural connections.

Residents can contact their respective mayors at: Mayor David Kogon, MD, Town of Amherst, 902-694-2214; dkogon@amherst.ca or Mayor Murray Scott, Municipality of Cumberland, 902-694-9881, mscott@cumberlandcounty.ns.ca

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