

# NSFM NEWS

## CBRM'S CLAIRE DETHERIDGE HONOURED

### **2019 Ken Simpson Award Winner**

Throughout a political career that spanned more than three decades, Claire Detheridge demonstrated exceptional public service, leadership and fairness.

Those attributes were recognized earlier this month when she was honoured with the **Ken Simpson Memorial Award** at NSFM's fall conference in Halifax.



Detheridge, above with NSFM President Pam Mood, received a standing ovation from more than 250 NSFM members at the event at the Westin Halifax Hotel.

CBRM Deputy Mayor Ivan Doncaster was first elected to council in 1985 and says Detheridge's reputation as an effective and fair leader preceded her.

"She was a strong voice on council and someone to look up to. When I was a rookie, she showed me around and helped me out wherever she could."

"And she served on every committee we had. You name it, she was on it," he said.

Her Cape Breton focus expanded when she was involved with the provincial library board, he says.

That work was recognized in 2011 with the Distinguished Service to Public Libraries award from Library Boards Association of Nova Scotia.

Another council colleague says libraries are still her passion.

"We still get messages from her about the possibilities of a new library in Sydney and someday we hope to get there," says Darren Bruckschwaiger.

Detheridge also worked tirelessly to establish the Sydney-West Wastewater project, NSFM President Pam Mood said in presenting the award.

"She knew that clean water and pristine coastline were vital for residents of Cape Breton and never gave up," Mood said of the \$60-million Sydney-West project now in the works.

"Two decades – now that is real commitment," Mood said.

Detheridge also chaired the local police commission at a time when tensions ran high because the traditional model of policing was changing.

"That was a big policing debate, choosing between Regional Police and RCMP, and it was caused by lack of resources," Bruckschwaiger said.

"Claire was chair at the time and she did a great job of handling that. A few councillors lost re-election because of that vote, but not Claire."

Detheridge is a hard worker who capably represented her own district and CBRM, says Bruckschwaiger, who worked with her for 17 years.

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*Claire Detheridge,  
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“She looked beyond her own boundary, because she understood that regional council is about the whole region. She made a point to come out to different communities for meetings to hear the views there too.”

Detheridge was the first woman elected to the former Cape Breton County Council and also served as deputy mayor.

“She always worked hard and gave 100 per cent,” he says of the mother of two and the grandmother to four.

With an unstoppable work ethic and an ability to build bridges in disputes, Detheridge embodies the spirit of the award named for NSF’s executive director from 1990 to 2010.

“Ken Simpson was really well respected and liked,” says Doncaster, “and she followed in those footsteps.”

Detheridge’s abilities also shone outside council chambers. After meetings, a few councillors used to hash out the votes at a booth at Jasper’s Restaurant.

“We might have been at one another’s throats at the meeting, but we could sit down together afterward and discuss the events of the evening.

“And Claire was a big part of the camaraderie we were able to achieve in those little sessions.”

## Solar Colchester Has The Power to Change

A new program in Colchester County is making renewable energy more accessible and affordable.

Launched in April, *Solar Colchester* provides up to \$20,000 in financing from the municipality for homeowners who want solar PV panel installations.

The seeds for the program were planted in 2015 when a residents’ group from North Colchester presented to council.



*Mayor Christine Blair, sustainability officer Joanna Burris, and community development director Crawford Macpherson accept the 2019 Climate Change Leaders Award for Solar Colchester at NSF’s conference in Halifax this month.*

And while other municipalities started off small with programs like solar-powered hot water, Colchester County moved right into clean energy generation.

“There was a lot of interest generating electricity directly, and that’s what the group wanted,” sustainability officer Joanna Burris said.

Council was immediately on board, says Mayor Christine Blair.

In 2016, the municipality installed two 45-metre high wind turbines at their balefill and composting facility in Kempton and were keen to try other green energy initiatives that reduce the demand for fossil fuels.

“Solar Colchester is a big benefit for Colchester County because we all know that climate change is crucial right now, it’s at a pivotal point.”

Council approved \$900,000 for the program over three years. The municipality’s operating budget is about \$30 million.

“It is a significant amount of money. Every bit that we do as a municipality counts in countering the effects of climate change.”

With \$300,000 available annually through 2021-22, each eligible homeowner can tap into a maximum of \$20,000 per project.

“That amount works out really well for most projects,” says Burris.

This year, Colchester County will finance 18 projects that generate about 7 kilowatts (7,000 watts), enough to power the average home. The homeowners pay back the loans at around \$2,000 a year.

“The payments on the panels they would have made on their power bills – so they’re exchanging one bill for the other.”

After 10 years, homeowners will have virtually free electricity for the remainder of the 25-plus year lifespan of the panels, she said.