

# Shelburne Parks and Recreation Commission

## Annual Report 2000

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## Introduction

The 2000 Parks and Recreation Commission Annual Report has been prepared to provide an overview of the operation of the Parks and Recreation Department of the Town of Shelburne for the 2000 calendar year.

This Report is a supplement to the reports submitted monthly to the Parks and Recreation Commission and Town Council by the Parks and Recreation Director.

Additional information on any of the items mentioned in this Report is available from the Parks and Recreation Office, 168 Water Street.

Items mentioned in this Report are in no specific order or priority.

## **Parks and Recreation Commission members**

2000

Deputy Mayor Tony Mahaney, Chair  
Councilor Bernie Nickerson, Vice Chair  
Councilor Earle Pentz  
Councilor Elizabeth Acker  
Susan Acker  
Natalie Bower / Liam MacLellan  
Al Mahaney  
Marina MacLellan  
Wolf Jacobi  
  
Mayor P.G. Comeau, ex-officio

## **2000 Highlights**

As this Report is being written, Christmas is still lingering. This year the Parks and Recreation Department began preparations for Christmas in mid-October. Christmas lights for the poles have to be inspected and repaired every year, before they are placed on the power poles along King and Water Streets and Falls Lane.

The Town's annual Christmas tree for Gloucester was cut right in Town this year and shipped out on November 15.

The Town employees constructed and "animated" a float for the Christmas Parade. We won the award for "Funniest Float".

The Town Hall was decorated with lights, frosted windows and other decorations.

This year our own Town Christmas tree- placed in the park at the corner of King and Water Streets- and the park area itself received additional decorating from a number of volunteers. Lights and decorations were donated and purchased. Many favorable comments were received on the additional decorations.

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In the fall, the Shelburne and Area Recreation Fields Committee was formed. This is a group of owners and managers of recreational fields in the area that was formed to develop a strategy for facility development and to open lines of communication. This committee resulted from discussion concerning possible development of several fields and the determination of the need and the extent of this development. With assistance from the Nova Scotia Sport and Recreation Commission, a consulting firm has been hired to prepare a report on nine fields in the area, with data that can be used to plan both routine operations and development of the sites. This information will be used to assist in planning for future development of these and other facilities of a similar nature.

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The Community Centre was very busy again this year. It has certainly proved to be an asset to the community. There were 424 bookings made during the year. This is higher than last year. The table below lists bookings for the last four years.

1997 - 270
1998 - 346
1999 - 411
2000 - 424

The Parks and Recreation Department is responsible for scheduling for the facility. This occupies a fair amount of staff time and includes billing (if necessary), referrals for catering, provision of additional equipment, and other related help.

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Our third Annual Haunted House was very successful this year. It was open for two evenings and this contributed greatly to its success. There were a total of 330 people counted through for the two nights. There were a lot of favorable comments received, from both parents and children. A number of volunteers assisted again this year. Their help is crucial to the success of this event. They also have a lot of fun with the makeup and costumes.

Plans have already been made for next year's house. The floor plan, characters and effects will be quite different from other years. It's always good (but difficult) to provide a different theme for each year.

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The past year saw a number of changes in Parks and Recreation Commission membership.

Our SRHS representative changed - Liam MacLellan replaced Natalie Bower. Wolf Jacobi joined the Commission as a volunteer, but moved away during the

year. Councilor Earle Pentz moved away and the fall municipal elections and changes in Council's committees had Barbara Huskison and Al Keith replace him and Elizabeth Acker. Susan Acker did not offer for another term as a volunteer.

Commission members meet monthly to review the operation of the Parks and Recreation Department and discussion municipal recreation-related matters.

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The Parks and Recreation Department and the Municipality of Shelburne's Recreation Department assisted with a Canoe/Kayak demonstration on September 9. Equipment and leadership for the day was provided by a competitive club from Dartmouth. A number of people attended the session and had an opportunity to try out a war canoe and several racing kayaks. There is potential for a small group to develop in this area - several volunteers have previous experience in competitive canoeing and kayaking and interest in developing a club. We will assist them and try to increase interest.

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Our website had only minor changes made to its format this year. The site is updated on a regular basis, as information changes. The site is supposed to remain quite consistent and provide very general information on the Town. We often get requests for information from school

children doing projects - the website provides a lot of the information they are looking for. The site has the potential to be expanded, but the time and technology are not available at the office. The site is not very busy - as website visits go - but there were 1864 "hits" made during the year.

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The Parks and Recreation Department provided assistance to other Town departments during the year. Equipment and staff were shared as required on a number of projects with the various departments. We also received assistance from these departments when we needed it. This cooperation and sharing helps to reduce operating costs for the Town and provides for a better use of existing skills and resources.

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The Departments new special events signs were heavily used during the year. The signs - placed on the corner of Falls Lane and the Ohio Road and at the corner of King and Parr Streets - have changeable letters and are used to feature department and community events. A schedule of requested notices is kept and we do our best to have every one placed on the boards.

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The Yarmouth Shelburne Municipal Recreation

Association, formed in December 1999 was very active during the year. The organization, comprised of municipal recreation staff in the two Counties meets to work on projects of a regional nature, to discuss and act on common issues and share experience and skills.

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Founders' Days 2000 was a series of "good news/bad news" stories.

The program was packed full of entertainment, events and activities for the entire weekend.

The Committee's decision to move Founders' Days from its traditional date seemed to work well. Events such as the Whirligigs, Weathervanes and Sundials Festival, the Regiment battles and camp, lot of local music, the improved sound system and a visit from Miss Canada International added a great deal of color and interest to the weekend. There were more booths than ever. The promotion associated with the Tall Ships visit to Nova Scotia certainly added to the number of people in attendance.

However, the "non event" of the Tall Ships visit (to Shelburne anyway) and the difficulties in getting corporate financial support for Founders' Days dampened our spirits more than the rain showers we had on that weekend.

The local Tall Ships Committee worked tirelessly to plan for every aspect of the ships' visits. Every little detail was thought through and assigned - all the ships had to do was come. The ships we got may well have been classified

as "Tall Ships", but they certainly were not enough in number or stature to justify the effort and expense by both the Tall Ship and Founders' Days Committees. This situation was repeated in all of the Auxiliary Ports of the Tall Ship program and was a disappointment to organizers and ship lovers alike. The local committee spent most of that weekend apologizing and trying to put a happy face on a clearly disappointing event.

The delays in getting volunteers and then the lack of interest in obtaining Corporate sponsorship for Founders' Days left the Committee in a constant state of uncertainty. A major portion of the Founders' Days program and events is dependant on the levels of funding that the Committee can secure. Entertainment, publicity, fireworks, etc. all are linked to how much money the Committee has to spend. This year we stuck our neck out - in anticipation of an increase in support, particularly at the local corporate level. It didn't happen.

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Volunteer Week was April 9 - 15. The Department requested nominations for representative volunteers from local organizations and 23 were received. Jacques Rioux was selected to represent the many volunteers in the Town of Shelburne at the Provincial Awards Ceremony held in Halifax on April 7.

A reception for volunteer nominees for the Towns

of Lockeport and Shelburne, and the Municipality of Shelburne was held in Lockeport on April 11. Nearly 100 people attended.

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The Shelburne Curling Club held its official opening on November 4. The club has experienced a increase in membership at all age levels. It is a fine example of a community-based facility that has developed with a lot of “sweat equity” by its membership. The Parks and Recreation provided some funding to the club toward equipment that is used in their Junior program.

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The Department participated in the summer staff training program that was developed by the Yarmouth Shelburne Municipal Recreation Association. The format for the sessions was changed considerably over previous years, and was very successful. Our Department’s staff numbers are very small compared to most others in the two Counties, so the number of our staff in attendance is not high. They still benefit from the training received and provide their own input to the sessions.

The Association has already begun the planning

process for next year’s training. Some changes will be made based on the evaluation of this year.

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The Department was busy with equipment loans though the year. Various items were loaned to community groups. This included tools, equipment, band risers, and canoes.

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The Youth Activity Fair was held on February 12. This year there were 32 different booths at the Fair. The Fair provided an opportunity for many different organizations and agencies to display their programs and services for youth to the community. The Fair is very well received every year and there is potential for the numbers of people who attend to grow significantly.

We need to include specific “attractions” to the Fair that will generate interest. This year’s live broadcasts by CJLS Radio were helpful in attracting more people.

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The Department was involved with the Registration Committee for the annual Recreation Nova Scotia Conference, held at 14 Wing Greenwood this year.

At the Conference the Sandy Point Recreation Group received the RNS Bluenose Achievement Award. This award is “presented to volunteers or community organizations to recognize outstanding achievements in the improvement of recreation/leisure opportunities.....”

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The Shelburne County Heart Health Action Team was very busy during the year. This is a group that has been formed to address heart-health related issues in the County. The group’s anti-smoking project that had been underway at Barrington Municipal High School continued. The BMHS Junior High survey results were released in January. From that, a number of programs are being developed in the school, with assistance from students, staff and team members.

The project moved to Shelburne Regional High School during the year. The smoking survey was done at SRHS in June and the results were compiled over the summer. The SRHS team was formed in September and plans were begun for the survey release in January 2001. Program development, based on information gathered from the survey release will begin.

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The Kids’ Fair Play Fund had a very busy year. The need to provide assistance to children to enable the to participate in sport and recreation activities in the County continues to grow. There are an increasing number of applications to the program as the need grows and knowledge of the program spreads. The Fund-raising Committee of the group was very busy, securing funding to meet the applications that are reviewed through the year.

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For the summer of 2000, changes were made to the staff hiring schedule for parks staff. In the past, one parks worker was hired in May, then 2 more were hired late in June. This year the schedule was flipped and two were hired in May and then one in June. This move proved to be very worthwhile. In the past work was always behind schedule during the busy months of May and June as parks and facilities were prepared for the summer. This year there were enough people to get the work done on time, and even ahead of schedule. This allowed for more time to complete work through July and August that may not have been done at all.

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Summer staff were hired with funding from the Federal government and the Parks and Recreation Department's budget. The provincial government has stopped funding summer jobs for municipal governments and this has placed an additional financial burden on us.

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The Department's summer program was very successful this year. A number of new short-term programs were tried and they were very successful. We have more ideas for next summer. The Department continued to provide staff to the Municipality's swim program at Welkum Park. The Special Events Coordinator filed a complete report on all summer programs.

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As a result of an initiative launched by the local Community Health Board, a group was brought together to develop strategies to increase the level of physical activity among children in Shelburne County. The Shelburne County Active Team (SCAT) was formed.

Early on, SCAT received funding from the Physically Active Children and Youth (PACY) program to implement a number of programs.

To date, SCAT itself is suffering from a lack of activity. The need is great, the ideas, plans and programs that are discussed are good, but the organization itself seems to lack feet. Implementation is a key that is lacking. The people who are involved are in recreation/

education/health fields and are all very busy with other projects and work-related things. Attendance at meetings is spotty at best and continuity is difficult. The future of SCAT will be decided early in the new year.

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## **Parks**

The Parks and Recreation Department is responsible for 17 different park/facility areas within the Town. They range in from small planters downtown to the 13 acres of the Roger Grovestine Recreation Complex.

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The Rail line trail was very popular during the past year. Our section of the trail (within the Town limits) is now included on the TrailPAQ website for trails across Canada.

We are pretty much in a “maintenance mode” with our trail section now. Work done is mostly routine with only slight enhancements. An experiment was conducted last winter concerning plowing snow on the trail. It worked quite well, and will be continued as the need arises, and equipment availability permits. There is still occasional vandalism on the trail, mostly associated with the signs, but it has declined overall. The trail is monitored regularly by staff and damage is repaired promptly.

We have not had time to work on further development and promotion of the resource package that was started two years ago. This includes rail history, identification of plant and wildlife and environmental topics in association with the rail-line trail

The Department installed a safety railing and “wings” on the east side of the railings on the Roseway River bridge this year. The railing keeps people clear of the steep bank on the Southeast side of the bridge approach, and the “wings” keep people from walking outside of the bridge rails. The wings on the other side of the big bridge, and both sides of the small bridge were installed by the Shelburne County Trails Association

The Department provided assistance to the Trails Association with their work in completing the clearing of the trails section from the Islands Parks Road to Birchtown. The Town’s chipper was used as well as other pieces of equipment from our inventory.

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The Department purchased a new ride-on mower last year. Our old mower is over 9 years old and has given excellent service. Its only problem was that the transmission was worn and ground speed was reduced significantly. Repairs were not cost-effective given its age so a replacement was funded through the Capital budget.

The old mower was kept in service and used in combination with the new one. This proven to be a very effective use of both equipment and staff. Mowing time for turf areas was greatly reduced. In some cases the mowers were used at the same site, in other they were split up and assigned depending on the size of the area to be cut. This practice will continue as long as the old mower stays in good repair. Consideration may be given to proposing a continuation of a two-machine system even after that.

Some modifications will be necessary to one of our trailers to accommodate better transportation of two mowers.

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The George Street Playground continues to have fairly good numbers of users.

The basketball/ball hockey courts are used quite often. The basketball nets are in very good condition, the hockey nets are in a continual state of disrepair, but are very serviceable. (They are often used as seating for basketball.) The asphalt court itself is beginning to show signs of heaving and breakage at some edges, but it is still in good condition.

The last of the rotten timbers around the playground equipment area were replaced this year. It should be a while before the replacement cycle begins there again.

Additional pea gravel needs to be added around some of the equipment to increase the depth of the protective surface and increase the fall protection value of the surface. This may be done before the 2000/2001 fiscal year is over - if funds permit.

One old piece of equipment is nearing the end of its life and will need to be removed and/or replaced soon. This will be a fairly expensive item.

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The Roger Grovestine Recreation Complex had a very busy schedule again this year.

The ballfield had a total of 173 bookings for the season. This is down quite a bit over last year, mostly in the months of August and September. The following table

shows bookings for the last 4 years.

	1997	1998	1999	2000
May	25	43	36	34
June	35	49	50	44
July	39	55	58	46
August	32	25	54	40
September	17	3	32	9
total	148	175	230	173

The field itself is holding up quite well. The quality of the outfield turf has not improved and is probably even deteriorating. This would be a significant cost to repair/replace. The infield had some additional material added this spring and more will be added next year. It has a number of low areas that do not drain well, and a wet summer causes problems. It is very difficult to get a soil mixture that compacts well and also drains quickly - you can't have both at the same time.

Spraying was used this year to attack the persistent problem of weed growth on the infield edges and the outfield warning track. Result were quite good. The labour cost and time factor of hand-weeding was a concern. This will be continued next year.

This year "mosquito pellets" were applied to some of the wet areas around the ballfield in an attempt to control some of the insect population. Result were not to

bad, with only a small amount of the pellets being used. The practice will continue next year.

Use of the ballfield lights was very disappointing this year. There were only 33 hours of use booked all season. In 1999 there were only 71 hours booked. This is nowhere nearly the potential for use of the lights.

This year was the first year for the need to replace light bulbs around the field. Some bulbs were blown after a lightning storm late in the summer. Prior to that only two light of the 49 were out. One light ballast was replaced. There is still one faulty ballast to be replaced - we only had one spare. This type of work will only be done when enough bulbs are out to justify the cost of the boom truck and electrician.

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## **A look to 2001**

This section of the Annual Report provides a brief overview of some of the projects and issues that the Parks and Recreation Department will be dealing with over the next year.

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The Recreational Fields study will be presented to the public early in February. The information contained in the study will be specific for each of the fields included and also very broad and general for use by the entire community. The information will be used by each facility group as it plans future development at its own site and it will also be used by the community as whole as they look at the “bigger picture” in facility development. This information will enable “smart” decisions on many of the issues concerning recreational field development in both the Town and the Municipality.

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A proposal to move 12 of the present Christmas lights that mount on utility poles will be included in the 2001/2002 budget. This will remove some of the lights from their existing locations extend them along George Street and further up King Street.

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The Shelburne County Trails Association will continue developing the trail to Birchtown. During the year chipping will be completed, signs will be installed, the trail bed will be improved where necessary and bollards will be installed at road intersections. The Association has received funding from the Province to assist with this work.

The Association will also have to begin maintaining the more than 8 km of trail that they are responsible for. Without a regular maintenance program, the trail will soon fall into disrepair and become a hazard. This is not a major amount of work - the group has the skill and personnel to handle it. It is an issue that needs to be recognized and planned.

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There will be more movement toward the construction of the Shelburne Regional High School replacement. The pace that this takes is undetermined. The wheels have been set in motion though, and they will pick up speed. The provisions for community involvement in this process has changed from the former "P3" system, but there is still an opportunity for input and to influence the design of the facility to reflect the local community's needs and concerns.

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The Parks and Recreation Department will continue its "community development" approach to working with local community groups and volunteers. There is a tremendous wealth of skill, talent and resources in this community. It often needs only to be located and tapped in order to be used. The provision of linkages and the opening of lines of communication are often the easiest (and hardest) things to do to assist a project. This is the best use of our resources for our community.

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The Parks and Recreation Budget will see the addition of several items in Capital expenditures this year.

Our "second" service truck is a 1988. We got it as a "hand-me-down" from the Public Work department in October 1996. It has provided good service to the Town over the years, but the time has come for it to go. A proposal for the purchase of a used truck about 5 years old (the same age as our best truck) will be included in the budget.

Some of our smaller pieces of parks related equipment need to be replaced. This includes a fertilizer spreader, a push mower and a bush saw.

Some minor computer upgrading will also be included.

Consideration will also be given to adding the replacement of a small piece of playground equipment at George Street to the budget.

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The Founders' Days Committee will have to get its Corporate sponsorship program firmed up this year. The importance of funding, and an early, accurate indication of levels so that program plans can be made can't be stressed enough. This may be the year that the program has to take some knocks to meet the reality of matching revenue. This may be difficult to explain to the public. Their expectations of Founders' Days grows at leaps and bounds every year.

Founders' Days has the potential to become a premier attraction for Nova Scotia, but it need the support of the entire community if this is to happen.

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The Parks and Recreation Department will need to address the need for more storage space as development continues at the Cox Shipyard. In the past the old mill building and part of the Dorothy and Gail building had been used for storage. All of the items stored in the mill building were moved into the Dorothy and Gail building when the shipyard restoration project began last fall and the equipment from the old boat shop was moved into the mill. Our storage space at the Dorothy and Gail building has overflowed into the "performance space" - at least for the winter. As the restoration progresses to other buildings we

have nowhere to bump to.

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The year 2001 will be a challenging one for Parks and Recreation Department staff.

Each year it seems that more and more needs to be done and there are ever-increasing demands for staff time and resources. Our budget has risen to meet increased demands in some areas but there are limits that will probably be reached this year.

Our staff is our most important resource and we are finding it increasingly difficult to keep a grip on things. In some instances we have slipped in terms of having enough time to properly plan and implement programs and activities in all aspects of our operation.

Flying by the seat of your pants should be the exception, not the rule. We have to be careful to not allow the "tyranny of the urgent" to take control.

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The Heart Health Project has become well established in Barrington, taken root in Shelburne and will soon be planted in Lockeport. The programs that will be implemented in each school will be used to reduce the number of smokers and thereby improve the heart-health of people in the area. This has an implication for recreation as some of these young people look to physical activity as part

of their personal health improvement plan. Recent surveys that show Nova Scotia as the “leader” in smokers is proof enough of the need for this type of program.

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## **NOTES**