

Director Diane Swinamer

# every year is tougher than the last"

especially in late summer, a time when the public's attention is usually focused on more leisurely pursuits, such as vacation and time with friend's and families. It's also a time when a lot of new families move into Fairview and the surrounding area, putting more stress on the second most used food bank in the province, averaging nearly 850 visitors every week.

"What you see is families spending money, by necessity, on school books and supplies," says Swinamer. "When you factor in moving expenses and other expenses there's not a lot leftover and you see an increase in demand for our service."

Swinamer says demand in August is only exceeded by the Christmas rush. Ironically that's when people think most about donating. Images of impoverished families are more likely to tug at the heartstrings during the holiday season than the beach season. "Every year gets a

little tougher," she says, offering a different hard luck image the Bank sees on an ever increasing basis. "The myth of the starving university student isn't really a myth at all, it's true," she said.

"Student needs are increasing," confirms Mount Saint Vincent Student Union President Ryan MacNeil. "What we've heard is that people here want us to open our own food bank." The Nova Scotia College Of Arts and Design did just that last year. MacNeil says it's a sign of the times.

"Student debt is skyrocketing. Tuition increases at an average of 8% per year. Here at the Mount we've been somewhat lucky because

the increases have been in the neighbourhood of 5% but it's still difficult."

MSVU's proposed food bank would, in all likelihood exist as a satellite branch of the Metro Food Bank, which won't do a whole lot to help the existing shortage of stock. As demand goes up Swinamer isn't seeing a corresponding increase in her capacity to spread her message. "We've got a mail campaign planned for August, but other than that, we owe a great deal to the media."

Most donors are regulars, but Swinamer says even many of those people fail to see the spike in demand the Food Bank experiences as the leaves start to turn colour. "Every year is tougher than the last demand wise, but our bills are constant."

## Two Citizens for A Safe Learning Environment (CASLE) receive medals

Two board members of a provincial organization that has spent ten years working successfully to improve school health and safety were awarded the Queens Golden Jubilee Medal. Karen Robinson, President and CEO of CASLE, received the award for "outstanding contributions in the field of health," and Debbie Hum, CASLE's Vice President, received the award for "outstanding volunteer contributions to her community and to the Province of Nova Scotia."

ment problems. As members of the Department of Education's Healthy School Design and Construction Committee (Robinson is chair) they are also pleased to report that most improvements that were part of this project have been incorporated into the Province's Design Requirement Manual for the building of all public buildings in the Province.

Both Robinson and Hum are founding members of CASLE and express satisfaction at seeing the progress on healthy school issues they and CASLE's volunteer team have worked so hard on. For example, school cleaning and maintenance products and practices have been improved across the province, and parents, staff, and official's use increased knowledge and awareness of how the school indoor environment impacts on health and performance.

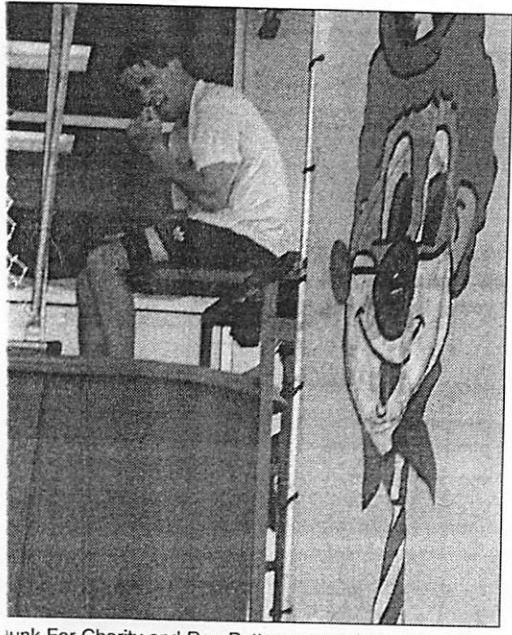
Robinson serves on several national projects including the Boards of Directors of Health Canada's Healthy Indoors Partnership and the Project Team of Dalhousie University and Health Canada's four year national research project on school indoor air quality. For more information on CASLE and healthy schools see CASLE's website: [www.chebucto.ns.ca/Education/CASLE](http://www.chebucto.ns.ca/Education/CASLE).

Of late, they note the NS government's recent long-term plan for school replacement and renovation as a good step forward. "We have pressed for years for a proactive, long-term planning approach to school improvements and we are pleased to see this happen. Of course if emergency situations arise in the interim we can also expect they will be dealt with as in the past, but this is real progress," said Robinson.

Robinson and Hum were also central to the recent design and construction of the new Halifax West High School as a benchmark building in constructing schools with less potential to have air quality and indoor environ-



Karen Robinson and Debbie Hum



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