

News from our Provincial Council - Dave Ritcey

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Health have: added 23 new positions to Nova Scotia Health in front-line and system support roles, including outreach, wellness navigation, health promotion, public engagement and grief and bereavement increased funding to eight community health boards in Cumberland, Colchester and Hants counties to support a range of local community wellness initiatives, from suicide prevention training and grief workshops to rural internet access programs to community events launched a new community transportation pilot - a direct response to community engagement in spring 2023; since the service launched in August, it has received more than 1,000 requests for support worked with Sipekne'katik Health Centre to provide transportation to and from wellness appointments in the community held mobile health clinics to provide primary health care, mental wellness supports and navigation services in communities mobile clinics are held three days a week in communities across Colchester, Cumberland and Hants counties the mobile clinical team includes a newly created role of emotional wellness navigator hosted a series of community conversa-

tions across the northern zone with local residents, community organizations, health system partners and others to understand the mental health and addictions needs in the community launched a new mental health and addictions support program for volunteer firefighters and ground search and rescue volunteers

Nova Scotia Health and IWK Health provided trauma-informed care and suicide intervention skills training for community groups and service providers hosted a compassionate grief education session for service providers, volunteers and community-based organizations provided mental health crisis intervention training to police in the northern zone hosted a compassionate grief education session added mental health and addictions outreach and clinical services in Millbrook First Nation one day per week.

More information on initiatives taken by the action team co-lead by the Office of Addictions and Mental Health and Nova Scotia Health can be obtained by contacting Dave Ritcey, MLA office.

Dave Ritcey is MLA, Truro-Millbrook-Bible Hill-Salmon River. He can be reached by telephone at 902-897-0884 or by e-mail at mlaritcey@bellaliant.com

Pilot Program to Educate More CCAs

A new continuing care assistant (CCA) program will be tested this year with the goal of improving training and getting more CCAs delivering quality care sooner. A six-month training program with updated curriculum that better reflects the complex care needs of older Nova Scotians will be piloted in April, with a second class in the fall. The current average length of CCA training is eight months.

The pilot course content will include more emphasis on equity, diversity, inclusion, reconciliation and accessibility, while addressing complexities of dementia and palliative care, as well as behavioural support. The program will continue to focus on core training components such as resident safety, personal care and social and mental well-being.

The program is a partnership with the Employment Nova Scotia division of Labour, Skills and Immigration, Nova Scotia Community College (NSCC) and Shannex.



Each class can have 24 students.

The pilot program has been designed to attract people to the profession and retain them with competitive wages and benefits during their training and full-time work afterward. Students in the pilot will receive free tuition and books and a wage supplement from Employment Nova Scotia. Employment Nova Scotia will also offer support for transportation, child care, technology, tutoring and moving costs.

More information about the pilot program, including applications for the April class, is available at: <https://shannex.com/cca-program/>

The Province is investing about \$3.6 million in the pilot program. This includes costs associated with curriculum

development, revised learning standards, adjustments for the CCA exam, student supports and administration.

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A More Sustainable Farming Model

Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture's Living Labs aim to help farmers better tackle climate change

By Jon Tattrie, Climate Story Network

Nova Scotia farms and fields have been turned into "living labs" in a bid to help farmers grow better crops and tackle climate change.

The Agricultural Climate Solutions (ACS) Living Labs project is active across Canada, funded by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada. The Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture (NSFA) was selected as one of nine organizations establishing these living labs, and in this province they are studying orchard laneways, cover crops, a land swap involving cattle, and riparian zones.

Keith Fuller, a soil scientist with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, is studying orchards and vineyards from the Kentville Research and Development Centre. They're in the second harvest of a five-year study.

Fuller said with woody perennials like apple trees and grape vines, farmers typically let random grass and broad-leaf weeds grow in the lanes.

"If we could seed these with a productive crop like clovers, we could sequester more carbon because the root system of clovers is very deep," he says. "We could also fix more atmospheric nitrogen, because clovers are a legume."

Over time, that could mean farmers need to use less fertil-

izer while also reducing greenhouse gas emissions. It could also lessen the need to till the soil, which can damage it. Fuller said they can see a difference in the fall harvest. They'll study the data over the winter to see what changes.

"The project is really designed to be an education for growers and to focus on the fact that any time you are sequestering carbon into the soil, it's a good thing. And when you plant trees, over a period of 15 or 20 years, you store a lot of carbon in the tree itself," he says.

All of which should lead to healthier and more fruitful harvests with farmers needing to seed the lanes every second or third year.

Carolyn Marshall, Environment and Climate Change Manager for the living labs, said the project could help Nova Scotia's 2,744 farms fight climate change.

"Each one has the same goal: to research farming practices that will help increase carbon sequestration and reduce greenhouse gas emissions," she says.

The cover crops projects are looking at four crops that farmers could plant to rest their fields from cash crops in a way that protects the soil from the elements and provides nutrients when the cover crops die.

"We've known about cover

crops for decades, but there are a lot of farmers that aren't cover cropping. So, part of the project is finding out why," she says. "What are the barriers to a farmer trying these practices and how can we help them get over those barriers?"

Another project is a land swap between livestock and crop farmers. One cauliflower farmer is rotating his fields by planting grass and letting cows graze. The grass protects the soil and the cows "pump" nutrients back into the soil, Marshall says, though she adds that means you "need to watch where you're walking."

"Earth worms and dung beetles love cow patties and tend to move under those fields," she says. "They take the cow dung and the carbon that's in it and the really good nutrients, and they pull it down into the soil through their burrows, and then it can stay long term."

Riparian zones are areas where water and land connect. ACS Living Labs have established six new sites in blueberry fields, and they will monitor the water, soil, and plant quality. These sites could be good places to sequester carbon.

Marshall said she's been fascinated with soil since she was a child.

"Ninety-five per cent of the food in the world starts in soil," she says. "Everything basi-

cally but fish either grew in the soil or ate something that grew in the soil."

The Living Labs project will end in March 2027.



Canada Post Foundation Accepting Grant Applications

Charities, schools and community groups with projects supporting children and youth can apply until March 1. The Canada Post Community Foundation is now accepting applications for its 2024 grants.

Canadian charities, schools and community organizations that offer programming for children and youth are encouraged to apply for project grants, ranging in value up to \$25,000. There are also up to four \$50,000-Signature Grants available, including the Indigenous Truth and Reconciliation Signature Grant.

Applications will be accepted from every province and territory with a focus on

local grassroots initiatives, such as literacy and language programs; youth outreach services; gender diversity programs; arts and recreation projects; anti-bullying initiatives; mentoring programs and many others.

The deadline to submit applications is Friday, March 1 at noon (Eastern Time) through canadapost.ca/community. Grant recipients will be announced in August 2024. (Charities, schools and community groups are encouraged to keep this information on file and bring forward 1 January / February 2025 if there was not sufficient time to apply for 2024)

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We are having our Branch Annual Meeting of Members. Branch finances will be discussed as well as elections will be held, followed by a meal.

The meeting is also open to prospective members, the only requirement is to be receiving, or eligible to receive, a federal government pension.

So, if you know of anyone who fits the requirement, please feel free to invite them. As a bonus, we will have Andrew Joyce from the RCMP, who will be speaking on "avoiding scams", an interesting subject of actuality these days.

Date: April 3rd, 2024

Time: 10am to 1PM

Where: Air Force Association, 22 Cottage Street Truro

Meal: will be served @ a cost of 10.00 per person

Contact Georgette @ 902-897-2404 or georgetteb@eastlink.ca to confirm your attendance and reserve by March 18th, 2024.