

When winter gets rough, the commuting gets tough

Car pooling and shuttle service may ease burden

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SUMMERSIDE – When ice forms and drifting snow turns Island roads treacherous, it can make commuting to work a headache.

For those who have to travel the roads daily, there are a couple of options available, particularly for those making the trip from Charlottetown to Summerside or Tignish to Summerside.

Breck Palmen is a software developer with Carestream Health and has worked in Summerside for the past two years. He lives in Charlottetown, and said for the first year, he was driving up alone every day.

"I had a Jeep and it was pretty pricy on fuel," he said. "I realized there were so many people coming up and I decided to share the ride."

He now pays another co-worker to drive him. But when it comes to bad weather he's often on his own. On Monday, he had to drive his own car.

Joyce MacKenzie works at the Summerside Tax Centre and also lives

in Charlottetown. She's worked in Summerside for nine years and used to car pool to work. Recently she started taking the new daily express shuttle service operating between the two cities.

"It accommodates students and those who don't have a vehicle," she said. "It's a service that's long overdue, in my opinion."

MacKenzie bought a monthly pass and plans to continue using the service in the future.

The shuttle, which started in late October, is slowly starting to attract commuters.

Trius Tours general manager Bobby Dunn said while it's early in the season to tell if the shuttle will be picking up more passengers during bad weather, he thought it was a likely scenario, considering the number of calls Trius received Monday morning when the weather was inclement.

"We've had parents call us who have students who go to Holland College in Summerside and Charlottetown who say that they don't really want to see their kids using cars or car pooling; they'd rather see them on a bus," he said.

He added other people taking the shuttle are going to medical appointments, University of P.E.I. classes or to federal and provincial

government offices.

The City of Summerside is looking into the problem of commuting for those who work within the city.

A survey was handed out to major employers in the area, asking for input on options for more car pooling or a bus system, said Nancy Quinn, an economic development officer with the city.

The survey is also available for residents to fill out on the city's website until Dec. 19.



Trius Tours is now offering a shuttle service between Charlottetown and Summerside.