

VILLAGE OF NEW MINAS
ANNUAL REPORT
Year Ended March 31, 2006

VILLAGE OF NEW MINAS

On behalf of the Village Commission of New Minas, I am pleased to present the Annual Report for the Fiscal Year April 1, 2005 through March 31, 2006.

Building and Development within the Village has been somewhat active in the past twelve months, although below that of 2004/2005. The value of Building Permits issued for properties within the Village of New Minas for the fiscal year ended March 31, 2006 was \$6,108,445, which represents a decrease over March 31, 2005 of \$ 2,835,548. There were 59 Permits issued for the year; 24 less than the previous year.

The Commission approved an annual budget in 2005/2006 of \$1,756,737, resulting in a Village Tax Rate of 44 cents for residential assessments and 45 cents for commercial and business occupancy assessments, per \$100 of Assessment.

Paula Kinley-Howatt of Bruchell MacDougall was awarded the tender to provide legal Services to the Village for the next three years. Morse and Brewster were awarded the tender to provide auditing services to the Village for the next three years. Hiltz and Seamone are the Village's Engineers. Sidewalk Snow removal was awarded to William Milligan for the next three years.

In September, 2005, the Village of New Minas hosted the inaugural Annual General Meeting of the newly formed Association of Nova Scotia Villages. The incorporation of this Association is very timely, and very critical. Villages, particularly larger Villages like New Minas, constantly struggle to be recognized and treated with the respect they deserve. One of the major issues being dealt with by the Association Executive at this time is full membership in the Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities. Furthermore, the Association is moving forward on some long-standing issues facing Villages specific to Section 18 of the Municipal Government Act.

The Village Chair and the Clerk Treasurer have been closely involved in the negotiations with the County of Kings to assure the Village of

New Minas receives an equitable share of Gas Tax funding. Villages of Nova Scotia have lobbied the Federal and provincial governments over the past several years to issue Gas Tax funds directly to the Villages, instead of being considered as part of their Municipalities' long lists of projects. This did not happen, and when the funding allocations were announced early in 2005, Villages were simply included in the Municipalities' overall list of green projects. The Village Commission of New Minas, along with other Villages in Kings County with green projects, met several times last winter to come up with an agreement whereby Villages would receive a fair share of the Gas Tax. To that end, a list of Guidelines is being compiled and will be discussed for mutual agreement in the very near future, and Villages will continue to negotiate to receive a fair share of funding through this source.

NEW MINAS WATER COMMISSION

AND SEWER SERVICES

The Department of Environment and Labour has dictated to municipalities, including Villages, that a new system of approving the operation of water systems be implemented. This has resulted in a significant impact on the Water and Sewer Commission, operating procedures and testing regime. The Village Engineer and water staff continue efforts to comply with the regulations as necessary. The Commission has completed the process to develop a Wellfield Protection Plan for the Village, as part of compliance to these regulations. The Sector Plan for the Village of New Minas has been amended to include this mandatory change, and has been forwarded to the Minister for final approval. The last phase of this project, monitoring of the sites with regard to the GUDI Protocol (Groundwater Under the Direct Influence), is now complete.

An application for a Private Members' Bill was submitted to Hon. David Morse in the fall of 2005 to amend the Water Utility Bylaw to

allow for an increase in the remuneration to the Water Commissioners. This has once again been tabled to the fall session.

In 2004, the Village Clerk and Engineer attended many meetings with the Regional Sewer Committee. This year, the Village's commitment to the operation of the Regional Sewer was calculated differently due to the flow discrepancies, which were detected the previous year. The budget for the upcoming year is better reflective of the actual flows due to a lot of hard work and negotiations between the Regional Sewer Committee and the Village.

The major administrative step this year with the Water and Sewer services was the purchase and implementation of the Water and Sewer Utility billing and accounts receivable program. The Village Office is now receiving payments, and all accounting is being done on-site. This project required a great deal of effort by the staff, but the operation went very smoothly and the Village and Water Commission should save approximately \$40,000 per year in contract fees.

NEW MINAS VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT

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The New Minas Volunteer Fire Department answered 147 emergency alarms during the year. These consisted of structure fires, motor vehicle accidents, forest fires, water rescue, haz-mat, vehicle fires, mutual aid responses, flood conditions, fuel leaks, propane leaks, animal rescue, medical emergencies, etc.. Last summer was a very wet year, helping to keep fires down, but it is interesting to note that so far in 2006, alarms are up 36% over last year.

The fire department operates two bingos a week, operates a canteen, four wheel drive rally, chicken barbeque, bars at special functions, dances, golf ball drop, sell car tickets, sell lottery tickets, do car washes, etc.. Every penny raised from these functions are used to offset the costs of operating the fire department. No volunteer receives even a penny for their efforts in fund raising. The fire department, with the help of an active auxiliary put \$132,421.00 in capital expenditures from their fundraising efforts in 2005.

The fire department is continuing their efforts to replace aging equipment and upgrades to an aging fire hall. The department is

planning to pave the back parking lot and do minor improvements to the outside appearance of the fire hall this summer. This paving will be paid for from the fund raising efforts of the fire department.

The Fire Chief serves as president of the Kings County Firefighters Association and as Chairman of the Kings Partnership Steering Committee, which is studying the future direction of the fire services in Kings County. The New Minas Fire Department plays an active role in the Kings County Emergency Measures Organization, and is active in fire prevention.

Besides providing fire protection, the New Minas Volunteer Fire Department also responds to medical calls with trained Medical First Responders. The Department has a water rescue team with advanced trained divers, and in partnership with the Kentville and Wolfville fire department, provide for a high angle rope rescue team, do hazardous materials response as well as providing equipment and training for response to chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear incidents.

James Redmond, Fire Chief

NEW MINAS AREA ADVISORY COMMITTEE

This Committee, consisting of Village Commissioners, Municipal Councillor, and members of the public, provides advice to the Municipality of Kings' Planning Advisory Committee on planning issues that are taking place within the boundaries of the Village of New Minas.

The Area Advisory Committee considered several Development Agreements, and amendments to existing Development Agreements, in 2005/2006. Some or all of the Committee members participated in, or otherwise attended, many public participation meetings this past year, and provided a great deal of input into the process. The Committee discussed and considered the possibility of extending the boundaries of new Minas south of the 101 Highway. This was sent along to the Village Commission for consideration. The Commission agreed to carry out a survey of landowners in the area, but tabled the process.

Miriam Coldwell served as the Area Advisory Committee Chair. The Committee has added to its membership Mrs. Irene Scott and Mr. Gordon Silver in 2005 as citizen members. The Council representative on the AAC is Councillor Eric Smith.

NEW MINAS RECREATION

The Department provided a variety of programs to the residents of the Village in 2004/2005. Canada Day celebrations, New Minas Celebration Days and the New Minas Soccer Tournaments, Christmas Tree Light Up, Winter Carnival, just to name a few. These were very successful. Also, the Village of New Minas provides programs to its residents. Such programs as summer and March Break Camps, Senior Games, and weekly Senior Fitness classes brings to the forefront the Village's desire to provide healthy living opportunities to all ages in the New Minas. A new program was added this year in the form of parent/tot playgroup. This has become very popular and the numbers are increasing almost weekly.

This year, as in the previous two years, the Village of New Minas has participated in the Municipal curling championship. Although no trophy was won, a great time was had by all and the team got a great work out! The Village's Rec Director has been asked to be involved in a number of Committees, which, although can be somewhat time-consuming, are very beneficial to the Village for networking, and places

the Village in an honorable position. The Rec Director continues to play a key role in the bid to bring the 2011 Winter Games to this area.

One of the major highlights of Parks and Recreation this past year is the construction of the Skateboard Park. Although challenged in the beginning with delays, the construction started in the fall of 2005 and was completed in approximately 3-1/2 weeks. The New Minas Rotary Club funded approximately 1/3 of the project cost as their Centennial project; a generous donation of \$20,000. Other sources of funding came from the Municipality of the County of Kings - \$15,000, the Province of Nova Scotia - \$10,000, and fund-raising by the skateboarders themselves of approximately \$4,000. The Village of New Minas provided bridge-funding and paid for the balance of the project (approximately \$20,000). Fund raising will continue to assist in the construction costs of the facility. It is obvious to anyone driving by the Skateboard park, located adjacent to the Civic Centre, that this project satisfied the enthusiastic needs of those young people who have the desire and ability to manoeuvre this great facility.

In 2004, a motion was passed by the Village Commission to disband the Recreation Advisory Committee. In 2005, the Commission voted to reinstate the RAC, and the Committee has met several times since this.

All other Playgrounds and parks are continuously being maintained. The playground equipment is constantly under scrutiny by provincial department to assure that they comply with the regulations.

NEW MINAS TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Transportation Advisory Committee was formed in 2005 for the purpose of acting as an advisory body to the Village Commission for such things as road maintenance, Village property issues, snow removal, construction and maintenance.

Over the past year, the Committee, through the Clerk Treasurer, has liaised with the local Department of Transportation office. The Transportation Advisory Committee had several meetings with DOTPW and Hon. David Morse to discuss procedure and issues pertaining to highway matters. The Village's Engineer has worked very closely with the Committee to try to find resolutions to problems. Flooding from Cloverleaf Drive to Milne Avenue and Marina Drive has been discussed with DOTPW and hopefully will be resolved in the next year. A Traffic Study is being carried out in 2006/2007 by the Commission to deal with traffic congestion on Commercial Street.

To the members of these organizations, I want to express the appreciation of the residents of New Minas to you for your contribution to the quality of life that we enjoy in our Village.

In closing, on behalf of the Commission and staff for the Village of New Minas, I would like to thank you, the ratepayers of New Minas, for your continued input and support throughout the past year. We are anxious to move forward in our endeavours to continue to keep New Minas a great place to live and work.

Respectfully Submitted by

Dave Chaulk, Chair

Village Commission of New Minas