

Stompin' Tom Tribute in Wentworth

By Hope Bridgewater

Stompin' Tom Connors Tribute, a musical event celebrated at the Wentworth Learning Centre featured Fraser Newcombe, assisted by Andy Crossan, Hayden Stover and Bronwyn Bridges, to represent Stompin' Tom. As well, Newcombe and his assistants presented songs composed by Newcombe and Stover and step-dancing by Bridges.

As the major focus were the songs of Stompin' Tom, it is important to relate significant facts of his life. His early life was difficult and poverty stricken having spent time in an orphanage, and finally he was adopted. At age 13, he ran away travelling across Canada and doing part-time jobs for low wages for 13 years until a big change came. While living on small wages, he was amazing for composing songs and playing a guitar which at times he used for singing in order to have a meal.

The big change came for Stompin' Tom in Timmins, Ontario, when he made friends with bartender, Gaetan Lepine at a hotel and sang a song for a beer. This resulted in Stompin' Tom being hired by the hotel for over a year and given time on a local radio station. Stompin' Tom remained friends with Lepine and they composed many songs together. In his lifetime, he composed over 300 songs and released 48 albums, all of them featuring Canadian life according to his views. His two most popular well-known songs were "The Hockey Song" and "Bud the Spud".

These two songs and his many other songs reveal Stompin' Tom's love for Canadian themes, history and culture. As an example, he believed the Canadian Juno Awards should be given only to those who live and conduct business in Canada, and those Canadians who live and work in the USA should compete in the Grammy Awards, not in the



Fraser Newcombe with his assistant Andy Crossan perform an admirable representation in a tribute to the late Stompin' Tom Connors. (Carol Hyslop Photo)

Juno Awards.

Why was he called Stompin' Tom? He stomped the heel of his left boot in rhythm to his guitar especially in noisy bars, and at one event a waiter introduced him as "Stompin' Tom Connors" and his audience was so delighted that Connors decided to have himself registered as "Stompin' Tom Connors." He took a piece of plywood with him to make his stomp even louder.

A few other interesting facts about Stompin' Tom: he once composed a song in exchange for a set of winter tires; while doing some record labels, he promoted not only himself but other Canadian artists as well; he always wore a black Stetson hat in public, even when he met Queen Elizabeth in 2002 as a guise of it being a religious headdress. He married Lena Walsh in 1973 on a live CBC-TV show as a way of thanking his fans for supporting his success.

Stompin' Tom retired to

his farm around 1974, but emerged again to make two more albums, one in 1986 and one in 1988. He passed away in 2013. He is remembered for his many songs, his interest in Canadian themes, and his forceful, frank and unique personality.

Musician and composer Fraser Newcombe and his assistants did an excellent job presenting a tribute to Stompin' Tom Connors. Newcombe has performed on TV and at many events especially in the USA and Canada. Previously he has represented other famous musicians; for example, he represented Hank Snow in tribute events for 9 years. Newcombe says: "Keeping the old country sound alive is what I am all about. I say it like it is and I am proud of that."

No Tax Increase

By Maurice Rees

Reading from prepared remarks at the April 26th council meeting, Mayor Christine Blair, joyfully announced council and staff had arrived at a balanced budget, and as a result there would not be any increase in residential or commercial tax rates for 2018/19.

Whether or not, individual property assessments changes will determine if taxpayers pay more or less in taxes, even though council held the tax rate.

Tax rates are \$0.88 per \$100 assessment for residential property, whereas the commercial rate is \$2.28 per \$100 assessment.

Recognized and approved forest property is taxable at the rate of \$0.25 (25 Cents) per acre for the first 50,000 acres and \$0.40 (40 cents) for acreage above 50,000 acres.

If forest property is located where an area, village or commission rate is levied for fire protection, the owner is charged an additional tax rate of \$0.01 (1 cent) per acre.

The municipal operating budget is \$29.7-Million, but 50% is spent on three items: 30% to Province of Nova Scotia; 16% to the RCMP for policing services and 6% for debt maintenance and debt amortization.

The remaining 50% is available locally for staff wages, garbage collection, waste diversion, recycling, support of 95 community organizations and 10% is placed in reserve funds for disasters and unexpected expenses.

Day-to-day municipal services (such as road maintenance, waste removal, recreation services) provided to citizens by County staff or local contractors account for just 35% of budgeted costs.

Achieving a balanced budget was made more difficult because revenues from solid waste and diversion contracts was down by over \$250,000, partly due to lower pricing for materials such as recover metals and cardboard and partly because of a non-renewed contract with Divert Nova Scotia. Financial support for community organizations, events, and non-municipal facilities totals approximately \$750,000 or 2.5% of spending.

Recognizing taxpayers concerns about the amount paid for taxes each year, Mayor Blair noted Colchester's tax rates continues to be lower than most Nova Scotia Municipalities.

Another positive for the county is reflected in studies stating Colchester County is an Atlantic regional leader in waste management, including diversion processing for ourselves and other municipalities.

Mayor Blair's comments echoed, what individual councillors constantly say, when dealing with issues around the council table, community organizations are the backbone of the county and are responsible for and overall positive attitude throughout the area.

The balanced budget, as noted by Mayor Blair, financially supported vital work being done in every corner of Colchester County by 95 community organizations. She stated, their facilities, programs, and events make our communities wonderful and caring places to live or visit.

These dynamic community groups, many of which are run on sparse budgets by volunteers, touch thousands of lives throughout Colchester, making them healthier, happier, and more meaningful - making our communities inclusive places of belonging.

The Municipality supports not-for-profit organizations through grants for things like programming, director's insurance, events, and repairs to community facilities.

Grant decisions are based on assessed community benefit, need, and organizational capacity.

Mayor Blair concluded, "Council sees these as valued and valuable investments, but it also realizes that our ability to respond to the increasing number and size of requests is limited. This year, under our revised non-profit granting policy, many grant applicants did not receive the full amount requested".



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