

OPEN LINE

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A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

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THE PRESIDENT'S PRIVATE LINE BY: MAYOR JOHN MORGAN

November Update

I am both excited and honoured to have been elected President of the Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities. As I stated at the Yarmouth Conference, "I believe in a strong, united municipal voice focusing on key municipal priorities." The power of fifty-five municipalities acting on a common agenda cannot be dismissed. UNSM is strong, our position clear, when we act as one.

Congratulations to the eleven individuals elected to serve on the new Board of Directors. As you are aware, we have moved from a regionally-represented Executive to a Board of Directors elected by three Caucuses—Regionals, Rural Municipalities & Towns. The new structure will present excellent opportunities for UNSM. On

Pages 4 & 11 a list of the new Board Members and their contact information is printed for your reference. I urge all members to stay in touch with your Board representatives and please feel free to contact me through the UNSM office.

I am looking forward to working with Minister Barnet of Service Nova Scotia & Municipal Relations and his Provincial colleagues. Minister Barnet has clearly expressed his willingness to openly discuss Municipal/Provincial issues and to working towards common ground. While we may not always agree, I look forward to finding solutions we can both accept.

AT THE LEGISLATURE

The House of Assembly concluded

the Fall session on October 30th and there are a number of key points of legislation which UNSM members should be made aware. Bill 2, "Amendments to the Retail Business Uniform Closing Day Act & Labour Standards Code" allows six Sundays of retail shopping this upcoming Christmas season and authorizes a binding plebiscite on the issue of Sunday Shopping in conjunction with next October's Municipal Elections. Those of you who attended the Annual Conference in Yarmouth know the strong municipal opposition to linking the Provincial plebiscite with Municipal Elections. Sunday Shopping is not our issue and should not be made part of the Municipal election process. This position has been clearly communicated to the

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New UNSM Board of Directors Listing

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211 Community Connection Program

Effective Community Decision Making Workshop a Success!!

by Lyle Goldberg, Policy Analyst, UNSM

The Local Government Leadership (LGL) Institute, in partnership with UNSM and AMANS, held a workshop for elected and appointed municipal officials from September 14th to the 17th at the Old Orchard Inn. Entitled Creating a Legacy in Leadership: Effective Community Decision Making, the workshop was designed to enhance personal leadership skills to address organizational governance and group problem solving within the municipal arena.

LGL's Executive Director Gordon MacIntosh facilitated the workshop. Mr. MacIntosh has twenty-five years experience as a local government manager and educator and has conducted over three hundred workshops for elected and appointed officials throughout Canada and overseas.

Twenty-five participants consisting of a fairly even mix between elected and appointed officials attended the workshop.

SEE "WORKSHOP" PAGE 5

Protecting Nova Scotia's Wildlife Species at Risk: How Municipalities Can Help.

by Samara Eaton and Sherman Boates
Wildlife Division
Nova Scotia Department of
Natural Resources

Species-at-Risk in Nova Scotia

Species-at-risk are animals, plants or other organisms considered to be at serious risk of extinction. Usually species are at risk as a result of human activities which pose a threat to the species or their habitat. In Nova Scotia there are tens of thousands of wildlife species—five are already extinct; forty-seven are seriously at risk. In order to secure the future of wildlife, including species at risk, we need the participation and cooperation of all levels of government, industry, community groups, and individuals.

SEE "AT RISK" PAGE 5

NEW GLASGOW GETS MENTION AT THE "WHITE HOUSE"

On September 29th, United States President, George W. Bush, hosted members of the 2003 Stanley Cup Champions, New Jersey Devils, at the White House. Bush posed with New Glasgow native, Colin White, defenseman with the Devils. Bush said that the Stanley Cup was "proof of a team's athleticism, and desire and drive, a couple of cuts here and there, and maybe a missed tooth or two." ■

"UPDATE" CONT'D

Government and opposition parties. On October 20th, Immediate Past-President Don Zwicker appeared before the Law Amendments Committee (see Page 8 for a re-print of his submission) and urged the Government to reconsider holding the Plebiscite on Municipal Elections day. Unfortunately, this legislation has passed third and final reading and received Royal Assent.

Bill 9, "Amendment to the Assessment Act", was introduced by the New Democratic Party and sets the Consumer Price Index (CPI) for Nova Scotia as the upward limit on the amount that an assessment on a residential property may rise from one year to the next. The UNSM Executive considered this legislation at our October meeting and agreed to strongly oppose it on the grounds that the Province should not cap property assessments which are the basis of municipal taxation. The UNSM advised all three political Parties of our position. The Bill received only first reading at the Legislature session.

Bill 10, "Amendments to the Municipal Elections Act", was introduced with UNSM support. This legislation removes the authority of municipalities to post voters' lists in public places. This Bill received third round reading and Royal Assent.

The New Democratic Party introduced Bill 27, "Amendments to the Municipal Government Act". This legislation requires the Province to compensate municipalities for increases in required expenditures or decreases in revenue where the Minister of SNSMR has not given the required one year notice of legislation, regulations or administrative action by the Province that results in increases or decreases. The Bill specifically applies to municipal contributions to education. This Bill is in keeping with the UNSM's position that one year's notice is required for all increases in municipal contributions to Education. This Bill

received only first reading.

Perhaps the most municipally significant bill introduced is Bill 40. This legislation caps the amount of annual residential and resource assessment increases that can be taxed by municipalities. The legislation establishes a base year for assessment purposes (2001-02) and, following consultation with UNSM, a cap will be established on future increases in taxable assessments. The Bill applies only to residential and resource property owners who are residents of Nova Scotia. The legislation allows for properties to be transferred within families without affecting the base year. If the property is sold outside the family, the year of sale becomes the new base year for assessments.

UNSM has objected to the Province placing a cap on residential assessments. This is Provincial intrusion on the municipal tax base. As an alternate solution, we urged the Minister to move forward with a residential property tax deferral program. Minister Barnet has rejected this idea and has expressed his hope that UNSM and the Province can move quickly on an agreed upon a cap percentage.

I believe UNSM's role now should be to define a cap in such a way that it provides relief to those truly in need and minimizes the shift in the tax burden among property owners. An income means test might also be a way of ensuring those truly in need benefit from this legislation.

ASSESSMENT AGENCY

All members should be aware that we are working with the Province to establish a new Agency which will undertake the assessment function. Today, municipalities pay \$12 million for this service and have no say in its governance. I have heard municipal leaders debate both sides of this issue—some in support of the status quo,

SEE "UPDATE" PAGE 3

"UPDATE" CONT'D

while others want municipal control since we pay the bill. The Province has advised us that the status quo is no longer acceptable and is seeking a re-definition of how the assessment function is handled. Our goal is to create a new Agency accountable to municipalities. The UNSM Board of Directors will play an active role on this issue, and I would expect that a draft terms of reference for the new Agency would be provided to municipalities for their feedback.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

On November 21st, the newly elected Board of Directors will meet for the first time. One of the main goals of this meeting will be to determine the priorities of the organization for the next twelve months. The Board will review last year's priorities and determine their relevancy for the future as well as consider the UNSM resolutions and issues raised by the Caucuses. Establishing priorities can be a difficult, time-consuming exercise, but I believe that focusing our resources will produce greater results.

Once the priorities are established by the Board of Directors, they will be communicated to all Councils.

Until next month! ■

Westin Ad

2003 WHITE RIBBON CAMPAIGN



It's time for municipalities In Canada to declare White Ribbon Days.

Once again this fall we will ask Canadians, especially men, to put on a white ribbon. This simple gesture, in the weeks and days leading up to December 6th, the anniversary of the shootings at Montreal's L'Ecole polytechnique, has become a widely recognised call to end violence against women.

The Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) has endorsed the White Ribbon Campaign for the past 5 years and since then over 300 municipalities formally proclaimed White Ribbon Days. (We publish the full list in our newsletter mailed to thousands of Canadians.) And, in many cases, the Mayor and Councillors or the city administration distributed white ribbons and had public poster signings at their municipal offices.

Please consider taking the following actions by your council:

1. Proclaim White Ribbon Days: November 25-December 6 (draft proclamation available).
2. Invite the public to come to your municipal offices to get white ribbons and sign the poster. (We'll send you as many as you need—just fax us at 416-920-1678.
3. Assign a senior staff member to co-ordinate White Ribbon Campaign activities.
4. Request your staff to consider participating in Campaign activities through ribbon and brochure distribution.

Please FAX us today with your order for white ribbons, literature handouts and a poster, and we will enclose an invoice with your shipment. And please send us a copy of your municipal proclamation so we can add your municipality's name to the published list. Visit us at "www.whiteribbon.com". ■

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"UPDATE" CONT'D**Workshop Description**

The workshop consisted of nine modules all of which were applicable to municipal government. Some of the module themes included decision making styles based on personality traits, group dynamics and shared values, shifting paradigms in government and council/staff roles and responsibilities.

The workshop was structured such that the twenty-five participants were divided into four groups which remained intact for the duration of the workshop. The facilitator introduced and explained each module and the theory behind it. Each group then undertook a number of activities to address the issues raised in each module. This involved working together on a particular issue to present to the rest of the participants. This was followed by a critique from each group, individuals and the facilitator.

What Participants Liked Best

From the evaluations received, the participants liked having the opportunity to:

- understand individual personality styles;
- work in an environment with a good mix of elected and appointed officials;
- work in groups and network;
- use a hands-on approach;
- participate on an equal basis (all participants had to serve as a recorder, presenter and facilitator);
- deal with real and relevant issues to municipal government; and
- clarify the roles and responsibilities between council and staff.

Overall Comments from Participants

Of the twenty evaluations received, 100 percent rated the workshop as either very good or excellent. Moreover, 90 percent indicated either highly or very highly that the information presented was applicable to their position in municipal government.

Quotes from Participants

Direct quotes from some of the participants included the following:

- Great program...excellent facilitator...workshop content very useful and easy to implement.
- All elected officials should have this opportunity.
- The workshop is an excellent forum for elected and appointed officials to learn as a team about key concepts for effective decision making.
- Enjoyed the personality analysis—always fun and interesting to learn something that is applicable to everyday and in every area of my life.
- This was the most intense and best organized workshop I have attended over my career.
- Gordon MacIntosh made the presentations very enjoyable mainly because of his many anecdotes about real-life situations.
- Great learning experience. One I will recommend to anyone!!

Conclusion

As indicated by the participants, the workshop was an overall success which benefited both appointed and municipal officials.

Both UNSM and AMANS were fortunate to have the opportunity to offer such a high level training program in Nova Scotia; to attend such a program in British Columbia or Alberta would be cost-prohibitive.

Due to the overwhelming success of the program, UNSM, AMANS and LGL are willing to explore the possibility of offering a similar program next year. If you or your colleagues would be interested in attending such a program, please contact the UNSM or AMA office.

**"AT RISK" CONT'D****Municipal Project for Species at Risk in Nova Scotia**

In August 2003, the Wildlife Division of the Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources initiated a project to work with municipalities on species at risk conservation and recovery. Currently little has been done to explore the important role that municipalities may play in supporting conservation and recovery of species and their habitat.

This project aims to raise awareness of species at risk, help build stewardship capacity within municipalities and communities, and explore municipal "tools" that might assist in the conservation and recovery of species at risk. We will be contacting all municipalities in Nova Scotia in hopes of meeting with them to present information on species at risk, and to discuss the role municipalities may play in conservation and recovery.

Why Should Municipalities be Aware of Species at Risk?

Municipalities should be aware of species at risk for a variety of reasons including the following.

1. Municipalities should be aware of how species at risk legislation applies to private and municipal property.

Federal and provincial legislation exists to protect species at risk.

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211 Community Connection

What is 211?

In June 2000, United Way of Canada-Centraide, United Way of Greater Toronto and InformCanada requested the Canadian Radio-Television Commission (CRTC) to assign the three-digit number - 211 - for telephone access to community, social, health, and government services across Canada. In August 2001, the CRTC assigned the access number 211 to public information and referral services.

United Way of Halifax Region, as the lead facilitator, is now working with Capital Health, the Nova Scotia Health Network, Public Librarians of Nova Scotia, Help Line Society, NS Departments of Health and Community Services, Aliant and others to explore implementing 211 in Nova Scotia.

211 is a social utility that builds on existing infrastructures by offering telephone information and referral service at no cost to the caller. It is a proven and effective way of providing an array of community, health, social and government information. 211 is indispensable to communities that want to ensure all citizens can easily access the information they need to make decisions and fully participate in society.

Community Information Toronto (CIT), in partnership with United Way of Greater Toronto, United Way-Centraide Canada and InformCanada, launched 211 in June 2002. They now receive more than 20,000 calls per month—that's more than a 120% increase since the launch.

211 is a priority of United Way of Canada-Centraide. There is a National Coordinating Committee in place and plans to implement 211 are underway in Vancouver, Edmonton, Calgary, Winnipeg, Montreal and communities across Ontario.

Why 211 makes a difference.

211, an easily remembered number, strengthens outreach services. It links people to available community resources efficiently and accurately. It enables agencies to focus on their core services.

The benefits of 211 - to individuals, the community and service organizations - are summarized below.

Benefits of 211 to Individuals, Agencies, Government and Community.

Individuals

- Streamlines Access
- Reduces Frustration
- Eliminates Confusion
- Reduces Needless Calls

Agencies

- Improves Access
- Enhances Core Service Offerings
- Improves Agency Network
- Improves Efficiency and Accuracy

Government

- Easy Access to Community Information
- Improves Referral and Service Capacity
- Enhances Core Service Delivery
- Improves Planning
- Identifies Service Gaps

Community

- Expands Civic Involvement
- Increases Sense of Belonging
- Helps Reduce Social Costs
- Improves Responsiveness

How 211 Links to the Determinants of Health.

211 links directly and indirectly with several determinants of health, namely:

1. Personal health practices and coping skills.
 - 211 provides an infrastructure to

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"AT RISK" CONT'D

Municipalities should be aware how these laws impact on private and municipal property. The Nova Scotia Endangered Species Act (1999) applies to all private and public (crown) land, and prohibits the killing, harming, or disturbing of species at risk or their habitat. The Federal Species at Risk Act (2003) protects all species at risk on federal land, as well as all marine and migratory bird species at risk. Prior to any major development or alteration of land, the Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources or Environment Canada should be contacted if there are concerns regarding species at risk.

2. *Municipalities may be eligible for funding to support conservation efforts and species at risk.*

Both Federal and Provincial legislation aim to protect species at risk by encouraging stewardship, education, and partnerships. There are several funding opportunities where municipalities are eligible to apply. These include the Government of Canada Habitat Stewardship Program for Species at Risk, the Nova Scotia Government Species at Risk Conservation Fund and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities' Sustainable Communities' Green Initiatives Funds.

3. *Species at risk may serve as health indicators of our natural*

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"CAMPAIGN" CONT'D

- connect individuals with precise information and social
- services that address individual concerns.
 - 211 uses qualified staff to help people identify the underlying issues and to connect them with the best available services.
2. Social support networks and social environments.
- 211 generates social capital by drawing communities together to work on issues about which they care most.
 - 211 will create a relied-upon social utility the drives improvements in the people access help and the way help is provided to communities.
3. Health Services.
- 211 will improve the overall

performance and image of community services.

- 211 will help our communities respond to large-scale emergencies.

211 in Nova Scotia.

In Nova Scotia we have established a NS 211 Steering Committee, and we are building relationships with community organizations, government departments and businesses. There are now local 211 committees in Pictou and Bridgewater. Committees are being considered in Truro and Windsor. We are developing a business case and a strategy for moving forward. Stay tuned for more developments.

For more information, contact Kathy Moggridge, Senior Research Associate, United Way of Halifax Region, Kmoggridge@unitedwayhalifax.ca. ■

"LINE" OF THOUGHT

All things are connected. We did not weave the web of life. We are but a strand in it. Whatever befalls the earth befalls the people of the earth.

Chief Seattle

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Presentation by UNSM to Law Amendments Committee On: Bill No. 2: Retail Business Uniform Closing Day Act

Submitted by UNSM Past-President, Councillor Don Zwicker, October 20, 2003

On behalf of UNSM, I would like to thank the Law Amendments Committee for giving me the opportunity to speak with you today on the issue of Sunday Shopping as addressed under Bill Number 2 - the Retail Business Uniform Closing Day Act.

Let me state emphatically that UNSM is neither for nor against Sunday Shopping. We are however opposed to the process of how the decision of Sunday Shopping will be determined under the proposed legislation. The public at large will associate the matter of a plebiscite as being municipalities who will be making the decision.

Section B of the explanatory note of Bill 2 states that:

This Bill authorizes a binding plebiscite on Sunday shopping to be held during the next municipal elections in the Fall of 2004 and authorizes the implementation of the result of the plebiscite by regulation.

Let me state that such a plebiscite will negatively impact on the 2004 municipal elections by making them the focus of a single provincial issue. Every councillor and every candidate campaigning door-to-door will be asked their opinion on Sunday Shopping. How they answer this question could determine whether they become elected. This is unfair given the fact that numerous municipal issues are at stake. Sunday shopping should not be made a municipal issue; it should be decided at the Provincial level through legislation.

It should also be noted that the current Municipal Elections Act does not make provisions for holding plebiscites during municipal elections. The fact that the Municipal Elections

Act will be modified or altered to accommodate these new provisions makes Bill Number 2 an inappropriate piece of legislation.

Rendering such a decision through a plebiscite coinciding with municipal elections is a way of downloading provincial responsibility onto municipalities. We saw this previously with the smoking issue where municipalities were given the option of introducing their own smoke-free bylaws. Again, this created a system of unfairness where some municipalities went smoke-free while others did not. The bottom line is that this should have been dealt with from the start through Provincial legislation that would apply equally to all municipalities.

In meetings with the Liberal Party and New Democratic Party, both agreed with UNSM that the issue of Sunday Shopping should not be determined by a plebiscite held during municipal elections. The Liberals have indicated from the election campaign that Sunday shopping is a provincial responsibility that should be addressed by provincial leaders. To that end, they have proposed introducing legislation allowing for year-round Sunday shopping.

At our annual conference held last week, the UNSM membership overwhelmingly passed a resolution (attached as Appendix 1) stating that the issue of Sunday Shopping not be part of the 2004 municipal elections.

While I realize that the Provincial Government has introduced this idea of a plebiscite to determine Sunday Shopping, they also indicated their willingness to listen to UNSM's concerns. Furthermore, it was the Province that also expressed the importance of consultation with UNSM on matters affecting municipalities.

Given these statements and the position of the two opposition parties, I hope the Government will heed our concerns and reconsider their position on this issue.

Sunday shopping is a provincial issue that should be determined by Provincial legislation and not piggy-backed on the municipal election process.

Again, I thank the Law Amendments Committee for giving UNSM the opportunity to speak on this important issue.

APPENDIX 1 Resolution 11A: Sunday Shopping

WHEREAS the issue of Sunday shopping is one which the Province of Nova Scotia has been publicly reviewing since several months; and

WHEREAS the Province has made a decision to allow Sunday shopping for a six week trial period this Fall; and

WHEREAS the Province of Nova Scotia has recommended that a plebiscite on Sunday shopping be part of the municipal elections of 2004; and

WHEREAS the addition of a plebiscite as part of the municipal elections only leads to confusion by the electoral community. It makes the issue appear to be a municipal election issue and there also may be acclamations where there are no elections which could result in very low voter turnout;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that correspondence be forwarded to the Minister of Service Nova Scotia & Municipal Relations stating that the issue of Sunday shopping not be part of municipal elections. ■

Colchester Receives 2003 Municipal InNOVAward



(from left to right: then-UNSM President, Councillor Don Zwicker, Minister Barry Barnet, Service Nova Scotia & Municipal Relations, Mayor Mike Smith, County of Colchester & Mr. Gary MacIsaac, Chief Administrative Officer, County of Colchester)

Plenty of people talk about getting in better physical condition, but how many actually do something about it and take hundreds of people with them? Mayor Mike Smith of the Municipality of Colchester did just that, and it has won his municipality the Municipal InNOVAward for 2003.

The Municipal InNOVAward

program was created by the Nova Scotia government to recognize innovation by municipalities and villages in Nova Scotia in the delivery of their services and programs. The annual award provides an opportunity to recognize quality innovation, as well as the chance to spread the word about current innovative programs and services.

This year's winner of the Municipal InNOVAward is the Municipality of the County of Colchester for The Mayor's Challenge. The Mayor's Challenge began with Mr. Smith's personal goal to bike 8,000 kilometres, or roughly the distance across Canada.

Before long, the municipal council decided it
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"AWARD" CONT'D

wanted to do something about inactive children who were spending too much time in front of the TV and playing video games. The municipality acted by extending The Mayor's Challenge to everyone in Colchester County.

Local businesses, radio and newspapers endorsed and promoted the challenge by offering free publicity and prizes. Within a month of issuing the challenge in January 2003, more than 500 adults, 200 children and 11 schools had signed up.

The challenge offers something for everyone. There are targets for families

and individuals of all ages and fitness levels. The Mayor's Challenge recognizes that the most important thing is to be active and to have a goal.

"I'm delighted that so many people in Colchester County have taken up this challenge," said Mr. Smith. "All over the county, children, adults and families are getting out of the house and are getting some exercise. Winning the Municipal InNOVAward is very gratifying to everyone involved with this project."

The challenge will officially end in December, but the municipality is encouraging everyone who participated to

continue to make physical activity an integral part of their daily lives.

"The success of this program, its obvious benefits to participants and the community, make it an excellent choice as winner of the 2003 Municipal InNOVAward," said Barry Barnet, Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations.

"Leading a healthy lifestyle pays dividends today and many years down the road."

The Award was presented by Minister Barry Barnet at the UNSM Annual Conference in Yarmouth. A local presentation is planned. ■

"AT RISK" CONT'D

environment.

Species-at-risk can serve as indicators of the health of our natural environment. There is an increasing awareness of the importance of a healthy natural environment and the direct connection to sustainable communities and quality of life. Participating in initiatives that enhance the natural environment, including species at risk projects, will contribute to attracting and retaining residents and tourists to local communities.

4. Municipalities can communicate key messages to local residents.

Being the level of government closest to the people, municipalities may be able to play an important role in promoting awareness of species at risk in their municipality.

5. Municipalities may have tools that could be used to assist in maintaining and conserving species at risk.

Land-use planning, zoning,

bylaws, policies, and parks and protected area development are examples of municipal tools that could be used to address species at risk and the natural environment.

Contact Us

For further information on species at risk or to arrange a meeting in your municipality, please contact Samara Eaton or Sherman Boates at the Wildlife Division, Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources by phone (431-8089) or via e-mail (eatonst@gov.ns.ca or boatesjs@gov.ns.ca). ■

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All opinions expressed in the "MOL" are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the UNSM.

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