

## Launching a business idea results in self employment

by Stella Shepard

**K**evin Leonard of Montague became self employed while searching for employment. About a year ago, he opened a home-based company called **ACC Business Services & Bookkeeping**. The company offers bookkeeping, payroll services, tax preparation, tax remittances, business advice, and assistance in collecting receivables.

His job search initially began after the sawmill he worked for closed in 2007. Kevin contacted **PEI Career Development Services (CDS)** in Montague for help to look for a job. Through career exploration and discussions with a Career Counsellor, an aptitude and interest in accounting and bookkeeping was confirmed. Kevin realized there was a possibility of starting his own business.

“My main goal was to continue living in Montague,” says Kevin. “My wife **Lynn** operates her own businesses called **Pro-Clean** and **Pro-Painters**. She works mainly in Montague and the surrounding area. We enjoy living in Montague. This is where we want to raise our family.”

### Business idea

“I am originally from Newfoundland and Lynn is from Fortune, PEI. She and I ran a successful cleaning business in Newfoundland for several years. In 1997, Lynn and I decided to move to PEI to be closer to her home.

“I did all the paper work for our cleaning businesses. I am very familiar with the financial aspects of a business. I earned a diploma in Business Administration after high school. The skills I learned helped me operate the businesses. My self employed friends sometimes asked for help with their tax forms and other related issues. This experience inspired me to pursue a full-time career in bookkeeping and tax preparation.”

**Kevin Leonard of Montague opened his own business called ACC Business Services & Bookkeeping.**



### Steps to self employment

Kevin contacted **Karl Johnston**, Self Employment Manager at **Active Communities Inc.** He assisted Kevin with a business plan and offered advice. Kevin was eligible for the Self Employment program administered through Service Canada. The Self Employment program provides financial assistance and entrepreneurial support to eligible participants to help them start their own businesses. The Self Employment program assists individuals in the development and implementation of the business plan through technical and consultative expertise.

### The benefits of self employment

“Being self employed allows you to move at a comfortable pace,” says Kevin. “You can control your working hours to some degree. This has the advantage of managing time for family activities and other responsibilities.

“The challenge of being self employed is to find ways to adapt to the present economic conditions. But I think when times are tough, businesses may need up-to-date accounting services even more. They need to know how best to budget and plan until the economy improves. Having a knowledgeable accountant, bookkeeper and tax preparer can prove to be a cost-saving asset.”

**Q** For more information about **ACC Business Services & Bookkeeping**, contact **Kevin Leonard** at 361-2026.

For more information about **Active Communities Inc.**, contact **Karl Johnston** at 838-7034 or toll free at 1-800-953-4030.

## A career in real estate on PEI

submitted by Hamish Redpath, [www.CanadasIslandParadise.com](http://www.CanadasIslandParadise.com)

**J**ason Pitre is a Charlottetown-based real estate broker and founder of **The MRE Real Estate Investor's Club**. This Island entrepreneur, originally from the western tip of the province, began his career as a real estate agent in 1999.

“The first year was a learning experience,” says Jason.

“It was tough being new to Charlottetown, having limited contacts, and being a rookie in a competitive business.” Despite the challenges, it was the first step in what has become a rewarding career journey.

After working in the business for six years, Jason decided to take a leap of faith and launch his own real estate brokerage firm. In 2006, he began **MRE Real Estate** and has never looked back.

“Finding a mentor helped put me on the right path,” says Jason. “I met real estate guru Craig Proctor early on and formed a solid relationship that helped me overcome the odds.”



**Jason Pitre, owner of MRE Real Estate, says there are opportunities for new real estate professionals on PEI.**

### About the industry

Although the global economy appears dismal today, Jason offers hope to anyone seeking an exciting real estate career on PEI. He feels the province stands in a good position because our Island still offers the affordable dream.

“A growing trend seems to be the arrival of BC and Alberta residents,” says Jason. “They may have never known PEI, but have heard of these amazing old farmhouses for sale at prices that seem too good to be true. European and Asian buyers are also discovering Canada's little red Island and offer a wealth of opportunity for real estate agents.

“Islanders know first hand how fortunate they are to live here, even in the snow and ice of winter. A few acres with a comfortable home and a water view on Vancouver Island can sell for a million or more, but here we can have it for a fraction of the price. The result is a growing number of new residents.

“The real estate game on PEI is competitive and forces an agent to adopt creative strategies in order to succeed, especially as the economy suffers. But rest assured, a committed agent, with innovative marketing support and a genuine desire to help the client, can be optimistic about a fulfilling and prosperous career in the industry.”

### Training and further education

**The Real Estate Association of PEI** offers at least one three-week real estate course each year and possibly more, depending on demand. Upon successful completion of the course, a new agent is licensed and permitted to work for a real estate firm on PEI. But it's not the end of training for an agent, only the beginning of a continual learning process.

**MRE Real Estate** puts its new recruits through an intensive three-day ‘basic training’ style course to prepare them for what's to come, followed by a supportive mentoring program. It is also an opportunity to find out about the company's unique selling programs. On-going training is strongly encouraged throughout a career, as trends and economic conditions change.

“I'm always on the look-out for someone with that unique flair, persistence, ambition, desire to help people, and a genuinely warm personality,” says Jason. “Those are all traits that help someone succeed in this business.”

**Q** If you feel you have the personality, creativity, and motivation suited to a career in this challenging but rewarding industry, call **Jason Pitre** at 566-1900 ex. 222.

E-mail [jason@mreteam.com](mailto:jason@mreteam.com) or visit [www.MREteam.com](http://www.MREteam.com)

For more information about a career in real estate, visit the **Real Estate Association of PEI** website at [www.peire.com](http://www.peire.com)