

Approaching the 11th hour

Baddeck Academy retrofit

by Jim Morrow and Jocelyn Bethune

In 2003, Baddeck Academy was promised a \$6.2 million upgrade.

Six years later, in 2009, the plans for the upgrade were presented to the public.

In 2010, a tender for a new \$3 million ventilation and mechanical block was issued and construction began to bring all the systems up to code for the renovations and the proposed addition.

In March of 2011 Baddeck Academy administration was presented with plans eliminating an entire floor and the loss of 5,000 square feet from the 2009 plans.

Parents packed the AV room of Baddeck Academy on April 14th to hear about cuts to the proposed renovation. They were not pleased.

"Our students deserve what every other student in Nova Scotia has. This is about our children's future," School Advisory Council (SAC) chairperson Lynn Myers told the crowd that included parents, teachers, students and area business people.

The proposed downgrades mean that Baddeck Academy cannot deliver programs as mandated by the Department of Education, she said.

The 2009 plans approved by the Department of Education and the Cape Breton-Victoria District School Board show renovations to an elementary wing and a junior high wing. A new 2-story addition was to replace the high school section.

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Ingonish business in receivership



photo courtesy Greg Ferens

The community of Ingonish is having difficulty adapting to the loss of the Home Hardware and Building Centre. Residents were recently shocked to find the doors closed and the locks changed. Life without easy access to the basic items from dustpans to nails has been a challenge in the weeks since the store has gone into receivership. The 10 employees too are scratching their heads wondering what their future will bring. Lee Myers, Area Manager for Home Hardware, said the store will only be closed temporarily. "We do not walk away from communities we have been part of for 25 years."

Middle River School Review

When cost reductions clash with quality education

by Jim Morrow

For the third time in five years Middle River Consolidated School is up for a school review.

The smallest school in the Cape Breton-Victoria Regional School Board's jurisdiction, Middle River meets four of the six criteria developed to trigger a school review which, if the community cannot justify the continued use of the school, can lead to closure.

Parents of the 20 students attending Middle River Consolidated have shown great resolve and determination in the past proving to the Board and the Province that a small school can deliver an excellent education to its students at reasonable costs. They are very much

willing to do it again to save the quality of education their children are receiving in Middle River.

The Board's criteria sees the staffing at Middle River with a staff to student ratio of 7.34 to 1 as skewed in relation to other schools. Parents on the other hand see the low student teacher ratio as a favourable circumstance that benefits the students immeasurably and creates a desirable situation for potential students and parents wishing to locate in the community.

Parent Kate Oland believes the obvious benefits of small rural schools are being overlooked by the board and the Department of Education.

Ms. Oland believes the mainte-

nance and capital improvement costs the Board has come up with are inflated and do not realistically reflect the work that is required at the school.

"With a \$150,000 small school supplement and the income unit of each student at \$2,500 there should be more than enough money to keep the school open," Ms. Oland says.

The Board's spent \$42,000 to operate the school in 2009-10. And the Board has projected another \$175,000 in repairs and maintenance.

"Some of this work has already been completed," Ms. Oland claims, "and some of the items on the Board's list for repairs are really unfounded."

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Federal election

3 questions for the candidates

by Jim Morrow

The *Victoria Standard* asked all the candidates in Sydney-Victoria three questions.

They are:

1) What can you and your party do to compensate for the out-migration of youth from the rural areas of this constituency and the country?

2) Our municipality is home to one of the highest percentage of seniors per capita in Canada. How is your party going to recognize this aging demographic and support their needs?

3) Next to our people, our environment is our most important asset. The

Bras d'Or Lake, the Cape Breton Highlands and the Cabot Trail are all significant aspects of what keeps our economy moving *vis a vis* our visitors returning.

How is your party ensuring our environment will not be threatened by unsustainable resource extraction practices?

The answers to question 1:

Liberal, Mark Eyking: Out-migration is obviously having a strong impact on our rural communities. There is no easy answer for stemming the tide of youth out-migration. Our party has a rural policy that I was proud to be a part

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Cap on forest biomass

Cutting to the edge of capacity

by Jim Morrow

Environmental groups and local watershed organizations see the province's attempt to further protect the sustainability of Nova Scotia's forests while keeping on track to meet its renewable energy goals, as too little and based on unknown quantities.

The cap on the annual amount of new forest biomass that can be used to generate electricity will be lowered by 30 per cent to 350,000 dry tonnes per year.

Biomass is wood fibre that includes small-stemmed or knotted trees and other low-value wood that is not used to

make lumber and can interfere with the growth of healthy hardwood stands.

"As we work to meet our target to generate 40 per cent of the province's electricity from renewable sources by 2020, we are continually assessing our information," said Charlie Parker, Minister of Natural Resources. "We have decided that the original 500,000 tonne cap, laid-out in the 2010 Renewable Electricity Plan and subsequent regulations, can be more cautious on the basis of current analysis."

The recently approved biomass project for NewPage Port Hawkesbury

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