

Colchester County - a Happening Place: Blair

Truro & Colchester Chamber of Commerce hosted the Mayors & Chief Breakfast on April 24th at Inn on Prince, which included Mayor Christine Blair, Mayor Bill Mills, Chief Bob Gloade and Mayor George Lloy.

The following contains the highlights of Colchester Mayor Christine Blair's message as follows:

Good morning everyone. President Stanton, Mayor Mills, Chief Gloade, Mayor Lloy, guests: Thank you to the Truro & Colchester Chamber of Commerce for coordinating this event and for the invitation to speak with you again this year.

To begin, I want to acknowledge the 3rd anniversary of the tragic events of April 18, 19, 2020, and the recent release of the mass casualty commission's report. These have been weighing heavily on our minds and our hearts. Our thoughts continue to be with the families and survivors. I can assure you that our council is committed to doing its part to advance recommendations in the report, as our jurisdiction allows, and as we can work with other orders of government to do so. Community safety is key for our residents, along with ongoing trauma, grief and mental health support. I also want to let you know discussions are now continuing with regards to a permanent memorial to honour those lost.

Council expects to pass its 2023-24 operating budget at this Thursday's council meeting. An interesting fact to note is that 42 per cent of our budget is not within our control and goes directly to the province for things like education \$8.2 million and policing \$6 million - costs that are steadily rising each year. I am sure you can appreciate not being in control of almost half your expenses from year to year, makes the job of balancing and juggling our many other priorities very challenging. Nonetheless, our council has been thoughtfully deliberating and making decisions. I anticipate we will have an approved, balanced budget to share before the end of the week.

Hurricane Fiona hit us hard. Council acted quickly and allocated a half million dollars for cleanup assistance. Never in our municipality's history had this level of emergency action been offered to help our residents, and every dollar was well spent in that regard.

With the damages incurred, solid waste collections had to be cancelled for a short time. We set up dumpsters in three locations for two days for spoiled food collection and collected 6 dumpsters of spoiled food, a big loss in itself.

Colchester County put dump trucks and grapple trucks on the roads on October 11 for cleanup of tree debris. When completed, the total cost of the cleanup involving external resources was just over \$470,000. Tipping fees were waived for residents that brought tree debris to the Kemptown site on their own. Tipping fees waived amounted to approx. \$105,000 at \$35 per tonne.

Some statistics for you! During the collection over 2210 km of Colchester County roads were travelled; Over 17,900 civic addresses were collected from; 1526 dump truck loads were collected from curbside; 1997 tonnes were removed by curbside collection program

and 3014 total tonnes (1017 tonnes delivered by residents/other customers)

In addition, we had extensive damage to our ports and trails and especially to our solid waste facilities in Kemptown.

We are looking at post-fiona cost recovery through the federal disaster management funding program. I would like to offer a very special thank you to our 17 Colchester County volunteer fire brigades, our first responders and Colchester Ground Search and Rescue for their efforts following Fiona. These volunteers went beyond the call, clearing roads, helping us power, clearing driveways, assisting residents by setting up comfort centres, by providing water, electronic charging stations, food, while at the same time, the majority had no power in their own homes. The community truly came together!

In 2019, the province introduced bill 58 requiring all municipalities in Nova Scotia to adopt a comprehensive municipal planning strategy and land use bylaw for the whole of their municipalities by the end of 2024. Upland planning has been contracted to carry out a community engagement process that will be foundational to the creation of a county-wide MPS and LUB for Colchester. A page on our website, colchester.ca, has also been developed to provide details on engagement activities, share reports, and access the community survey. I strongly encourage the business community to become involved in this process to ensure your input is included. The plan will impact future development in the county and will provide a level of protection for landowners.

Housing has risen as a significant issue across the province and country and although a provincial responsibility, our municipality is exploring ways that is can support solutions to increasing affordable housing options.

Council has been exploring housing development concepts for a 44-acre of municipally owned land in Debert. A request for proposals is being prepared to identify the level of interest, preferred approach, and expectations from prospective developers. We hope the process will shed some light on the level of interest, desired incentives for affordable housing and financial/labour capacities of development firms. We are looking at a potential 528 units built in four phases.

Salmon River school property - a request for proposals will be issued in the coming weeks to seek development concepts for the former Salmon River school 16.4 acre property. Council decided 40% of the property could be dedicated for residential development while the remaining 60% would remain for passive recreation use.

We are actively assessing infrastructure upgrades required throughout the county to support other future housing developments as well. A few private development plans currently include the conversion of a former elementary school in Tatamagouche into a multi-unit



apartment building; a multi-unit residential development in Truro Heights was recently recommended by council to advance to second reading. Council has also received a presentation on a concept for a significant residential development for a large 157-acre property in Bible Hill.

2022 was already a record year for new construction in Colchester. For all of 2022, there was an unprecedented construction value of \$97 million. By comparison, the average value over the last 5 years was \$59 million. So far this year the increases in permit applications and subdivision plans are tracking 25% over the previous year.

The Debert Business Park saw significant growth during 2022 and welcomed six new businesses. It was a year of opportunity with both domestic and foreign investors showing major interest. This boom in attention resulted in approving seven new development projects. This equates to over 165 acres of commercial land sale with construction slated to begin during 2023. In the coming months we will also be undertaking a process to establish a development plan for the Debert Business Park to ensure future growth is both thoughtful and strategic.

The Debert Aviation Centre, Colchester's state-of-the-art aviation facility, has expanded our amenity offerings at the Debert airport, welcoming a new aircraft maintenance company and private hangar storage for various types of aircraft.

We are undertaking a detailed analysis of economic opportunities and management models for the airport prior to deciding on capital works, such as runway resurfacing. Staff have retained the services of Interviewas, a specialist consultant in the aviation industry, to prepare a Debert Airport business case for infrastructure investment, economic assessment, and operation review. Results of this study are expected in June 2023.

Additionally, we were happy to host Air Show Atlantic at the Debert Airport in 2022, an event that attracted thousands of visitors to Colchester. We are excited that this event will be returning this summer yet again on August 26 and 27.

In 2022, visitation to the Fundy Discovery Site returned to similar numbers as were experienced pre-pandemic in 2019. In fact, shoulder season visitation was up so much, we were prompted to have the site's family washroom open throughout the winter months this year. A tender for an active transportation bridge at the Fundy Discovery Site has been finalized and was issued earlier this month.

Construction is expected to span 16 months which will be contingent on the cooperative



A large pile of twisted metal was collected at the Kemptown Balefill Facility following destruction caused by Hurricane Fiona. (Colchester Photo)

efforts of Nova Scotia Power to relocate the existing transmission lines that presently interfere with planned construction activity. A multi-use pathway located parallel to Tidal Bore Road connecting the site to the Cobequid Trail is also planned for the summer/fall of 2023. Both projects received external funding of nearly 75 per cent of estimated costs under the investing in Canada's infrastructure program.

Design of a tidal viewing platform at the site will soon be underway. Once finalized, we will solicit construction quotes with a view to complete the structure by the end of the summer. This viewing platform will be dedicated in memory of the late Bill Lake.

A picnic shelter planned to be constructed in the memory of former Colchester Councillor, Bill Masters during the fall of 2022 was delayed due to hurricane damage and the availability of contractors. Arlington Timber Frame Structures has designed the shelter and will be fabricating components over the next few months with the hope the project will be completed by September 2023.

We continue to support the Cliffs of Fundy UNESCO Global Geopark as a significant tourism draw. The United Nations Educational, Science and Cultural Organization designation was achieved in 2020, however revalidation is required every 3 years. This summer we will be hosting international evaluators in the geopark once again to retain our prestigious designation.

We are supporting the development of Heart's Haven Memorial Park in Debert. The park is a community-led initiative in memory of Vitrims of the April 2020 mass casualty. Two picnic shelters were constructed late last summer, and two parking lots were constructed last fall. The south loop trail had significant tree damage from Fiona which has since been cleaned up. Two large garden beds were also installed last summer/fall in preparation for spring planting. Commercial playground components have arrived and custom wooden components for the playground are being fabricated off site.

The annual Colchester clean litter clean-up campaign kicked off on Earth Day, April 22. The campaign encourages businesses, community groups, and individuals to get involved in litter cleanups across the

county. This is an important step to community beautification as we lead into this tourism season.

Carbon-free Colchester is another county-wide initiative aimed at reducing our carbon footprint. Among the many projects involved, the municipality recently installed electric vehicle chargers at Five Islands Lighthouse Park, the Fundy Discovery Site, the Don Henderson Memorial Sportsplex, the Upper Stewiacke Co-op and the Municipal Office at 1 Church Street. We anticipate additional charging stations to be installed at the Tatamagouche Library and in Debert by the end of May as well.

October 1, 2022, marked the one-year anniversary of the launch of Cozy Colchester and the relaunch of Solar Colchester. In that first year, the municipality helped 88 homeowners to reduce their energy costs and greenhouse gas emissions through retrofits and solar PV projects, and in the last several months, we've helped dozens more. Due to the overwhelming success and demand for the programs, we had to put them temporarily on hold. However, we expect them to be back up and running again this spring.

We recently returned from the Middle East where Colchester has been involved in a project of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities in Jordan over the past six years. Colchester was selected to participate in

the project due to our extensive expertise in waste management. We have been helping municipalities in Jordan with their anti-litter and recycling programs among other topics such as community engagement and women leadership in municipal politics.

I also want to acknowledge partnerships with our fellow municipal partners - TCPEP, the RECC, the library, and as we explore the implementation of a marketing levy that will generate funds to increase tourism promotion and event attraction in the region.

Before I conclude, some of you may have heard that our Chief Administrative Officer (CAO), Rob Simonds, is retiring at the end of June, with his last day in the office being May 31st. Rob has done an exceptional job for our municipality over the last 7 plus years. On behalf of our council, I want to thank him publicly for his years of dedicated service, professionalism, and service to our organization. I know he is leaving some pretty big shoes to fill. Please say a word to Rob before you leave.

Our Director of Corporate Services, Scott Faser, has been named interim CAO. Please welcome Scott.

As you can see, Colchester County continues to be a happening place, a wonderful place to live and enjoy life.

See more images from Mayor Blair's presentation on page 14



Hurricane Fiona tore coverings off many structures at the Kemptown Balefill Facility as shown in the above photo. (Colchester Photo)



The newly renovated Debert Aviation Centre adds to the amenities being offered at the Debert Airport including a new business and hangar storage for private airplanes. (Colchester Photo)

Fathers (Dads)

**Getting upset if you've lied
Teaching right from what's wrong
They say hello or so long
Dads**
**Children are their pride and joy
Makes no difference girl or boy
Like diamonds that are in the rough
They keep a family strong and tough
Dads**
**Like steel in a firey hearth
They love you from your very birth**

**Though sometimes they can forget
Saying things they may regret
Dads**
**Most of all though
Dads are truly really great
Like ships with lots of freight
Heartfelt hugs they come free!
For our dads love you and me!
Dads**
**God bless and thank-you
Thomas A. Marshall, (Ex-Navy)**

**They give to family first
Quenching our loves thirst
They keep their heads held high
Though they find it hard to cry
Dads**
**To show their strength and pride
They hold their love inside
They work hard at their life
For their bride and their wife
Dads**
Emotions they sometimes hide