

District 3 Councillor's Communique WILDFIRE 2008 - SPECIAL EDITION



As the local district Councillor, and on behalf of the thousands of residents affected by the Porters Lake - Lake Echo wildland fire area that burnt over 1900 hectares that affected the communities of Porters Lake, West Porters Lake, East Lawrencetown, West Lawrencetown, Mineville, Lake Echo and the rest of the Eastern Shore beyond the fire line, I would like to express our greatest respect and admiration to all those involved in fighting this fire. We extend our sincerest thanks to all those involved in the firefighting efforts, and to those who assisted the families displaced by the evacuations.

Some of the organizations who assisted include HRM Fire and Emergency Services, NS Dept. of Natural Resources, Parks Canada, the RCMP, HRM Emergency Management Organization, Nova Scotia EMO, NS Dept. of Transportation, Metro Transit, Emergency Health Services, Eastern Shore Joint Emergency Management Team, Canadian Red Cross, the Salvation Army, St. John Ambulance, Canadian Armed Forces - Shearwater Squadron, Eastern Shore MLA Bill Dooks, HRM Mayor Peter Kelly, NS Dept. of Community Services, Halifax Regional School Board, Cole Harbour Place, Disaster Animal Response Team, Fred Dunphys Excavating, and Lawrence Bellefontaines A&L Concrete, Seaforth Hall, St. Anselms Church Hall, Porters Lake Community Centre, Lakeview School, Lawrencetown Community Centre, Cole Harbour United Church, Halifax Regional Search and Rescue, Eastern Shore Ground Search and Rescue, and all the pastoral Ministers and grief counsellors, and a special thank you to all the water - sky craft air support from New Brunswick, Quebec, Newfoundland and Labrador. And to all the media, especially News Radio 95.7 FM for broadcasting Live during the whole weekend event. And to all other volunteer organizations and individuals that assisted. Plus thanks also for all of the generosity of all the local businesses and residents who gave of themselves so unselfishly with all of the food donated to feed those at the Evacuation Centres during this ordeal. You all are heroes to so many. Signs of affection have appeared everywhere throughout the area. Because of your collective efforts, a major disaster was averted.

On behalf of the Municipality, I would also like to thank the residents affected by this ordeal for their patience and understanding during this stressful time. Your cooperation was greatly appreciated by all service personnel combating the blaze.

By the Grace of God, we were spared. And I believe there was the help of 2 new angels with this Divine intervention: the late Mr. Rae Austin and Mrs. Nellie Loughran. Mr. Austin who passed away in late May 2008 was the dreamer, planner and developer that built the Mineville area. And the late Mrs. Nellie Loughran, who died of a heart attack on Friday afternoon, June 13th during the fire. The last thing she did was to go out and have one last look at her flowers in the garden. Nellie feared the fire may destroy them. The family's bequest is that all donations in her memory be given to the families impacted by the wildfire. Donations can be made payable to "Mineville Community Association - "In memory of Nellie Loughran" and sent to MCA - Mineville Community Association, #351 Mineville Road, Mineville, HRM, NS, B2Z 1J8

Please be careful and respectful to those in areas most impacted. The residents of Candy Mountain Road need time and space to cope with their loss and recovery. Your cooperation will be appreciated.

I have spoken many times about the impact of Hurricane Juan on our district. My prophecy is no longer fallacy, and we are not out of the woods yet. There is still more to be done. The post Hurricane Juan harvesting of brush and downed trees done on both sides of the Lake Echo and Lawrencetown Lake helped to mitigate the magnitude of this fire significantly. When the fire reached these harvested areas, it could only creep along the ground and not leap across to other trees. Once the assessment of this fire is complete, I will be advocating for further clean-ups both inside and outside the burnt areas.

In the meantime, please be aware of wildlife displacement. Animals such as bears, foxes, coyotes, raccoons, minks, skunks, squirrels, ospreys, owls, hawks, bats, deer and rabbits will now be seeking food sources closer to the residential areas. Residents are reminded of the following measures to prevent the attraction of animals that have been displaced by the fire:

- as bears are primarily nocturnal, place your green cart out for collection in the morning at 7 AM on your regular collection weekday;
- once your green cart has been collected place in a shed or garage;
- remove exterior pet dishes;
- remove grease from BBQ's and/or place in garage or shed;
- remove bird feeders and any seeds on the ground;
- waste stored outside is to be placed in garbage can with a locking lid or strapped down;

For more information go to : www.gov.ns.ca/natr/wildlife/Nuisance/nuis.htm

If a bear becomes persistent, then contact NS Dept. of Natural Resources (1-800-565-2224) whom will live trap the bear and relocate it.

Anyone concerned about their wells should refer to : www.gov.ns.ca/nse/water/privatewells.asp

Furthermore, please take other precautions to make your home and property safer. Look up www.firewise.org and www.getprepared.ca for ideas. One suggestion is to remove any and all decorative bark mulch and/or pine needles away from your dwellings foundation.

Have you considered volunteering for your local Fire Services or join our own ES-JEM team as a Community Status Reporter? More helpers, the better. And I will be asking for your input on how we can improve our responses for any future emergency event. Please convey your experiences, either good or bad, on what worked well and what didn't. In the meantime, please take care of yourself and give a helping hand to a neighbour.

Best regards,

David Hendsbee

HRM Councillor District 3 : Preston - Lawrencetown - Chezzetcook