

Local school bus driver celebrates 37 years and two generations of passengers



THE SCOOP

MABLE HASTINGS

Potton school bus driver, Jean Guy (Gomer) Lachance has been driving school bus for 37 years now. He started driving for Jean Thomas Carrier and going with the changes in bus companies through the years he presently drives for "Les Autobus G. Ashby." Lachance is a father, grandfather and a real wiz with local history. He has lived in Potton all his life and his big yellow school bus has long been parked year after year in front of his home in Mansonville during the school year.

"I really enjoy seeing the children as each school year begins and I have watched many local youths grow into young men and women over the years," he shares. "That is probably my most proud achievement in doing this job," he adds.

Many might ponder the question of how a person can drive a school bus for

thirty-seven years and still maintain a joy for the job? For Jean Guy Lachance there is a pride in focusing on keeping the children safe and assuring parents that as their kids get on the bus they are his priority. A treat at Halloween, Christmas and at the end of year has made Jean Guy quite famous with the kids. He is firm but he is fair and all of his actions are taken with their best interest at heart.

The Covid 19 Pandemic has changed many things and school bus driving is no exception with new safety measures put firmly in place. Lachance emphasizes that the Government and School Board directives are always at the forefront of his job.

"I won't be giving treats this year," says Lachance. "With the new directives, these acts of kindness are out of the question but in time and if we all follow the rules we hope things will return to normal."

The bus company is following strict guidelines set by the Provincial health board as well as local school boards with an aim to keep the safety of their precious cargo front and center. When in the driver's seat, the driver is completely surrounded by a plastic curtain. When the driver steps out of this space the wearing of a mask is mandatory. In entering the bus, the children must use hand sanitizer and be wearing a mask. Lachance often finds himself having to remind the children of these measures and while he feels it may make him a little less



popular he hopes that the kids know that he is doing it for their well-being as well as his own. Protocols must be followed.

"Serving two generations is an honourable and gratifying accomplishment," says Lachance. "I never imagined experiencing something like the Covid Pandemic and I am determined to do all I can to stay healthy and keep those in my care healthy too."

A while back someone shared a poem with Lachance entitled, "A BUS DRIVER'S PRAYER." The author is unknown but I have chosen to end this article with it.

"Please, Lord, watch over me this day. Please help me to remember to watch all five mirrors, two dozen

windows, eight gauges, six warning lights, six dozen faces, three lanes of traffic, and to keep a third eye open for wobbling bicycles and daydreaming pedestrians, especially teenagers wearing headsets who are in another world. Please, Lord, help me hear all train whistles, truck and automobile horns, police sirens, and the two-way radio. Please, Lord, give me a hand for the gear lever, the steering wheel, the route book, the radio microphone, and the turn-signal lever. And, Lord, please grant me the self-control to keep my hands away from Johnnie's neck. And one more thing, dear Lord, please don't let anyone be sick all over the bus. And finally, Lord, please watch over us all so that we can do it again next year. AMEN."

How many Sherbrooke residents does it take to change a light bulb?

By Gordon Lambie

The City of Sherbrooke launched a new online tool to report and respond to lighting issues on its territory on Monday evening.

According to David Seminario, Head of the lines division at Hydro Sherbrooke, the city receives roughly 1,500 reports of lighting problems each year ranging from burnt-out bulbs to wasp nests. Coming as they do by phone or through email, however, it is difficult to know when requests have doubled up or been addressed properly.

The new map, which is already online, allows one to see where issues have already been reported in the city and also report them yourself.

"You can also indicate a problem with a structure that does not appear on the map," Seminario said, acknowledging that the new tool does not yet have a perfect inventory of all municipal lights in the city.

Lights on the map are colour coded, with black being the default status of a lamp without any kind of report, red indicating that a report has already been made, yellow indicating that the issue has been flagged for follow-

up later, and green meaning that the issue has been resolved. Each light with a report also provides an indication of when the report was made and what the nature of the issue in question is, allowing everyone to note whether there is only one or a number of problems with a given lamp.

The final colour, purple, indicates that a lamp is not under the jurisdiction of Hydro Sherbrooke, such as in the case of lighting on provincial highways. Seminario clarified that Hydro Sherbrooke maintains all streetlights in the city, even in sectors where it does not serve as the power utility like Lennoxville.

Lennoxville Borough President Claude Charron expressed appreciation for the new tool, but also took the time to highlight the fact that the pre-existing means of reporting, namely by calling 819-821-5858, will remain accessible to those who feel less comfortable with the interactive map system. A significant portion of the complaints made to the Lennoxville borough council in recent years have been in relation to lighting issues.

Du Carrefour councillor Évelyne Beaudin, meanwhile, praised the way

the new interactive map empowers citizens to call out issues directly and asked whether similar systems could be put in place for issues like potholes. Deputy General Manager Guylaine Boutin responded that the city does not want to overwhelm citizens with a new interactive map for every

little issue, but said that a solution is being examined to improve reporting generally.

To explore the functions of the new map visit www.sherbrooke.ca/en/services-to-citizens/interactive-maps and click on "street lights" in the list available.



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