



2019-2020

Colchester Ground Search and Rescue Annual Report



So
Others
May
Live

Tom Fitzpatrick MMM, CD
President Colchester Ground Search and
Rescue Association
2019-2020

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Our Mission



73 Ventura Drive Debert

Colchester Ground search and Rescue's mission is to maintain a constant state of readiness of Personnel and equipment for search, rescue, and incident response



"So Other's May Live"



Our Greatest Resource Our Members

Colchester Ground Search and Rescue is committed to the lost or injured person in our County and all parts of the Province Nova Scotia. Our dedicated volunteers, all have one thing in common: they unselfishly donate their time and energies in order to help others in time of need. Each member of our teams bring their own special talents to the task of enabling the Association to continue to locate, access, stabilize and transport Lost and injured persons from the wilderness area of our County and Nova Scotia. We continue to assist Emergency Officials, Area of Jurisdiction authorities when called upon in times of crises. All volunteers are a precious resource to their communities. Those who are willing to help out in adverse conditions make personal sacrifices and risk injury while doing so are especially rare. This is the reality of Ground Search and Rescue, and never more obvious as seen in the Members of CGSARA. Whatever the time of year, whatever the weather, whatever the time of day... We do what has to be done.

"SO OTHERS MAY LIVE"



Message from CGSARA President



Colchester Ground Search and Rescue has a long and rich history of service to Colchester County and the Province of Nova Scotia. As the teams celebrated 45 years of service in February 2020, many of our members also reached personal milestones in Service to their communities.

Colchester Ground Search and Rescue Association, is very fortunate to have the continued support from the County of Colchester, the Towns of Stewiacke and Truro as well as Millbrook First Nations. Who without their continued support we would be unable to provide the professional level of service and quality of equipment that we bring to bear on any request for assistance in our Communities and Province.

The teams focus in 2019-2020 was to move forward with the construction of our much needed new addition to our facilities, to allow the team to house all of our equipment and vehicles. This was even brought to the for front on November 11, when we lost our newest vehicle addition just after completing over 12K in upgrades, parked at a members home it was consumed by fire. Fortunately the County provided insurance policy allowed us to order a new 2020 expedition as a replacement. The team continues working hard to add to our building fund, which has now reached 149K, but because of increase building cost from the



Covid 19 Pandemic, were unable to move forward within current financial resources.



March 2020 Due to Covid 19, the team lost all fundraising capabilities due to restrictions, and additionally

in-person training was ceased to comply with public health restriction, the team did conduct weekly readiness checks of the team to ensure our ability to respond if the need came. The team also postponed its Annual General meeting until in person training resumed.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Tom Fitzpatrick'.

Tom Fitzpatrick MMM, CD
President
CGSARA

Our Team Beginnings



CGSARA was founded in 1975 after two small children were lost, one of the children died of exposure. At the time the children were lost there was no organized search teams to look for them. Untrained volunteers were used to look for them and were not successful, in fact one of the volunteers died during the search effort. The fatality was mainly due to lack of proper equipment and training. The team was incorporated in 1975 and is now registered with the registry of joint stocks registry ID#1257016.

CGSARA home base is located at 73 Ventura Drive, Debert Nova Scotia, This building houses vehicles, and equipment storage, offices, kitchen, and training classroom. With permission of the owner the team, also



takes full advantage of the surrounding wilderness areas to conduct valuable training. The team is one of the larger teams in the Nova Scotia Ground Search and Rescue Association's central zone, with its main area of primary responsibility being Colchester County. This team has been continually deployed upon request to all parts of the province, assisting in all functions at larger search operations.

CGSARA is a group of volunteers that form a Ground Search and Rescue Team, which is a self-directed and managed community organization. CGSARA is organized, trained, and equipped, to locate, access, stabilize, and transport to safety person or persons lost and/or injured in wilderness or wilderness interface areas of the Province of Nova Scotia.



Our Team

Colchester Ground Search and Rescue is one of 23 teams in the province, and one of five in central zone north. The team seen the necessity in 2016 to change the team structure and by-laws to better reflect the Incident Command System (ICS) which is utilized operationally.

The team is managed logistically by the executive which represents an ICS management team, with the addition of an associate member chief to represent the associate members of the team.



Team Resources

- 1 X ICP Trailer
- 4 Station Network Computer Management System
- 1 X A Repeater mounted
- 1 X Satellite Phone System
- 22 X Real Time Tracking Radios
- 1 X Trunk Mobile Radio (Provincial System)
- 1 X ICOM Provincial Repeater Sites
- 1 X Marine Radio
- 1 X Air Operations Radio

Team Personnel

- 5 x Search Managers (MLPI, Lost Person Behaviour)
- 14 x Team Leaders (GSAR CSA Standard)
- 10 x Electronic Search Specialist
- 4 x Medical First Responders
- 14 x Wilder First Aid
- 17 x Helicopter Operations
- 4 x Life Flight Landing Officers
- 5 x UTV Operators

Operationally, the team is activated through the provincial Everbridge system, managed at Shubie Radio. The team deployment is managed by the team duty search manager, who coordinates a team Everbridge callout and identifies team resources as be activated. The team is activated as either mutual aid, or primary role which requires all team resources, including command and logistics functions.

The Command Post Trailer acts as the Incident Command Post (ICP). Searches are managed by the team Command Staff and IC from the trailer.

Vehicles & Critical equipment

- 2 x 1 Ton Dodge trucks with sliding Trays
- 1 x Excursion Transport Vehicle
- 1 x 8 wheel Argo Remote Rescue vehicle
- 3 x Litters with Mule litter wheels
- 1 x Winter evacuation toboggan
- 2 x two part Wilderness Trauma bags
- 2 x low angle rope rescue systems
- 5 x hypothermia management kits



Scope of Operations



Lost Person Searches Colchester Ground Search and Rescue has the highly trained personnel and modern equipment to enable them to search for lost, missing, despondent and/or injured individuals and groups of all ages in all terrain and weather that Nova Scotia has to offer.

Remote Rescue Operations Colchester Ground Search and

Rescue performs and/or assists in the evacuation of injured or in peril persons in remote and difficult terrain where specialized training and equipment are required to safely bring the individual to the medical help they require.



Evidence Searches When called upon Colchester Ground Search and Rescue assists the RCMP or other police services with evidence searches throughout the province of Nova Scotia.

Civil Response In emergencies

Colchester Ground Search and Rescue can be called upon to assist in Civil Response incidents such as, flood evacuations, sandbagging, traffic control, and mass casualty incidents.

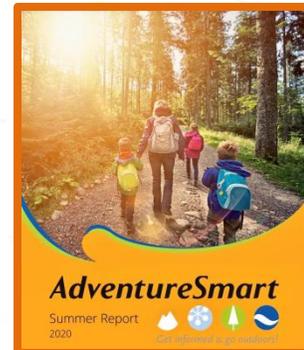


Project Lifesaver Project Lifesaver is a non-profit organization dedicated to assisting and responding to the challenge to caregivers of finding wandering or bolting loved ones who may suffer from Alzheimer's Disease, Autism or any other special needs requirements.

Clients registered with Project Lifesaver wear a personalized bracelet. It is a one-ounce battery operated radio wrist transmitter that emits a unique automatic tracking signal every second, 24 hours a day.

Public Education Colchester Ground Search and Rescue at times provides public education opportunities to promote safe wilderness activities. This includes Hug-A-Tree, Adventure Smart, Map & Compass & GPS, Wilderness First Aid.

Public Event Services Colchester Ground Search and Rescue offers various public event Services such as First Aid, Medical First Response, traffic control and parade marshalling.



Our impact

Colchester Ground Search and Rescue 2019 to 2020 Volunteer hours were down in comparison to previous years due to Covid 19 . The number of searches were down slightly from the average 12 callouts a year.

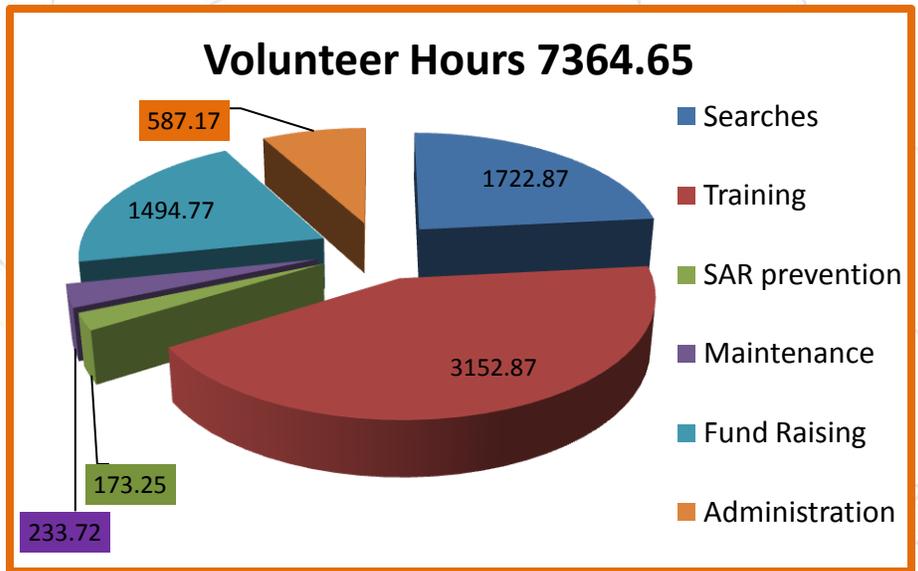
Tuesday evening are the designated training nights for the team, during these evening two levels of training are offered, searcher training and advanced search tactics. Additionally the team ran two searcher courses, one team leader course, as well as one project lifesaver electronic sensor specialist course, as well 15 members took part in Incident Command 200 level training. Outside training consisted of seven (7) team members attended Lost Person Behaviour Course, and one member attending Managing the lost person incident (Search Management). The team also had eleven(11) members attending wilderness first aid program provided by the Red Cross.

SAR Prevention encompasses both Public Education and Project LifeSaver, the team presently has seven (7) Clients that they provide service to on a monthly basis. The team also has six (6) AdventureSmart presenters but were only able to provide one session during this period.

Team members also utilize hours for vehicle maintenance and modifications in an effort to reduce costs. Most building maintenance and grounds keeping are also conducted by volunteers except for snow removal which is contracted out.

Fundraising normally accounts for over 35 percent of volunteer hours, during this period due to Covid these hours were reduced. The team depends on two major fundraisers Parking at Riverside Speedway, and Chase the ACE with other Debert organizations.

Adminstration includes, purchasing, meetings, arranging fundraising, administering team accounts, by-laws, and team correspondences.



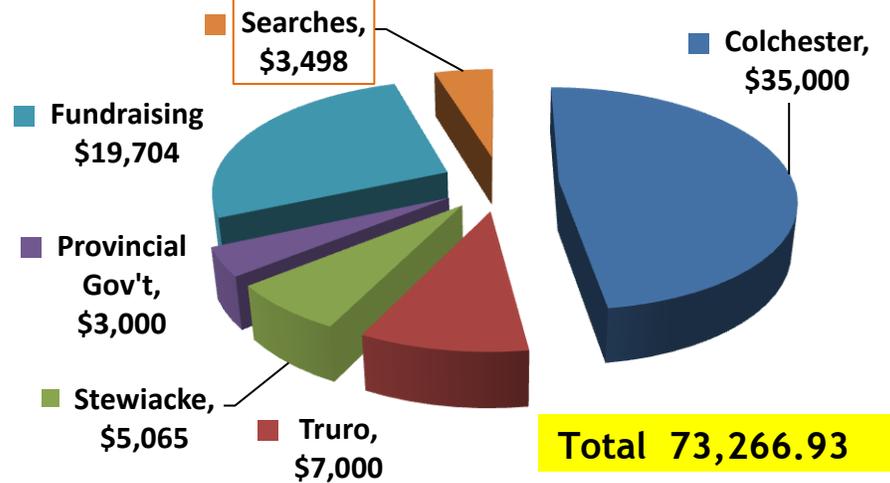
Cost of Doing Business

Colchester Ground Search and Rescue 2019-2020 was a below average financial year for the team due to poor performance of Chase the Ace, and the shut down due to Covid 19.

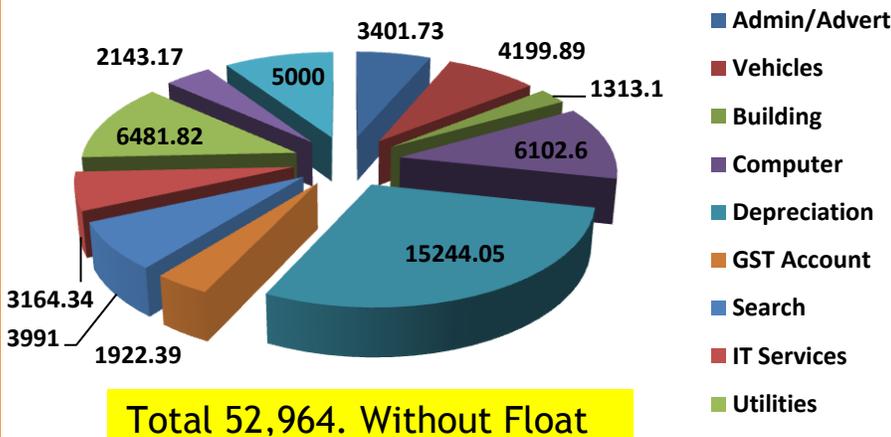
Annual Grants were received from the Province of Nova Scotia, County of Colchester, Towns of Truro and Stewiacke. Search funding was received but did not equate to the required upgrades of computers required for the ICP.

Colchester Ground Search and Rescue has been curtailing all upgrades and purchasing of new equipment until such time as we are able to properly store and maintain it. All funds are being directed to our much need building project. Only projects affecting operations and response time are being addressed immediately as required. Those projects previously started are being seen through to completion.

Annual Income 2019-2020



Team Expenses



The team maintains a 20K Float for search operations as all cost are paid by the team upfront, and claims are submitted to AOJ for reimbursement. Members are reimbursed mileage and expenses by the team immediately. Claims average 90 days after submission.

The team building fund which contains 149K, includes two GICs totalling 102,431.21, and 47K in the account. Reduced fundraising and expenses does not allow the team to add to the building account during this fiscal year.

Year at a Glance

Activations

- On the evening of June 15th, 2019 CGSARA was activated to search for an elderly man in the McLellans Mountain area that hadn't returned when expected by family members. The missing man was quickly found and the team stood down.
- June 26th, 2019, the team was activated for a mutual aid search for elderly man in Cape Breton. The subject was found while the team was en-route.
- 4:30 am, July 3rd, 2019, CGSARA was requested to aid in the search for a father and daughter that hadn't returned from their canoe trip on their scheduled return date. The daughter was found on the first day of the search, while the father was found 2 days later.
- Sept 9th, 2019, members were activated to search for a 12 year girl that wandered away from home in Pirate Harbour. She was soon found safe and sound.
- At 5:30 am on Nov 4th, 2019, GSAR was activated to Halfway River to search for an elderly lady that left her home the night before and hadn't come home. After spending the night in neighboring outbuilding she was found none the worse for wear.
- 4:30 am on Dec 18th, 2019, CGSARA received a call to search for an elderly hunter that didn't arrive back home the previous evening. Shortly after searchers arrived on seen the gentleman was found after a night held up under a tree to stay warm.
- On the afternoon of May 6th, 2020, CGSARA received an urgent call to find a 3 year old child that wandered out of his yard within Truro. Sadly after exhaustive days searching, this case remains unresolved.
- June 8th, 2020, the team was called into Truro again, this time to search for a missing elderly man with dementia. He was soon found still within the residential complex that he was reported missing from.
- July 22, 2020, CGSARA was called to aid in a search in Newtonville for a missing elderly woman. After searching all night without any results, fatigue and safety required some of our members to acquire local accommodations for a few hours' sleep before the trip back home.

Lessons Learned

2019 -2020 Has provided the team some valuable lesson to learn from with the loss of our Ford Excursion on November 11, 2019. The vehicle was parked at a members home because of no space to park it in our building. The vehicle was older 2004 but was the only vehicle that could be with available resources, that could carry 8 searchers (Search team of 7 and a driver) and tow one of the team heavy trailers. The vehicle had undergone approximately twelve thousand in upgrades and repairs to make it suitable for our purposes. The vehicle was a complete write off and the County's furnished insurance policy was excellent and provided for a new replacement. Team members fanned out

Our Challenges

looking for a replacement. The only vehicle suitable was a 2020 Ford expedition. The team ordered the expedition at the end of January, providing a five thousand dollar down payment in an effort to get the order moving. The Insurance money was received, but did not cover any taxes. Covid of course delayed vehicle delivery from April to finally October. The team then utilized the insurance settlement and an paid and additional ten thousand in taxes. In the end the team has a new vehicle although it did cost us fifteen thousand of unbudgeted funding. The vehicle still requires upgrading to tow our trailers, and once again it is parked at a members home.

Recruitment and Retention Our Greatest Challenge, finding new members willing to commit the time and availability. It takes a special person to be able to leave family and work obligations any time of the day or night to respond sometimes hundreds of kilometers away for indefinite time period up to days or even weeks to help someone they have never met or known. The flexibility or an employer willing to allow you to leave work at a moment's notice or not show up at work so that you are able to respond, more often unpaid. potential member with the financial resources (1200\$-1700\$) to be able to purchase appropriate clothing and personal equipment to safely operate in all environmental conditions. A reliable means of transportation to allow you to attend meetings, and respond to search sites or pickup points. The capacity to cope with long and arduous physical exertion, the emotionally taxing challenge of dealing with deceased finds. Attending hundreds of hours of yearly training, honing perishable skills, late nights, poor weather conditions and valued weekends. Hundreds of hours a year doing fundraising, to be able to train and buy equipment to allow the team to respond to emergencies. Hours upgrading and maintaining team equipment and facilities, preparing for deployments, meetings, carrying out administration. Untracked hours a year in home study, purchasing and upgrading personal equipment and preparing to respond. The commitment to serving others, and the willingness to endure the hardships of service.

As the number of new volunteers or available time reduces, the demand on other team volunteers increases to meet obligations and fundraising activities, often resulting in burn out and loss of retention. Maintaining Our Greatest Resources is our greatest challenge to the organization. CGSARA on the books has 45 member, for responses on weekends or evenings we may be able to field 30 members, during work days the team may be able to field between 15-20 members. Unfortunately not all members are equal in capabilities so approximately 1/3 of responding members are not field capable searchers due to age, or physical conditions, but are utilized in logistics roles at the search base. In the end it is the number of available members that directly affect response time to incidents, and ultimately it is boots on the ground that find lost persons. Ideally to meet our current needs and commitments CGSARA should be maintaining a strength of about 60 members, but this is not

Our Challenges

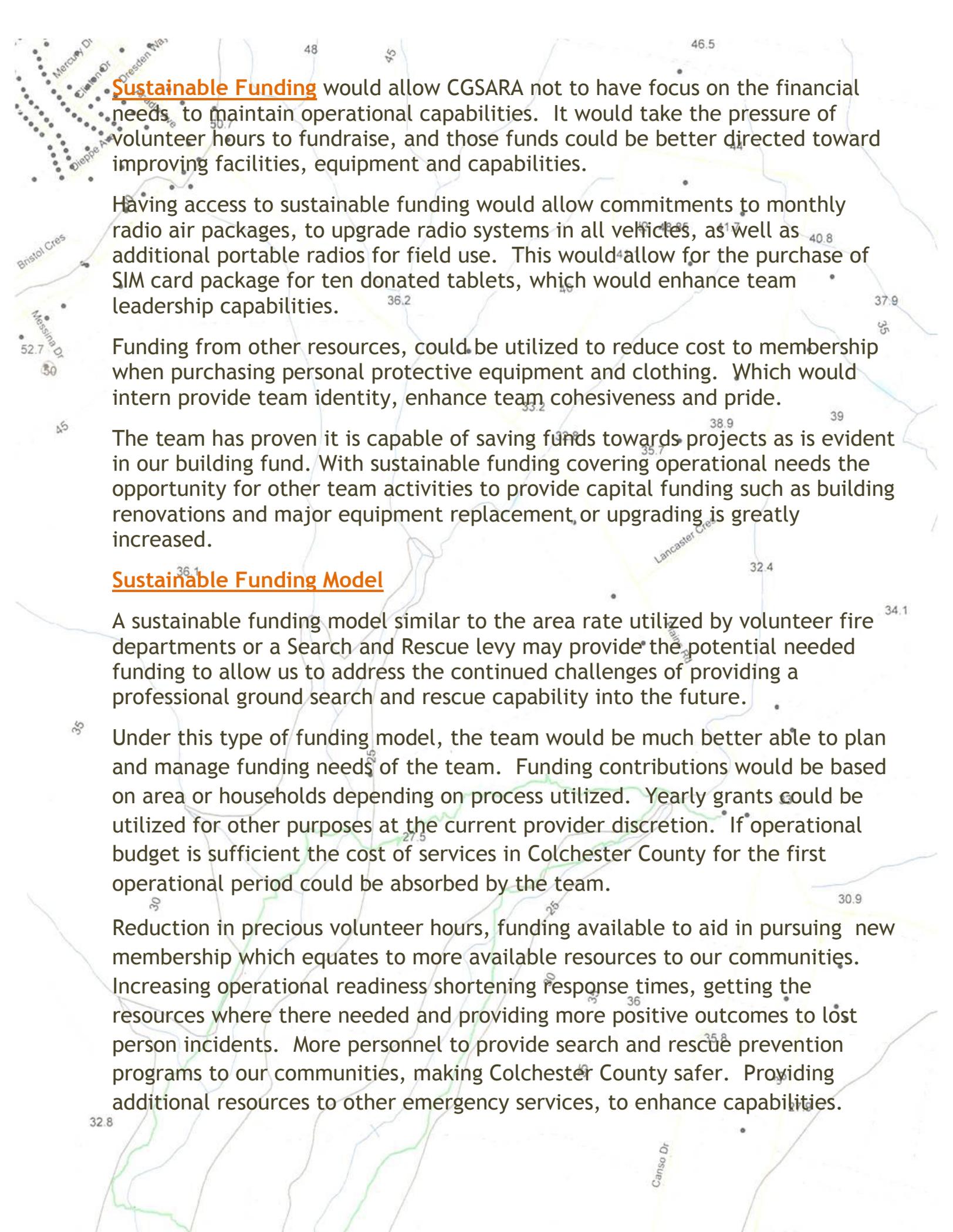
achievable under current conditions, without removing some of the negatives to service, by reducing cost and utilizing precious volunteer hour wisely.

Sustainable Funding our second greatest challenge is sustainable funding to allow us to better manage precious volunteer hour, and reduce the cost of volunteers to serve. Currently CGSARA is one of the best community supported Ground Search teams in the Province, we are very fortunate to have the support of Colchester County for building and vehicles insurance, and the new insurance policies to protect our valued members, as well as our major financial supporter. We are also very thankful to the Towns of Stewiacke and Truro, as well as Millbrook First Nation for their financial support to our organizations. CGSARA would not be able to train or respond in the professional manner we are capable of, with frontline modern equipment and capabilities that we presently provide to our communities and the Province, without this continued support.

Sustainable funding is key to recruitment and retention, and should not depend on volunteer hours to meet our commitments. Monies received from search operations are utilized to reimburse member travel expenses, and replenish utilized equipment, expendables and some user costs. These funds are far from sufficient to replace broken major equipment or equipment reaching the end of its service life, or the volunteer hours utilized to train, care and maintain the equipment.

The team has curtailed most upgrading and purchasing of needed equipment to focus on our much needed building project. Team priorities are to provide sufficient storage and protection as well as space to maintain our valuable equipment and vehicles we presently hold, thus reducing maintenance hours, cost of repairs, and dependence on fundraising activities. The building project will upgrade washroom facilities, and provide more training space for membership. Most importantly it will increase response time, and reduce volunteer hours having to restock vehicles during winter months prior to responding.

The present funding model does allow us to maintain facilities, vehicles and equipment at **Current levels**. This model is difficult to plan or depend on due to fiscal restraints, and depends on yearly requests and approval process with no guarantee. This model still directly depends on additional volunteer hours in fundraising, upgrading, and maintenance to maintain the status quo.



Sustainable Funding would allow CGSARA not to have focus on the financial needs to maintain operational capabilities. It would take the pressure of volunteer hours to fundraise, and those funds could be better directed toward improving facilities, equipment and capabilities.

Having access to sustainable funding would allow commitments to monthly radio air packages, to upgrade radio systems in all vehicles, as well as additional portable radios for field use. This would allow for the purchase of SIM card package for ten donated tablets, which would enhance team leadership capabilities.

Funding from other resources, could be utilized to reduce cost to membership when purchasing personal protective equipment and clothing. Which would intern provide team identity, enhance team cohesiveness and pride.

The team has proven it is capable of saving funds towards projects as is evident in our building fund. With sustainable funding covering operational needs the opportunity for other team activities to provide capital funding such as building renovations and major equipment replacement, or upgrading is greatly increased.

Sustainable Funding Model

A sustainable funding model similar to the area rate utilized by volunteer fire departments or a Search and Rescue levy may provide the potential needed funding to allow us to address the continued challenges of providing a professional ground search and rescue capability into the future.

Under this type of funding model, the team would be much better able to plan and manage funding needs of the team. Funding contributions would be based on area or households depending on process utilized. Yearly grants could be utilized for other purposes at the current provider discretion. If operational budget is sufficient the cost of services in Colchester County for the first operational period could be absorbed by the team.

Reduction in precious volunteer hours, funding available to aid in pursuing new membership which equates to more available resources to our communities. Increasing operational readiness shortening response times, getting the resources where there needed and providing more positive outcomes to lost person incidents. More personnel to provide search and rescue prevention programs to our communities, making Colchester County safer. Providing additional resources to other emergency services, to enhance capabilities.

Mapping our Future

Colchester Ground Search and Rescue Association looks forward to a bright future in service to our communities. With three major goals, increasing the number of volunteers, moving forward with the addition to our facilities, sustainable operational funding to reduce reliance on volunteer hours utilized to fundraise.

Priority #1 Volunteerism in Nova Scotia has changed, making it very difficult for organization such as ours to find new members.

- I. The team must increase recruitment activities and public exposure to increase new membership.
- II. The team must seek opportunities to provide more generic equipment to reduce personal cost for clothing and equipment.
- III. The team must reduce where ever possible non-core related uses of precious volunteer hours.
- IV. Team must increase recognition both internally and the communities of volunteer service.

Priority #2 Team facilities need to be upgraded to better store valuable equipment, increase training facilities, and washroom capacity.

- I. New addition must be completed to increase operational readiness, and response time.
- II. Provide proper storage of team equipment, and sufficient spaces to conduct proper equipment and vehicle care and maintenance.
- III. Upgrade of washroom facilities to ensure compliance with local codes and meet the growing needs of the membership.
- IV. Increased classrooms to allow for concurrent training to be carried out during valued training periods
- V. To increase member Esprit de corps, and public image.

Priority #3 Sustainable operational funding is key to all team priorities.

- I. Sustainable operational funding would remove dependence on fundraising to meet operational needs of the team.
- II. Funding will allow more opportunities to focus fundraising activities towards facility and equipment improvements.
- III. Funding could reduce demands on valuable volunteer hours for fundraising, maintenance, and administration.
- IV. Provide opportunities to reduce the costs on member's equipment.

Recognizing Our Members

Congratulations

On your years of Service Milestone



30 Years

Leonard Brandstad

36.1

20 Years Service

Gwen Brandstad

Doug McNutt

Edward Leblanc

15 Years Service

Amy Hansen

10 Years Service

George Trenholm

Malcolm Magee

Stephen Parker

5 Years Service

Graham Long

Darlene Colpitts

Tom Fitzpatrick

Deanna Hatfield

Nancy Adams

Jackie Waugh

Jeff Winters

Thank you for your Service