

N.B. Government Announces St. Stephen Collaborative Care Clinic

Nathalie Sturgeon
Reporter, LJI

Dr. Wael Saber will tell you that patients visiting the access clinic at the Charlotte County Wellness Centre – a clinic specifically designed to divert patients from the emergency room – have pleaded with him to become their full-time doctor.

Saber is the only physician working out of the new clinic on the third floor of the Charlotte County Hospital (CCH). There are also three nurse practitioners, two registered nurses, two licensed practical nurses, one respiratory therapist, and one social worker.

“Since I’ve come to the community, it was obvious that the community is in great need of doctors,” he said, speaking with reporters. “I have been facing a lot of patients who have never seen a doctor for years and years, and



that [is] a challenging situation.”

The clinic opened in February, according to the Department of Health, and has since taken 310 patients off the primary care waitlist. Saber said space is the clinic’s biggest issue.

“I’m trying my best to make these things work for them; however, as we know, space [is] a big challenge,” he said. “I have a lot of colleagues who are still waiting to join, to come to the community, they are willing to come and help, but the space is a big challenge.”

He said he came in June, and he’s been waiting for things to improve, but nothing has changed.

“Today’s announcement kind of gives us hope that things are on track,” he said. “I’m still facing a lot of patients who I see [in] the access clinic, who are begging me to be their family doctor.”

Premier Susan Holt said the limited space means more people can’t come off the list.

“So this investment means new space that will have room for more patients and investment in more practitioners, so that we can take more patients off the list, because that is the goal to get everybody attached as quickly as we can,” she said. “And we can’t do it here. This is not the ideal place.”

St. Stephen marks the ninth collaborative care clinic to be undertaken by the Holt government. It has committed to 30 throughout the next several years, and 10 within the first 18 months of the mandate.

Holt was asked on Tuesday when the clinic could open, but could only say it would be early 2026.

“We’ll get the lease signed, we’ll get it renovated, and we’ll have people in before the snow melts,” Holt said.

When asked why announce it before the clinic was ready, Holt said it is to reassure the public.

“I think folks are asking us: you’ve forgotten about us, you’re not doing anything; it’s not going to happen,” she said. “The ninth collaborative clinic is in St. Stephen.”

Holt said it would not open before the end of the year in its new location.

In total, the government announced \$3.6 million dollars for the property it intends to lease, which has not been disclosed, and further recruitment efforts.

The municipal council in St. Stephen has also made efforts to recruit and retain healthcare providers. It has also helped the province procure a new property. Deputy Mayor Ghislaine Wheaton and Coun. Emily Rodas are part of the Community Health Committee.

“We have a municipal incentive that the council developed. It’s \$125,000 over five years, which is huge,” Rodas said, speaking with *The Courier*.

She explained that it has been challenging to not have a better understanding of where the clinic might end up, especially when trying to recruit primary care providers. Both Rodas and Wheaton have spent time with the Saber family, helping them learn about the school district and various community programming.



Dr. Wael Saber is the only physician working at the collaborative clinic in St Stephen (Nathalie Sturgeon/The Courier)

The Courier

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Top Five Stories in Charlotte County for 2025

CHCO News

It's been a newsworthy year in Charlotte County. From wharf deadlines, Minister Island's uncertain future, Blacks Harbour water supply woes, a heavy tourism season, a trade war with the U.S., and turmoil over a local homeless shelter – there was no shortage of stories to choose from for our top five.

Feds, province contradict deadline for wharf project

In September, 2025, *The Courier* uncovered a deadline previously stated by staff from the Town of Saint Andrews to be March 2026 was contradicted by the other two levels of government who helped provide the majority of the funding through the *Integrated Bilateral Agreement*.

St. Stephen shelter sparks conversation about wider impact

A group of concerned residents living and working around the Lighthouse Lodge spoke to *The Courier* and CHCO-TV about what they have been experiencing since 9 Main Street was established. They described incredible moments of violence as well as what they believed to be drugs being used and sold.

Blacks Harbour residents decry ongoing water quality issues

Residents in Blacks Harbour have been challenged by poor drinking water quality for more than two decades. In recent years, the problem has only worsened. The water supply is owned privately and the municipality has struggled to find a way to either take over the water supply or find a new one.

Charlotte County meets Formula 1: one engineer's journey to the pinnacle of motorsport

Grace Lloyd is from St. Stephen,

but is now living in the UK – working at the pinnacle of motorsport. Lloyd works for the Mercedes Petronas AMG Formula 1 team. Her profile explains what it is like to work on one of the world's biggest stages in sport.

Campobello's Friendship Trail offers lesson in unity

In a time when headlines are dominated by division, a quiet corner of the world is offering a powerful message of hope, friendship, and unity. Campobello Island – the only place where Canada and the United States jointly manage an international park – has officially opened its most ambitious project to date: a new trail built not just for walking, but for connecting.

For all our local news coverage, visit our website at chco.tv.

Fifty Years of the Charlotte County Archives

Anna Krentz Archives Manager

The Charlotte County Archives owes our existence to a storm. Fifty years ago, in 1975, winds damaged the attic and chimney of a historic building on St. Andrews' Water Street, known then as the Masonic Hall, and today as Drewhaven. When repairs were accessed the long-sealed loft in the building's attic, they uncovered a treasure trove: thousands and thousands of nineteenth-century records, stashed in trunks and piled in stacks.

The Masonic Lodge knew who to call. Since 1961, the Charlotte County Historical Society had been connecting local history enthusiasts under the leadership of Dr. J. Carl Medcof. Immediately the Society recognized the value of the find, which ran rich with unique resources on the histories of Charlotte County. For years the CCHS had casually collected historical materials, and this discovery was the spark needed to finally build a dedicated local archives. On a foundation of government grants and knowledge shared by the Provincial Archives, they embarked on the project of collecting and caring for the documentary heritage of Charlotte County. A resolution on December 10, 1975 made it official. The Charlotte

County Archives was born. A team of dedicated volunteers, soon led by newly appointed archivist Dr. Elinor Mawson, quickly got to work. At first, lodgings were temporary, and fleeting: rooms in Vincent Massey Elementary, the post office, the library, the Ross Museum. Finally the stars aligned and the Archives secured permanent quarters in the recently decommissioned Charlotte County Gaol. After extensive renovations by the Province, including the repurposing of the former second storey cells as a state of the art, climate controlled archival storage vault, the Archives took up its new home in 1983. Perhaps surprisingly, the site is a perfect one for an archives. The coldness, darkness, and security that humans dread are ideal for the long-term preservation of historical records.

In the decades since, from the ten linear metres of material found in that attic, our collection has grown to over 170 linear metres. We have letters, photographs, videos, ledgers, maps, posters, paintings, tapes, diaries, legal papers, scrapbooks, and so much more. Through these holdings we preserve experiences of local life at all levels. The formal correspondence of lawyers shares space with family albums filled with snapshots of beloved pets. Diaries of rural farmers join manuscripts of

plays by Grace Helen Mowat. Our collections brim with stories from our community's past. We care for the materials that hold these stories not only so they endure, but so they can be discovered. These records are yours to explore, whether you are an avid historian or a high school student. We invite you to make use of them in any way that is meaningful to you. Dig for ancestors. Draw inspiration. Uncover forgotten stories. Make new meanings.

For fifty years, we have thrived thanks to community support, without any regular government funding and sometimes against the odds. Our goal for the next fifty is to keep building our community relationships, as well as to foster new ones. We believe archives are for everyone.

Whether you are an old friend of ours, an intrigued new learner, or a well-wisher generally, we invite you to think of us on our December 10th birthday, and perhaps raise a toast to fifty years of the Charlotte County Archives.



Letters to the Editor

The views expressed in letters to the editor are solely those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of The Courier or its staff.

Letters to the editor should be limited to a maximum of 200 words and can be sent to thecourier@chco.tv and although all letters will be read, the Courier reserves the right to not publish letters that are unsuitable for a Community newspaper.

Dear Editor,

In my opinion, "The Courier's" coverage of the St. Stephen Homeless shelter was incomplete. It omitted important aspects such as: To continue living at the shelter do occupants make an effort to improve their situations, e.g., drug addicts going to drug rehabilitation?

Additionally, how does the shelter's rules address situations when occupants are involved in illegal acts such as using and distributing illicit drugs, verbally threatening others, or assaulting others? Are they expelled?

Courier-coverage provided insight about the loss of quality of life for the shelter's neighbors such as the

frequency in which RCMP officers are responding to incidents after an occupant's behavior becomes uncivil, with the local-RCMP averaging 19 calls per month, and the calls occurring at all hours of the day or night. However, Courier-coverage should have provided insight about what an average RCMP shelter-response looks like such as: How many officers are routinely involved, and are RCMP officers routinely-threatened with exposure to violence or used needles, etc.? Also, what's the average costs associated with an RCMP response? That instead of society paying for 19 RCMP responses per month to the shelter would those public funds be better used to: (a) differentiate and separate those who are earnestly down-and-out

with those choosing, "the high life;" and, (b) housing the ladder in a mental health facility with trained drug treatment therapists?

In conclusion: "The Courier's" coverage failed to address the harsh reality about the shelter's existence: that it is enabling a lifestyle of persistent drug abuse, which is a public harm that city and provincial officials sprang on St. Stephens' residents and business.

Dale Ferriere
Lubec, Maine

Dear Editor:

After driving some streets in Saint Andrews and coming upon pedestrians in dark clothing, can I remind your readers that they should, for their own safety, wear reflective clothing when out and about walking during dusk, dark and dawn.

Reflective shoes are not good enough!

Be seen and be safe!

Sylvia Humphries
St Andrews

Dear Editor,

A recent death of a young man in the St. Croix river prompts me to write this letter. Disregarding the questionable consequences that made a desperate person flee into the icy waters, what astounds me is the fact that at least one bystander had to stand helpless and watch as the man struggled before the river claimed his life.

St. Stephen Town Council affords a large electronic welcome sign near the RBC branch yet cannot see fit to provide lifesaving equipment despite the town bordering the river. Two sites along the river providing a lifebuoy and rope would have enabled any bystander to throw the lifebuoy into the river and offer a chance of life to a drowning individual. The cost of equipment would not exceed CAN\$1,000. Wooden stands would be required to house lifebuoys and ropes. Had this been in place maybe the mortality could have been avoided.

A town beside a river with no life-saving capability! A life is a life and precious. Do nothing now and what will be the excuse next time a drowning occurs in St. Stephen?

Victor T Morford
Lawrence Station

Santa's Helpers Raises Nearly \$64,000 for Charlotte County Kids

Vicki Hogarth Reporter, The Courier

If there is a season in which Charlotte County reveals its truest self, it is Christmas. And nowhere is that more visible than in the annual Santa's Helpers Telethon on CHCO-TV. Over five hours of live broadcasting, the community raised \$63,371, with even more donations pouring in afterwards. Every dollar raised goes directly toward supporting children in our region who need it most.

This year, 496 children were on Santa's Helpers' list. That number carries weight. In a small county like ours, these aren't statistics; they're the children of classmates, neighbours, co-workers—kids whose names we recognize even if the stories behind them remain respectfully private. The need is real, and yet the generosity that rises to meet it is just as real.

Behind the scenes, three women keep the machinery of Santa's Helpers running all year long: Lexi



Brisley, Kari Lambert, and Natasha Reid. Their work is mostly invisible by design. Form by form, phone call by phone call, they spend countless hours matching families with resources quietly and without fanfare. But without them, the whole operation would fall apart. Their dedication is stitched into every gift that appears under a child's tree.

On the broadcast side, CHCO-TV spent three weeks visiting schools across the county to record more

than 1,000 students singing holiday music. Those performances threaded through the telethon like little lanterns, with voices rising out of St. Stephen, Milltown, Campobello, Lawrence Station, Blacks Harbour, Back Bay, and St. Andrews.

Throughout the night, local mayors, St. Croix MLA Kathy Bockus, community volunteers, and business owners joined the set to read pledges. Some donations came from organizations, others

from individuals including children giving whatever they could. In a county where financial margins are thin, the impact of these gestures lands with particular force.

What made this year extraordinary is that the total surpassed last year's amount by more than \$20,000. It's a reminder of something we see again and again in Charlotte County: when the need grows, the community simply grows its heart to match it.

Passamaquoddy Lodge Foundation Pushes for Response on New Nursing Home

Nathalie Sturgeon
Reporter, LJI

Following ongoing delays in provincial approval regarding plans to expand and relocate its nursing home, the Passamaquoddy Lodge Foundation announced that it will host another information session. The foundation held two open houses on Nov. 25 at the W.C. O'Neill Arena. A similar open house was held in January 2024, and the town's political leadership had been told an answer would be provided by February.

Caroline Davies, a member of the board of directors for the foundation, said,

"Eight years ago, the board was examining how to move from 40 beds, 20 of which are shared, to 60 individual rooms." Davies said the province instructed the board at the time to build new.

"We hired a company that specializes in aging and how to help organizations age well to guide us on what the options were," she said. "We came up with a concept to come up with five individual homes, each with 12 beds, so we still have a 60-bed facility, but they would each have their own bedroom and bathroom, and then COVID hit."

She said this is when the concept the board proposed was solidified. Many seniors in nursing homes, Davies explained, died from loneliness due to the requirement to isolate during the pandemic.

The Canadian Institute for Health Information released a study in 2021 on the first six months of the pandemic. It said long-term residents' deaths were higher than in years prior to the pandemic, even when there were fewer COVID-19 deaths.

During the first wave from March to August 2020, 11 per cent of assessments noted that the resident had not had any personal contact with family or friends over the previous week, including virtual contact or phone calls. This proportion was 3 times higher than that for the same period in 2019, the report said.

It went on to say that of those, 36 per cent were assessed as having symptoms of moderate to severe depression.

Davies said the self-contained households would prevent others from being separate from their loved ones, because only one household would need to be isolated should an infection arise.

The foundation also sought a part-



nership with the local daycare, with Davies adding that intergenerational bonding has proven to improve health outcomes in both seniors and children.

Another big priority of the concept was to allow seniors to age in their own homes.

The Liberal government has placed significant investment in the Nursing Home Without Walls

"People don't go to a nursing home because they think it is a good idea; they go because they can no longer safely live on their own," she said. "But they should feel that it is their home, not an institution, and right now, our nursing home is an institution."

program, which helps older New Brunswickers access programming and financial support without needing to go into long-term care, and there are now 31 sites in the program.

One site is in Charlotte County through the Charlotte County Seniors' Resource Centre. The program has expanded to include the islands. It serves about 460 seniors across the county.

The new lodge would also be a child care facility, which Davies said is a critical part of the cross-generational support. It would also have an adult day program and a therapy pool.

But mainly, it is about allowing seniors from the community to remain in it throughout their lives.

"People don't go to a nursing home because they think it is a good idea; they go because they can no longer safely live on their own," she said. "But they should feel that it is their home, not an institution, and right now, our nursing home is an institution."

Davies said many donors and supporters feel frustrated by the government's lack of decision-making on the project. The Town of Saint Andrews donated 13 acres of land for the project, off Bar Road.

"It would be serviced land; it would meet the needs of our proposed building," Davies explained. "We get a new council in May; what if they change their mind?"

The plan is to have the people of southwest Charlotte County raise \$20 million dollars and to have the provincial government cover the

per diem costs of residents. Davies said many people are waiting to donate large amounts toward the facility, but are left in limbo.

"We have a dedicated committee of volunteers who have been working on this; at some point, they don't need to be hit on the head anymore," she said. "We're ready to go."

She said it is as simple as letting the foundation and the community help the government achieve the goal of investing in improvements for long-term care.

"I've talked to other nursing home providers who have wanted to go with a similar model as we did, to get the go ahead; they had to make it more institutional with 30 people living in a communal space ... and their advice to me was don't blink, hold the line, and you need household model nursing homes," she said.

The Department of Social Development (DSD) did not respond to questions about what is causing the delays in approvals or when the timeline for an answer would be available.

"The Department of Social Development is aware of the request to replace Passamaquoddy Lodge in Saint Andrews," it said. "While internal analyses and discussions are ongoing, there is no further update to share at this time."

Saint Andrews Council Pass Budgets and Hold Tax Rates

Nathalie Sturgeon
Reporter, LJI

The Saint Andrews' council has approved its 2026 budgets, but not without some dissent.

Like other local governments in Charlotte County, it held its tax rates for both rural and urban areas. The provincial government has a freeze on property assessments, creating a level of uncertainty to municipalities across the province.

Saint Andrews will hold the rate at 1.0506 per \$100 of assessment. Bayside and Chamcook will hold at 0.5395 per \$100 of assessment, but will face an additional fee of about 0.4115 from the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure.

In its general capital budget, the council set aside \$1 million for the Saint Andrews wharf refurbishment. The structure is undergoing a structural assessment to determine the next steps.

It budgeted \$167,000 for a new Zamboni, \$280,000 for a new sidewalk machine, \$125,000 to upgrade the washrooms in the W.C. O'Neill Arena Complex, and \$200,000 for housing.

A focus on paving

Another major focus of the upcoming year is improvements to various roads and streets. Several are expected to see upgrades, including:

Crestwood Lane, \$280,000

Prince of Wales, \$120,000

Water Street (replacement of asphalt sidewalk), \$160,000

It is also expected to take over the former Royal Canadian Legion parking lot. Chief Administrative Officer Chris Spear told the council that if it is paved properly it could add up to 50 more parking spaces in the downtown core.

Spear said it would be funded through the tourism accommodation levy – a fund supported by visitors who stay in local hotels, motels, and inns in Saint Andrews – amounting to \$468,000.

Bayview Drive is also expected to be paved, but it will be paid for through the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure (DTI).

Dissension among council

Council did not vote unanimously to support the budget, with Coun. Darrell Weare expressing concerns about errors contained in the budget, the debt being taken



Saint Andrews Council passes budget while holding tax rates (Nathalie Sturgeon/The Courier)

on by the municipality, and missing details on contracts the town holds with the Wellness Centre.

"All the economic think tanks, all the people in the know, the economy, where it stands today and where it is going tomorrow, are all talking about decreasing debt," Weare said. "Yet as a town, we are continuing to increase debt. It bothers me because of what we're putting on the shoulders of the citizens of tomorrow."

Weare said he took issue with the town not furthering the development of the allocation model. It had been recommended by the transition facilitator to develop one. The model is a system that distributes funds, resources, or services fairly across different departments, projects, or communities.

"So here we are going into year four and we still haven't got this financial model as was envisioned with municipal reform ... I'm just wondering what is going to happen next year, we're just going to slide by and not put the model in place, [and] that bothers me."

He said he felt that last minute changes to the budget made him feel that the town wouldn't have a financial model that was as accurate as it should be.

Lastly, Weare took issue with what he described as a verbal contract between the town and the Wellness Centre, located inside the W.C. O'Neill Arena Complex.

He said he noted that certain expenses had been removed, but a cost of living adjustment clause had been added, even though it had been budgeted for previously.

"I thought it was almost mandatory for a municipality to have a contract on that," he said. "It is just not good business practice to operate on verbal contracts. This is a business. A very important business."

Weare said he was unable to get a

response on what retention fees were being paid to the physicians working in the clinic. He asked whether a sunset clause had been applied or whether the payments were set to continue indefinitely.

"These are very valid questions on [a] contract," he said. "Things that as a councillor, I should know for my constituents and I should have a right to know."

Two doctors currently operate out of the Wellness Centre: Dr. Brian Peer and Dr. Julie Levesque-Taylor. Coun. Annette Harland manages her husband Peer's practice.

The clinic receives free space from the town, and it recently signed a memorandum of understanding with Horizon Health Network for renovations in the clinic, which comes amid a provincial push to establish 30 collaborative care clinics across New Brunswick.

Chief Administrative Officer Chris Spear, who is also the town's treasurer and is an accountant by trade, said he felt Weare's comments questioned his credibility.

"I've been doing this a long, long time," he said. "There are sometimes ups and downs, but I've been in the public sector too and my budget is more accurate than anything they would get in the public sector."

Spear said he, too, had discovered the errors mentioned by Weare during a final quality check before the vote.

He explained that previous iterations of government were not putting money in reserves – an account that allows municipalities to store funds for future use, including for capital upgrades.

"We've been fairly proactive with replacing assets, we can always look at cuts, but I guess it is what we are going to cut," he said.

Spear said cuts can be made to the budget if borrowing is not what the council wants to do.

"I'm not saying it's the wrong thing or the right thing," he said, explaining the options to the council. "Other municipalities have made these hard cuts and lived with it; it is the reality."

Spear said he wouldn't apologize for his recommendations regarding borrowing because he has always been transparent and honest with the council. He also agreed to sit down and try to figure out the allocation model but said previous attempts to elicit feedback from the council were unsuccessful.

Coun. Lee Heenan also defended the budget preparation and the replacement of municipal assets.

"I find that a budget is always a living document," Heenan said. "I understand that mistakes can be made, but a budget is a living document which means it has to be able to change to accommodate the needs of a particular town."

He said he feels the council is filling in gaps that were left in the years prior to this council's installation.

"We get tons of feedback about minor things that happen in the town; I've not gotten one letter on the budget," he said.

Heenan said he was upset by someone questioning the Wellness Centre.

"I will fight tooth and nail to make sure that our health services in the Town of Saint Andrews remain strong and committed," he said.

Council voted six in favour of the general operating and capital budgets, with Weare voting against both.

It voted six in favour of the utility budget, with Weare abstaining. Additionally, the province provided an additional \$1.6 million for the renewal of existing assets, which was passed unanimously.

St. Stephen Holds Tax Rates Amid Assessment Freeze

Nathalie Sturgeon
Reporter, LJI



The Municipal District of St. Stephen (MDSS) is holding its tax rates amid the ongoing property assessment freeze throughout New Brunswick.

Rates will remain at 1.5561 per \$100 of assessment for Ward 2 – or the urban area of St. Stephen – and 0.5597 per \$100 of assessment for the rural wards. The rural wards are also charged a Department of Transportation and Infrastructure (DTI) fee of about 0.41 per \$100 of assessment.

It comes amid a province-wide property assessment freeze by the provincial government for 2026. Property assessment accounts for about 83 per cent of a local government's funding, with the remaining coming from unconditional grants.

"I like the idea of holding the tax rate and putting most of it in reserves," said Coun. Wade Greenlaw.

Local governments are not allowed to run surpluses on the budgets; all money must be allocated. As well, local governments are not required to do a capital budget, but some do.

"I'm also in favour of holding the tax rates steady and transferring them into reserves," said Coun. Joyce Wright.

The council can take the money it sets aside for reserves to be used down the line on other projects or needs of the community.

Greenlaw said that with a lot of unpredictability, having money in the reserve might be a good thing.

"Part of the reason I want to leave it there [in reserves] is that we don't know what the property assessment revision is going to do," he said. "It's nice to have a little bit of reserves there because that could take us either way."

The capital budget does focus on infrastructure upgrades, including \$5.1 million allocated for paving various roads and streets within Ward 2. Renaud told the council it would be done through the Municipal Capital Borrowing Board (MCBB).

It has also taken the opportunity to purchase a new lift station – a system used to lift wastewater to a higher level when gravity isn't enough – that has fallen into significant disrepair.

The municipality is expected to spend \$1.5 million to do the replacement.

According to Renaud, the community is on the provincial government's radar for infrastructure in its water and sewer system.

"Through quiet conversations, they said they need to see a plan," Renaud told the council last week. "They're willing to help, but they need to see a plan. So, we have started that work with our engineering firm."

The council approved setting aside funds to undertake work engaging

with the federal and provincial governments on the long-term sustainability of the utility, and for the issues that may arise in the interim.

Additionally, it plans to purchase new self-contained breathing apparatuses (SCBA units) for the fire department at a cost of \$150,000, alongside four sets of bunker gear for \$15,000. Council has also approved the purchase of a dehumidifier for the Garcelon Civic Centre (GCC).

Council has also approved a new roof for a municipal building at 199 Union Street for \$350,000 and about \$40,000 for solar lights along the waterfront trail.

The council of MDSS unanimously supported the budget for 2026.

NB Power Enters a 'Moratorium' on Winter Disconnections

Nathalie Sturgeon
Reporter, LJI

NB Power says it is enacting a moratorium on winter disconnections of electricity for vulnerable populations in the province.

On Friday, the utility's president, Lori Clark, told reporters disconnection is a "last resort."

"We have developed some criteria that we will want to enforce to make sure that we are helping customers manage their bills and not leaving customers in the spring-time of the year with very large arrears," Clark said.

It comes amid rising electricity rates, including a request before the Energies and Utilities Board for a rate hike of 4.75 per cent on April 1, 2026.

NB Power officials said individuals 70 and older, those with medical issues that require electricity, and those with a combined household income of \$70,000 or less would be considered vulnerable under the moratorium.

This was established through the Vulnerable Populations Committee, which was established in March 2025. Randy Hatfield, the executive director of the Human Development Council, said that about 1,000 customers were disconnected last winter due to non-payment.

Customers will still have to pay some toward their bills to avoid disconnection.

"This doesn't address the issue of affordability generally, but it deals properly with the consequence that flows from the affordability crisis in New Brunswick," Hatfield said, speaking to reporters Friday.

He said this option was favourable to the utility and the committee.

"In the past, I would say there have been payment arrangements that some of our customers struggled with maintaining," Clark said. "So, we'll be working with our contact center to ensure that the payment arrangements that we put in place are ones that customers can afford, and they may not be nearly as high as they have been in the past."

The "interim moratorium" only differs slightly from the current disconnection policy, which states that disconnection can happen for non-payment after 30 days.

Clark couldn't say how many customers fall within the criteria identified under the moratorium.

"We're not focused on the numbers," she said. "We were focused on helping New Brunswickers. So

again, another reason for us to look at this as a pilot and understand some of the learnings that will come out of this in the period that we're evaluating."

About 25 per cent of New Brunswick's population is considered 65 years and older, according to the 2021 New Brunswick Census. Data from Statistics Canada in 2020 showed 168,860 households had a pre-tax income of \$70,000.

Clark said service agents will be working with customers to identify programs that they might not be aware of, including the equalized billing program and the energy efficiency program.

She couldn't say how many times customers would be contacted or by what methods they might be contacted to ensure their bills are

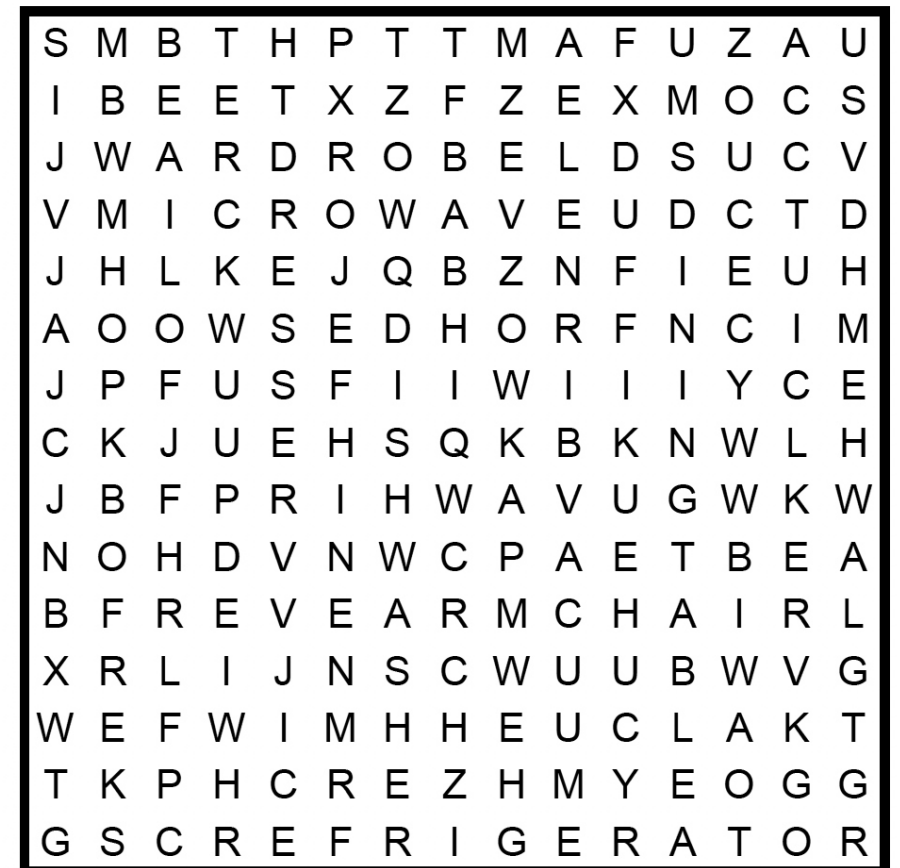
paid. "As I said earlier, disconnecting is always a last resort, but we do want to maintain communication with customers through this process and avoid disconnects during this period," she said.

Both Hatfield and Clark said any arrears have to be dealt with at some point, so it is about ensuring those don't become unmanageable.

"We will continue to work with customers to avoid [disconnection], and obviously, with the most vulnerable customer group, we will not be disconnecting those customers during the winter periods," Clark said.

JANUARY WORD SEARCH

- ARMCHAIR
- CHINA CABINET
- DINING TABLE
- DISHWASHER
- DRESSER
- FURNACE
- MICROWAVE
- REFRIGERATOR
- TELEVISION
- VACUUM
- WARDROBE




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Year End Interview with John Craig

**Nathalie Sturgeon
Reporter, LJI**

John Craig said when amalgamation happened, he knew he needed to spend more time in the newly incorporated areas – making himself accessible to the new constituents of Eastern Charlotte.

It has been one of his biggest commitments through 2025. With a new council, and a renewed focus, the issues of the Blacks Harbour and Beaver Harbour's water supply came to a boiling point, along with the increasing demand for child care, and a greater need for affordable housing.

"When I go out to all these areas and talk to people, whether it's birthday parties, anniversaries or just church services, it gives them accessibility to me," he said, speaking to The Courier.

In the last year, the council has built a pavilion in Riverside Park – an area poised for both recreation and events. It has become the home of the Eastern Charlotte Night Market.

"I expect it to be used a lot and maybe for weddings, receptions, birthday parties, anniversaries, and graduation parties. I can see a lot of that happening there, right by the river, is a beautiful spot, and so we're quite proud of that this year," he said.

The town worked on paving this past year. Craig said the challenge is that there is only so much money to go around.

"Paving is always a must, and it's not easy, because when you do certain streets, we can't do them all at once," he said. "We did the Hospital Street, which was falling apart. The reason we did that is because everybody in Eastern Charlotte uses that."

Blacks and Beaver Harbour water supply

Craig said the biggest priority for the current council—and the one he hopes to lead in 2026— is improving the water quality for residents in Blacks and Beaver Harbour.

The issue has been impacting residents for many years. The system is privately owned by Connors Brothers, a fish packing and processing plant.

"I know it's frustrating for the people of Blacks Harbour," he said. "It's safe, but I see the frustration there, but it is moving ahead."

In November, Englobe—the engineering firm responsible for trying to find a new water source for the area—said a new water main-flushing schedule would help with the deposits being left by manganese and iron coming in contact with chlorine.

He said the biannual flushing schedule isn't enough to move the deposits along.

"The transmission line, we know that's got to be replaced," Craig said. "They're doing the final study on that. The province is not going to give us [Eastern Charlotte] money until they've done those studies."

He said the next step is for council to form a separate committee to work on the water supply quality in Blacks and Beaver Harbour

"[The] council wants a separate committee," he explained. "It'd be sort of a communication committee, where they can communicate what's going on better to the public, and let people know and try to get the information out there."

The engineering firm is working on determining the legality of going on to private property, which can often be a complicated process.

"We have to keep pushing and pushing to make sure this gets done," he said.

Child care in Eastern Charlotte

For several years, the council has also been working toward a new child care facility in partnership with the Southwest New Brunswick YMCA.

In April, the YMCA said it had seen an increase in usage.

"We're going to keep the momentum going, offer more programming," Paige Scott said, speaking to the council in April. "We're a small, but mighty team. We put our heart and soul into everything that we're doing."

It has faced challenges with finding a location for the facility, and it currently operates out of the Eastern Charlotte Recreation Complex.

Craig said the municipality is waiting on drawings for what the new facility could look like, which should allow them to put it out for tender.

"We [have] got to see what the final prices are going to be and that's kind of where it is at the moment," he said. "Child care is very important, because if you don't have a place for your children to go to, you end up moving



away and moving to a place where there is child care."

Increase in medical calls

The fire department in Eastern Charlotte has also been facing an increased number of medical calls throughout the year, prompting the municipality to seek assistance from the province in advocating for better response times from Ambulance New Brunswick (ANB).

Jason Gaudet, the municipality's chief administrative officer, said in February that officials have been going back to Ambulance New Brunswick [operated by a private company] and the province to ask why this is happening.

"We're looking for some assistance from the province on their end to look into it as well, and to come up with some answers long-term," he said.

With increasing medical calls also come additional costs, Gaudet explained.

"There's also an additional cost for training firefighters, not just now for fighting fires, but also in regards to just responding to health and medical calls," he said.

According to ANB, in November 2025 it responded to 94.7 per cent of 9-1-1 emergency calls in Blacks Harbour within the 22-minute rural response requirement.

Between April and November, ANB responded to 9-1-1 emergency calls for Blacks Harbour on average 86.6 per cent of the time.

Craig said the fire department has a list of medical calls that it responds to.

"I think they've taken some things off that list to try to keep the call numbers down a bit," he said, adding they still respond to more serious 9-1-1 calls.

ANB said in February that the company was contacted by Eastern Charlotte Fire Chief Justin Johnston to join its Medical First Responder (MFR) program, in

which ANB and individual fire services mutually agree on the types of medical calls a particular fire department will respond to.

When the criteria are met, ANB will request assistance from the fire department through its dispatch agency. It said requests for the MFR program are not always made by ANB, but can also be made by the Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP).

"In those instances, PSAP advises ANB that they are sending MFRs. In these instances, calls do not always meet the agreed upon MFR criteria," it said in a statement.

Craig believes the fire department has the situation under control.

"I have to talk with the fire chief and our manager too; I think they seem to have a pretty good handle on it, really, at the moment," he said.

Looking ahead to 2026

Craig said the main focus going into 2026 will be housing, the Blacks and Beaver Harbour water supply, and maintaining the tax rates.

"We're going to hold the line on taxes, and the council is voting on that to make sure that we hold the line on taxes," he said. He also noted the provincial property assessment freeze, which is creating uncertainty on local governments.

"We're not going to have as much capital money to do as much capital work next year, but we're going to pick and choose what we can do, and live within our means," Craig said.

As for the mayor's future and the upcoming election in May 2026, Craig said his name will go back in the hat for one last time around the horseshoe.

"I feel things still have to be done," he said. "And I'd like it through. And if I do go one more, [it] will be my last time. I want to see some of these projects through. I have a great council down there."

For the Love of Maud: Chapter 8 Ushering in a New Year

**Vicki Hogarth
Columnist, The Courier**

Maud was born on Dec. 29, one of those inconvenient, post-Christmas, pre-New Year's orphaned birthdays that humans tend to resent. People with late-December birthdays always speak in the fragile tones of hostages: "No, it's fine, really. Christmas counts for both." It never does. But for a dog, it's perfect. The humans are home, slightly dazed from overeating, wandering around the house in slippers and trying to remember which day of the week it is. They're generous with snacks, naps, and existential gazes out the window. In other words: paradise.

The period between Christmas and New Year's—Twixmas, or my favourite, "Betwixtmas"—is a week suspended in time. A liminal zone. A societal shrug. People drift between family visits and reflective solitude, talking about "the year that was" and "the year to come." Some set resolutions with the determination of someone who has never met themselves before; others plan indulgent New Year's outings engineered specifically to sabotage good judgment.

It's the week when no one, absolutely no one, is truly working. Even the people who are working are not working. Entire offices survive on the efforts of one reluctant employee logging in from a parent's basement, replying to emails in a housecoat while sipping a hot toddy.

For Maud, this is the natural rhythm of life: snacks, naps, and walks where the destination is irrelevant. For humans, it's a rare occurrence.

My husband, Patrick and I have now missed four of Maud's seven birthdays, the last four consecu-

tively. Each year we leave St. Andrews for a two-week migration to Barbados to see our dear friends Vincent and Roberto.

The dose of sunlight rejuvenates me, and being nearly 4,000 kilometres from the TV station ensures I won't "just pop in" to finish something. I love my job, and I love my life and where I live, but there is something profoundly restorative about stepping away long enough to fully recharge.

Maud has no clue that we are missing her birthday—or that she even has a birthday. What she does understand is the sight of a suitcase. Suitcases mean Fredericton, her own private Club Med, also known as Nana and Papa's house.

We have to spell their names in regular conversation to avoid inciting hysteria. Just saying "Nana and Papa" is the linguistic equivalent of shaking a treat bag next to a megaphone. When we need her to look into the camera, we simply whisper, "Nana and Papa," and she fixes us with a gaze of such longing and devotion it is almost heart-breaking. Suitcases equal Nana and Papa. And Nana and Papa equal bliss.

Maud has her own bed at their house, positioned beside Nana and Papa's bed. Even if we stay the night before the airport run, she still sleeps in their room, as if reminding us of her priorities.

Life in St. Andrews may come with its own canine stresses, too many squirrels to chase, so many deer that they've actually become beneath her notice, but at Nana and Papa's she experiences unfiltered dog freedom.

She rides shotgun in Papa's truck as though she's inherited it. She visits Ivan, Papa's friend, where she is greeted like visiting royalty. She receives samples of Nana's



home cooking, small bites, but enough that you could reconstruct an entire casserole from them. Nana bakes daily, drawing from her Wilkins family recipe book—a recipe book that I suspect is equal parts tradition and witchcraft. No leash is required; they live on the river with nothing but fields between them and the nearest neighbour. She doesn't even need a collar. It's a pet sabbatical with cookie breaks.

People like to say dogs don't understand time, but I disagree. When we return two weeks later, well into the New Year, Maud jumps higher and cries louder. Her anguish is specific: you were gone too long. Not you missed my birthday. Just too long. For a dog, every reunion is a declaration of love.

"It's like we're Nana and Papa and she's actually missing us for a

change!" I once said to Patrick. It was the closest thing I've had to being promoted within my own family hierarchy.

Stepping out of your routine has a way of reminding you what your routine actually means. We return home with our Barbados memories—sun, sea, friends, the illusion of new beginnings—while Maud looks out the window, sitting in my arms—all 65 pounds of her. She's done this since she was a baby. I can't believe she's 7 now. She's been in our lives so long, I don't know the world without her. And in that moment, we celebrate her birthday. Together, we follow the winding, snowy road into St. Andrews, past fields wearing winter like a wool coat, past snow-capped trees that seem to be sleeping, recharging for the spring.

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Boat Recovered from Passamaquoddy Bay Following Fire

Nathalie Sturgeon
Reporter, LJI

A hybrid boat that had docked at the St. Andrews wharf has been removed following a fire on Dec. 3.

According to Fire Chief Kevin Theriault, firefighters from the St. Andrews Fire Department were dispatched around 3 p.m.

“Our crews responded immediately, stretched hose down the wharf, and began attacking the fire. St. George and St. Stephen responded for mutual aid, so we have quite a few firefighters on scene to keep firefighters rotating in and out,” he said in an interview with *The Courier*.

The hose had to be dragged down the length of the wharf due to a weight restriction at the structure’s approach. No more than 5 tonnes can cross that area without risking damage to the wooden wharf.

The boat had two lithium-ion batteries on board, in combination with diesel to operate the Hartford Hybrid engine.

“It’s the same as any EV fire,” Theriault said. “You try to get water on it and cool the batteries as [quickly] as you can. We just followed that guideline. We did the best job the crews could do, and they did an amazing job that could have been a lot worse.”

The boat was attached to a wooden wharf—rebuilt in the 1990s following a devastating fire—so firefighters hosed down the wharf in an effort to prevent the fire from spreading to the structure.

The amount of information on proper procedure on fighting fires that involve hybrid boats is limited. *The Courier* searched Transport Canada’s website on combating hybrid boat fires but was unable to find specific guidelines for these types of boats.

International companies like Vic-



Boat being Removed (Photo by Meg Carter)

taulic—which has an office in Brampton, Ont.—have developed hybrid boat fire suppression technology.

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taulic Vortex™ hybrid fire suppression system efficiently absorbs heat and reduces oxygen to extinguish fires,” it said on the company’s website.

Winter Warmer and the Art of Gathering

Vicki Hogarth
Reporter, The Courier

Every late January, long after the Christmastime visitors have made their goodbyes and the New Year’s Eve revellers have caught their breath, St. Andrews settles into a welcoming winter pace.

The town never fully sleeps; it simply exhales. And just as the season begins to stretch out ahead, the Winter Warmer Festival arrives, turning the heart of winter into a celebration of music, community and Maritime coziness.

The creative force behind it is Jamie Steel of Periwinkle Productions, who has guided the festival through years of experimentation, bylaw puzzles, shifting venues, unpredictable weather and post-pandemic renewal. What began as a simple idea shared with local guitar phenom Ryan LeBlanc has grown into one of the region’s most anticipated winter traditions.

“At first, we imagined a house concert festival,” Steel told *The Courier*. “Intimate, cozy events. People wandering between living rooms.”

The charm was obvious. The practicality was not. Once tickets were

involved, private homes became “commercial venues” in the eyes of municipal regulations, and the festival had to adjust.

Winter Warmer adapted by moving into small local venues such as Sunbury Shores, Honeybees, the Anglican church hall and The Herring Pub. These rooms preserved the intimacy of the original idea without the legal complications. As the desire for communal experiences grew after the pandemic, larger events were added, including dance nights at the Algonquin and headline concerts at the Huntsman Marine Science Centre’s 200-seat theatre.

Despite this growth, Winter Warmer remains rooted downtown, where the venues sit only steps apart. One can leave a songwriter circle at Sunbury Shores, walk a block through the crisp evening air and slip into DrewHaven before the steam has fully left one’s coat.

“That closeness adds to the feel,” Steel said. “You’re wandering through the town, show to show, warm room to warm room.”

Local support has expanded along with the festival. New venues such as Saint Andrews Brewing Co. have become integral partners, and businesses both open and closed for the season contribute generously. The town’s Recreation Department now runs parallel pro-

gramming including snow sculptures, trivia nights, cribbage tournaments and family activities that widen the festival’s reach.

This year’s lineup, running from Jan. 29 to Feb. 1, blends regional talent with nationally known performers. Headliner Jenn Grant will take the Huntsman stage just weeks before her new album tour. Friday’s dance features The Wharf Rats, a beloved Grateful Dead tribute band.

Bluegrass master Ray Legere returns with a powerhouse ensemble, while rising East Coast voices, including Shane Pendergast, Bouhala and percussive guitarist Asif Ilyas, round out the program. A Sunday songwriter circle brings together artists with Polaris Prize and Sub Pop pedigrees.

The festival also includes a literary event with Andrew MacLean, author of the Backyard History series. A new Saturday brunch at the Anglican church hall adds another layer of community warmth, giving concertgoers the chance to break bread with musicians over breakfast.

Winter Warmer proves something Steel, a true Canadian, has always believed. Winter is not something to merely endure. It is something to gather around.

For more information or tickets, visit winterwarmerfestival.ca.

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— Rainer Maria Rilke

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The Space between Surviving and Living - and Why So Many Working Families Feel Stuck

Jay Remer
Columnist, The Courier

Most public conversations about economic hardship begin with the word poverty. It's an essential discussion — but it no longer tells the whole story of what working families are experiencing.

A growing number of Canadians are not poor by official measures, yet they are not secure. Recognizing this helps you understand how many families live in the space between surviving and living comfortably — not luxuriously, just without constant financial strain.

Naming that space matters. Not to assign blame, but to better understand how today's systems intersect with everyday life.

Two measures, two realities

Canada's primary poverty measure, the Low-Income Measure, places roughly 10 to 12 percent of Canadians below the poverty line. These households face absolute deprivation and require focused support.

A living wage looks at something different: what a household realistically needs to cover basic costs — housing, food, transportation, childcare, taxes — and participate modestly in community life, assuming full-time work and restrained spending.

In New Brunswick, the living wage for a family of four with both parents working is approximately \$24 to \$26 per hour, depending on the community. The minimum wage remains far below that threshold.

Between those two figures lies a significant and often overlooked

group.

When we look at households, not just wages

We often hear that 40 to 45 percent of workers in New Brunswick earn less than a living wage, a pattern similar to that across Canada. But when we analyze household income, combining multiple wages and supports, the picture of financial insecurity becomes clearer, revealing a broader scope of household vulnerability.

When we view income data at the household level, three broad groups emerge:

- About 10–12 percent of households live below the poverty line.
- An estimated 25–35 percent live above poverty but below proper stability — able to manage day-to-day expenses, but with little resilience.

The remaining 55–65 percent meet or exceed living-wage benchmark, though even here comfort varies widely. Recognizing that this middle group often faces unpredictable expenses highlights how household instability can ripple through community health and productivity.

It is the middle group — neither poor nor secure — that deserves closer attention.

Why “meeting” a living wage often isn't enough

Living-wage calculations assume a predictable world:

- Stable schedules
- Reliable school calendars
- Limited unpaid caregiving disruptions



- Childcare that aligns neatly with work hours

Many families say their lived experience no longer fits that model.

In practice, to live comfortably — meaning without chronic stress — both parents often need to earn a living wage. Life's unpredictability quickly consumes any margin that exists on paper.

When small changes create real pressure

This becomes clearer when we consider decisions that are reasonable on their own but costly in combination.

For example, adding an extra professional development (PD) day to school calendars may seem administratively minor. However, for families living near the line, it introduces a recurring dilemma:

- One parent misses a day of work, often unpaid or
- The family pays for short-term childcare, typically at higher rates

Over a school year, that's roughly ten added disruptions — each one quietly eroding an already thin margin.

No one is at fault here. Education systems need training time. Workplaces require reliability. Child-care providers face their own constraints.

But the economic impact doesn't vanish. It accumulates — at the household level.

What this tells us

This is not a question of individual responsibility versus social services.

Working families are already doing their part — budgeting carefully, working full-time, making trade-offs. Social services respond to poverty and crisis, not the cumulative strain created by everyday disruptions in working households.

What we are seeing instead is misalignment: systems that make sense independently but, together, ask families to shoulder more instability than living-wage assumptions allow. This understanding can inspire you to advocate for change that eases household fragility.

The result isn't failure. It's fragility. Recognizing this shared vulnerability can motivate you to support policies that strengthen household stability for all.

An invitation to look more closely

Families living in this in-between space rarely qualify for assistance. They pay full market costs and live one unexpected expense away from trouble. They are not asking for luxury — only for breathing room.

When a third of households live that way, the issue extends beyond personal finance. It affects health, productivity, and community trust.

Recognizing this is not about blame. It is about clarity.

Before we discuss solutions, we need to agree on what is actually happening — and how many working families are carrying far more strain than official statistics suggest.

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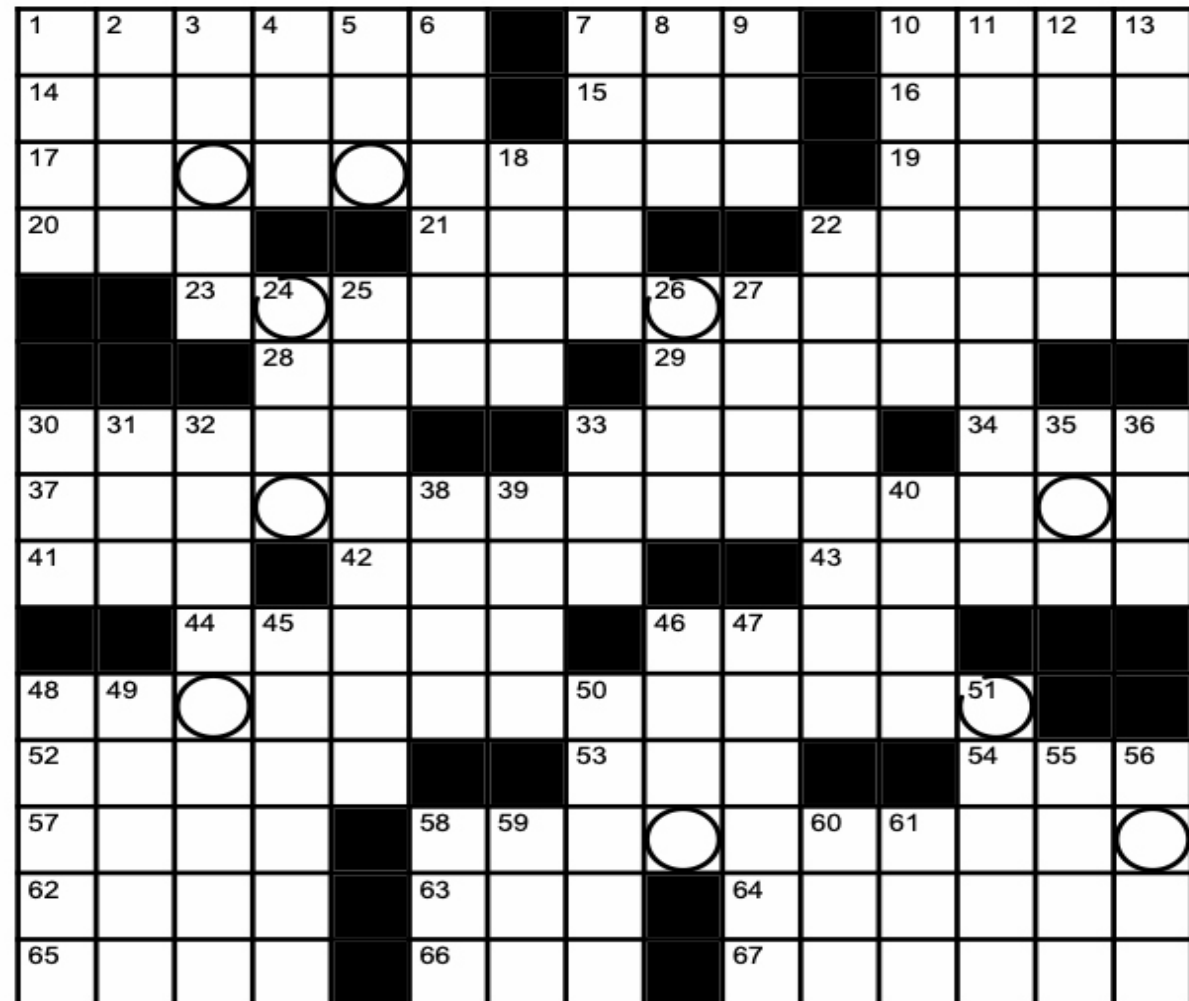
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Across

- 1 Hatfields' foes
- 7 Backstage pass holder, say
- 10 TV's "Leave ___ Beaver"
- 14 Green, cheddar, dough, etc.
- 15 Cassowary kin
- 16 "The Big Raven" painter Emily ___
- 17 War hero whose statue is in Trafalgar Square [radon]
- 19 Company named for its founder's initials and home town
- 20 Hoppy brew, briefly
- 21 Passing letters?
- 22 Potpourri emission
- 23 Hit from "Moulin Rouge!" [argon]
- 28 Caramel-filled chocolate
- 29 Shrink in fear
- 30 Be in sync (with), as views
- 33 Poet Charles
- 34 Land in l'eau?
- 37 Meghan Markle's title [helium]
- 41 Tree ring indicator
- 42 Salon products that lock locks
- 43 Some cocktail mixers
- 44 Took badly?
- 46 Thumbs-ups
- 48 Monarch who abdicated to marry Wallis Simpson [krypton]
- 52 ___ about (out of bed)
- 53 Target of Bart's crank calls
- 54 Memory stick port
- 57 Overhead bin item
- 58 Jazz pianist and bandleader [neon]
- 62 Techie website
- 63 Uses Facebook Chat
- 64 Be a snitch
- 65 That girl's
- 66 Certain NCO
- 67 Adele's "___ Me", 2021

Down

- 1 Caesar's 2051
- 2 Farm house with layers
- 3 Pinkish-orange hue
- 4 "Same __, same ..."



- 5 "Wok with ___" ('70s cooking show)
- 6 Singer Crow
- 7 Italian scooter
- 8 Texter's viewpoint intro
- 9 The lowest form of humour, it is said
- 10 Wintery eave clinger
- 11 Leave to chance
- 12 Pollster's observation, say
- 13 Wax poetic
- 18 Long ride?
- 22 Ten-dollar bills, in slang
- 24 Hair-tearer's cry
- 25 Performed well, ungrammatically
- 26 Snowbirds mil. group
- 27 Ones served breakfast in bed in mid-May, maybe
- 30 Mute girl in "The Piano"
- 31 Cart with difficulty
- 32 Winter commuter on Rideau Canal

- 33 Lead-in to Angeles or Alamos
- 35 Levi's rival
- 36 Strait's "All My ___ Live in Texas"
- 38 Egoist's concern
- 39 Whole whack
- 40 Not good, not bad
- 45 Fundamental beliefs
- 46 Poetic "soon"
- 47 White swan in "Swan Lake"
- 48 Go ___ (split the bill)
- 49 Winning by a point
- 50 "It's my duty"
- 51 Out of practice
- 55 Fodder tower
- 56 "Where have you ___?"
- 58 Non LGBT, for short
- 59 Texter's gasp
- 60 Ewe said it
- 61 Email address symbols

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The Hidden Dangers of MAiD Advance Requests

Heather Campbell Pope
Columnist, The Courier

Canada's potential expansion of medical assistance in dying (MAiD) to include advance requests is being hailed by many as a triumph of autonomy. But beneath this misleading veneer lies the grave risk of elder abuse. When the stakes are life and death, our duty must be to protect the vulnerable, not create pathways that could expose them to harm.

An advance request would allow a person to ask that MAiD be provided in the future, after they have lost capacity to consent and once certain conditions are met. While a recent federal "What We Heard" report suggests that Canadians are "generally supportive" of advance requests, majority opinion does not make it morally sound or safe.

For good reason, advance requests are prohibited under the Criminal Code, as the line between mercy and manipulation can blur with dangerous ease.

Imagine an older woman with dementia who develops a urinary tract infection, a common, treatable and underdiagnosed condition that can cause temporary delirium. In that fleeting confusion, her son persuades care providers to interpret her advance request as consent to hasten death. His charm conceals impatience for an inheritance, turning what was meant as a safeguard for dignity into a tool for exploitation.

Elder abuse in Canada affects roughly one in 10 seniors and is often fueled by isolation, dependency and broken trust. Introducing MAiD advance requests would hand abusers another avenue, cloaked in the language of compassion.

People can be pressured into signing, especially amid family strain, caregiver exhaustion, or financial motives. Once signed, a request can be interpreted as a standing wish for death, even when the person might later experience comfort, joy or connection.

Many Canadians take solace in controlling the terms of their dying, but how many mistaken deaths are we willing to tolerate in the name of personal choice? No system can fully prevent coercion or undue influence when vulnerability and power imbalance are at play.

The impulse to sign an advance request frequently arises at moments of deep vulnerability, often after a new diagnosis or when facing long-term care. Fear, grief and uncertainty can make death seem like the only form of control. This is compounded by a society that too often devalues older people, especially those with dementia.

Earlier this year, a United Nations committee warned Canada against allowing advance requests for MAiD, citing the heightened risk to people with disabilities. As parliamentarians consider Bill S-231, which would permit such requests, they must weigh not just public opinion but the very real



moral and practical risks. Expanding MAiD sends a chilling message that people with dementia are less valued and less worth protecting.

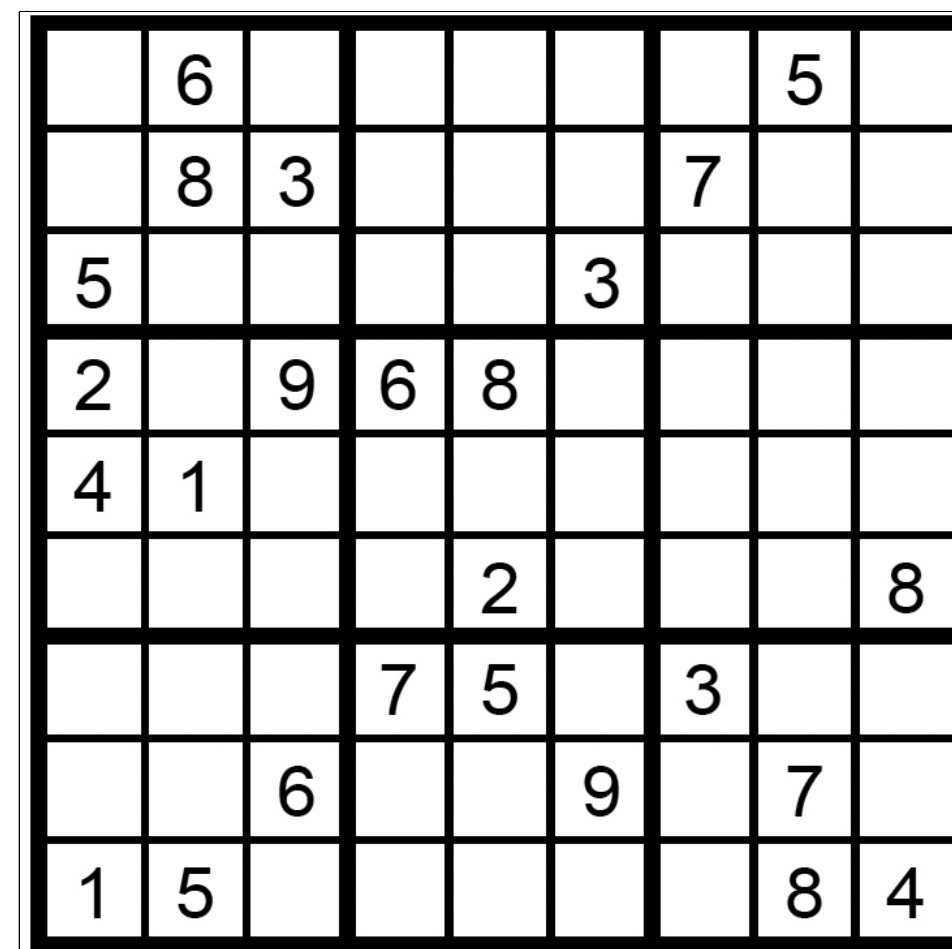
To truly honour dignity, we should focus on improving dementia care, expanding supports, and creating care homes that foster respect and belonging.

Recognizing the value of every life, regardless of illness or depen-

dence, is not only a moral imperative but also a necessary safeguard against elder abuse, and one that lawmakers have a responsibility to uphold.

Heather Campbell Pope is founder of Dementia Justice Canada, a small nonprofit dedicated to safeguarding the rights and dignity of people with dementia.

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This Holiday Season, Lonely Seniors Deserve Care

Heather Campbell Pope
Columnist, The Courier

December is often portrayed as a season of togetherness, with windows glowing, families gathering, and a month steeped in social rituals. But for many older Canadians, the winter holidays are a particularly lonely time. And loneliness, despite its quietness, is not benign. It can distort judgment, shrink a person's world, and trap them in patterns of vulnerability that the law tends to overlook.

Loneliness is more than being alone; it is a painful emotional state, an unmet longing for connection. When chronic, loneliness fuels a paradoxical cycle: people want meaningful relationships, yet become more likely to withdraw, misread social cues, and even reject help. For older men especially, who already tend to seek help less often and may guard their independence fiercely, loneliness becomes an internal constraint, shaping choices in subtle ways that can be misunderstood by others as purely autonomous.

During the holidays, these pat-

terns often intensify. Many community programs pause, neighbours travel, and the absence of relatives becomes more evident. A man who lost his spouse years ago may sit in an empty living room, growing frailer, and turn down home care visits, not necessarily because he truly wants to "live at risk" but because loneliness has altered how he experiences offers of support. His refusal looks autonomous on paper, yet the reality is more complicated.

The "right to live at risk" is rooted in the belief that capable adults have the right to make unwise choices, and that, for dignity's sake, we should let them. While this principle is important, it can unintentionally overshadow the effects of loneliness and leave some needs unmet.

When loneliness takes hold, declining support can become a way of clinging to the last pieces of control, even when the refusal leaves the person isolated and at risk. Sometimes, saying no is a coping mechanism, a way to protect oneself from the fear of rejection or further emotional pain.

The consequences of rigidly interpreted autonomy are most evident

in avoidable emergencies. In the buildup, a lonely senior's suffering may go unaddressed because of their asserted right to refuse, with insufficient attention to how emotional isolation can compromise their actual choice.

This is not to suggest that authorities should override every refusal. There is room within existing legal frameworks to respond with sensitivity and thoughtful compassion. We can support, rather than displace, a capable older adult's autonomy by recognizing when a refusal is shaped by loneliness rather than by true preference. With the right approach, services can be offered in ways that strengthen connection and prevent the slide toward crisis. This means tempering slogans about the "right to live at risk" with practical, relationship-based supports that help seniors age safely and

with dignity.

At this time of year, it's important to remember that dignity is not just about independence; it's also about belonging. Without it, the language of rights can mask neglect, leaving older adults isolated under the guise of autonomy. We need to recognize not just the right to choose but also the supports that allow lonely seniors to make choices with genuine agency and meaningful connection, so they can make decisions without loneliness dictating their lives.

Heather Campbell Pope is founder of Dementia Justice Canada, a small nonprofit dedicated to safeguarding the rights and dignity of people with dementia.

1	M	C	C	O	Y	S	7	V	I	P	10	I	T	T	13		
14	M	O	O	L	A	H	15	E	M	U	16	C	A	R	R		
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6	1	3	4	9	5	8	7	2
5	8	9	7	2	3	1	4	6
7	9	5	1	3	2	6	8	4
8	4	1	6	7	9	3	2	5
3	2	6	5	8	4	9	1	7
9	3	7	2	5	1	4	6	8
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2	5	4	3	6	8	7	9	1



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ERICA B. COPPING

It is with deep sadness that we announce the passing of Erica B. Copping (Lindsay) at the Moncton City Hospital Moncton, NB on November 25, 2025, after a short battle with cancer.

Erica is survived by her husband; Bradley Copping, their daughters; Arya & Lila Copping, her parents; Danny & Lori Dempsey, brothers; Cody Dempsey and Micheal Roy, grandmother; Janice Lindsay, grandparents; Cheryl and Jim Dempsey, brother and sister-in law; Luke and Lianna Copping, mother-in law; Katherine Arseneau, father-in-law; Desmond Copping and many beloved Aunts, Uncles, cousins and dear friend Katie Curran.

She is preceded in death by her grandfather; Charles (Buddy) Lindsay and grandmother; Judith Crosby.

Funeral service was held November 27, 2025

DALE W. GREENLAW

It is with great sadness we announce the passing of Dale W. Greenlaw on November 26, 2025, at the age 82.

Surviving are his children Alisa (Dave) Cook, Blain Greenlaw and Darin Greenlaw; grandchildren Kira, Malory, Matthew, Kathleen, Tyra, and Calin; great-grandchildren Quinn, William, Olivia, Norah, Cohen and Penelope; brother Wayne, Glen, and sister Debbie.

Dale was predeceased by his parents; Frederick and Marjorie Greenlaw; wife; Gloria Greenlaw, sisters-in-law; Susan Greenlaw and Claire Dunn and brother-in-law; Paul Babcock.

Dale was predeceased by his parents; Frederick and Marjorie Greenlaw; wife; Gloria Greenlaw, sisters-in-law; Susan Greenlaw and Claire Dunn and brother-in-law; Paul Babcock.

A private family service will be held in the spring.

FLORENCE L. IRVING

We announce the peaceful passing with her family by her bedside, of Florence L Irving on December 1, 2025, at the Charlotte County Hospital St Stephen, NB.

She was born in 1929 to the late Harry and Jessie Reynolds.

Florence is survived by her beloved children; Linda (Rod), Marilyn, Arnold (Cheryle), Carol (Brent), James (Michele), Teresa (Frank) and Chris (Cindy), 13 grandchildren, 24 great-grandchildren, 3 great-great-grandchildren, brother; Keith Reynolds (Anne), several nieces, nephews and cousins.

In addition to her parents, Florence is predeceased by her loving husband; John, daughter; Patsy, 2 granddaughters, 1 sister and 3 brothers.

Funeral service was held December 4, 2025

PHYLLIS P. LORD

With great sadness, the family of Phyllis P. Lord of Rolling Dam, NB, in her 105th year, announce her peaceful passing at the Charlotte County Hospital St. Stephen, NB on Thursday November 27, 2025.

Phyllis is survived by nieces and nephews; Mary Kay Brown, Galen Dempsey (Janet), Sharon Pierce (Richard), Dennis Dempsey, Patsy Colpitts, Terry Dempsey (Ada), Marsha McDougall (Blair) and a large extended family.

Funeral service was held December 3, 2025.

PATRICIA "PATTY" L. KEENAN

It is with shattered hearts the family announce the sudden passing of Patricia "Patty" L. Keenan, after a battle with diabetes on Sunday November 23, 2025, at the Saint John Regional Hospital Saint John, NB.

She is the daughter of the late Ernie and Anna Defazio.

Patty is survived by her loving husband; Joe, two chosen children; Jamice and Degan Reiker, siblings; David, Paul (Heather), Royden (Bob), Daniel (Donita), several nieces, nephews and cousins.

In addition to her parents, she was predeceased by her sister; Kim and brother; Nick.

Funeral service was held November 27, 2025

RUTH A. FRASER

It is with sadness the family of Ruth A. Fraser announce her peaceful passing at the Charlotte County Hospital, St Stephen, N.B. on Thursday, December 11, 2025.

Ruth is survived by her children, Julie Chisholm (Dale), Michael McLaughlin, James McLaughlin, (Angela), Cindy Ganong (Brad Speedy) and Susan Garland (Mike Erskine), several grandchildren and great-grandchildren. She is also survived by her brother, Ralph McKeeman (Pam), several nieces and nephews.

In addition to her parents, she was predeceased by her husband Roy Fraser (September 2025), son, David McLaughlin (1982), beloved sisters, Inez McLaughlin, Carol McLaughlin, Freda Dalcy, brothers, Sheldon and Fred McKeeman.

Funeral service was held December 14, 2025

MARGO J. GREENOUGH

Margo J (née McCann) Greenough, 83, passed away peacefully on December 1, 2025, at Monarch Hall, surrounded by her family. Born in Rolling Dam, NB, she was the daughter of the late Marion (Williams) and Carleton McCann. She was predeceased by her husband of 47 years, J. Geoffrey Greenough.

Her children will deeply miss her, J. Richard (Treena) of Halifax and Sheila Gidney (James) of St. Stephen, along with grandchildren Travis, Megan, Nolan, Alyssa, and Barrett; great-grandchildren Genevieve and Audrey; her brother Alan (Eileen) McCann; sister Keay (late Alan) Halstead; sister-in-law Patsy Witzke; and many nieces and nephews.

Her celebration of life and interment will be held in May 2026. For details, contact Sheila at sheilagidney@gmail.com.

DALE E. ACHESON

It is with sadness the family of Dale E Acheson announce his passing at the Charlotte County Hospital on Saturday, December 13, 2025.

Dale is survived by his wife, Francine, his children; Sher Acheson (Jeff), Candace Mitchell (Cory), Stephanie Acheson and Matthew Acheson, his siblings; Gordon (Dodie), Gary and Shirley Cloney (Mike), several nieces, nephews, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, cousins, aunts and uncles.

In addition to his parents Olin and Eileen, he was predeceased by his sister; Sandra Matheson and brother-in-law; Gordon Matheson.

A celebration of life was held December 19, 2025

J. DOUGLAS HANSEN

After living a long and honorable life of 96 years, the family of J. Douglas "Doug" Hansen sadly announce their father's passing on Sunday November 30, 2025, at the Charlotte County Hospital St Stephen, NB.

Doug will be sadly missed by his surviving family members, his 4 children; Drew (Gloria) Hansen of Charlottetown, PEI, Mark (Ginette) Hansen of St Stephen, NB, Kim (Wendy) Stringer-Hansen of Cobourg, ON, and Ed (Lorrie) Hansen of Burnaby, BC, 10 grandchildren, 17 great-grandchildren, 3 great-great-grandchildren, sister-in-law; Myrna Drew of Lower Sackville, NB, several nieces and nephews.

Private family service will be held at a later date.

FLORENCE L. IRVING

We announce the peaceful passing with her family by her bedside, of Florence L Irving on December 1, 2025, at the Charlotte County Hospital St Stephen, NB.

She was born in 1929 to the late Harry and Jessie Reynolds.

Florence is survived by her beloved children; Linda (Rod), Marilyn, Arnold (Cheryle), Carol (Brent), James (Michele), Teresa (Frank) and Chris (Cindy), 13 grandchildren, 24 great-grandchildren, 3 great-great-grandchildren, brother; Keith Reynolds (Anne), several nieces, nephews and cousins.

In addition to her parents, Florence is predeceased by her loving husband; John, daughter; Patsy, 2 granddaughters, 1 sister and 3 brothers.

Funeral service was held December 4, 2025

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Funeral service was held December 3, 2025.

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In addition to his parents Olin and Eileen, he was predeceased by his sister; Sandra Matheson and brother-in-law; Gordon Matheson.

A celebration of life was held December 19, 2025

Ability New Brunswick Launches New Portal for Early Learning Centres

Nathalie Sturgeon
Reporter, LJI

Ability New Brunswick has launched a new microsite aimed at helping early learning centres and daycares create more inclusive spaces for children with mobility disabilities.

Haley Flaro, the executive director of Ability New Brunswick, noted that the organization observed a trend in those facilities and decided to partner with the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (EECD).

Childcare centres were inquiring about how to build inclusive playgrounds and classroom spaces, as well as grant and funding opportunities to support this work.

"It really was a natural next step for us, because we know that inclusion starts really early, and we have a lot of families that often struggle to find accessible, inclusive daycares for children with a mobility disability," she said, speaking with *The Courier*. "This was a perfect partnership for us, and we're really excited ... with the hub that's been developed."

According to the Government of New Brunswick (GNB), in June 2024, an estimated 35.3 per cent of people had a disability. It is the second-highest rate of disability in Canada, falling behind neighbouring Nova Scotia.

Flaro said Ability New Brunswick reviewed 60 early learning and childcare facilities throughout the province to measure the level of inclusion. Inclusion was one of the pillars included in the Canada-New Brunswick Child Care Agreement.

New Brunswick, she explained, has been able to allocate money to help those facilities. She added



that the applications are underway.

Ability New Brunswick conducted jurisdictional scans on inclusive learning and found that mobility disabilities are often overlooked. Flaro said that, in most cases, few centralized sources exist for people to find the resources that are available.

"This is the first time in New Brunswick ... where there is a hub for workers and parents working with children with a mobility disability, with a really close focus on inclusive play for that population, [and] inclusive resources," she

said.

Flaro said her organization often hears stories about parents who find it difficult to secure placement in daycares and early learning centres, and that having a child with a mobility disability makes the process that much more complicated.

"We've had families that have gone to so many daycares to try and find the right space," she said. "Sometimes they can find accessible indoor spaces, but the child's not able to use the playground."

She said critical development hap-

pens in those first several years of children's educational experience, and if they are left out due to physical limitations, it leads to segregation.

"It really is unfortunate when we see this type of segregation that exists, and we know even better than ever that we need to start the dialogue about the resources around true inclusion for children with a mobility disability early," she said.

You can visit the new portal on Ability New Brunswick's website.

What You Need to Do to Boost Your Career in 2026

Jennifer Bouley
Columnist, The Courier

The Canadian labour market is changing, as is the labour market around the world. Technology, societal trends, and changing workplace arrangements have made the Canadian labour market change. Let's discuss what you need to do to revamp your career in the labour force landscape as we head into 2026. Technology is advancing, economic conditions are different, accompanied by a growing emphasis on adaptability; it's crucial to align your career approach with current trends.

Look at your Digital and Technical Abilities

In Canada, our workforce is now being driven by digital transformation. New technologies, which include AI, data analytics, and cybersecurity, are shaping job requirements across various sectors which include healthcare, finance, manufacturing, public service, and more. This is increasingly important for small business owners to stay on top of technology trends to remain competitive. Now more than ever, it is important to invest in continual learning through online courses, micro-credentials, or professional certifications. Focus on areas that pique your interest through online learning. Just because technology is changing, it does not mean that you must return to post-secondary to get another degree or diploma. Looking at learning skills like coding, data literacy, and digital communication can really help you fill gaps in your career.

Look Closely at Remote and Flexible Work Arrangements

With things changing a lot of employers are requesting that em-

ployees return to the office full-time, or at least in a hybrid manner. However, hybrid and remote work are becoming more popular in Canada. So, if you are looking for a specific role and cannot move, consider looking for remote opportunities in other parts of Canada. This can offer higher salaries and greater work-life balance, and access to jobs beyond geographic constraints. Focus on your ability to show the employer that you have strong time management and digital project management abilities. Both of which employers are seeking out in employees. Soft skills are also important, so demonstrate adaptability and self-motivation in your resume and cover letter examples. Look into using LinkedIn to build a strong professional presence and take part in virtual networking through associations and start to build your network across Canada.

Look at your Interpersonal and Transferable Skills

Skills that are big on Canadian employers' lists tend to prioritize communication, problem-solving, leadership, and emotional intelligence. When it comes to leading a team, working remotely, and collaboration in general, these skills are essential for career advancement. In the job market right now, there is a lot of uncertainty, and employers are seeking talent that is diverse and capable both emotionally and technologically. They want innovative team members, but who also want to build community. If you do not have much time to spare, taking part in webinars, workshops, volunteer opportunities, or mentorship programs can help you boost your skills. Talk about your transferable skills when seeking promotions or new opportunities, and how you can put them to use in new roles.



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- November 13, 2025 Janet Omar
- November 22, 2025 Carolyn Webber
- November 23, 2025 Helen Taylor
- November 27, 2025 Donna Mitchell
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