



A Cartoonist Turns Cancer Treatment and Hospital Waits into Humour

Vicki Hogarth
Reporter, *The Courier*

In the fluorescent hush of hospital waiting rooms, where beepers break the silence and barely audible talk shows play in the background on TV screens, an 84-year-old artist began to draw.

The sketches were quick and wry: porters in a blur, the choreography of chairs, the small absurdities that gather around illness. Nurses photocopied them. Patients passed them hand to hand. Before long, a stapled stack by Reception had a title: “Ted’s Toons”.

The artist is Ted Michener, a Charlotte County mainstay whose career has braided fine art, commercial illustration and decades of community cartooning. Trained at the prestigious Ontario College of Art and Design, Michener has lived and worked for years in St. Andrews, where he also owns The Gables restaurant and gallery. He has been the cartoonist for *The Courier* for over 30 years, shining a light on the good, the bad and the hilarious side of life in rural southwest New Brunswick, saying with satire what news stories sometimes can’t – about politics, civic life and society.

The drawings that became *Ted’s Toons: A Cancer Patient’s Look – On the Brighter Side Through Doodling* grew out of something even more personal than the

region where he resides: his own cancer treatments.

“It just evolved from waiting for my procedures at the local hospitals. I’ve always been a doodler,” said Michener to *The Courier*. “I would sketch while I was waiting for the buzzer to go off to go in for my procedure.”

The impulse, he added, was less about self-expression than atmosphere: a humane interruption of worry. He noticed faces change when the pen came out; rooms loosened. Early bundles were collated by nurses and, with encouragement from supporters, gathered into a small book meant for fellow patients.

“I’d look around, I’d see the various looks on people’s faces, various moods, obviously,” said Michener, recalling his time in the oncology waiting room in particular. “I thought, ‘Gee, what can I do to alleviate the feelings within people’s minds?’ So people gathered around, watched me sketching, and right away, it worked. It seemed to lighten people’s load up somewhat, if only for a few moments. And then, of course, the nurses would do a copy and pin it up, and that was nice.”

The tone of the cartoons is observational rather than sentimental. Some panels fix on daily frictions: food rules, long stairways, the prosaic hardship of getting from car to clinic. Others aim gently at small inequities. Michener was



struck, for instance, by the reality that parking isn’t free for even the staff at many New Brunswick hospitals.

“What amazed me was the nurses have to pay for parking. That’s one of the cartoons. I couldn’t believe that,” recalled Michener. “And there are 22 steps up to the parking lot. I’m 84 years old, and I have asthma, and I’m thinking, ‘What the hell is this?’ So many times I’ve been huffing and puffing going up the stairs to the top, especially in the winter when it’s icy. And a couple of times people have said, ‘You made it!’ That’s another cartoon, too.”

If the drawings are light, the ethic behind them is serious. Humour, for Michener, is a form of care. He talks about volunteers and drivers, the Charlotte Dial-A-Ride network that ferries rural residents to medical appointments, as part of the region’s quiet infrastructure of help. He credits Charlotte County Cancer, a long-standing local non-profit, with assisting early print runs meant to be given away in waiting rooms.

Michener’s trajectory helps explain the balance in the work. As a young artist, he studied with teachers linked to members of the Group of Seven and later taught at his alma mater; his illustration and editorial cartoons appeared in national papers and magazines before he and his wife settled on the Passamaquoddy Bay. Recent exhibitions in New Brunswick and Maine have kept his paintings in public view even as the cartoons have found a different audience, one waiting for lab results.

He is not interested in selling the

book so much as getting it into people’s hands. He is seeking a partner – a health authority, a foundation or a publisher – to underwrite larger printings for hospitals and clinics. Until then, he keeps drawing. A second volume is underway.

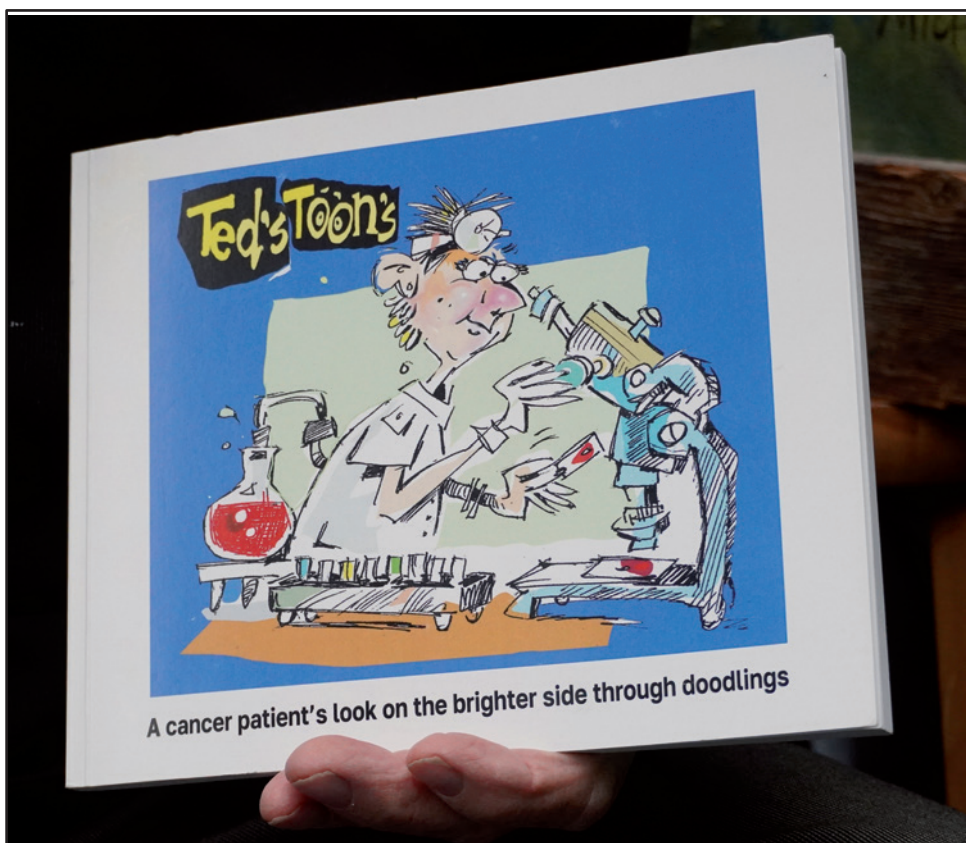
What has changed now that his own diagnosis is the subject? Less than one might think. He still measures time in images.

“I’m still fairly active,” he said. “So far, so good.”

At night he paints, sometimes with only a loon calling across the bay, and in the morning he returns to the sketchpad, looking for punchlines in corridors and parking meters. The effect of the cartoons, in his telling, is modest but real: a circle formed where strangers wait.

A single laugh won’t cure cancer, but it can lift a soul. In the most uncertain of times, Ted’s sketches remind people they’re still human, still here, still capable of joy, and sometimes that flicker of light is what gives a person the courage to keep moving toward tomorrow.

Copies of Ted’s Toons are available for \$20 at Charlotte County Hospital, Cockburn’s Drug Store and The Nautical Shop. If you would like to assist with a print run of Ted’s Toons, please contact Ted Michener directly via email: tedmichener@gmail.com



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Eastern Charlotte faces Criticism on Non-Recorded Budget Meetings



Nathalie Sturgeon
Reporter, LJI

A motion to record the budget discussion process in Eastern Charlotte died on the floor, drawing swift criticism from the public.

Coun. Alexa Detorakis made a motion to ask that the working session for the 2026 budget and the committee of the whole meetings be recorded on camera. It also asked for the recordings to be made available for the public to review. As well, it asked the residents of Eastern Charlotte to be given the opportunity to provide comments to council on the budget for 2026.

The motion received no seconder, which means it cannot move forward to a vote or debate.

There is no explicit requirement in New Brunswick's *Local Governance Act* for municipalities to hold public consultations as part of the budget process, but many do, including the Municipal District of St. Stephen (MDSS) and the Town of Saint Andrews. Section 75(1)(e) does specify what documents should be available to the public at the clerk's office, which includes budget estimates.

Matthew Hall, a resident of Eastern Charlotte, said he couldn't understand why the council did not follow through with the motion.

"It's ridiculous," he said. "There [are] people who can't come to meetings, there [are] people who want to talk and have input and you guys are denying that."

He accused the council of not being transparent and accountable.

"Something needs to be done to hold these people accountable and changes need to be made," he said. "Because this is getting [to be] too much."

Anthony Scott, another resident of the municipality, asked the council "why it was trying to hide stuff."

"We're the taxpayers; we ought to know what's going on," he said, speaking to the council.

The Department of Environment

and Local Government (ELG) said it had to set the tax rates for three communities in 2025.

"Under the *Local Governance Act*, the minister only intervenes when delays jeopardize issuing property tax notices," the department said in a statement to *The Courier*.

Those communities were Eastern Charlotte, Campobello Island and Lakeland Ridges after they missed the submission deadline. Coun. Adam Hatt said while he didn't oppose the motion tabled by Detorakis, he feels the technology is not there for the council to have more meetings recorded.

"It's not that I don't support it, I do support recording of meetings ... but we need to figure that out and to make a promise today that we're going to record budget [meetings] that are going to start within the next few weeks," he said, adding he felt he couldn't second the motion because there was no way for them to accomplish it.

In St. Stephen and Saint Andrews, the councils purchased cameras through grants that were built into the chambers. They are remotely operated by local non-profit broadcaster and educational channel CHCO-TV, who also is the owner of *The Courier*.

The setup in Eastern Charlotte involves two individual cameras and an operating system that is brought by the CHCO-TV broadcasting team, taking up to five hours.

Detorakis said she was surprised she didn't get support from the council, but respected the decision.

Coun. Darrell Tidd said he had no problem supporting recording meetings for the budget, but was concerned about sensitive matters.

Under section 68(1) of the *Local Governance Act*, discussions of council can be closed for about 10 different reasons, including some of the ones mentioned by Tidd. All votes or decisions must return to an open session.

"Other than that, I have no prob-

lem. If we have the technology to do it, then I say we should do it," Tidd said.

Coun. Lisa McKay cited similar concerns as Tidd.

"It's that word 'all' [in the motion], because there is stuff in our budget that needs to be kept confidential," she said. "Other than that, I'm absolutely open to, other than the personnel issues or upcoming contracts, I'm completely open for the budget to be public."

All motions can be amended by a majority vote of council, including on the wording of a motion.

McKay said the council has frequently been accused of hiding stuff.

"We're damned if we do and damned if we don't," she said. "There isn't one councillor at this table that does not take into consideration the ramifications that we have if we make a wrong decision, and we are human and we are going to make wrong decisions."

Eastern Charlotte Mayor John Craig told *The Courier* he understood some of the frustrations voiced by the community during the meeting.

"The council will get together and discuss the budget," he said. "We're going to work on that."

Both Craig and Chief Administrative Officer Jason Gaudet confirmed all meetings, including committee meetings are open to the public, and it requires a vote to go to a closed session should an item fall under Section 68(1) of the *Act*.

"Overall, those meetings are open to the public," he said, adding copies of the draft budget will be available online. He said once the budget is presented by the Deputy Mayor David Hatt, the public can ask questions to the council, which are taken into consideration.

"Every councillor is there for the good of the community. There is nothing deceitful going on, they're all trying their best, every one of them," he said.

Former Charlotte County MLA Remembered for Kindness, Dedication

Barbara Rayner
Reporter, *The Courier*

Former Charlotte County MLA Sheldon Lee, who died on Oct. 21 at the age of 90, was always there to help his constituents during his 25 years in the Legislature.

Even though he was a busy man, he always took the time to return phone calls from constituents or members of the media looking for quotes often in the evenings or during weekends. You always knew if you left a message with his late wife, Joan, he would get back to you.

Born in Bonny River, he was the son of the late Arthur and Helen (Justason) Lee and that is where he made his home. He was elected as an MLA in 1978 and continued serving the people of Charlotte until his retirement in 2003. He was well known and respected not only in Charlotte County but

throughout the province and beyond.

Lee served as Minister of Transportation in Frank McKenna's Liberal government from 1987 until 1999. During that time he saw many changes and was involved in many projects but was always there to listen to people's concerns and do his best to offer guidance because he loved helping people.

He was a member of the St. George Curling Club, the St. George Masonic Lodge #12 and Shriners, and the Bonny River Second Falls Baptist Church but, above all, he was a family man who loved nothing more than to be surrounded by his family in his down time.

Lee is survived by his children: Terry (Brenda) Lee of Bonny River, Wanda (Doug) Harrison of Nasonworth, NB, and Lynn (Paul) Orser of Nauwigewauk, NB, five grandchildren, six great grandchildren and one great great grandchild.



Kiwanis Holiday Baskets Inspire Connection in Saint Andrews

The Courier

Every December, the Kiwanis Club of Saint Andrews gathers for one of the community's most cherished traditions: assembling holiday baskets for local seniors, especially those who are widowed or live alone. In the last few years, they have also been joined by their youngest members, the K-Kids, who bring their youthful enthusiasm to the initiative. What began nearly 50 years ago as a small gesture has blossomed into an intergenerational act of kindness that

ripples through the town year after year.

Together, Kiwanians and K-Kids form a joyful, bustling assembly line, packing baskets with holiday goodies, treats, and a handwritten card from students at Vincent Massey Elementary School. This year, a print edition of *The Courier* will also be tucked inside, offering neighbours something special to read over the holidays. For those with dietary restrictions, a bright, festive poinsettia is delivered instead, ensuring everyone receives something made just for them.

Each basket is then hand-delivered by a Kiwanian, who brings



not just a gift, but a warm personal greeting, a moment of connection for seniors who often live alone.

"It's really just our way of saying, 'You're loved, and we're thinking of you,'" said longtime St. Andrews Kiwanis Club member Sue Lister. "A basket is festive, and the visit reminds them they're still very much part of the community family."

For the K-Kids, it's a lesson in compassion, responsibility, and what it means to care for your neighbours and your community. All items are purchased locally, extending the circle of support to

small businesses during the holiday season.

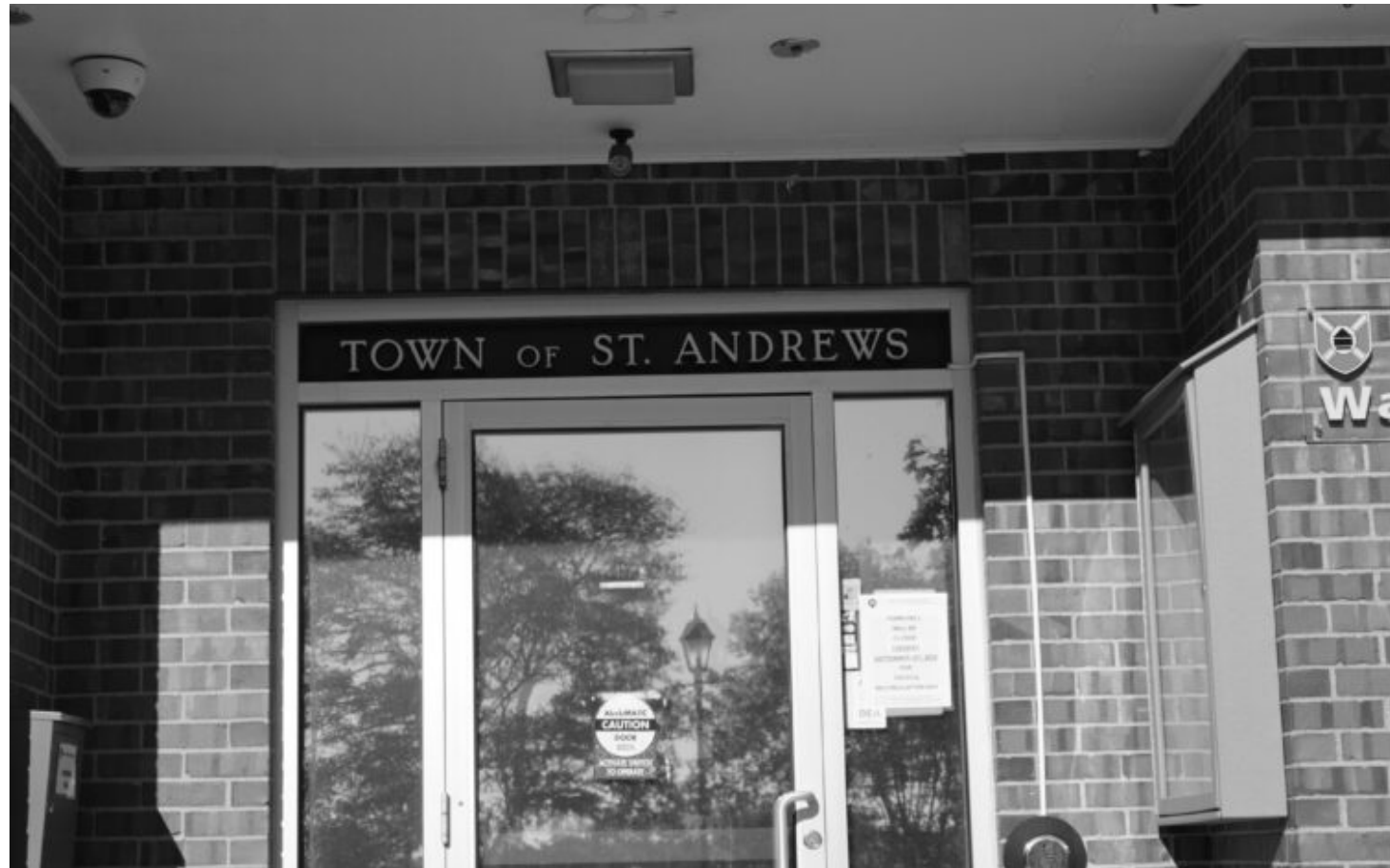
In return, the club receives heartfelt thank-you notes from seniors touched by the gesture.

"We're reminded every year how powerful it is for someone to simply show up—that someone remembered them and cared enough to stop in," Lister said.

What happens every December is more than packing baskets. It's the passing on of a tradition, one generation teaching the next how to lift up a community, one visit, one smile, and one lovingly packed basket at a time.

Saint Andrews Signs Deal with Horizon Health for Wellness Centre

Nathalie Sturgeon
Reporter, LJI



Horizon Health Network and the Town of Saint Andrews have signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) on the Wellness Centre located in the W.C. O'Neill Arena Complex.

The Wellness Centre is a medical clinic that is given space for free by the town to operate and has several doctors with active practices. The agreement is for renovations to the space for the phlebotomy laboratory and what the council said are three additional doctors.

"In appreciation of the efforts of the council, including the investments in the current facility, Horizon Health Network (HHN) has agreed to fund the renovations now needed to allow for extra service providers," said Coun. Lee Heenan, reading background on the motion.

Heenan said they will provide the funding for the renovation in exchange for not charging rent for a five-year period. The cost of the renovations are between \$250,000 and \$300,000.

The council moved to a closed session under section 68(1)c of the *Local Governance Act*. Council voted to approve the MOU after returning to an open session.

Dr. Julie Levesque-Taylor, one of those physicians, decided she wanted to bring the collaborative care model to the town – something she had previous experience with in Manitoba.

"I noticed when I first got here that it's just not sustainable, or it's sustainable on a very small scale," she said. "We took on patients, and people came in, they called, they begged, they pleaded, (and) our staff listened ... and then there came the heartbreaking moment where we [had] to start saying no."

She, alongside Dr. Brian Peer, operate their practice out of that space. Coun. Annette Harland is the manager for her husband, Dr. Peer's, practice.

Levesque-Taylor aims to take 400 people off the waitlist with the area code E5B. In August, Premier

Susan Holt and Health Minister Dr. John Dornan came to visit the clinic.

Holt told *The Courier* during a monthly address on Oct. 20 that the provincial government is working closely with the Saint Andrews' team.

"We do have a good partnership in place," she said. "[We] are going to continue working with them to do more and give them the tools they need to serve more of their neighbours."

Susan Neal, HHN director of primary care in the Saint John region, said the regional health authority is continuing to work to establish family health teams across the province.

In her statement, Neal did not address questions about who the doctors were or when they would be officially working at the clinic – nor did she confirm Saint Andrews will be part of the 2025 commitment.

"Work is underway in Saint Andrews to explore opportunities that support recruitment and retention of health care professionals, including physicians, to improve access to care for residents," she said. "Horizon is working with provincial and local governments and local primary care physicians to plan for the expansion of health

services and resources in the community in the coming months."

But Saint Andrews wasn't originally on the 2025 list; however, St. Stephen was. The clinic currently operates on the third floor of the Charlotte County Hospital (CCH). Blacks Harbour is slated to be part of the commitment for 2026, which Holt said is well underway.

Holt said the government feels very close to announcing the clinic, promising before the end of the calendar year in just two months – and had visited the clinic back in August as well. "I was down there visiting with the team a number of months ago because we were at the point of site selection and identifying where the clinic would go [so] that we could get some of those practitioners out of the hospital and into the kind of space they need with the additional resources they need and then that frees up the space in the hospital that is desperately needed," she said. "We're going to deliver on that."

The Department of Health did not respond directly to questions about the details shared by the municipality nor did it confirm Saint Andrews would be added to the list of collaborative care clinics for 2025.

In a statement, Health Minister John Dornan reiterated the government's commitment to the 30 clinics promised during the election.

"There will be more collaborative care clinic announcements between now and the end of the calendar year. We are looking forward to finalizing details to share with New Brunswickers in the coming weeks."

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Property Tax Overhaul Could See Break For Seniors, Says NB Premier

John Chilibeck
Reporter, LJI



Seniors in New Brunswick fed up with high property taxes have caught the attention of the Holt Liberals, who are looking at the idea of giving them a discount or freeze on their annual bill.

Premier Susan Holt put out the suggestion during an online question-and-answer session last week, in which the priority of questions was voted on by the public.

"There are other provinces in Canada that have different forms of discounts for people depending on their age, their retirement status," the premier said. "Sometimes, it's a freeze to property taxes. Sometimes, it's a discount of five per cent or 10 per cent on property taxes."

"So, we're looking at ideas like that, suggestions like that that are happening ... across the country to see if any of those will fit in the kind of property tax system that we bring forward."

Seniors are considered particularly vulnerable to rising property tax assessments because they are unpredictable. Many older folk are on fixed incomes, fueling a fear they won't be able to afford living in homes they might have spent decades enjoying.

The premier made the comment only days before her government released the report *What We Heard: Property Tax Overhaul* earlier this week.

It was part of an election promise in 2024 to overhaul the system. All told, the government spoke to 32 groups over the last several months, from business and industry, construction and builders, housing and real estate, advocacy groups and social services.

It also used a local government advisory panel and the responses of more than 7,500 people who filled out a public survey.

Responding to a public backlash over skyrocketing property taxes, the Holt government decided to freeze property tax assessments for 2026, judging that local governments would be reluctant to

raise tax rates to keep people's bills higher, the primary source of their revenues.

The Liberals have promised to overhaul the arcane tax system on about 480,000 properties, which the study found many people don't fully understand. In New Brunswick, provincial assessors, who are hired professionals, decide the value of homes and other properties, and then elected municipal politicians set a tax rate against them.

The value assigned is supposed to reflect the price a property would likely sell for on the open real estate market as of Jan. 1 of the previous year.

For instance, if a home is assessed at \$300,000 and the tax rate is \$1.50 per \$100 of the property's worth, the homeowner would pay a tax bill close to \$4,500 the next year.

But assessments have risen sharply since the pandemic, when a flood of people moved to New Brunswick, especially retirees and remote workers, attracted by lower home prices and wide-open spaces.

In a province where real estate prices have been stagnant or slow for decades, New Brunswickers have been shocked to see their assessments suddenly rising faster than in richer places such as On-

tario, Alberta and British Columbia, driving their tax bills up.

New Brunswick has spike protection for homeowners that limits yearly assessment increases to 10 per cent, but there's a catchup in years when the annual increase is less than 10 per cent.

And as soon as a homeowner sells the property or makes significant renovations, spike protection is out the window.

The study showed that residential properties made up the bulk of the total assessment base in 2025, at 84 per cent of the value (worth \$82 billion), with commercial properties making up the remaining 16 per cent (worth \$15 billion). Growth has accelerated since 2021, with residential assessments increasing by about 49 per cent, compared to a 23 per cent hike for commercial and industrial properties.

Over the last 10 years, total property tax revenues have risen steadily from about \$1.3 billion (2016) to about \$1.7 billion (2025), an increase in taxes of \$400 million. That's a 30 per cent hike. Meanwhile, the normal rise in goods and services over the period was 28 per cent, according to the Bank of Canada's inflation calculator.

The document says driving the higher bills has been record

growth in New Brunswick's real estate market, population growth, increasing property assessments, rising costs of living and service delivery, and increasing demands on local governments.

"We froze your property tax assessments this year so in the bill that you'll get that comes through this winter, it will have a frozen assessment level, and then depending on what municipality you live in, whether they have frozen their rates or move their rates will impact, whether your property taxes go up or not," Holt told people listening to the Facebook live session.

"And in the meantime, we're overhauling the property tax system, because we think it does need to be more predictable, more competitive, less volatile so that people aren't seeing dramatic changes year over year. That work is ongoing right now.

"In fact, there was a public survey put out that received thousands and thousands of responses, so great to see the engagement of New Brunswickers with your ideas for how we can make our property tax system clearer, more simple, easier to understand, and more competitive for everyone."

The reforms should be in place by 2027, the Liberal government says.



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Motion to Move Homeless Shelter Out of Town Defeated

**Nathalie Sturgeon
Reporter, LJI**



St Stephen Mayor Allan MacEachern listens to a group of concerned citizens at an Oct. 15 meeting of council (Nathalie Sturgeon/The Courier)

The Municipal District of St. Stephen has voted in opposition to a motion to relocate and remove the shelter outside the municipal boundaries.

Coun. Marg Harding made the motion at Wednesday night's meeting – citing concerns for the residents living near the shelter.

It was defeated two to five, with Harding and Coun. Brian Cornish supporting the motion.

Coun. Joyce Wright said she couldn't support the motion for two reasons, including the fact council had voted in favour of a municipal plan and zoning bylaw that had identified sites more suitable for the shelter.

"It needs to be walkable to groceries, to services, and if you move it outside our boundary, that is not something I could ever support," she said. "They are citizens of our community, regardless of what we think of behaviours and actions; they are somebody's child, somebody's mother, somebody's brother."

Coun. Emily Rodas said she agreed that things are not working in its current location. She said she would support the community and operator being at the table to see where it goes in the future.

"I don't even know if we have the authority to make these kinds of decisions," she said.

Alex Henderson, the senior planner for the Southwest New Brunswick Service Commission (SNBSC), said the new municipal plan and zoning bylaw do address the shelter's location.

"In your plan, in your bylaw, you have two sites that are pre-zoned that have been part of the community information sessions, they have been available publicly to review, and those two sites have been zoned for potential emergency shelter, but with conditions."

Schedule E of the Zoning Bylaw, known as Z-4, specifically outlines Special Institutional Use Overlay (O-SIU) which is for emergency shelters.

"It zones a portion of the rear yards of two government-owned institutional properties inside of the urban service boundary," Henderson told *The Courier*. "It would permit the development of a future emergency shelter on these sites subject to conditions that may address potential land

use conflicts."

Those conditions, Henderson explained, are a tree buffer around the lot line, a privacy fence and 24/7 site supervision.

He said it means the current shelter is legally non-conforming with the zoning bylaw – otherwise known as grandfathered in because it already existed. It limits the development of the current shelter on 9 Main Street until it conforms to the new bylaw.

Others were supportive of the motion.

Coun. Brian Cornish said he felt Harding was on the right track.

"Representing the rural area, basically, we don't want drug addicts in the rural area any more than you do in the urban area," he said.

Cornish suggested the task force distinguish those who are homeless from those who are facing substance abuse disorder – saying they should be in treatment and "if not, they are incarcerated."

"I don't know if I would classify this as homeless, Marg; I don't know what the word is, 'undesirables,'" he said. "The bottom line is where we ship them to, what we do with them ... we don't really want this activity in the rural area either."

Harding echoed her feelings of support for those living around the shelter.

"I'm bringing this forward because I feel really sorry and upset for the people who have to live in this area," she said during the meeting. "Yes, these people are vul-

nerable, but if they're vulnerable why can't they behave themselves?"

She proposed a change of operator might be needed. The shelter is currently operated by Neighbourhood Works Inc., a non-profit organization dedicated to help those who are unhoused.

"I think this task force will be on the right road, it's Christmas time, and they don't want to be looking at this [expletive]."

The Courier reached out to Neighbourhood Works and is currently awaiting a response.

It comes after a committee of the whole meeting that sparked debate between the public and the local government over the presence of the shelter on 9 Main Street.

Residents said they've experienced a reduction in their quality of life living next to the shelter and made three demands of the council, including relocating the shelter, the creating a public safety task force with all levels of government and the community, and enforcing the municipal bylaws.

There are limits to bylaw enforcement, according to Deputy Chief Administrative Officer Sean Morton, who added during that meeting the limit of their authority stops at private property.

The Minister responsible for housing, David Hickey, said the concerns around the shelter in St. Stephen are understood by the provincial government.

"Eliminating the shelter is not

going to eliminate the problem in St. Stephen," he said, speaking to *The Courier*. "We have a massive humanitarian crisis in the community, and we need to address it."

He said addressing it means providing the type of housing that is supportive enough to keep people from returning to a state of homelessness, something he said the government has not done yet.

When asked about whether the Liberal government would work with St. Stephen to move it to the two pre-zoned areas of the municipality, Hickey said "Everything is on the table."

"To actually see the end of a need for a shelter in St. Stephen is my main priority, and it means making sure that we're building the continuum of housing to not only get people off, get people out of a tent and into a shelter, but get them into a permanent, supported unit that actually sees something change in the community," he said. "If we just simply move it, we're just moving the problem to a different part of the community."

He said the council in MDSS knows the most about what it needs from the provincial government in order to make meaningful change in the community.

"We need to make sure that we are offering housing beyond the shelter, so that the neighbourhood can actually see less use of the shelter, [a] more long term strategy, and can actually see that end in their community, which we have not given them to date."

OP-ED: The Courier, an Old Friend

**Julian Walker
Community Contributor**

As one of many former editors, I am writing about this venerable newspaper which was first published in 1865. In this article, I am writing mainly about the people and the community side of my *Courier* experience.

I remember well what the members of the paper's staff called the "bush notes". These were the gleanings from the far flung reaches of Charlotte County—the down-to-earth and personal news: who was visiting local families or who was getting together for a card game.

And then, there were the tea parties. There was a definite hierarchy to these tea events: who "poured", and who "replenished"—who brought the cookies and cake.

The full name of every person who attended a tea party was mentioned in the newspaper's story. Salty old editors knew that many people bought the paper just to see their names, family members and friends' names in print. Advertisers will always like having a lot of people viewing and appreciating their products.

Names were the bread and butter of traditional community journalism.

Then, there were the photographs. It is said that a picture is worth a thousand words. The great and colorful Al Corbett was our photographer back in the day, and nothing would light up the front page of the paper quite like one of Al's photos of smiling kids or perhaps a deer fawn brought into the newsroom by one of the local forest rangers.

If Al was with us today, I'm sure he would agree that there's more to journalism than talking to people on the telephone, or texting or emailing them.

Reporters must get out and talk to real people, face to face, cover the local councils, the hospital or school board or other public meetings and events. Simply put, journalists must find out what's going on out there in the commu-

nity and report on it.

While facts are critical for news and editorials, commentary can be strongly opinionated, but it must strive to be fair and without a proverbial axe to grind.

There is romance associated with the life of a reporter. Woodward and Bernstein, the reporters who broke the Watergate story back in the 1970's, are still folk heroes today.

But even in community media, the life of a reporter is not all wine and roses. In my time, *The Courier* was doing investigative reporting on the construction of the Point Lepreau nuclear generating station, and a Minister in the provincial government stood up in the Legislative Assembly and accused us of being in possession of "stolen" documents. We were not, and the Minister later clarified his remark, saying it was made in relation to others, not *The Courier*. Still, those were tense times for all of us, including the Publisher, Dick Granville who stood with us.

We should not forget others in the *Courier* shop, people like the late Eileen Lee who kept us afloat financially; Ernie Peacock and Mary Bartlett who were essential in the layout room; Cartoonists, the late Dave Stevens and Ted Michener; the late Ann Breault who lead our investigative reporting efforts; Reporters Don Richardson, Marianne Janowicz, Reed Haley, and on the Calais side, Laura Proud.

In those years of the paper doing investigative journalism, we had no illusions about many readers being more interested in the "bush notes" than in our more serious journalism.

One of the great things about local journalism, is that you face the people you are writing about in the street, the day the newspaper is published.

I remember when a local minister of the cloth with Conservative leanings chewed me out after I wrote an editorial endorsing a federal Liberal election candidate. The minister and I later became friends, although it was after the newspaper gave prime coverage to

his church's efforts to rebuild after it was destroyed by fire. I also learned that endorsing a candidate does not necessarily cause that person to win an election. In fact, the opposite is often true!

In the age of social media and misinformation, the challenge can be more bruising for reporters and editors. Today, when words and threats are issued online, they are seemingly more remote from reality and of any consequences.

The life of one local reporter was threatened recently online when the facts as reported were accurate but differed from the incorrect online version of events. A journalist must call it as he/she sees it, and while reporters cannot always expect to be popular, they should not have to fear for their own safety. Sometimes the truth hurts.

The great Pulitzer-Prize-winning journalist, Robert Caro, asked half a decade ago: "What is a great reporter? (It's) someone who never stops trying to get as close to the truth as possible...there is no simple truth...but there are facts, hard facts...and the more facts you come up with, the closer you come to whatever truth there is."

Nor can community media comment only on local issues. The world has a way of pounding its way to our doors.

For instance, many Ukrainians have come to live in Charlotte County because of the Putin-lead Russian invasion of Ukraine. They may be able return to their home country after this war, or they may settle here permanently. In any case, their lives have changed, and we have changed positively because of them coming here.

Similarly, the situation in the Middle East has blown up into an all-out war between Israel and Iran, into which U.S. President Donald Trump has now gotten involved in a big way. The history and grievances are real and complicated. Too many people are starving or dying, and journalists here in Canada must be prepared to take a stand.

Too often, fact-based news is not what we are getting today in North America. Social media sources of

news are more about manipulation of the truth and are often based on outright lies or gossip. Our democracy, our planet, desperately need fact-based news and honest opinion.

The late Marc Garneau, the first Canadian astronaut, spoke of looking back at planet Earth from space, and like other astronauts who have see our planet from far away, Garneau was changed by the experience. He said: "You had to see that this is our home, and we have to take care of it."

The return of *The Courier* in print is very encouraging, and an example for our whole country. Congratulations to Vicki Hogarth, Patrick Watt, and their famous puppy Maud, as well as current Editor, Nathalie Sturgeon, Aidan Raynor, Madison Gowan, Brian Owens, Florence Mitchell, Barb Rayner, Brian Dickson and many, many others at CHCO/Courier.

Julian Walker was born in St. Stephen and grew up in Bayside. He was editor of The Saint Croix Courier 1979-82. While he was editor, the paper's small, hard-gigging staff received honours for the best weekly in Atlantic Canada, and recognition for churning out stories among the top 10 pieces of investigative journalism in Canada for 1981. Julian went on to work for five daily newspapers in New Brunswick and outside the province.

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NB Records Largest Deficit in Two Decades

Nathalie Sturgeon
Reporter, LJI



The New Brunswick government is projecting a \$837.4 million dollar deficit, the greatest in the past two decades.

According to the Department of Finance and Treasury Board (FTB), revenues are \$180.5 million lower than budgeted. Expenses are \$105.2 million higher than budgeted.

Nick McCann, the assistant deputy minister for FTB, said revenues are lower due to a reduction in corporate and personal income tax. Expenses are up largely due to operating costs with the regional health authorities and program support from social development. All but three areas were considered over budget.

The Department of Health was over budget by \$146.8 million, the Department of Social Development is expected to be over budget by \$91.6 million, and the Department of Natural Resources is over budget by \$14 million – largely due to cost for fire suppression during wildfire season – and the Department of Justice and Public Safety is over budget by \$9.2 million.

It is projected to have a shortfall of \$61 million in corporate income tax.

Peter Kiley, the assistant deputy minister of treasury management and fiscal policy, said the other shortfall of note is conditional federal revenue.

“It’s not that the revenue has gone away, it’s that we won’t realize it necessarily this year; it relates largely to either project delays or revised spending intentions within the departments, which also affects the spending side,” he said, speaking with reporters.

The provincial assessment freeze, implemented by the Liberal government as an affordability measure, has resulted in a \$7.9 million dollar loss. McCann said there are several projects that have been delayed – which are impacting both sides of the budget.

The Rothesay wastewater project, the Saint Andrews Market Wharf and Market square project, the Mount Allison University library rehabilitation, and the UNB law building all have been delayed and are part of the Integrated Bilateral Agreement – which is a joint funding agreement between the provincial and federal governments.

It is about roughly \$88 million dollars in federal funding – leav-

ing out the funding provided by the province and proponent.

In September, the Saint Andrews wharf and Market Square project came in a little more than \$2 million dollars over budget, which alongside community criticism over the design, forced the town back to the drawing board.

“Given the amount of economic uncertainty and cost escalations we’ve seen in recent years, those types of projects have caused some delays ... looking at their scoping, their timing, because of the cost escalations result in there’s only a finite amount of money they’ve received for their project and for their funding,” said McCann. “If it comes in higher than that, sometimes the proponent may need to adjust and then go back to the drawing board, adjust their plans, and then come back forward again.”

Saint Andrews council will be getting an assessment for the wharf’s

structural integrity for about \$99,000 before proceeding any further with a refurbishment.

Meanwhile, Finance Minister Rene Legacy did not rule out the continued escalation of the deficit, which is near \$1 billion.

“So, if nothing else changes on revenues or some improvement on expenses, there is a potential that could still grow by the fourth quarter,” adding the deal signed with the New Brunswick Medical Society (NBMS) for physician compensation would have an impact as well.

On Nov. 14, the government ratified a deal with the NBMS to ensure “New Brunswick is competitive with other provinces in terms of physician recruitment and retention while improving access to primary care.”

A statement from the NBMS said the 2025-2029 Service Agreement is an investment of \$270 million. The agreement is retroactive

to April 1, 2025.

During the election, the Holt government said it would balance the budget, but has been unable to do so as it increases spending in major sectors like health care, education and social development.

Legacy argues the government is working to fix years of under investment. When asked whether New Brunswick is seeing concrete results in the areas the provincial government is trying to improve, Legacy said transformational change will take time to take effect.

He added that he felt the government may have lost some political capital by falling short on its promise to balance the budget.

“But it’s the right decision,” Legacy said, in response to questions from *The Courier*. “We have to make that move for the good of the province and the future of our economy.”

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- BUTTER TARTS
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- TIM HORTONS



EDITORIAL: Assessment Freeze Leaves Municipal Budgets on Shaky Ground

The Courier
Editorial Board

As the budget season for municipalities gets underway, all to be settled before the hustle and bustle of the holidays, it’s a time to reflect but also to set a vision for the future.

A budget is a defining document that sets out the dollars and cents for a municipality’s operations, setting also priorities for infrastructure, recreation and future taxation. But there is one little snag in the process – the provincial two-year assessment freeze on property tax.

In May 2025, the provincial government put a freeze on residents’ property assessments – the largest funding source for municipalities in New Brunswick – accounting for roughly 83 per cent of their budget revenue, according to the Union of Municipalities of New Brunswick (UMNB). It is certainly a headache for those sitting around the council chambers.

Municipalities took on additional geography and population as part of amalgamation in 2023 – completed by the then-Progressive Conservative government. A moment of relief for those who had been calling for such change for many years – but ultimately was left unfinished without corresponding fiscal reform. Without fiscal reform, it doesn’t mean



much.

“Councils need money now,” Dan Murphy, the executive director of the UMNB, told *The Courier* in April.

According to the UMNB, the 2022-23 municipal reform increased the number of people living in a local government by 38 per cent, but without any funding mechanism added to help.

It is particularly concerned about the infrastructure gap, measured at \$2.5 billion. The organization said a report showed there is a nearly \$200 million shortfall in funding to municipalities. This is

a severe funding shortfall in most councillors’ goals for their respective areas – many of whom want the best for their constituents – but also to improve the area where they live.

Hope has been extended to municipalities a few times in that local governments will see an additional \$138 million in funding for 2026 as part of a new and long-awaited fiscal reform framework.

But the UMNB said it lacked details – and still does. Legislation was passed in June. But the full fiscal frame and funding model keeps getting pushed back. It was 2026; now it is delayed until 2027.

It has been said that “municipalities are children of the province,” but to achieve meaningful success and self-determination, they must surely be allowed to break free of that fiscal chokehold.

In a time when municipal leaders are facing unprecedented harassment and intimidation, and when constituents are rightly demanding more of their local governments, shouldn’t that urgency demand a decisive response from a provincial government that is also facing its share of public pushback?

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New Brunswick Sets Goal to Boost Spending by Tourists by \$1B

John Chilibeck
Reporter, LJI



New Brunswick has launched a strategy with the goal of growing tourist spending from \$2.7 billion to \$3.7 billion annually within five years.

The Holt Liberal government came up with the glossy document after conducting a survey with 8,600 New Brunswickers and consulting with tourism businesses, Indigenous organizations, and accommodation and campground owners.

“The industry is extremely important,” Isabelle Thériault, the tourism minister, told reporters at the legislature last week after the plan was released. “It contributes a lot of money. It creates a lot of jobs. That’s why we want to grow the sector, so that tourism spending can reach \$3.7 billion by 2031.”

Her department doesn’t necessarily plan on spending any more money in upcoming years, as the Liberal government is struggling to pay for promised improvements in health and education while trying to balance its overall budget.

Premier Susan Holt has already admitted it will have to go into the red until the end of its mandate, with a \$669-million deficit expected by March 31 alone.

Thériault said her department simply has to spend the money it has wisely in the right areas to boost an industry that already supports 30,000 jobs.

This includes building on the province’s “Quebec advantage,” given how many people speak French in New Brunswick, expanding the Ontario market, where four out of every 10 Canadians live, and appealing to the U.S. northeast, a neighbouring region that’s home to close to 60 million people, according to the plan.

It also calls for a four-season strategy that extends the industry’s traditional “shoulder season,” spring and fall, to year-round.

Mary Wilson, the tourism critic for the biggest opposition party, the Progressive Conservatives, said there was plenty of good in the plan. Nevertheless, she couldn’t help but see the Liberal government’s shortcomings.

“Their past precedes them in their first budget. They reduced the tourism budget by almost \$1 million,” she said, referring to the \$900,000 cut to the department, whose estimated spending last

year of \$20.6 million dropped to a spending plan of \$19.7 million this year.

The minister stated in the legislature that her government will build a tourism sector that is strong, resilient and innovative, one that generates prosperity and opportunity for all, and how every region is valued, but doesn’t include the historic MacDonald Farm provincial heritage place in Miramichi that closed this summer due to lack of funding from support of this government.

She also pointed to Ministers Island, near Saint Andrews, where organizers of the non-profit organization that run the historic site, once the summer home of the business titan William Van Horne, complained they were running out of money and in danger of shutting down the big tourism draw.

“Can you imagine if Ministers Island in Saint Andrews closed?” Wilson said.

(The minister, for her part, told Brunswick News her government would keep listening to the organizers of both sites to try to come up with solutions to keep their properties open. She also blamed the previous Tory administration for never increasing their budgets.)

Wilson said government had to get out of the way by helping tourism businesses keep expenses down, including taxes.

“We’re not competing well in taxes in Atlantic Canada,” said the MLA for Oromocto-Sunbury, pointing out that the small business corporate tax rate in New Brunswick is 2.5 per cent, whereas in neighbouring Prince Edward Island it is one per cent and in Nova Scotia 1.5 per cent.

Newfoundland and Labrador recently announced it would reduce

its rate to one per cent.

Megan Mitton of the small Green opposition party said she wants to see the government champion public transportation, making sure there are better connections between the regions, and improve electric vehicle charging stations. New Brunswick is behind more populated places on both counts, and tourists expect to find them when they visit, she said.

Mitton also said roads had to be properly maintained and repaired in tourism corridors.

“We need to ensure roads like Route 955 can be driven on safely, let alone smoothly,” she said, referring to the highway that takes people to Murray Beach Provincial Park in southeastern New Brunswick near her riding of Tantramar.

“We definitely need to ensure that our transportation infrastructure is going to be welcoming to people. I have had people contact me from other provinces because they often travel through my riding and complain about Route 16 and so we need to see some improvements there. Certainly, you

can’t do all of this without any spending.”

Route 16 connects New Brunswick with the Confederation Bridge to Prince Edward Island.

If 2025’s tourism season is any indication, the goal could well be surpassed. The province estimates that tourism spending grew from \$2.5 billion in 2024 to \$2.7 billion this year, a leap of \$200 million, or eight per cent. Many people say the long, warm summer, with little rain, helped immensely.

If spending continued to grow at that pace over five years, it would be a 40 per cent increase, reaching \$3.78 billion, a full \$80 million more than targeted.

Asked why the strategy came up with a rounded, exact figure of a \$1 billion increase in business revenues, the minister said tourism operators and other partners agreed it was a realistic goal.

“We said that target, and everybody seemed to be okay with it,” she said. “So, everybody thought it was achievable.”

New Brunswickers Asked to Conserve Water amid Drought

Nathalie Sturgeon
Reporter, LJI

New Brunswickers are being asked to continue to conserve water amid “well below normal” levels across the province.

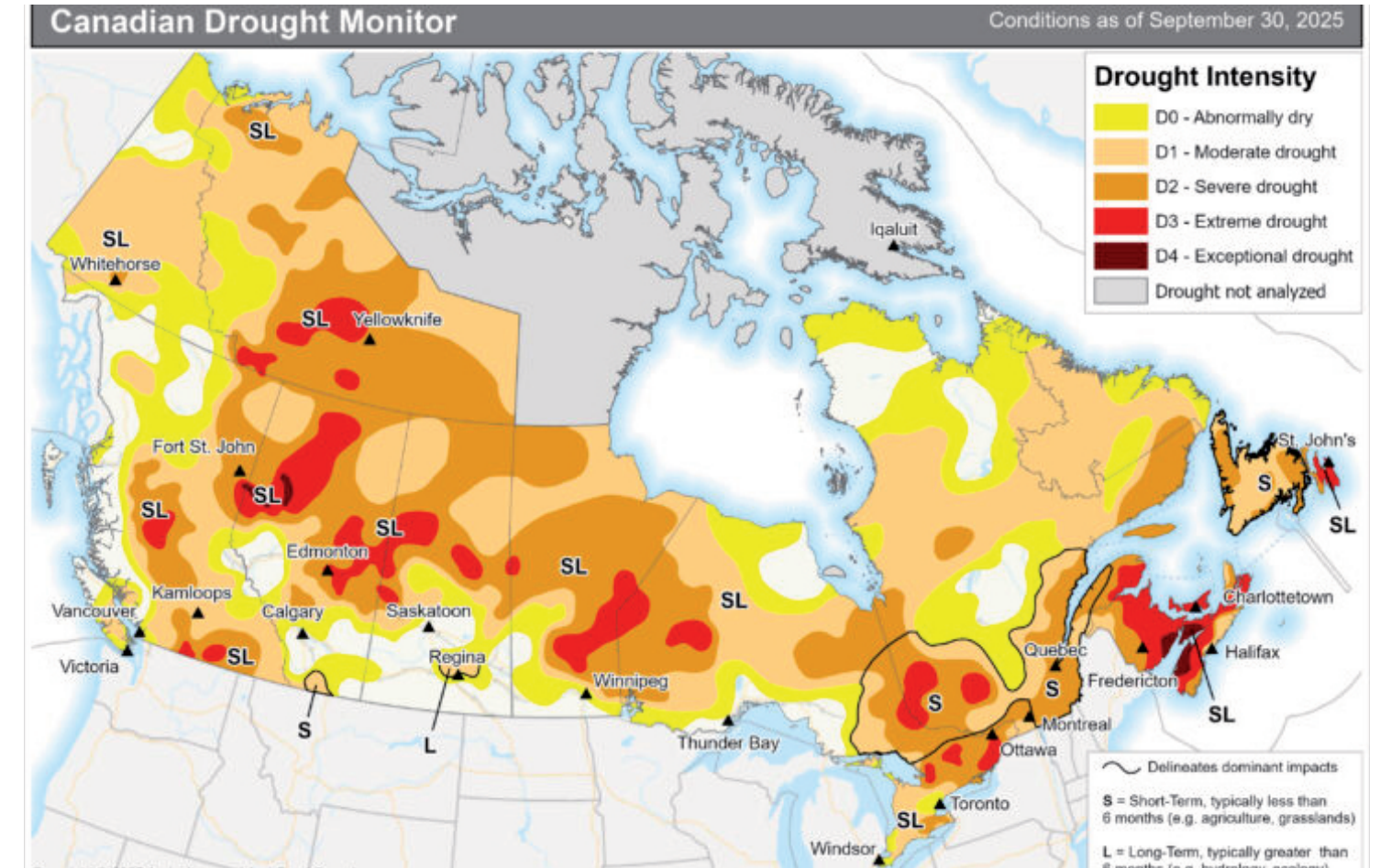
As temperatures continue to drop, frost will limit the ground absorption, according to the Department of Environment and Local Government.

“Our province continues to experience low rainfall, and, until significant precipitation returns, every drop saved counts,” said Environment and Climate Change Minister Gilles LePage. “Community resilience begins with each of us doing our part to conserve water.”

The department said while the recent rain has been positive, it is not enough to solve the recent drought. It said sustained and consistent precipitation is required to bring levels up to normal.

According to the Canadian Drought Monitor (CDM) report, published through the Government of Canada, more than half the province is in the extreme drought category. The report also suggests some wells on Grand Manan have run dry.

The department said in the release that with no significant precipitation in the immediate forecast, conditions are expected to continue to decline.



People are being asked to consider how to reduce water consumption and use, whether on a public or private system.

“We will work directly with local governments to ensure they have the tools and information to support residents experiencing reduced or no water supply,” LePage said.

The Department of Environment and Local Government suggests the following ways for people to conserve water:

- avoid washing vehicles

- avoid letting water run while brushing teeth
- use washing machines and dishwashers less frequently and with full loads only
- take quick showers to minimize water used for washing
- consider installing low-flow faucets
- check for leaks in plumbing systems, such as faucets and toilets, and repair as necessary

In Saint Andrews, Chief Administrative Officer, Chris Spear, said the water supply is surface level,

adding it is satisfactory.

“We have one facility, Bayside Hall, that is on a well. It uses very little water (compared to a household) and we have not experienced any issues there,” he said. “For citizens on private wells, we have not been notified of any issues. Private wells are outside the jurisdiction of municipalities and are handled by the Department of Environment. If a cluster of local properties ran into well issues, Council may intervene with the Province to help find alternative solutions.”

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For the Love of Maud: Chapter 7

A Small Town Christmas

Vicki Hogarth
Columnist, The Courier

Since she was a puppy, Maud has accompanied us to work at the TV station. What began as a quiet office companion quickly turned into an accidental on-air presence, her head popping up behind the news desk like a rogue sock puppet during a live broadcast. And from there, she became a fixture of CHCO-TV programming.

It's hard to explain how a dog becomes a local television personality. One moment you're delivering the evening news; the next, your sidekick is ambling across the set mid-interview, blinking at the guest with sleepy eyes before coming in for an ear scratch. Most stations would edit this out, and sometimes we do. But for the most part, Maud's slow, unbothered wanderings have become so notorious and beloved that they've become part of our small town signature.

Maud receives more fan mail than any human associated with the station, a fact confirmed daily by people stopping me on the sidewalk to request a photograph—not with me, the news director, but with her, the true face of the TV station. I now take photos like I'm her personal assistant: cheerfully, efficiently, fully aware that I am

merely the handler to the real star.

Every December, Maud is a celebrated part of our annual Santa's Helpers telethon. The average canine would be rattled by the chaos – five hours of fluorescent lights and dozens of volunteers answering phones and reading pledges – but Maud is in her element on live television. She curls up on the circular couch as the opening music plays and remains there, blissfully unfazed, until the final total is announced. Occasionally she extends a paw to a nervous volunteer, a gentle gesture that is powerfully calming.

Unofficially, she is CHCO's Chief Emotional Support Officer, a title bestowed upon her by my coworkers who have witnessed the near-clerical efficiency with which she dispenses comfort. Being on television can turn even the most articulate person into a jumble of nerves. I've watched guests dissolve into panic, only to be steadied by Maud placing her chin on their knee. She has soothed cameramen, producers, visiting politicians, and even one very tense Santa Claus.

The telethon itself is a love letter to our county. Weeks beforehand, our team travels from school to school filming elementary students singing Christmas songs. During the broadcast, we switch between the live studio and the



choirs, creating a five-hour tapestry of small-town goodwill. Parents, grandparents, neighbours—everyone tunes in. Donations come by phone: \$5 from a child who emptied his piggy bank, \$20 from someone's aunt, \$100 from a high school sports team, \$500 from a local business, \$1,000 from someone who simply says, "Put it where it's needed most."

The names are all familiar. That's the benefit—and burden—of a small community. In a big city, the less fortunate are often theoretical, or worse, invisible. Here they are the people we grew up with. Here, when someone struggles, we all know it, and we all know that no anonymous system will sweep in to save the day. So we become the system, flawed but earnest, funded by bake sales, bingo nights, and people who still believe five dollars can make a difference. Because we know it can.

New Brunswick is often referred to as a "have-not" province, a term that overlooks the alternative reality many of us live: when you're overlooked long enough, you learn to take care of each other. The need is steep every year, and the

math rarely adds up on paper. Yet somehow, when the cameras turn on, the community pours its heart out with a generosity that eclipses the very term "have-not."

Maud plays her part by doing what she does best: staying put, available, steady as a lighthouse in a storm of pledge forms and tangled headset cords.

At the end of the night, we gather for a group photo. Maud is always in it, nestled among the volunteers, blinking into the camera like she's signing off the broadcast herself. But the photo never captures the full story. Missing are the thousands of unseen contributors: the boy with the \$5 donation, the restaurant that sent over trays of food unasked, the non-profit that gave from its limited funds to support another charity, the neighbour who walked across town to hand us a cheque because "this year seemed tougher than most."

Small communities like ours like to say it "takes a village," and we mean it literally. Sometimes it takes the whole county. And sometimes, more often than you might expect, it even takes the four-legged ones.



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'Incredibly Special': Setting Day Kicks Off Lobster Fishing Season

Nathalie Sturgeon
Reporter, LJI



Boats getting ready for Setting Day (Nathalie Sturgeon/The Courier)

Setting Day isn't just the first day of lobster season in Charlotte County – it is about tradition.

In Back Bay, before the sun begins to rise, families gather to send off the fishermen and women in boats that will race to set traps for the season. Some have waited on this wharf in the cold temperatures, watching their loved ones, for more than 40 years.

"This is incredibly important for fishermen, not just because everyone is leaving at the same time to head out to the fishing grounds, but because [it's] the beginning of the fishing season and November tends to be when there is the best catch," said Mishona Collier, with the Fundy North Fisherman's Association.

About 20 boats left Back Bay on Tuesday, with most of them loaded up with traps, and this year the season started early. Dozens more set sail from varying wharves across the Local Fishing Area (LFA) 36.

In LFA 36, which spans from St. Martins to St. Stephen, including Campobello and Deer Islands, setting day is on the second Tuesday in November – weather dependent.

"Of course, weather is an enormous concern for safety with the

boats piled high, as well as extra crew on board," Collier said. "The Department of Fisheries and Oceans, at least for the last few years, has allowed us to have a weather window of about 48 hours. If [the] setting day on Tuesday has weather that is too extreme for the fishermen to go out, and it has to meet certain criteria, then they're able to vote on a day that is fit for setting."

If wind speeds are more than 20 knots and waves are in excess of 1.5 metres high, the crews can start the season early.

However, with calm seas and clear skies and blistering weather predicted for the second Tuesday in November, boats head off early to

place different methods of setting traps. Traps can be set individually or through a trawl – which involves laying multiple traps along a groundline.

She said fishers and crews are small, independent businesses.

"I know for some of our fisher-

incidents on varying vessels are down in 2024. Fishing vessels, it said, accounted for 29 per cent of all shipping accidents, which is the highest proportion among vessel types.

There were 12 fatalities in 2024, which was a decrease from the year



Families are an important part of Setting Day watching their loved ones depart the wharf (Nathalie Sturgeon/The Courier)

men, they make most of their money for the entire year in a couple of weeks in November," she said. "So if something goes wrong, the weather isn't cooperating, if there's any issues, it can truly impact their year's worth of income," Collier said.

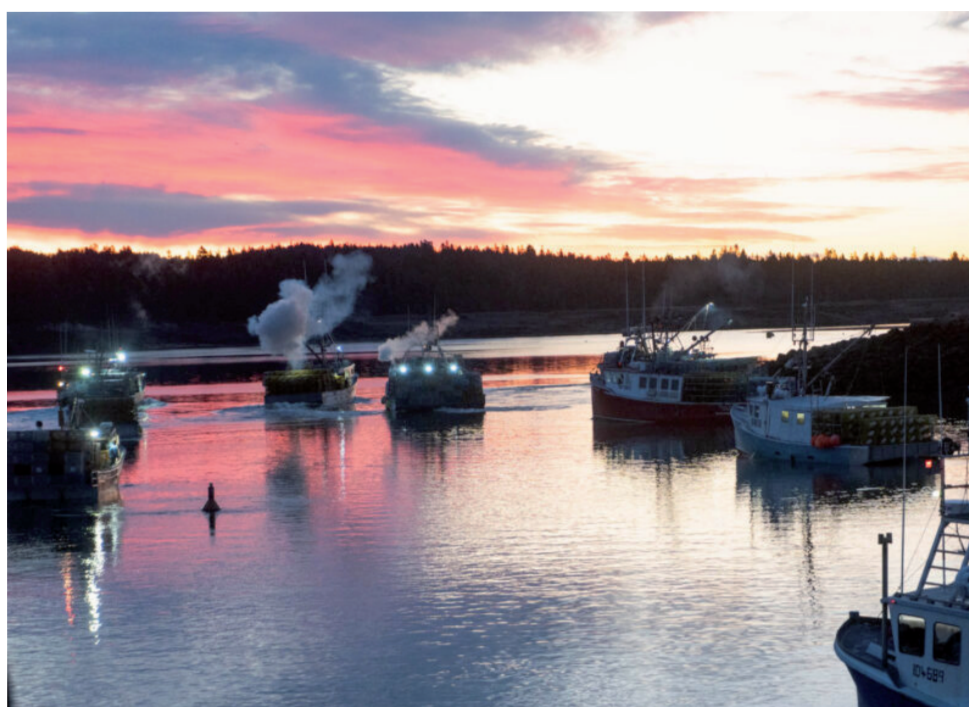
In the end though, Collier explains it's the traditions that mean the most. Every setting day involves a blessing broadcast over the radio – something to lend comfort to those families who are staying behind.

According to the Transportation and Safety Board of Canada (TSB),

prior. TSB said half those were on commercial fishing vessels.

"Even for those folks who aren't as religious, it brings a lot of comfort," she said. "These traditional aspects of coming together as a community, circling around fishermen, celebrating them and supporting them – in churches as well as over radio – are incredibly special."

The season closes on Jan. 14, with the spring and summer season beginning on March 31.



About 20 boats left from the wharf at Back Bay for the start of the lobster fishing season (Nathalie Sturgeon/The Courier)

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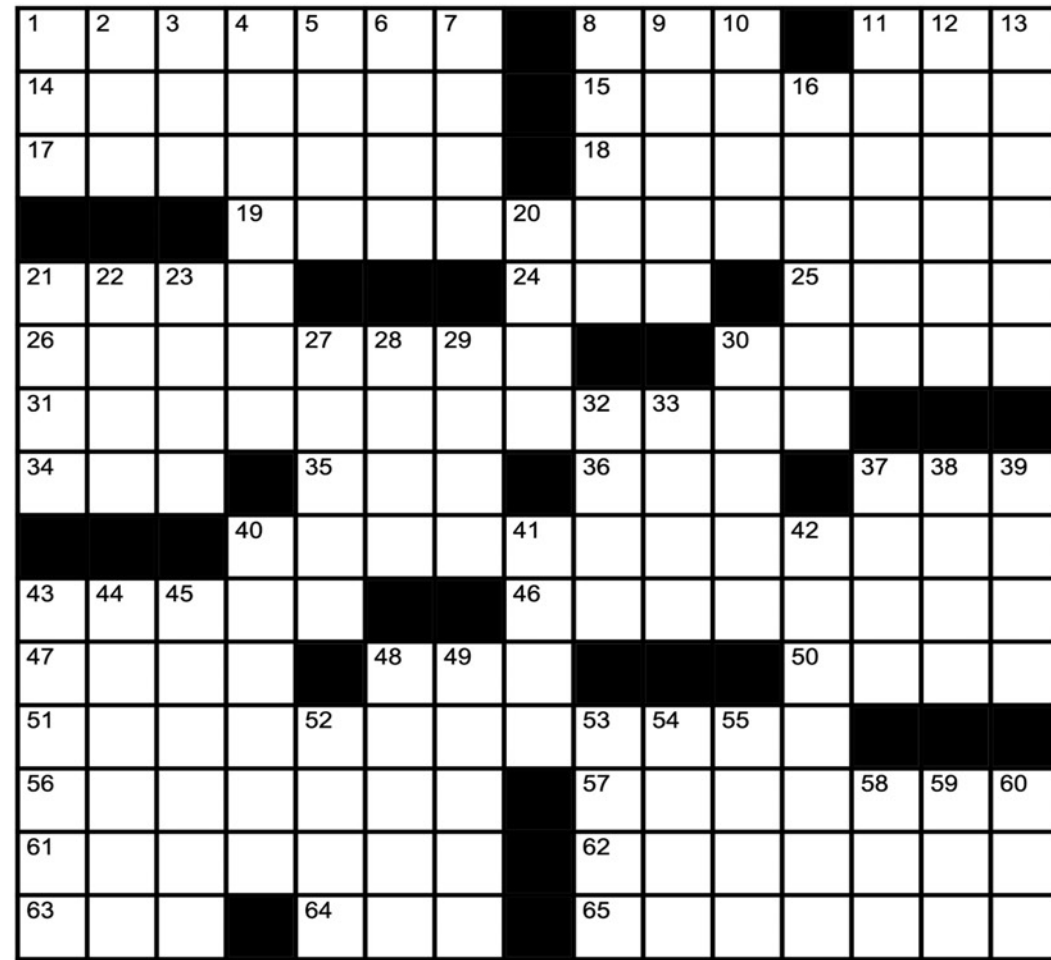
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Ship of Foolishness

by Barbara Olson
© ClassiCanadian Crosswords

- Across**
- 1 Did a cryptographer's job
 - 8 The Bangles' "manic" day: Abbr.
 - 11 Mil. unit
 - 14 Clothing chain with a nautical name
 - 15 Opposite of professional
 - 17 She was dubbed the "unsinkable ship"
 - 18 Atlanta's state
 - 19 Ships' bathrooms equipped with Siri?
 - 21 Flatten à la Foreman
 - 24 Club giving free tows: Abbr.
 - 25 "Ugh!"
 - 26 Only a handful
 - 30 Like a roach motel
 - 31 Baseball slugger atop the ship?
 - 34 Nail Envy maker
 - 35 Just dandy
 - 36 Fine wine designation
 - 37 Airport alternative to JFK
 - 40 Cargo area for barber tools?
 - 43 "___ Diddy Diddy" (1964 song)
 - 46 Popped the top off
 - 47 "Two owls and ___ ...": E. Lear
 - 48 Covered, as a loss
 - 50 Moving wheels
 - 51 Upper structure where the ship's orthodontist works?
 - 56 Province meaning "sparkling water" in Iroquois
 - 57 Slip-on shoes
 - 61 Process of chewing away
 - 62 Stitches, medically
 - 63 Roget suggestion: Abbr.
 - 64 Van. summer festival
 - 65 Do much hand-wringing (over)
- Down**
- 1 Nickname for Dorothy
 - 2 ___ Lilly (drug company)
 - 3 Summer hrs. in Winnipeg
 - 4 Painting the town
 - 5 CNN reporter Bash
 - 6 Four fifths of the devil?
 - 7 Flemish artist Van ___



- 8 Word before "Carta" or "cum laude"
- 9 Horseshoe-shaped Greek letter
- 10 Sodium hydroxide, to a chemist
- 11 Entertain with grand tales
- 12 Took by the hand
- 13 Gaudy and crude
- 16 Alex ___ Studio, where Jennings works
- 20 Clickable symbol
- 21 eReader that's an anagram of "book"
- 22 Take ___ (catch some Zs)
- 23 Nepal's airline
- 27 "Ah, but a man's ___ should exceed his grasp ...": Browning
- 28 "Star Trek: TNG" counsellor Deanna
- 29 Cantonese cookware
- 30 "Pardon," slangily
- 32 Rodent-control brand
- 33 Isn't perfect
- 37 "Copacabana" girl
- 38 Highlands valley
- 39 Tosses in
- 40 Some Christmas lawn ornaments
- 41 Damages-seeker
- 42 "Enjoy yourself!"
- 43 Does groovy woodwork?
- 44 "The Gift of the Magi" author
- 45 Continued speaking
- 48 What March comes in like
- 49 Side-angle car crash
- 52 "What ___!" (response to a money-grab)
- 53 She turned up at Rick's
- 54 56-Across's premier Ford
- 55 Catalonian cat
- 58 ___ tu (Verdi aria)
- 59 Snotty Nose ___ Kids (Haisla hip hop group)
- 60 U-turn from NNW

Service Commission Reduces Cost to Charlotte County Municipalities

Nathalie Sturgeon
Reporter, LJI

The Southwest New Brunswick Service Commission (SNBSC) has reduced the amount some municipalities in Charlotte County will pay as part of its new budget.

Hollis Bartlett, the SNBSC's executive director, said because the province froze property assessments this year – the sole funding received by municipalities in New Brunswick – it was asked to take a closer look at the budget to reduce cost.

"We're able to do that without actually cutting back any services," he said, speaking with The Courier.

The SNBSC cut a position related to tourism promotion in favour of a different approach.

"The result was it's going to cost a lot less money, and because it costs less money, I could have more regional services support funds available to me," he said.

In the end, the commission was able to reallocate the funds to other areas it wasn't maximizing, which he explained significantly reduces the cost to members.

"It made a big difference," he said. "I think that was helpful."

A reduction in cost to SNBSC commission lessens the burden on taxpayers, Bartlett explained.

"Therefore less pressure on municipal budgets, which hopefully, translates to good news for the

actual taxpayers," he said.

In 2023, the provincial government under then-Premier Blaine Higgs undertook local governance reform, amalgamating several municipalities with some rural areas. The mandates of the regional service commissions were expanded as a result.

Those included economic development, community development, tourism promotion, regional transportation, and local infrastructure cost-sharing.

One example was the wildfire resiliency plan. The SNBSC applied on behalf of all municipalities in Charlotte County, which resulted in a lower cost. Each municipality will get their own chapter, Bartlett told The Courier a few months ago.

Largely, the SNBSC handles solid waste. Five million of its \$8.36 million dollar budget is for operation of the Hemlock Knoll landfill.

"It's a capital intensive operation to run, but what I think gets lost a lot of times, even though it's a \$5 million operational expense at the landfill, the actual residents, and what we actually bill the municipalities, is less than 20 per cent of that," he said.

Most of that comes from revenue collected through several programs at the landfill, including accepting foreign waste.

As far as transportation, the SNBSC supports Dial-A-Ride, a local non-profit that helps people get to and from medical appointments for a \$5 monthly fee or a



Hollis Barrett from the NB Southwest Service Commission (Nathalie Sturgeon/The Courier)

small cost based on distance.

"They've done, year to date, over 8,000 rides," he said.

The organization will be hiring a communications officer as part of the restructuring, Bartlett explained.

"It's more storytelling; we want them out in the community on a very regular basis to grab stories and videos and things like that, to talk about all of the different things that we have to offer in

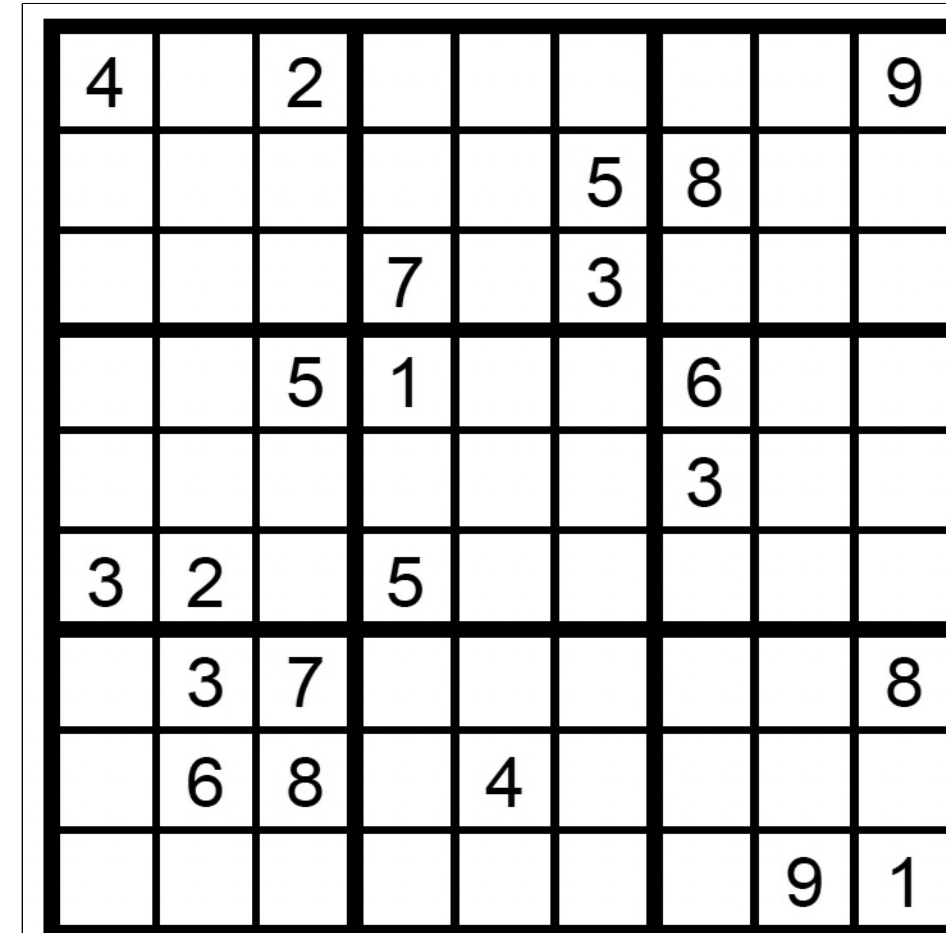
[the] southwest," Bartlett said.

He said he felt it hasn't done a good job communicating what the service commission undertakes, but feels the community deserves to know as it affects them.

In total, St. Stephen is expected to be charged \$186,587, with a net rebate of about \$46,241.

In Saint Andrews, the municipality is expected to be charged \$108,365, with a net rebate of \$27,984.

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Emergency Contact Phone #
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DEAN R. BELL

Dean R. Bell, age 45, of McAdam, NB, passed away suddenly on October 14, 2025, as the result of a motor vehicle accident.

Dean is survived by his mother, Teresa Bell, his children; Owen Bell and Cassidy Bell, along with many aunts, uncles, and cousins. He was predeceased by his father; Dean Bell and his brother; Joshua Bell.

Funeral service was held on Monday October 20, 2025



NANNETTE M. GIDDENS

Nannette M. Giddens passed away peacefully on Wednesday, October 15, 2025 at the Charlotte County Hospital, St. Stephen, NB

Nannette is survived by her husband of 53 years, Thomas Giddens, one son, Christopher and his wife, Nicole, two grandchildren, Cooper and Lani, who she adored and loved deeply. She is also survived by her brother, Christopher (Linda) of Edgewater, Florida.

In keeping with her wishes, there will be no funeral service or visitation held.



VIRGINIA HATT

It is with great sadness the family of Virginia Hatt announce her passing at the Charlotte County Hospital, St Stephen, N.B. on Thursday, October 16, 2025.

She is survived by her life partner, Michael Gilman, children, Brenda (Marc), Eric (Tanya), Bonnie (Jim), Derrick (Barbie), four grandchildren, eight great-grandchildren, three great-great-grandchildren, nieces and nephews.

In keeping with her wishes, there will be no funeral service or visitation held.



MARY E. CARNEY

With heavy hearts the family of Mary E. Carney announces her passing that occurred October 18, 2025, at the Charlotte County Hospital St Stephen, New Brunswick.

Mary is survived by two daughters; Kelly Haley (Larry) and Cindy Greenwood, one son; Thomas Essensa, six grandchildren, six great-grandchildren, 6 sisters and two brothers.

A private family graveside service will be held.



DAVID G. BLACK

It is with great sadness that the family of David G. Black announce his passing on October 18, 2025, at the Oromocto Public Hospital Oromocto, NB.

David is survived by his two sons; Shane Black (Jana) and Jody Whittier, several grandchildren and great-grandchildren, brother; Eugene Black (Noella), sister-in-law; Sally Black, several nieces and nephews.

In keeping with David's wishes, there will be no services.



JOHN E. SPRAGUE

It is with profound sadness that the family announce the passing of John E. Sprague on October 19, 2025, at Fundy Nursing Home Blacks Harbour, NB.

John is survived by wife; Joyce, children; Doris Sprague, Paula Fraser-Cleghorn (Perry) and Jason Gowan (Paula), five grandchildren; two great-grandchildren; siblings; Alex, Allan (Ellen), Patsy Pelton (Norman), Margaret Babineau and Lynn Sprague.

Funeral service and visitation were held on Friday October 24, 2025



ELIZABETH J. DAIGLE

It is with heavy hearts, that we announce the unexpected passing of Elizabeth J. Daigle, fondly known to many as "Betty", on October 21, 2025, at the Saint John Regional Hospital Saint John, NB.

Betty is lovingly remembered by her daughter; Penny Daigle, grandchildren; Jessie, Jacob, Zackery and Trent Kitchen, great-grandchildren; Nova and Milo Kitchen, and their mother JJ, siblings; Douglas, Debbie and John Daigle; sister-in-law; Beth, several nieces, nephews, great-nieces and great-nephews, all whom she cared for deeply.

Funeral Mass was celebrated on Monday, October 27, 2025.



S. LLOYD JACKSON

S. Lloyd Jackson, formerly of Little Ridge, N.B. passed away at Campobello, Lodge, Welshpool, N.B. on Monday, October 27, 2025.

Survived by his loving wife of 71 years, Alma (Kingett) Jackson, children, Cindy O'Leary, David Jackson and Suzanne Kessler, six grandchildren; Christina, Aimee, Eryn, Jesse, Caleb and Zachary, several great-grandchildren.

In keeping with Lloyd's wishes, there will be no funeral service or visitation held.



DANIEL R. BRADFORD

It is with great sadness that the Bradford family announce the passing of Daniel R. Bradford on Wednesday, November 6.

Danny was born in St. Stephen, N.B. in 1968 to Norman and Arlene (Bartlett) Bradford.

He is survived by his sons: Nick Bradford and stepson Wayne Leavitt of St. Stephen, Danielle Fortin, mother of Nick & Wayne; siblings: Brian (Nancy) of Edmonton, AB; Bruce (Karen) of Oak Haven, Bonnie (Mike) of Little Ridge; his precious grandchildren: Shelby and James Bradford and Ava Leavitt; several nieces, nephews and cousins.

Funeral service and visitation were held Wednesday, November 12.



ANN R. CHAPMAN

It is with heavy hearts that the family announce the passing of Ann R. Chapman on November 11, 2025, in St Stephen, New Brunswick.

She was the daughter of the late Russell and Merel MacDougall.

Ann is survived by her loving husband Stephen, two sons; Robert and James, siblings; Faye Oakley, Stephen MacDougall (Patricia), Tom MacDougall (Florine), Fraser MacDougall, Eric MacDougall (Anne), Michael MacDougall (Sandy) and Ruth Ross, nieces and nephews; several great-nieces and great-nephews.

Funeral service and visitation were held on Saturday, November 22.



KEITH W. GULLISON

It is with profound sadness the family announce the passing of Keith W. Gullison on November 16, 2025, peacefully at his residence surrounded by his loving family.

Keith is survived by his first and only love, his wife; Pam, sharing 43 years of marriage and 49 years together a love story anyone could have hoped for, his daughters; Terri Bragg and Emma McGregor, his sons-in-law; Jacob Bragg and Austin McGregor, who were more like sons to him, two grandsons; Simon and Weston (Pa's Boys), whom he loved more than life itself, their laughter and love were what kept him going.

Also survived by his siblings; Marilyn (Stan), Glennie, Brenda (Wes), Russell (Pam) and Mona, several nieces, nephews, brothers-in law and sisters-in-law, some close friends who were just like family.

Funeral service and visitation were held Friday, November 21.



McKAY M. THOMAS

It is with great sadness the family of McKay M. Thomas announces his unexpected passing in St. Stephen, N.B. on Sunday, November 16, 2025.

Born in St. Stephen, N.B., son of Ricky and Lorna (Borthwick) Thomas of Oak Haven, N.B.

In addition to his parents, McKay is survived by his brother; JB (Katie), his beloved nieces; Kara and Khloe, maternal grandfather; Alfred Borthwick, several aunts, uncles and cousins.

Funeral service was held on Sunday, November 23.

Season's Greetings

During this season of reflection and togetherness, we wish you peace and comfort for the holidays and in the new year.

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Municipal Budgets Focus on Infrastructure Upgrades

Nathalie Sturgeon
Reporter, LJI

The Queen Street extension could cost between \$375,000 and \$400,000. While the Legion lot could cost \$468,000. Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) Chris Spear said if it filled in the ditches and paved it – with proper markings – it estimated the lot could fit between 48 to 50 vehicles.

Budget season is underway for Charlotte County municipalities.

In Saint Andrews, council has received two presentations regarding its capital and operating budgets, and two in St. Stephen.

A priority theme throughout both capital budgets – which are the budgets that deals with acquisition or maintenance of fixed assets like buildings, land, equipment – has been working toward improving infrastructure.

Saint Andrews is considering a new Zamboni, but is waiting to determine whether it will move to an electric version, proposed by Coun. Marc Blanchard – which cost \$70,000 more – or stick with a propane model.

“I’ve seen how the electric Zamboni works and it just dies,” said Coun. Lee Heenan. “They have to revert back to the old one. I would support propane this time. I believe that everything is going to get better with time. Right at this time ... I think it’s really financially responsible to buy the propane one.”

Some upgrades and equipment have been requested for the fire department.

The council has placed a lot of focus on improving parking within the downtown core. In the summer months, some 80,000 tourists visit the community, which creates parking congestion.

Staff are proposing two paving projects, one on the Queen Street extension, and a parking lot at the site of the former Legion parking lot.

Spear said this would come from the municipality’s portion of the tourism accommodation levy (TAL), and could effectively wipe it out. This means it would not come at the expense of the taxpayers in Saint Andrews.

The TAL is a fee charged by hotels, motels and inns to guests who stay. It gets put into a fund that goes toward tourism improvement.

Spear said the priority would likely be the Legion lot.

Heenan said he feels that lot would eliminate a lot of issues next year.

“I’m not really for investing a whole million in parking, but I really like the Legion parking lot,” he said. “I think, as you say, we can discuss later through the year [on other projects].”

He proposed taking the Queen Street extension out of the draft budget.

Coun. Steve Neil agreed, adding he also couldn’t imagine spending \$1 million on parking and he feels the Legion lot gets the council and the town the most for their money.

Heenan also said he continues to be concerned about the aging equipment owned by the town, but that council has done a good job of beginning that replacement work.

“We’ve done exceptionally well,” he said. “I’m very pleased that we’ve been able to undertake new equipment.”



St Stephen Council deliberating on the budget (Nathalie Sturgeon/The Courier)

Last year, the town purchased a ladder truck for the fire department for about \$1.5 million.

The proposed total general capital budget is \$3,384,000 of which \$1,101,307 would come from tax revenue and the proposed utility budget is \$1,226,300 of which \$557,000 comes from user fees.

Assessment base rises slightly

In Charlotte County, assessments were up despite the provincial government freezing them for the 2026 taxation year in May. The assessment freeze did not apply to new construction or renovations.

The provincial average was growth of about 2.7 per cent.

Eastern Charlotte saw its assessment base grow by 1.8 per cent. In St. Stephen, it increased by 1.5 per cent. Saint Andrews, meanwhile, grew by 1.8 per cent. Fundy Shores saw a small growth of about 0.9 per cent.

Road improvements for St. Stephen

St. Stephen’s Chief Administrative Officer Jeff Renaud said the largest priority is roadway improvements at a cost of \$5.1 million through the municipal borrowing board.

The draft budget also included proposals for a new roof on the municipal building at 199 Union Street for \$350,000.

It proposes 10 self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA) units for the fire department at about \$150,000 and a new dehumidifier for the Garcelon Civic Centre GCC for \$250,000. It will also consider the installation of new solar lights along the waterfront trail for \$40,000.

Further funds, of about \$430,481 are expected to be allocated at the Nov. 26 meeting. Renaud said through consultation with the public, the staff determined roadwork was a significant priority, but also communications.

The town approved hiring a communications officer in October.

Renaud said all assessment increases help, but “an artificial freeze on the assessment base does limit the policy options available to elected officials.”

“We’ve done exceptionally well”. “I’m very pleased that we’ve been able to undertake new equipment.”

Municipalities in New Brunswick must run a balanced operating and utilities budget by law. However, municipalities are not required to do capital budgets, although some do, so the legislation doesn’t apply.

The Etiquette Guy at Large - Driving Miss Daisy

Jay Remer
Columnist, The Courier

As summer temperatures rise and wallets become lighter due to economic hardship, tempers often flare on the road. However, going back to the basic rules of driving—those we learned early on—can significantly help keep our communities safe and respectful.

We’ve all heard the phrase, “One good turn deserves another.” It also applies to driving. A small act of courtesy—like letting someone merge—can create a ripple effect. Most drivers will return the favor, especially if they receive a simple thank-you wave. Sadly, in the busy rush of daily life, such gestures are often forgotten, and their absence can lead to resentment.

One of the easiest ways to avoid frustration is to leave more time for your trip. Running late is not an excuse for weaving through traffic, tailgating, or ignoring signals—behaviors that increase tension and danger for everyone. Reckless actions, such as cutting too close in front of someone without signaling, are more than rude—they’re dangerous. Wait until you can see both headlights of the car you’ve passed in your rearview mirror before moving back over. Always use your turn signal, even when the road is empty. Habits form quietly—and good habits can save lives.

Speeding has become the new normal, but that doesn’t make it acceptable. I’ve seen this especially among teenage drivers in my community. One heartbreaking incident involved a young girl who hit a cat while speeding. The cat died, and the girl was devastated. It was a painful, unforgettable lesson in why speed limits are enforced.

We all understand the dangers of driving under the influence. Alcohol and drugs impair judgment and reduce our perception of speed. The consequences can be tragic, especially for young drivers who are still learning their limits of responsibility. A recent local prom party took a proactive approach: parents collected all car keys at the entrance, supervised the event, and made sure no one drove impaired. Even those few who tried to break this plan ended up with flat tires and a valuable lesson. It was a night of celebration—and a quiet victory for civility and common sense.

Driving demands full attention. I learned this the hard way on a ski

trip years ago. While fumbling for a CD, I hit black ice and flipped my Land Cruiser into a rock formation. Thankfully, no one was hurt, but the outcome could have been much worse. Distractions like phones, music, or even conversation can be deadly.

Driving is a privilege, not a right. It also comes with responsibility. Being civil behind the wheel can be the difference between life and death.

A Reader’s Letter

I recently received a thoughtful letter from a reader, S.R.W., who took issue with an earlier column for omitting a crucial topic: the relationships among all road users—drivers, pedestrians, and cyclists. With permission, I’m sharing excerpts here, along with a few thoughts in response.

“Your ‘right’ to turn right on red doesn’t override a pedestrian’s right to cross in front of you. Red lights triggered by pedestrians aren’t optional—they’re legally binding, even if they seem ‘out of cycle.’”

Correct. Failing to yield because you’re distracted or driving too fast unfairly shifts the safety responsibility onto the pedestrian. The driver must slow down and stay alert—it is not the pedestrian’s duty to avoid danger.

“Pedestrians have the right of way on sidewalks crossing driveways and parking lot entrances. Cyclists do, too. Wait until the way is clear. Patience is a virtue—possess it if you can.”

It bears repeating: sidewalks are not optional zones. They are protected pathways, and everyone using them deserves to feel safe.

Cyclists ride on the right side of the road, not the gravel shoulder. If there isn’t enough space to pass safely, wait—don’t try to force your way through. And for young male drivers: shouting at pedestrians or cyclists to ‘spook’ them isn’t funny. It’s dangerous. Grow up—or surrender your license until you’re ready for the responsibility.

S.R.W., thank you. These points deserve more attention than they often get. The road is not solely for cars. Civility extends to pedestrians, cyclists, and those of us on foot or wheels. Respect isn’t optional—it’s the foundation of safety.

Winter Driving: Courtesy in Cold Conditions
Here in the North, winter adds its layer of challenge. Ice, snow, and surprise deer crossings require



heightened caution. Drive slower. Test your brakes regularly. Keep warm clothes and a charged phone in the car. Before long drives, check road conditions and let someone know your itinerary.

Preparation is not paranoia—it’s courtesy. It shows respect for yourself, your passengers, and fellow travelers. As always, drive defensively. Assume that conditions can change without notice.

Raising Respectful Road Users

Children should learn traffic etiquette as soon as they begin to walk or ride a bike. Pedestrians should face traffic when walking along the road’s edge, and cyclists should ride on the far right where it is safe to do so. Bike lanes, when available, are invaluable—but in their absence, drivers must be patient. Cyclists are vulnerable.

They don’t have airbags. Many towns, including Saint Andrews, ban biking on sidewalks, but children often feel safer there. If so, parents should teach them to yield to pedestrians. Respect starts early—and the road is an ideal place to model it.

In Summary

Civility isn’t just for dinner parties. It’s also at four-way stops, in bike lanes, and in parking lots. It’s the wave you give after merging. It’s the moment you pause for someone crossing the street. It’s the line that separates chaos from community.

Every trip you take offers a chance to practice consideration. Behind the wheel, just as in life, the smallest gesture can make the most significant impact.

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craft fair

Saturday, December 6

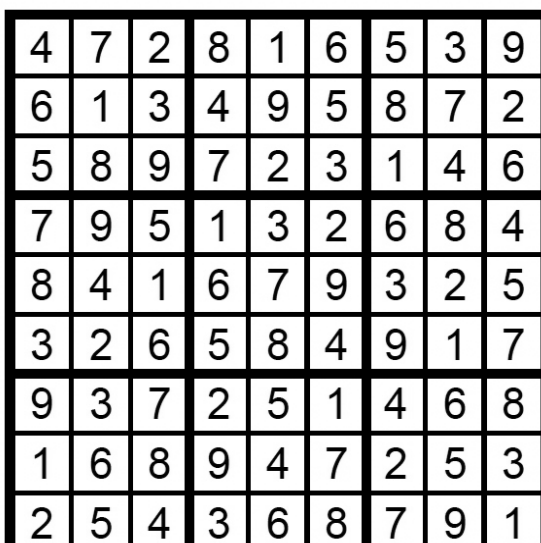
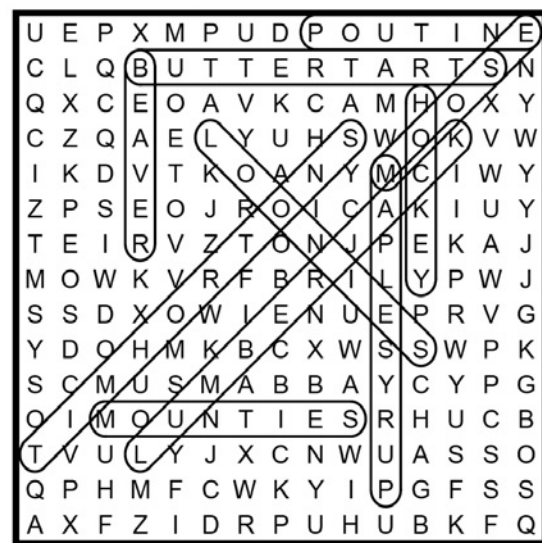
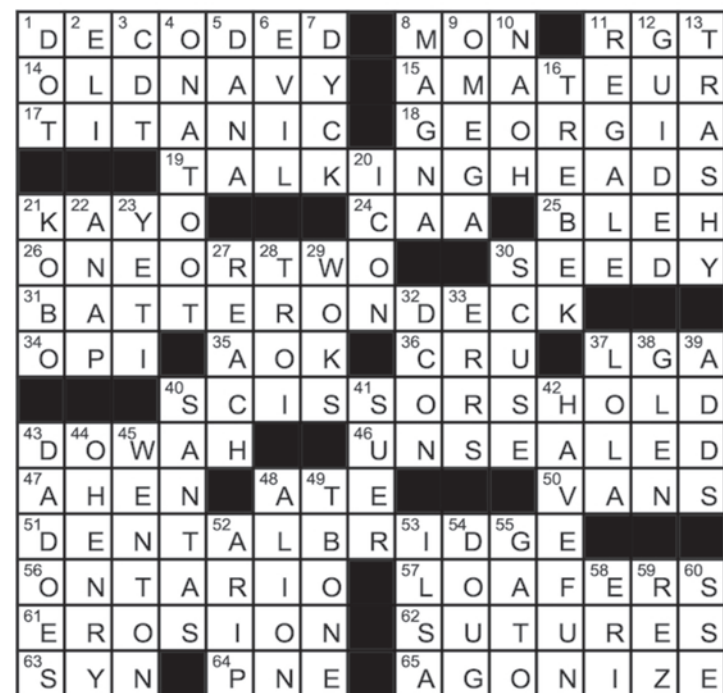
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NB Moves to Eliminate Motor Vehicle Stickers

Nathalie Sturgeon
Reporter, LJI

more convenient for New Brunswickers," said Local Government Minister Aaron Kennedy, who is also minister responsible for Service New Brunswick (SNB) in a release. "Eliminating licence plate stickers will simplify the registration process, reduce costs and save people time."

It said renewal reminders would continue to be offered by mail or email. SNB said it will be adding reminders through text messages in the coming weeks, according to the release.

The release said customers who renew their vehicle registration online would have the option to print their own registration certificates immediately after payment or have them mailed. People can also continue to renew them in-person at SNB.

The Holt government has tabled legislation that could, if passed, eliminate the use of registration stickers on all vehicles, including off-road and commercial vehicles, but not the cost.

The changes to the *Motor Vehicle Act* would remove the requirement for the stickers next spring – the small sticker placed on the right side of the license plate. According to the change, drivers are still required to renew their registration annually, but enforcement officials will need to confirm the registration electronically."

"The proposed amendments reflect how technology has evolved and how we can make services

MERRY CHRISTMAS & HAPPY NEW YEAR!

Sending you warm wishes for a joyous holiday season filled with love, happiness and the company of those you hold dear.

KATHY BOCKUS,
MLA FOR SAINT CROIX

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YEAH MUST BE TRUMP IT'S DESCRIBING

DOG'S

MICHAEL

How You Can Heal From Burnout in the Workplace

Jennifer Bouley
Columnist, The Courier

Let's talk about practical approaches to recovery and wellbeing. When you are burnt out, it can leave you feeling like you have failed. It leaves you feeling physically, emotionally, and mentally drained. But what if the truth is that it is not your fault that you are burnt out? Multiple factors contribute to workplace burnout, such as demands from outside the workplace, family care, extracurriculars, and more. While you should not drop things that give you joy in life, when you are feeling burned out, recovery is possible with the right strategies and support.

Here are 4 points to consider when you are looking for support for recovering from burnout.

Make Time for Self-Care, Rest, and Recovery

Rest is essential; as humans, we are not meant to be running late into the hours of the night and waking early each morning just to do it all over again. Take time for self-care – for each person self-care will have a different meaning – for some it is simply relaxing with a book, and for others it may be spending time with friends or exercising. Either way, making time for yourself, to be alone, or just to be still, is important to rest and recalibrate.

Don't Be Afraid to Speak Out and Seek Support

Having open and honest discussions about how you are feeling can help you on the healing journey. Talk to your manager and tell them how overwhelmed you are; talk to a therapist or coach, even family and friends. Talking about your feelings and experiences can help you process emotions and

feel less isolated.

Setting Clear Boundaries

Establishing clear boundaries is essential. When you start to say no, people will get upset, especially if you have always been a yes person. When you first start to say no to people and feel guilty about it, move past that feeling and remind yourself why you said no. You are the one living in your mind and body, and you must be okay with that. When you say no to additional responsibilities, you will then have time to allocate to activities that bring you joy.

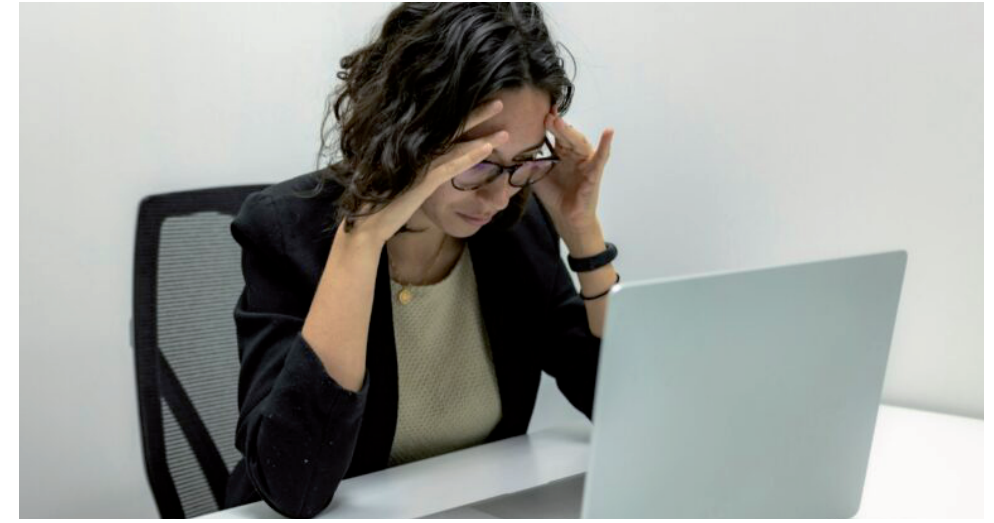
Evaluate and Adjust Your Workload

Look at your current workload. Look at where you can reduce something or delegate it to someone else. The main priority should always be your family, yourself, and work. All other things, if they don't bring you joy and you feel like you just must do them, then let others know that you can no longer take on the extra work. For work, discuss adjustments with your employer or colleagues and consider flexible work arrangements if available.

Recovering from burnout takes time and self-compassion. Incorporating these strategies can foster healing and build resilience for the future.



Jennifer Bouley is a Career Development Practitioner located in St. Stephen. Jennifer can be reached at blissplusyou@gmail.com.



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