

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

An Unsustainable Reality

The Editor

A recent editorial in *The Victoria Standard* pointed out that Victoria County has yet to implement its sustainable economic development plan. Victoria County does not have an economic development officer. Nor has the County been able to establish a working relationship with a Regional Development Authority (RDA) of which there are two on Cape Breton Island.

In 2009 an initiative was undertaken by the Victoria County Council to contract consultants to develop a strategic plan for Victoria County. A Dalhousie University consulting group tabled a 2009 plan which was mostly an update of a 2001 planning document. This new plan is entitled "Shaping Our Future." The Dalhousie document cost circa \$66,000.00 which was funded by a grant.

In December 2009 I attended a two day work shop held at the Inverary Inn hosted by Gordon McIntosh, principal of the Local Government Leadership Institute. Mr. McIntosh was able to get sufficient input from the 21 invited participants to create another strategic planning document. The participants at this meeting took their day's work seri-

ously.

A document emerged entitled "An Economic Development Strategy" detailing four strategies for short term action. The forum was held "to help the Council define economic development priorities and the County's leadership role in enhancing the region's economic welfare." No follow up session has occurred; the cost of this exercise is unknown to me.

The bottom line of these consulting documents is that the Victoria County Council has been charged with implementing a sustainable economic development plan. The naked truth revolves around the capability of the Victoria County Council to shoulder the leadership role in empowering and creating a committee of interested County citizens to work with council in an advisory capacity to implement the basic recommendations outlined in the various sustainable planning documents.

To date there has been no effort by the Victoria County Council to constitute the recommended volunteer citizens sustainable economic advisory committee.

In a recent query as to the progress being made on the adoption

and implementation of a sustainable economic development plan, I was told, "There is lots going on. Stay tuned!" On further investigation I found out that, in fact very little is going on regarding sustainable economic development. Nor have any forthright steps to engage the greater Victoria County citizenry been taken. Sustainable economic development sits at the bottom of the Victoria County Council's meeting agendas!

On May 6, 2010, I attended a day seminar on community economic development in St. Peters. It was led by Ross MacDonald, our former County development officer. I attended as a representative of NEDAC, The Northside Economic Development Assistance Corporation. NEDAC is a federally funded community business development corporation (CBDC) that lends money to small business located in the Northside and Victoria County. I have been a volunteer NEDAC Board member since 1992. Several years ago I served a two year stint as Chairman of the Board.

During the 18 years that I have served as a volunteer on NEDAC's board, over 4.7 million repayable dollars have been loaned to small businesses in Victoria County - certainly an

opportunity not to have been missed!

My observation is that Victoria County Council members are reticent to engage in any meaningful dialogue with interested residents on moving ahead with the implementation of a sustainable economic development plan. Victoria County is the "laggard" of the entire province of Nova Scotia with regards to implementing sustainable economic development planning. Simply put, if you fail to plan, you plan to fail.

My personal sense is that the current council needs to sharpen its capacity to be the effective lead agent to move ahead the implementation of those recommendations outlined in the sustainable planning documents. We all have paid dearly for lost opportunities!

I came away from the St. Peter's May 6, 2010 economic development forum most enthused regarding what other municipalities have accomplished through their RDA's, volunteers and funds accessed to pursue worthwhile community development initiatives that benefit their residents. Sadly, I can not say the same for Victoria County.

Stay Tuned!

Henry W. Fuller, Board Member
The Northside Economic Development Assistance Corporation

Safe kids are healthy kids

The Editor

Recently, from late May to early June, was Safe Kids Week and Doctors in the province wanted all Nova Scotian kids to know how to be safe this summer. Whether it's on the playground, on the bike, or in the water, there are ways to make sure playing, is a safe activity.

Playgrounds are great places to bring the family, have a picnic and enjoy the beautiful summer weather; however, it's important to inspect play areas for hazards before children are allowed to play. When supervising children pay close attention to the height of the equipment they are playing on and never let children tie ropes to slides and swings. When preparing to go to the playground make sure children wear clothing and hats that do not have strings and remove bike helmets before playing.

When riding a bike, it's extremely

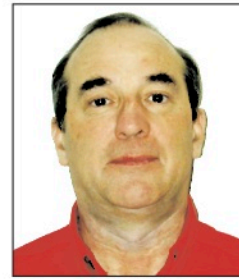
important to always wear a bike helmet that fits properly, slow down and pay attention to the surrounding area, learn hand signals and road signs and most importantly never leave children unattended to ride on the street.

When the sun gets too hot and the family retreats to the water, be prepared for water safety. Have lifejackets on hand for swimming and boating activities, use waterproof sunscreen and be sure there is an adult watching the children at all times.

The doctors of Nova Scotia wish all Nova Scotians a happy, healthy, and safe summer. Remember to keep yourself hydrated by drinking plenty of water and practice sun-safety at all times. For more information on Safe Kids Week, visit www.hc-sc.gc.ca.

Ross Leighton, BSc, MD, FRCSC, FACS
President, Doctors Nova Scotia

Chuck Thompson's "Along the Trail" **"Enriched"**



I looked up the word to see if it fit and I'm still not sure. "Enriched" according to old *Funk and Wagnall* means the act of enriching or the state of being enriched. I guess that should come as no great surprise.

So I went backwards to "enrich." "To make rich or increase the wealth of." Maybe. 2. To add attractive or desirable elements to. Closer! "To increase the beauty of." Again, maybe.

It just seems that after attending the annual spring school concert at the Middle River Elementary School, the whole experience was "enriching." I'm not sure old *Funk and Wagnall* would use the same word but it works for me.

Every year, 'the little school that could' puts on a show for all the hard working teachers, assistants, subs, support staff, and most of all, the parents, as a way of saying thanks. It also provides some comfort to the parents who wonder what really happens when the big yellow bus leaves the end of the driveway every morning.

I went to my first MRES concert when our daughter was in Grade 5 and haven't missed many since. The teachers have changed, the kids have changed, the school has been upgraded (CAP Site and its winking, blinking computers), Radon proofed (whatever that is) and other less tangible make-overs. The one constant has been the enthusiasm and yes, the talent of the kids. Here is a school that is struggling for its very existence but there is no lack of enthusiasm on "show night."

Under the capable and inspired leadership of music teacher, Fred Greene, the

kids sang (well) and danced and put on imaginative skits to the delight of the large crowd packed into one of the school classrooms.

Now this is not to say that larger, richer schools are not equally enthusiastic. I'm sure they are. I remember the concerts at Coxheath Elementary and they were good, very good as a matter of fact. But they were different. You spent the evening looking for your child in the sea of faces and when he or she had danced or sung their way off stage that was pretty much it, the rest were strangers. It lacked the same closeness or intimacy that you get from a small school.

Every year when I attend the concert I am always struck by the level of talent from so few. This year was no exception. There were drummers, guitar players, excellent singers, natural actors. The talent pool was more typical of a much larger school.

Needless to say, the kids all knew each other and they were quick to support each other whenever there was a dropped line or off-key note. The whole atmosphere was one of helping, not competing. This, of course, reflects teaching, but it also is indicative of small, intimate numbers.

When the inevitable next school review raises it's head, the "enriched" atmosphere of MRES will mean little or nothing. It will come down to, as it always does, about how many light bulbs are burnt in a year, how much chalk gets used, all number crunching exercises. It would be so much better if the bean counters could take off their ties and come to the concert. They might weight "enriched" a little higher up the scale!

chuckthompson47@hotmail.com

Letters to the Editor Policy

The Victoria Standard welcomes letters of interest to our readers. Letters published do not necessarily reflect the policies or beliefs of the staff of The Victoria Standard. All letters must bear the signature of the writer and include the writer's address and phone number for verification. Addresses and phone numbers will not be printed. The use of any letters submitted is at the discretion of the editor. The editor reserves the right to edit letters to meet space requirements, for clarity, or to avoid obscenity, libel or invasion of privacy.
Mail to P.O. Box 629, Baddeck, Nova Scotia B0E 1B0



The Victoria Standard

The Victoria Standard is published fortnightly by
Bras d'Or Graphic Marketing Services.

Editor and General Manager: James Morrow
Copy/Design/Subscriptions: John Johnson
Advertising/Sales: Jim Ryan

PO Box 629, Baddeck, Cape Breton
Canada • Nova Scotia • B0E 1B0
902-295-1144 • Fax 902-295-1143
E-Mail: victoriastandard@ns.sympatico.ca

Copyright and/or property rights apply to all advertisements appearing in
The Victoria Standard. Reproduction of advertisements, in whole or part, is not
permitted. Copyright and/or property rights are available for purchase.

Mailed under Canadian Publications Sales Agreement #221740