



THE LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR'S COMMUNITY SPIRIT AWARD NOMINATION

Town of Canso & Eastern Guysborough County

Groups within the community who have joined together to put forward this nomination:

1. Town of Canso
2. Eastern Communities Youth Association
3. Chedabucto Folk Society (Stan Rogers International Folk Festival)
4. Canso Volunteer Fire Department
5. All Saints Church

Enhancing the lives of those living in the community:

There have been many examples of working together on projects to improve the lives the citizens in the community. This is not an exhaustive list but rather a few examples.

The most recent partnership saw the Eastern Communities Development Association, Chedabucto Folk Society and the Town of Canso work together to complete major renovations to the Stan Rogers Folk Festival site and the Canso and Area Arena. These renovations will help with the sustainability of both the Festival and the Arena. The Arena was opened in the early 1980's and was in need of repair which the Arena Commission could not afford on their own. Through a strong partnership between these groups, both volunteers and paid staff, all repairs were done and the youth and adults of the community are enjoying another year in one of the nicest arenas found in any rural community. The Festival site was enhanced to meet the growing number of attendees each year and to help toward financial stability.

Each year the Eastern Communities Youth Association hosts the annual Canso Regatta. This is a successful community festival due to the coming together of the Youth Association, the Town of Canso, the Chedabucto Folk Society and Canso Lions Club. The Town works with these volunteers and a first class event is hosted with the profits going to support youth programming and activities throughout the year. Many other groups participate by working booths and events during the Regatta and this is a time that many organizations get a great opportunity to fund-raise for their cause. The Town of Canso provides many in-kind services to ensure the success of this event. Volunteers from the community also help to offer the annual Bernie Long Memorial Road Race during the Regatta. The Canso Lions Club volunteers to set up and take down all booths. The Stan Fest volunteers along with other community members erect the large tent and take it down.

The local Town of Canso owned swimming pool fell victim to budget cuts a couple of years ago and failed to open for one season. The following season saw several community groups and volunteers come together with the Town of Canso to ensure the youth and citizens of the Canso area had the pool to enjoy for subsequent summers. The Eastern Communities Youth Association offered free management services, the Canso Lions Club and other citizens helped with the maintenance required to open the pool and the ongoing community support has continued in various ways to maintain the pool each summer since. The paid staff and volunteers at the Pool each summer are what helps our community offer successful pool programs each summer.

The Canso & Area Arena was facing a very difficult situation financially and with lack of management services and a large debt. There was a need for quick action. The Arena Commission, the Town of Canso, the Eastern Communities Development Association, the Eastern Communities Youth Association and the Chedabucto Folk Society came together and hosted a telethon (which has become an annual event). This telethon raised more

than \$10,000 its first year to help pay bills and get the Arena back on even footing. At this point the Arena is doing well and is offering a full range of services for the citizens. The Telethon has become an annual fund-raiser thanks to all the volunteers from various groups. The second part of this equation, to deal with the Arena's problem with no management, saw a partnership develop where the employees of the Youth Association were seconded to work and manage part-time at the Arena. This arrangement lasted one year until the Arena was able to attract a manager for its facility.

During the winter in Canso there are many programs that in the absence of a budget for a staff person to organize and run such, we have to rely on the volunteer efforts of groups such as the ECYA, library staff and members of the recreation committee to ensure that all requirements are met to have these events. These events include things like the Torch Light Parade and Santa's visit at the Town Library along with other events. During the summer months the same volunteers help organize sports for youths, host Canada Day celebrations ie; parades, cakes and children's activities. In other municipalities these events are usually looked after by paid staff, but in the absence of staff the community here relies upon volunteers.



Making our community a better place in which to work, live and play:

Needless to say there are many challenges facing the Town of Canso that many other municipalities do not have to worry about. Financially the Town has little extra money for anything but the basic services for its residents. Through strong community partnerships with various organizations and people in the Canso area, the Town is proud to have many state of the art facilities which include an arena, a swimming pool, two lighted ball fields, soccer field, basketball court, library, senior's home, seniors' club, a Lion's Club, a top notch youth association and many other organizations that offer activities for the youth, adults and seniors of the area. When people visit or move to the community they are pleasantly surprised by the many facilities the area has to offer. Without the many volunteers working at each of these facilities and organizations it would be impossible for the Town of Canso to afford to maintain these amenities on its own.

Another amazing event which is a clear example of Community Spirit occurred recently. Just after Xmas our local Arena had a major mechanical failure, causing it to close for the remainder of the season, as the Ice Plant must be replaced. This closes Minor Hockey and Figure Skating and thus all the children/citizens are very upset. The Community held a Telethon this weekend and an amazing \$50,000.00 was raised in 4 hours. Calls came from just about everyone in the community (Guysborough County), many of their relatives who now live away and others were just friends of Canso. This economically depressed area came forward once again and dug deep in their wallets to help in a time of need.

Another example of hard-working volunteers is within the Canso Volunteer Fire Department and Ladies Auxiliary. The Fire Department has thirty volunteer firefighters who are on call 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. These volunteers also hold community bingos each week and dances eight or ten times per year to fund-raise for the Department. Several Fire Department volunteers run a campground during the Stan Rogers Folk Festival each year, which raises funds, while providing much needed camping space.

The five different churches in the community are very busy with volunteers. The volunteers are the backbone of each and every church. There is a need for major fundraising to maintain the church and services provided by each. When one church is in need of major repairs, a plea goes out to the community and people from all denominations come forward to support the project. This has occurred on at least three occasions in the past five years. The churches are old structures that obviously have needed upgrades and improvements. There are

many interdenominational activities held within the area, which see parishioners participating on a regular basis.

Encouraging citizens to volunteer:

All volunteer positions are advertised that are in relation to anything with the Town of Canso directly. Volunteers are actively sought out and encouraged to get involved in the various Town related organizations by Mayor, Councillors and staff.

The Mayor and Councilors lead by example and are very busy and active volunteers themselves. The small community of Canso could never offer what it has without the large volunteer base that the community relies on. In most larger municipalities many of the services that our volunteers provide in Canso are actually performed by paid staff, i.e., recreation director/department. Recognition to the volunteers and organizations is extremely important. On a regular bases and whenever the Town of Canso is able it offers advice, guidance and in-kind work to ensure volunteers are assisted, so their work is done as easily as possible.

Another way to encourage citizens to volunteer is by show casing our success stories. Many organizations use the media to show the great work they are doing. The positive stories help in the efforts to recruit more volunteers.

Improving the capacity of organizations and local government to involve volunteers:

This has been a problem due to the large out migration of young and middle-aged persons from Guysborough County and in particular from the Town of Canso. However, due to the fact that the community is so close and the needs are known by all, it is the volunteer sector that has stepped up, and keeps coming to the forefront, to assist in maintaining the current infrastructure and programs. The Town or organization communicates their needs and the generous people of Canso and area step up to do their part. By offering in-kind services and advice the Town of Canso staff and municipal council are able to assist in the load the volunteers are carrying to achieve their goals.

The Town Council relies heavily on volunteer work and engages the community in almost all its work, especially recreation services.

The amount of youth that have become engaged in the community has been where the marked difference has been for the Town of Canso. Young people are seeing the needs of the community and where possible are becoming involved to help improve the area. There are youth setting as voting members on several of the organizations in Town. These young volunteers are wonderful leaders and role models for other youth.



Enhancing volunteerism in the community?

The pride in the Canso community is a real joy to see. The many volunteers give so freely of their time in order to provide facilities and activities that are timely and encourage participation. The local volunteer organizations are supported by the Town of Canso which in turn helps them be able to offer activities that challenges, entertains and develops skills and competencies. Together we are trying to improve the lives of area's citizens.

Because of the many volunteer partnerships that have developed over the years in the Town of Canso we have

seen many volunteers gain very worthwhile experience, achieving successes on many fronts. These same people continue to give even more of their time and talents to ensure the citizens of the area have as many opportunities that you would normally see in a much larger center. In many cases, volunteer experience has helped citizens gain employment with their increased skills and knowledge gained from volunteering.

The Canso Seaside Manor is a senior's residential care facility that has a strong volunteer commitment. This facility is owned by the Town of Canso and again relies on volunteers to bring recreation, entertainment and other services to the residents there. The seniors enjoy activities weekly that are mostly put on by volunteers and local citizens are invited to attend the functions as well. There is also a "Meals on Wheels" program for seniors that sees volunteers deliver food to seniors in their own homes.

The Eastern Memorial Hospital has a volunteer board and auxiliary that are the backbone of that facility. There is community fund raising done on a regular basis that helps maintain and improve equipment and the facility itself.

One need only look at Canso's Stan Rogers Folk Festival to see the most amazing show of volunteering of any community in the Province of Nova Scotia. In a community of less than 1000 people, we see more than 500 volunteers giving thousands of hours each year to put on a world recognized music festival, that is said to be one of the best in Canada, if not the World. Compare this to the Vancouver Folk Music Festival which has 1,500 volunteers, in a population of 1.5 million people. The Stan Rogers International Festival would never be possible unless the volunteers gave so freely of their time and talents.

The volunteers in the Town of Canso come from the Town and County areas and from all walks of life. Without volunteers our small community would have little to offer the youth, adults and seniors of the area. All organizations and events are opened to Town and County residents and working together we are able to create a unique, pleasant and activity filled community.

Organizations in our area that are supported by volunteers:

Canso Volunteer Fire Department and Ladies Auxiliary
Canso Legion and Ladies Auxiliary
Eastern Communities Youth Association (includes a Drop In Centre and on going recreation programs)
Eastern Communities Development Association
Canso & Area Food Bank
Canso Flying Figures Skating Club
Canso and Area Minor Hockey Association
Canso & Area Arena Commission
Canso Sea Cadets
Canso Curling Club
Canso Regatta (Annual Festival)
Old Timers Hockey League
Canso Historical Society
Eastern Tips Trails Association
Shamrock Club (senior citizens)
Canso Scouts, Cubs, Beavers, Girl Guides, Brownies, Sparks
Canso Lions Club
Eastern Tip Trails Association
Stan Rogers Folk Festival (Annual Festivals)
Meals on Wheels (Delivering meals to seniors)
Breakfast Programs (Preparing and serving breakfast at the local schools)
Five different Churches within the Town
Eastern Memorial Hospital Auxiliary
Canso Seaside Manor (Seniors Home)
Canso Professional Coop (Board)
Canso Trawlerman's Coop (Board)
Canso Cooperative Limited (Board)
Canso Area Day Care (Board)
Guysborough County Inshore Fishermen (Board)
Canso Academy (various activities including a Home & School Association)
Fanning Education Centre (various activities including a Home & School Association)
Creative Writing Group

