

Letter to the Editor

I read the letter to the editor from Sandra Beazley in the December edition about the decision of the Girl Guides of Canada to stop participating in Christmas parades because of the organization’s policy of not participating in religious or faith-based celebrations.

At first, I will admit that I rolled my eyes and dismissed it as another person mourning the end of Canada as “we” know it.

Once that initial reaction passed, I reminded myself that to some people change is scary, and that this letter probably doesn’t come from a space of hate but from a place of fear. And so here I sit typing out a response to Sandra in the hopes that maybe it will move her and others that share her opinion from a place of fear to a place of acceptance.

The Girl Guides as of late have made a few key changes to make sure that all who want to participate will find GCC a welcoming place to be. They changed the name of Brownies to Embers because unfortunately, the term “brownie” has been used in hateful ways by white people. They have made sure that trans girls and women and non-binary people feel comfortable participating in

their program, both as members and leaders. And yes, they have adopted a secular policy. This policy ensures that none of their activities will make any of their participants uncomfortable and that they don’t feel othered in a place that is supposed to be for all.

In the 2021 census, only 53.3% of Canadians identified themselves as Christian, down from 77% of Canadians in 2001. That means 46.7% of Canadians are not Christian. Now Sandra may be right to state that some of those non-Christian people may still celebrate Christmas in their own way. But that percentage also means that 4.7 out of every ten Girl Guide families potentially don’t celebrate it at all.

That percentage also means that 4.7 out of every 10 Embers family might have to look at their leaders and say, “This makes me uncomfortable.” Imagine a 7-year-old having to say that—worse yet, imagine a 7-year-old having to go along with an activity because they are too afraid to say that it makes them uncomfortable. That is not a small number of children potentially being excluded from this activity that Sandra is identifying as a Canadian tradition. How sad it would be if they read your words and internalized them as meaning that they

are not considered true Canadians because they have their own traditions.

In looking at the data of what religions (or no religion at all) Canadians identify with, it is easy to see that in the next decade, the majority of families will not identify as Christian. I am glad that the Girl Guides have seen the future and have prepared to make sure all are welcomed. Change is inevitable. Instead of lamenting the days gone by, it’s time to start embracing the country we live in now.

I know change is hard, but the GCC’s policy is not political correctness as Sandra called it but a wholehearted attempt at including all Canadian children. These policy changes may be an “annoying subject” to her, but these changes weren’t intended for her. The new policy is for all the little girls and kids who want to participate in such a wonderful organization. Perhaps Sandra could take some time to reflect on the intention of the Girl Guide’s leadership in adopting this policy and support these changes despite any fear she may have.

Warmest regards, Liane Reeves

Cultivate Creativity and Exploration in 2024

By Mary Elizabeth O’Toole

Every January, many of us take the opportunity of a fresh start and undertake a journey of self-improvement by making resolutions or choosing a focus word. This year, prompted by both the new calendar and a recent milestone birthday, I have set my intention to embark on a year of creativity and exploration for learning and for fun. I’m beginning my year of adventure right here on the Eastern Shore. Why not join me in the challenge to explore local?

Here are a few strategies to help you discover more in ’24. I have included a few specific suggestions on the Shore but there are too many things to list everything in one short article. Look for events posted on your local community bulletin boards and on social media. Facebook pages for your community are a great place to share events or ask for recommendations.

1. **Get inspired.** Creativity thrives on inspiration drawn from diverse sources.

- The Halifax Public Library (halifaxpubliclibraries.ca) has books, magazines, musical instruments, snowshoes, and community spaces

available around HRM – including branches in Sheet Harbour and Musquodoboit Harbour, and library offices in Middle Musquodoboit and East Preston.

- Steeple Green Books, a cozy bookshop in a former church in Musquodoboit Harbour (East Petpeswick Road) has thousands of books at low prices, and hosts regular events including live music, open mikes, and book readings (facebook.com/steeplegreenbooks).
- The Deanery Project in Ship Harbour (facebook.com/deaneryproject) offers workshops on such topics as permaculture, natural building, and traditional skills.
- The Black Cultural Centre (bccns.com) in Cherry Brook celebrates and tells the story of the Black Nova Scotian community through cultural and educational events.
- Memory Lane in Lake Charlotte provides historical perspective of life on the Eastern Shore in the 1940s. (visitmemorylane.ca)
- The Old School Community Gathering Place in Musquodoboit Harbour is a hive of activities, including

Tai Chi, Fibre Friends, Enhance Through Dance, a community garden, and lots of opportunities for volunteers.

2. **Join Like-Minded Communities.** Surround yourself with those who share your interests to exchange ideas, gain support and even collaborate on projects. Look for established groups or start one with friends, either online or in person. There are many opportunities all along the Shore to participate in art or craft groups, play in musical jams, sing in choirs, or be part of building community.

3. **Take A Class.** Of course, there is lots of online selections. There are also lots of in-person local options. Try Halifax Rec (Halifax.ca/parks-recreation) for rec centres in your community and visit your local community hall for chances to make together or learn new things. Many local artists teach classes or offer one-on-one mentoring programs. Visit open studios or shops or reach out to local arts to inquire about custom training or recommendations for resources.

...continued on page 13

Valentine’s Community Breakfast

First United Church
Musquodoboit Harbour

February 10, 2024
8:30-9:30 AM
Price: \$10





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Wishing You All the Best in 2024

MLA MEMO

Minimum Wage Increase

Nova Scotia’s minimum wage will increase to \$15.20 per hour on April 1. The increase follows the formula previously recommended by the Minimum Wage Review Committee and accepted by the government. Starting this year, the rate is to be adjusted by the national consumer price index plus one percentage point from the minimum wage rate set the preceding April. That means an increase this year of 4.7 per cent from the April 2023 rate.

Wage Increases & New Pension Benefits for Early Childhood Educators

Early childhood educators and employees working in licensed child-care centres will receive benefits and pensions for the first time. The province is raising the wages of early childhood educators (ECEs) and introducing a benefits and pension package for all employees of the licensed sector.

All employees will have access to an Employee and Family Assistance Program as of January 1. The wage increase will take effect April 1, 2024. Employers will start enrolling in group benefits and the pension plan in May 2024, with full enrolment by the end of 2024. The province will fund employers to provide retroactive pension contributions to January 1, 2024.

Transforming Cancer Care in Nova Scotia

Cancer patients in Nova Scotia will be some of the first to access new technology and innovative programs developed in the fight against the disease over the next decade.

Nova Scotia Health and Varian, a U.S.-based Siemens Healthineers company that provides cancer care technologies, have entered a 10-year multi-disciplinary oncology partnership that includes utilizing artificial intelligence in digital imaging and will modernize the way cancer care is delivered in the province and around the world.

The partnership will provide Nova Scotia with new, state-of-the-art equipment and

software to expand the ongoing oncology transformation project across the province. The benefits will include:

- expansion of the provincial cancer screening and cancer survivorship programs
- earlier detection of cancers with improved diagnostics
- treatments that are less invasive and more personalized
- improved outcomes for patients.

Nova Scotia Health will invest up to \$224 million over the next 10 years in the project. That includes \$175 million to purchase hardware, software and digital solutions and services, and \$49 million for renovations to accommodate new equipment and create new positions to support the project.

Supports to Help Seniors Stay in Their Homes

A new pilot program, the first of its kind in Canada, will soon help seniors in the Preston area, Kings County and on the Halifax peninsula live more independently in their homes.

The Community Aging in Place, Advancing Better Living for Elders program (CAPABLE) will pair seniors with a registered nurse, an occupational therapist and a handy person who will work with them to identify needs in their daily activities and homes that will help Program teams work with seniors to set goals and make modifications, which could include recommending exercises to improve strength and mobility; reviewing medications; rearranging furniture; removing carpets; moving frequently used items so they are easier to reach; securing shelves; improving lighting; installing grab bars, raised toilet seats, lever faucets and lever door handles; and repairing steps and other items.

The CAPABLE pilot will be delivered by VON Nova Scotia, which will work with community

organizations to identify and refer local seniors. Three hundred seniors – 100 in each area – will be able to enroll in the pilot.

Applications are now open for seniors in the communities of Cherry Brook, Lake Loon, North Preston, East Preston and surrounding area. Applications are expected to open for seniors in Kings County and on the Halifax peninsula early in 2024.

To qualify, seniors must:

- be 65 or older
- have physical or mobility challenges
- have a net income of \$85,000 or less or receive income assistance, the province’s heating assistance rebate, or the guaranteed income supplement from Service Canada.

Seniors can get more information and apply by calling 1-888-925-6101 or going to <https://von.ca/von-care/capable>

Winter Sportfishing Open

Winter sportfishing provides an opportunity to be outdoors and enjoy many lakes and waterways across Nova Scotia beginning Monday, January 1.

Getting outside at this time of year is fun for established anglers and those discovering sportfishing for the first time. Whatever your skill level, and whether you fish by yourself or with others, safety should always be top of mind.

Freshwater species in the areas open for winter sportfishing include brook and rainbow trout, white and yellow perch, smallmouth bass, and chain pickerel. The Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture stocks lakes with trout from three provincial hatcheries to support the season.

A general fishing licence is needed for this activity, except for the annual winter sportfishing weekend, which is February 17-19 in 2024. Buying a sportfishing licence and safety information: <https://beta.novascotia.ca/programs-and-services/sportfishing-licensing>



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Happy New Year!

As we enter 2024, I'm wishing you and
your family all the best in the year
ahead.



Eastern Shore Lifestyles Centre Committee

The Eastern Shore Lifestyle Centre Committee wish to thank you for your continued support of our Hope Chest fundraising for the new Lifestyle Centre. This project has been a long time coming but we now have an architect starting to develop the design.

Halifax Regional Municipality sent out a postcard to all households in the catchment area between East Ship Harbour and Ecum Secum confirming that the new facility is coming in 2027. It will feature a community hall; Halifax Public Library; recreation

space including a fitness centre; and a new Halifax Regional Fire and Emergency Services Station #28.

We wish everybody a happy 2024 and look forward to seeing this much needed community project become a reality. Updates will be provided throughout the project.

Thanks again for your support.