

To all members of amateur radio clubs in Nova Scotia.

I have often heard amateur radio operators in Nova Scotia asking why they should bother to be a member of the NSARA. Each time I attempt to explain my thoughts about membership, I am sure I leave something out or the ham I am talking to stops paying attention after a few seconds so here we go with some of the most obvious reasons.

Here is a brief description of NSARA activities that you might describe to your members. Hopefully someone in your Club might take a bit of time to make sure your members get a chance to hear about these activities.

One of the projects that almost all amateurs should be aware of is the Nova Scotia amateur callsign licence plates.

The NSARA has worked very diligently over the years with the Motor Vehicle Branch of the Province of Nova Scotia, to make it possible for Nova Scotia amateurs to have callsign plates for their vehicles. The NSARA has a coordinator who looks after the administration from the amateur radio side of things. This is presently VE1CZC, John Brown, NEW GERMANY, P.O. BOX 131, NS, B0R 1E0 , j.brown@ns.sympatico.ca

The NSARA maintains a web page and it is looked after by Eric Smith, VE1CFY, 1780 Bishop Mt. Road, RR#1, Kingston, NS, B0P 1R0, email: ve1cfy@rac.ca

The NSARA offers a certificate for the Worked All Nova Scotia Counties Award and for the VHF Century Club Award and the NSARA Contest.

The NSARA has been working with the Emergency Measures Organization to increase the preparedness of radio amateurs for times when amateur radio is needed during emergencies. The most important aspect of the NSARA activity is probably the courses that Jim Hannon and others have conducted for message handling and proper operating procedures. One such course was conducted in the

New Glasgow area a few years ago. I know several Truro area amateurs attended the course. I think that was conducted by Jim, VE1AFH. I'm not sure who in the PCARC might have attended.

The NSARA has a director who has taken on the responsibility of frequency coordination of repeaters in Nova Scotia. Mainly this involves the VHF frequency repeaters, but we offer advice also on the UHF repeater frequencies. Bev Reynolds, VE1TL has been the coordinator for the last several years.

The NSARA has been very helpful in assisting to establish several of the IRLP systems in Nova Scotia. The NSARA has actually purchased several of the IRLP interface boards and offered them to groups to help in getting the area set up. I know that an offer was made to at least one Cape Breton area to provide the IRLP board free of cost. Unfortunately I don't think we had anyone interested enough to set up a system.

One of the most obvious involvements of the NSARA that I am aware of has been in helping to provide funding for major equipment purchases for provincial groups that are setting up or up-grading repeater sites. The NSARA policy has been to help with 50% of the cost of an item. I know that the Truro Club has had such assistance on two occasions. The last time was when the Truro Club needed to purchase a new repeater controller. I know also that the Greenwood Club has purchased a controller with assistance from the NSARA and also the Cumberland county club has had assistance on a project. There are others of course, but these come to memory.

Along with this type of financial assistance the NSARA has provided at very reasonable cost, lots of repeater equipment to the various repeater sites across the province. This has been made possible by an NSARA project that has possibly no equal in any of the other provinces.

The NSARA has made arrangements with several government agencies, to receive surplus radio equipment from them when they up-grade equipment. This equipment is then very carefully cleaned and properly tested and inventoried. Much of the equipment has then been provided to volunteer services such as fire departments and

such to help them in having the needed communications equipment. I know that many fire departments have likely received communications equipment that they would not have been able to purchase any other way.

A lot of the equipment has been put into amateur use for repeater site use and also some has at times been sold to amateurs for their use. I know that some of the multicouplers that the Truro Club has at Nuttby, were made available by the NSARA. Some of the antennas used on club repeater sites have come through the NSARA activities.

Along with this work on equipment that is put back into service somewhere, members of the team actually have taken equipment apart to be able to sell aluminum metal, etc. This has provided some of the funding that the NSARA has been able to make available to Clubs. The government has been so impressed with this service that test equipment has been purchased for the alignment, etc. The place where the work is done has been affectionately dubbed "The Radio Factory" by the volunteers who have worked there. Bill, VE1MR and Tom, VE1TA, have put in hundreds of hours on this project alone, along with many others. They have made themselves available, to be there when groups of amateurs from various clubs have visited and spent a day or what-ever to help with the cleaning or what ever needed to be done. This work has been done at Miller Lake. If a Club is interested, they can contact Bill or Tom to work out a mutually convenient time for the group to come to help out. It is a great way to have a "club outing"! :-)

The NSARA has been very active in setting up a provincial repeater linking system. There is a linking system in the western part of the province, where several repeater sites are being linked via UHF radios with the hub of the system being at Springfield, N.S. This system is almost complete. Some sections are already up and some will be later in the spring.

I have been with the NSARA team during installation of the link and VHF repeater at North Range, near Digby, and I was there for some of the installation at the Bridgetown, Natural Resource repeater site of VE1BO. I was also with them at Springfield and at the Dalhousie repeater sites.

It is certainly impressive to see the degree of volunteer service some of these guys give. I know I got home on a couple of occasions, in the wee hours of the morning, and they still had a couple of hours of driving to get to their homes. This at times has seen them active for days on end mainly on week-ends after a busy week at the office for some of them. Links are in place near Yarmouth and along the South Shore and the Western part of Nova Scotia is well linked together.

I have two APRS nodes installed, one is at the Bridgetown repeater site and the other is at the Springfield site. The NSARA has arranged for these nodes to be at the Natural Resource sites, and has provided a set of multicouplers for each installation.

Another NSARA project has been the setting up of the repeater site at Kedgie, VE1KEJ, which was completed in 2006 and is a solar powered repeater. They worked with members of the Queens County Club and others to get this installation done. Much work was done before the physical work was even started, because permission had to be given by Parks Canada and all sorts of arrangements had to be finalized.

The NSARA is also presently working on a project to establish a linking path to Cape Breton. The system is established as far as Nuttby Mt. and plans are to continue further as soon as possible and eventually get to the Sydney area.

The NSARA was a founding member and is active on the Provincial (Vols Comm /IWAN/TMR) Including . Fire, RCMP, TOPW. This committee has been involved in many of the communications issues of the various agencies in the province. Part of our interest is in continuing to maintain the Provincial Grid sites which is where much of the amateur repeaters are located.

The NSARA has been active in supporting opportunities for students to communicate with the International Space Station. One such session was conducted in the Halifax area recently.

One other NSARA project that has been ongoing for several years has been the supporting of student bursaries. This was started a few

years ago after Jim Hannon, VE1AFH, proposed the idea. Basically it was set up to help to make the community a bit more aware of the NSARA and amateur radio in general.

If a local club is interested in the project and is willing to pay half of the cost, they can offer a \$100 bursary to a graduating student who is planning to persue an education in an area of communications. Science degree, engineering degree, electronics, etc. The NSARA will provide \$50 and the local club \$50. This is limited to one per year. It might not seem like much, but to a student, it might be a book cost or something, so it helps. The local club would likely talk about the bursary with the school principal or guidance counsellor, and when the school decides which student will get the bursary, the Club would make out a cheque for the student. The NSARA would then give \$50 to the club. I must say that this bursary project has not been used very often; probably due to lack of involvement by the local clubs. I know that every year, Jim has a student from the Cumberland area! Other clubs should consider this.

Of course the NSARA always appears at Provincial flea markets with a table and someone is available to chat about activities, or whatever. Also, the NSARA has a picnic each year which provides amateurs with an opportunity to gather and renew acquaintances. (to many hams, if you mention NSARA, the only thing they seem to be aware of is the picnic) Hams don't seem to really communicate very well! Directors are appointed so that the clubs can be made aware of the activities of the NSARA, but I wonder how many care enough to spend some time relating info to their members. Hams are often, of course, a bit piggy, so mention food and their eyes open up! :-)

One incentive to encouraging your club members to maintain a yearly membership in the NSARA is that if your club collects the \$10 membership fee from a member, your club can retain \$5 of the fee and only send \$5 to the NSARA for each member who signs up. This way your club does a bit for the NSARA and it also gets a bit back.

I hope this gives you some fuel for a report or discussion or whatever. As President of the NSARA, Tom, VE1TA, is personally active on almost all of the activities of the NSARA, so you can see from the above that he often is a very busy man! Along with his involvement

on provincial committees he is one of the main technical wizards and I suppose he is like a hummingbird and never sits still!

I hope you have managed to read this far! Good luck in your adventures in amateur radio and hopefully you will consider becoming a member of the NSARA.

Sincerely,

Bruce Harvey, VE1II
Secretary, NSARA