

REES' Pieces

Working for Sustainability

In last month's column, I focused on the problem community groups encounter with approximately \$3.60 per hour wage differential between the amount community groups must pay summer students and the provincial government rebate.

I don't need to explain how hard volunteers work to keep community driven initiatives alive. No matter how hard they work every year more obstacles are put in their way.

Personally, I know how it feels. Groups with which I'm involved are facing the same obstacles: college student wage rebate shortages; liability insurance premiums approaching \$3,000 and the list gets even longer.

I've come to the conclusion unless government makes some drastic changes, community groups involved with the smaller projects will burn themselves out, trying to overcome obstacles dispatched from government.

Volunteer "burn-out" is a problem. Not because volunteers are expected to do so much, but because those not volunteering see what is happening and decline the opportunity to help better their community. As a result those few dedicated volunteers have to do more to keep the initiative on life-support.

All of this is because volunteer groups are dependent on annual renewal of grants to employ students; pay for the liability insurance, or a new roof on the hall. They would be much better served with a multi-year contract to deliver a service to the community.

If government's, municipal or provincial, are serious about wanting to ensure rural Nova Scotia thrives, they need to immediately level the playing field with a new approach. Granted times are touch and money is at a premium. However, this can be done without increasing annual expenditures.

When the community groups thrive, they can be rewarded with more money depending upon their success. We won't stop on this analogy now. Hang on, there's lots more.

With multi-year financial assistance to take care of the essentials, community groups are in position to proceed to even greater greatness.

A vibrant, but overworked community group with a great project should consider weaning themselves off government funding, by developing a plan to become self-sustainable within five years.

They need to start or purchase a business.

To succeed the business should be unrelated to the core community project and not be in direct competition to existing local services. Don't start a convenience store, if there is already one. If the business is the only one of its type in the community, there aren't many competitive feathers to ruffle.

Let's look at rural Nova Scotia. Many are family business facing the problem the next generation is not interested, or have relocated to another area.

As a result, the multi-generation family business is in danger of closing. A community group can salvage the community icon, rejuvenate it and use profits to support community projects.

Broad-based community support gives it a better chance of thriving. Run successfully the business generates profits which are earmarked for the "core" community project which started the whole process.

However, there are danger areas, which need to be solved before they happen: A volunteer board of directors manages the business; staff delivers the services and residents need to support the business. Those same residents, who probably are shareholders must leave the day-to-day business activity to the staff, who report to the board of directors. If they don't like what is happening complaints go to a shareholders meeting.

The biggest challenge is not raising the money, but rather getting community group volunteers to believe their group should be instrumental in having a profit oriented business associated with their group.

There are plenty of financial instruments to accomplish all of this. The Nova Scotia Co-operative Council with offices in Truro is a good place to start. They can explain a number of options and suggest operating and financing opportunities.

Investors can invest up to \$50,000.00 per year and receive \$17,500.00 credit on their income tax through the Equity Tax Credit Program.

Converting an overworked volunteer group, operating a interpretive centre or craft shop, to a sustainable community entity is needed to deliver services and survive beyond the next five years.

If you need some thoughts for your group, contact me.

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

Hi Maurice

Thanks so much for this wonderful "Journal".

I read it completely at least three or four times, even the ads!

I'll call to change my address when I drive to Brule, Colchester county for the summer.

Thanks again,

**Edith Bogle
Grosse Pointe Park,
MI, USA**

Maurice:

Attached is cheque to renew my subscription. Please note the new address. I haven't moved, but last winter (November to May, I was unable to be at home because of my health.

I am at home again and don't want to miss any "Shoreline" issues because it is my lifeline to the area.

I miss being down there these days.

**Sincerely,
Dorcas Knight
Sanbornville, New Hampshire, USA**

Dear Colchester North

Constituents:

By now many of you have either read or seen media coverage on the Auditor General's report on MLA expenses and allowances.

The Auditor General believes some of these expenditures were excessive and inappropriate. He has determined, in his opinion, serious weaknesses in the current expense and allowance system. The PC Caucus also recognizes the need to bring the regulations up to a higher standard.

In a letter from the Auditor General to the Speaker, MLAs who he believed had such expenses were identified. Information in that letter was shared with appropriate Party Caucus leaders. For our Caucus, one member was identified. He has acknowledged that publicly and has repaid the full amount of the claim.

Five former MLAs were also identified. They were asked to contact the Speaker's

Office and all have done so.

I do not condone or defend unreasonable expenses and the Legislative Internal Economy Board will deal with such matters in response to the Auditor General's report.

The PC Caucus understands the public's perception, even if purchases were made without ill intent. As Progressive Conservative members and Party ambassadors in your communities, I regret the position you have been placed in and I ask for your understanding and continued support. It is important to understand that the process for completing expense claims includes submitting the claim from a constituency office to the office of the Speaker. The Speaker's office then reviews the claim and determines which expenses are eligible for reimbursement based on existing guidelines. Tens of thousands of transactions are processed through that office. Not all expense claims that are submitted are approved and reim-

bursed. It is these guidelines and this process that needs to be improved.

All expenses incurred through a constituency office are available to the public through the Speaker's Office. Each MLA is responsible for submitting claims for their constituency office. If you have questions regarding claims submitted through the Colchester North Constituency Office, I would welcome the opportunity to meet with you.

The Speaker has said that he has accepted the recommendations and will call on all MLAs to work with him to find solutions to the issues identified in the report. As your MLA, along with the entire Caucus, I am committed to working with the Speaker to bring about those improvements.

**Sincerely,
Karen Casey
MLA Colchester North
Leader, PC Party of Nova Scotia**

ATH: 3350-1 (CO)

26 January 2010

Families and Friends of ATHABASKAN

A few words from off the coast of Haiti

by Peter Crain, Commander

Commanding Officer, HMCS ATHABASKAN

Good day to you all. As I pen these words we have many of the crew ashore providing aid and assistance to the people of Haiti. I want to assure you that the Canadian Forces, indeed all of Canada, are pitching in together to provide some relief to the Haitians in their time of need. I am sure that all of you are aware of these efforts from the news reports so I will confine myself to the spectacular contributions of your loved ones here in ATH. We are currently patrolling about 3-5 miles off the coast of a town called Leogane; it is west of the capital city of Port au Prince. It is from here that we send, on average, about 50 people ashore each day to provide humanitarian assistance and disaster relief. I will provide more details on what we are doing a little further on.

Leogane is one of the worst hit areas and is one of the focal efforts of Canadian humanitarian assistance. Leogane was very close to the epi-centre of the earthquake and has suffered unbelievable destruction. I would assess (please note that I am not a structural engineer and this is a personal observation) that up to 90 percent of the buildings have been destroyed. Those that remain are largely single level homes that were either very well built or had a "flexible" structure. Two story homes generally "pancaked": the first floor gave way, unable to take the load of the second floor during the shaking. I would say that most of the 130,000 (approximately) residents of the city are now homeless and have moved to tent cities or are living in their yards and streets. It is a very sobering sight. Because of the many aftershocks, some of which would qualify as earthquakes themselves, the people are reluctant to move back into their homes that have received less damage. I don't blame them and in the same situation would do the same thing. Water has been scarce, food limited and medical care facilities were destroyed. We are helping with temporary shelter, water and medical support. Several Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) have spooled up to provide medical, food/water and shelter relief. The Canadian sailors, sol-

diers and airmen are helping these NGOs as much as possible.

ATHABASKAN has done, and is doing, a fantastic job down here and I am, as you are, very proud of our accomplishments. Although some times it seems so little in an area where the need is so great, I am glad that we are here. On the 13th of Jan we all came to work in Halifax thinking that the ship was in a work period and that shoveling snow was our greatest concern. A short 36 hours later we were at sea heading south at speed. I cannot thank you enough for your support to make this happen, especially those families of sailors from other ships that joined ATH to fill critical shortages. Not knowing exactly what the situation would be like, we planned for the worst, training people and designing humanitarian assistance teams on the way. On that first day when we went ashore it was clear that we had prepared well. I am relieved that we did not have to deal with the deceased victims of the tragedy as for the most part, that task had been completed. We were able to set our minds and efforts to providing help, comfort and medical care to the survivors.

One of the first jobs that we took on was the set-up of the Canadian Medical Assistance Team camp. Located close to the centre of Leogane, this team of doctors from Canada has treated well over a thousand of Haitians since we arrived. In addition to setting up the facility itself, we helped process patients using our casualty clearing teams; carried patients to and from the treatment tents; and, our medical teams - Doctor, Physicians Assistant and Medical Assistants - have been treating patients alongside the CMAT doctors. CMAT estimates that with our help they are able to treat twice the number of patients that would normally be possible. There have been all manner of operations done in this tent facility from setting of fractures to amputations. Our sailors, especially those who speak French, have proved invaluable in providing comfort and care to patients. On a brighter note, as has been in the press over the last day or two, two ATHABs helped bring a newborn into the world. An excerpt from our daily report:

A Babies Tale (23 Jan 10). Two members of ATH assisted in the delivery of a baby while working with CMAT. The event took place in a makeshift surgical tent on an army cot in what used to be school playground. OS Jean-Francois Cloutier-Joly was on the field translating when someone asked him for help delivering the child. Lt(N) Kate Wyand was asked to provide assistance to the doctor and provide some privacy for the young mother to be. Although there were complications, the mother gave birth to a

continued on page 20

The Shoreline Journal (circ. 1300) 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 & CIRCULATION:** Dorothy Rees

Canadian Publications Mail Products Agreement #4686039, ISSN #1209-9198

SUBSCRIPTION RATES:

LOCAL SUBSCRIPTIONS: B0M / B2N - \$23.00, PLUS HST = \$25.99 • **ALL PARTS OF NS:** \$26.00 plus HST = \$29.38

ALL OTHER AREAS OF CANADA: \$28.00, plus HST = \$31.64 • **USA SUBSCRIPTIONS:** \$40.00

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 an 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.

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.

