

First March of Gratitude was fantastic according to organizers



BY MICHAEL RILEY Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

The grey skies and cold temperatures couldn't do much to dampen the enthusiasm of the couple of dozen people that showed up for the first March of Gratitude at the post office parking lot beside the town office on March 1 at 3:30 p.m. There was a second march on March 9, and there will be two further marches on March 17 and March 27. Further details can be found on the March of Gratitude Facebook page or at marchofgratitude@gmail.com. As of March 4, they had raised over \$1,000 in donations. After meeting up at the post office parking lot on Station Street at 3p.m., the participants in the March of Gratitude walked past the town office beginning at 3:30 p.m. and then came back down Station Street and then made a left on Hastings Street and went along to the Dollar Store at Snow Road and then turned around and walked back along Hastings Street the other way. One of the organizers, Bill Kilpatrick, says that this first march is the one where they're just trying to get people out and at least be visible in the community to recognize the front-line workers. "There was an awful lot of rhetoric at the start of this about these heroes and we're going to pay them more, briefly. And then that kind of died out. So, we thought you know, it's coming to the end of this [pandemic], this is the time to do something like this, something positive," he says. Some of the other organizers on hand distributed special face masks with maple leaves on them and colourful beads for marchers to wear while they walked. Kilpatrick is a front-line worker himself so he knows how difficult and challenging it has been for his fellow front line workers the past two years. Kilpatrick says that the goal of this march and the other three marches happening March 9, March 17 and March 27 are to change all the negativity into positivity and just say thanks. The gift certificate program is part of the rebuilding process and involves supporters making monetary donations or purchasing gift cards from local restaurants or businesses with a \$25 minimum, which can be dropped off at Alice's Pantry at 99 Hastings Street North. Monetary donations will be used to buy gift cards. The gift cards will then be raffled off to front line workers at a wrap up gathering at the end of March. More information can be found at the March of Gratitude Facebook page or at marchofgratitude@gmail.com.

As the March of Gratitude walkers got ready to get going on their walk on March 1, Kilpatrick said a few words beforehand. He thanked everyone for coming and his fellow organizers for all their hard work to make these marches possible. He said that as they walk, they're not only honouring front line workers but all who've been impacted by the pandemic; economically, physically and mentally. Kilpatrick said they were both celebrating and mourning; the resilience of the human spirit and the fragility of the human spirit, respectively. Now he said, the difficult task of rebuilding post pandemic had to be faced. "That rebuilding process begins today, to honour those workers on the front lines, so we could have access to healthcare, groceries in our cupboards, gas in our vehicles and countless other amenities we depend on. To the countless workers on the front lines, we say thank you. Today we honour you and today you have our gratitude," he said. After the march, Kilpatrick told Bancroft This Week that the walk had gone

really well and was well received by everyone they visited along Bancroft's main street. In addition, he revealed that a local businessman, Jayson Keever, the owner and operator of Timber Mart, donated \$300 to support front line workers who have been so important throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. "We wanted to show our gratitude to the frontline staff that has kept our community running through very challenging times. Our business and I personally could not have done it without their support," he says. As of March 4, Kilpatrick said that the March of Gratitude had raised over \$1,000 in donations.