

Saint Andrews Council Advocates for Formalized Code of Conduct Process

Nathalie Sturgeon
Reporter, LJI

The Town of Saint Andrews is asking the Department of Environment and Local Government to create a formal policy outlining how code of conduct and conflict-of-interest meetings should be handled, following an advisory from the Local Governance Commission (LGC).

The town was advised, alongside 76 other municipalities and the regional service commission, that it could not hold discussions about those items in closed session outside the exemption set out in Section 68(1) of the *Local Governance Act* under solicitor advice.

The commission said municipal councillors and mayors cannot be considered employees of the municipality under the same section of the *Act*.

“In November 2025, the LGC provided a written advisory to local government councils and board members of the Regional Service Commissions (RSCs) regard the use of closed sessions to review, and in some cases to make decisions on, code of conduct and conflict of interest complaints,” the statement from the town reads.

The release said previously councils had previously moved into closed session under the Section 68(1)(j), which pertains to labour and employment matters.

In its advisory, the commission cited two examples of case law that for the purposes of the *Employment Standards Act*, mayors and councillors are not covered by that exemption.

The town said in July 2024, the provincial government passed an updated code of conduct regulation (2024-48) in the *Act*.

“In the absence of receiving information from official channels regarding the new regulation, councils continued code of conduct processes in existence for decades, or when newly formed councils took office in January 2023,” the release said.

It said the widely publicized review of the Strait Shores council brought the issue to the attention of the LGC.

According to the town, the advisory was circulated first at a symposium on harassment and bullying hosted by the Union of Municipalities of New Brunswick (UMNB), which was attended by Deputy Mayor Kate Akagi and Coun. Steve Neil.

“Multiple concerns were raised by councillors and staff members from around New Brunswick, commenting on a common belief the code of conduct procedure was approved by the province and in place universally across municipalities,” the release went on to say.

Similar concerns were echoed by Eastern Charlotte Chief Administrative Officer Jason Gaudet.

Gaudet explained that some complaints can be baseless or lack merit and that the complainant are not limited to the municipality, meaning they can file complaints from anywhere in Canada.

The town’s statement said decisions were always made in open session, including on involving a code-of-conduct complaint received and voted on, based on legal advice, in February 2025.

“Closed discussions also served to provide protection for the identity of those filing a complaint, regardless of council’s decision to investigate or dismiss the accusation,” the statement said.

The town’s administrative staff is working to draft a new code-of-conduct bylaw including collecting information from municipal legal counsel, provincial departments, and updated bylaws from other municipalities.

Other provinces, the town explained, have made changes to protect against the misuse of the code-of-conduct complaint process, including in Nova Scotia and Alberta — with Alberta moving to remove code of conduct bylaws from councils.

The town called for the province to create “a clear, universal process for councils to follow for code of conduct and conflict of interest complaints.”

“In the absence of a process provided by the Department of Local Government, the development of a new by-law remains challenging,” the release said. “Council



and staff will continue requesting additional information and perspectives to develop a fair process in alignment with provincial acts and regulations.”

Geoff Martin, a professor at Mount Allison University, said he supports the creation of a formalized process that could be applied across local governments.

“I do think the Town of Saint Andrews makes a good point, which is that it’s not the best use of resources,” he said, speaking with *The Courier*. “I don’t think, for 77 municipalities, all to head out and talk to their solicitors and come up with amendments—who knows how many different directions they’ll go in.”

He said a patchwork of approaches is likely to emerge.

“There could eventually be a judgment saying, you know, you did it wrong because you didn’t follow our advice,” he said, adding then the municipality would be required to re-do the bylaw again.

Martin said he believes someone in the Department of Local Government should develop a process that all municipalities can apply to code-of-conduct and conflict of interest. With new councils and administration, he said there must be guidance for people who are still learning the ins and outs of local governance.

The Department of Local Government told *The Courier* it provided its partners with the opportunity to contribute during the public consultation process. It said the changes were communicated when they came into effect in

2024.

“Local governments are independent levels of government that are responsible for the development and implementation of their own by-laws,” a statement from the department to *The Courier* said. “It is their responsibility to determine the specifics of their process under their own by-laws.”

The statement said that if legislative interpretation is required, local government must seek its own legal advice.

Martin said there is a history of the department being hands-off.

“When I heard about the commission on local government’s ruling or opinion on this matter, I was kind of concerned about the complications of implementing what they’re saying, and the mechanisms as well,” he said.

Martin said a standardized template that all municipalities could implement, with tweaks, would make bylaw creation much easier. However, he said representing mayors and councillors as employees has been used to stifle critical comments.

“You have a duty of loyalty to the municipality. You may have an obligation not to undermine the majority of the council, but you do have the right to disagree with the majority of the council and to disagree with things the municipalities are doing, and that’s what you’ve been elected for,” he said.

He said it will be challenging to develop a sound system for handling these complaints given the greater public obligations involved.

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N.B. Green Party Hope to Pass Healthy Environment Bill

Nathalie Sturgeon
Reporter, LJI

Green Party Leader David Coon says Bill 23, *An Act Respecting the Right to a Healthy Environment*, is intended to protect human health, including the health of children.

The proposed legislation would also establish the creation of an Environmental Rights Commissioner.

“People have no right to clean air,” Coon said, speaking with CHCO-TV, noting the clear air and water acts do not enshrine the right to a health environment, but set out the standards for the level of contaminants that are acceptable under the legislation. “How is that problem addressed? Right now, environmental legislation is aspirational.”

Still, Coon said, there is no right to clean air. He added that the commissioner would act as an advocate for the right to a healthy environment, including clean air and water.

“We’re talking about drinking water, breathing air, these are things that are essential for our health and wellbeing and with a lack of a right to those things, what we’ve seen is illness and impacts on communities that have not been positive,” he said.

In Eastern Charlotte, residents of Blacks Harbour and Beaver Harbour have been dealing with poor-quality drinking water for years.

The water supply is privately owned by a fish packing and processing company and an engineering firm says it believes deposits are forming in the water supply system through a chemical reaction.

In recent months, pressure has mounted on Eastern Charlotte to improve water quality.

“I saw one of the filters from the restaurant and it was not pretty to look at,” Coon said, adding the private ownership requires a significant draw on the water supply.

“The piping into the community is old and problematic and it is a mish-mash of older pipes and somewhat newer pipes, except for some of the distribution system ... is all run by Connors Brothers, Bumblebee, that’s not right, there needs to be a separation between industrial supply and the municipal water supply.”

Coon said residents need assurance that the municipality is in charge of the water supply and that there is a solution.



“In those cases, it needs a partnership, a real strong one between the provincial government and the local government and its citizens to solve that problem,” he said.

The *Clean Water Act* broadly regulates environmental water quality, including drinking water. Municipal and provincially operated water systems are required to take samples for “specific parameters” within the list outlined in the Act.

If any of those samples exceeds the limits, it is subject to a health risk assessment, which could result in boil water orders or other directives to ensure the health of New Brunswickers.

According to Public Health, Blacks Harbour was under a five-week-boil-water order in 2023. It also experienced a four-day hour last year.

Beverly Gingras, executive director of the Conservation Council of New Brunswick (CCNB), said Bill 23 is an important piece of legislation for New Brunswick.

“Right now, the people of New Brunswick don’t have a right to a clean environment. It’s probably shocking,” she said, speaking with *The Courier*.

Gingras said New Brunswick has the framework to establish an Environmental Rights Commissioner, noting the Advocate, Kelly Lamrock, as well as the Office of the Ombud.

“There’s different offices that already exist, and they’re there to make sure that the government is being held accountable,” she said. “The commissioner would be there to see what the government is doing in terms of complying with the rights under this bill.”

She said Blacks Harbour and Beaver Harbour are a prime example of why the bill and the commissioner are needed.

“I think that that’s one example of issues where there doesn’t seem to be any accountability,” she said, noting the *Act* would include a provision to allow New Brunswickers

to take their environmental concerns to court.

Gringas explained industry could be concerned about this, but if there was a commissioner, it could filter through that individual first to determine how to move forward.

“This act is a way for the public to be able to hold the government to account in a real, meaningful way that might actually make some changes,” she said.

Bill 23 passed first reading at the Standing Committee on Law Amendments and will return to the Legislative Assembly in the coming months.

Environment Minister Giles LePage said it will be debated and when the bill was first introduced he was seeking clarity on whether the commissioner position would enhance the confidence that the government is complying.

“I haven’t seen those answers yet,” he said. “But that will be debated between the Greens and us and their stakeholders and we’re still looking at that.”

LePage said he would not commit to the bill because it has only passed first reading. He added that the Liberal government is also involved in the water quality issue in Blacks Harbour.

“Our main focus is to ensure that the residents get good quality drinking water,” he said, adding it cannot intervene to assist in the legal issue between land owners and the municipality on searching for a new water source.

Fundy-The Isles-Saint John-Lorneville Progressive Conservative MLA Ian Lee has also called on the Liberals to help the municipality ensure the residents in his riding have access to clean drinking water.

Meanwhile, Coon said he hopes he can be a part of helping move this forward and ensuring, at the provincial level, the government is taking the necessary actions.

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

Just wondering: Is there any reason why, at the present time, there are no trash receptacles in downtown Saint Stephen? Though, in fairness, there is one in the Ganong Park if you can access

it.

And, if a car falls into a pothole and the driver abandons said car, do the laws of salvage apply?

Donald Hunter

St Stephen

Dear Editor

The Canadian Dental Care Plan

It’s my belief that most Canadians are under the mistaken impression that the Canadian Dental Care Plan or CDPC is similar to our healthcare system.

It’s not. There’s no universality; there is a 20 per cent co-pay; there is an income cap; and there’s an element of unfairness.

I’m not sure what the cost is but I suspect we are going to have a vast sum paid for a half vast scheme. My concern is private insurance eligibility. If you have private insurance with a dental option, even if you can’t afford it, you are ineligible for CDCP.

Whereas someone may be able to

afford private insurance with the dental option, but chooses not to, they are eligible. So someone with double your income can get it and you do not. Because they have decided not to purchase private insurance, as a choice not because of lack of income.

But the left can take credit for a misunderstood plan and the right may criticize at their own peril. But it did prevent an election nobody wanted.

Donald Hunter

St Stephen

Reading Between the Listings: What a Balanced Market Means for Sellers

Brittany Locking
Community Contributor

If you’ve driven through Charlotte County this winter, you may have noticed that some of the same “For Sale” signs are still standing.

That’s not unusual for this time of year and it’s not a red flag either. It’s simply the rhythm of a balanced market.

In last month’s column, we looked at the numbers behind our local housing market and saw something steady: roughly half of the homes listed each year are selling. Not frenzied. Not frozen. Balanced.

Winter often carries over listings

from the fall, while fewer new homes come to market. Buyers move a little more thoughtfully this time of year. Activity doesn’t stop. It just slows. And that seasonal pause offers something valuable: perspective.

As we look ahead to spring, traditionally one of the busiest seasons in Charlotte County, many homeowners quietly begin asking the same question: *Should we list?*

In a balanced market, preparation matters more than timing alone.

During the peak pandemic years, homes often sold quickly regardless of pricing strategy or presentation. Today’s buyers are approaching things differently. With more inventory available overall,



they’re comparing options carefully and taking the time to make confident decisions.

That shift doesn’t mean homes aren’t selling, they are. But it does mean thoughtful positioning makes a difference.

Pricing has become less about testing the waters and more about understanding them. Buyers have access to recent sales and comparable properties, and they recognize when a home is aligned with the current market. When it is, interest tends to follow. When it isn’t, momentum can stall.

Presentation carries similar weight. In a balanced environment, buyers naturally gravitate toward homes that feel well maintained and move-in ready. Small improvements – fresh paint, minor repairs, simple curb appeal, often have more impact than sellers expect.

Patience is also part of the picture.

A slightly longer time on market isn’t necessarily a warning sign; it’s often just the rhythm of a more measured market. Sellers who begin the process informed and realistic tend to experience far less stress along the way.

The encouraging news is that spring consistently brings renewed energy. Buyers re-engage. New listings emerge. Conversations turn into plans.

We’re no longer navigating extremes. We’re operating in a market that rewards preparation, perspective, and informed decisions, and that clarity benefits everyone.

Spring in Charlotte County always brings renewed energy – in our gardens, on our streets, and in our housing market. For those considering a move, thoughtful preparation now can make all the difference in the months ahead.



Editorial : Civility Matters in our Political Discourse

Courier Editorial Board

Civility matters — or at least it should.

In recent months, we have seen a rise in the opposite. From geopolitical upheaval to provincial mudslinging and local tongue-lashings, our discourse is steeped in incivility.

Following the recent tragedy in British Columbia, Canada's political leaders stood together. The governor general, the prime minister, and the leader of the official opposition demonstrated that, at least in moments of grief, differences can be set aside. You can read more about this in an opinion editorial written by CHCO-TV News Director Vicki Hogarth titled *What it means to be Canadian*.

Recently, the Town of Saint Andrews faced a public hearing of objections, a practice that dates back centuries. Days later, Coun. Lee Heenan raised a concern brought to him by constituents, asking: "When did civility leave public hearings?"

That is a good question — one that doesn't just exist in municipal politics. Local government is the closest to the people. Constituents have front-row access to them in a way not found at any other level of government, which should present valuable opportunities to engage in a meaningful way.

Data that shows the levels of harassment and bullying is increasing. But at what point does one cross that line? The Union of Municipalities of New Brunswick has held symposiums on this issue and sent out a call for expressions of interest in developing an action plan.



Disparaging public servants, local leaders, and administration rarely advances a cause or strengthens a community. Constructive, civil feedback, however, can. They won't always get it right, this we

know. However, providing constructive, civil feedback is how we all move forward with the betterment of our communities. It is the public's right to question

leaders, to challenge decisions, and to demand change. Democracy depends on it. But when the storm of incivility clears, what will be left for us to rebuild on?

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Moe Basque bids Farewell to Kennedy House

Vicki Hogarth
Reporter, The Courier

On one of his final nights at the Kennedy House, Maurice "Moe" Basque approaches a familiar table carrying two coffee pots. The group has kept the same reservation, on the same night of the week, for years. Moe pours as if following a choreography only he knows—regular, then decaf—switching without looking, skipping the cups that never take refills, landing each pour exactly where it belongs.

A joke comes his way. He lets it sit, then answers it—dry, precise—and the table erupts. Moe smiles and completes the circuit. This is usually the point where he would drift on to the next table. Instead, he stops.

"I'll miss moments like this," he says candidly. "It's been an honour and a privilege to serve you."

A small ripple of applause moves through the dining room. Across the table, a woman fights back tears.

"It's the end of an era, Moe," she says.

For Moe, moments like these have always been the work itself.

He arrived in St. Andrews from his hometown of Bathurst in the fall of 1994 to study hotel and restaurant management at New Brunswick Community College. Like many who come for a season and stay for a lifetime, he was taken quickly—with the town, the people, the maritime beauty of the peninsula.

"By the time I finished my second



Dominique Berlenger and Moe Basque outside the Kennedy House (submitted)

year," he told *The Courier*, "I had fallen in love with St. Andrews."

That affection became a career spent in many of the town's best-known hospitality rooms—from Water Street mainstays to the world-famous Algonquin Resort—before bringing him back to the Kennedy House in 2007. He began in the kitchen, then moved out front, where his ease with people emerged as his greatest gift.

"I've worked in practically every place in this town," Moe said. "But once I moved out front at the Kennedy, I stayed."

Built in 1881, the Kennedy House has gone by several names—the Commodore Inn and the Shiretown Inn among them—before returning to its original one. Under the stewardship of owner Dominique Berlenger, who took over in 2022, the building has been carefully renewed, preserving its character while easing it into a new era. The walls are lined with historic photographs that trace the town's long memory.

Moe sometimes gestures toward a 19th-century image of the Kennedy House while chatting with guests. If you look closely enough, he jokes, you can spot him—already at work.

"There have been six owners here," he says, as if the observation isn't entirely theoretical. "I've

worked for three." Regulars ask for Moe by name. Visitors return, hoping he'll be there. His favourite time to work is winter, when the pace slows and tables stay longer than planned.

Behind the scenes, the bonds run just as deep.

"My relationship with my coworkers is what I'll miss most," Moe said. "You sweat together. You see each other at your best and your worst. That creates something."

He speaks just as warmly of Berlenger. "In my 36 years, Dominique was the best boss I ever had," he said. "He understood what made the Kennedy special—and knew how to carry it forward."

Moe may be stepping off the floor, but he isn't leaving St. Andrews. He will continue selling advertising for *The Courier* and CHCO-TV, staying connected to the community he knows so well—a community he is now inseparable from.

In a town admired for its architecture, its ocean views, and its long history, it is often people like Moe—present, perceptive, unmistakably themselves—who quietly turn a place into somewhere people feel they belong.



Basque says he'll miss his coworkers in retirement with whom he's developed close bonds (submitted)

MARCH SUDOKU

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No Decision on Charlotte County Francophone School Location

Nathalie Sturgeon
Reporter, LJI

Education Minister Claire Johnson says the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (EECD) is still reviewing where rightsholders are located and what land is available for a Francophone school in Charlotte County.

In December 2024, the Liberal government announced plans for two schools for southwest New Brunswick, including one in Charlotte County and Kings County.

It set aside \$14 million for the provincewide ventilation program. The funding also allocated \$2 million for a universal wash-room program and \$163.1 million for ongoing construction projects, equipment, improvements, repairs, and the dust collector program to ensure schools remain safe for students and staff.

Francophone Sud took legal action against the government over a lack of investment in the education sector in southwestern New Brunswick.

"The investments [are] needed to expand and renovate our existing schools and build new ones," said a news release translated from French back in September 2024.

"After years of delays in crucial investments in school infrastructure, which are necessary to meet

the rapid population growth of our district, our demands are met with a lack of action from the current government."

Johnson said Statistics Canada added a question about rights holders in 2021.

"So that means for the first time, they were able to identify who had rights to a French education," she said speaking with *The Courier*. "That was an area [Charlotte County] that was targeted."

According to Statistics Canada, which is expected to collect data in May 2026, 2,390 identified as French without specifying a connection, in 2021.

Another 195 identified as French Canadian and 30 as Quebecois, while 570 identified as Acadian.

The statistics also included several other cultural identities that speak French. Additionally, children eligible for education in the minority official language is 255, which is about 17 per cent of Census respondents from 2003 or later.

The number of children eligible for instruction in the minority official language in Charlotte County is 200, but only 55 of eligible children who have been instructed in the minority official language at the primary or secondary level, between 2003 and 2015.

An examination of 2,372 surveyed individuals, in 2013, who were exclusively English was reviewed by



Marc-Andre Bouchard and Sylvia Kasparian at the University of New Brunswick in 2019.

"We're studying to find out where specifically in that area the interests are, where the rights holders are, and where land is available, and all of those different things will guide our decision making," she said. "No decision has been made yet."

In June 2025, Eastern Charlotte council wrote to Johnson and EECD to ask whether the school could be placed in St. George.

"Eastern Charlotte is geographically central in Charlotte County and the community of St. George is situated along (Route) 1," the letter reads. "In addition, St. George municipal water and wastewater services could service a new school."

The council's letter also identified Pennfield as an ideal location but

noted it is not serviced by the municipality.

The council asked the minister to meet with members to discuss the proposed location. The municipality confirmed there has been communication between it and the province on the proposed school.

"If a location is yet to be determined, we offer Eastern Charlotte as the most beneficial location to support a Francophone school in this region," the letter went on to say.

The Municipal District of St. Stephen (MDSS) told *The Courier* that it requested a call with those involved in the Francophone school project which is expected to take place later this week.

The Town of Saint Andrews has not been in touch with EECD regarding the school and its council has not requested any communication.

For the Love of Maud - Chapter 10 Winter Walks and the Scents of Time

Vicki Hogarth
Reporter, The Courier

Maud sniffs longer in the winter.

Not casually or politely. She lowers her nose to the snow with the intensity of a detective who has just stumbled onto the one detail that explains everything. Her body tightens. Her focus narrows. The rest of the world disappears as she inhales with purpose, tugging me toward snowbanks like we're Sherlock Holmes & Dr. John Watson and she's just spotted the break in the case. Whatever is happening down there is important, urgent, and not to be rushed, regardless of how wet my boots are becoming.

Watching a dog encounter a familiar scent is strangely absorbing. There's a shift in posture, a visible click of recognition, the determination to gather more evidence. I assume it's one of her enemies—squirrels, most likely—or perhaps a member of her local canine network. Maud has many acquaintances, a few friends, and several sworn adversaries, though the criteria for these distinctions remain a mystery. Dogs, however, are consistent. They remember. They keep tabs.

This is what dogs do on walks. While we admire trees, peer into windows, and note which neighbours still have their Christmas lights up, dogs are conducting a far more serious investigation. They smell.

Most of the year, we can only guess at what they're discovering. Winter, however, gives everything away. Snow is an honest medium. Footprints announce who's been



where. Paw prints overlap like timestamps. And then there are the yellow annotations—some fresh, some ancient, all meaningful. Fresh is thrilling. Fresh demands a response. A reply, as we like to say. A pee-mail back.

Going outside to smell where everyone has been is Maud's version of social media. Our stroll is her scroll, and she approaches it with both passion and focus. There is one front lawn we must always stop at: Diesel's. Diesel's yard on Water Street is the canine message board of the town. Maud is shy around Diesel in person, but this does not prevent her from leaving

him a note. Even if she has already relieved her bladder, she will circle the yard until she finds just enough left to say, "Maud was here." It's not about necessity. It's about participation.

Dogs smell thousands of times better than we do. It's their way of moving through the world. They can recognize individuals, detect illness and stress, and determine how long ago someone passed through. Who lingered. Who rushed. Who had a bad day.

Whoever decided dogs don't understand time failed to consider that dogs may measure it differently.

We understand time in numbers and dates. Dogs understand it in proximity. Something is near, or it is gone. Time isn't a ruler; it's a trail. It's a scent. The past isn't nostalgia or regret—it's information. The future isn't feared. It simply hasn't arrived yet.

They can smell anxiety. They can smell dishonesty. They can smell when someone is pretending to be fine.

In this way, dogs are better readers of the world than we are. They may not understand language, but they understand reality. They don't fight time. They move alongside it.

We, meanwhile, are constantly trying to outpace it. We invent routines, supplements, creams, systems, and resolutions. We document our lives obsessively, terrified of losing moments even as we rush straight through them. A dog just lives. Time doesn't govern her; it accompanies her.

This is what I learn from Maud on long winter walks, when she takes a particularly meaningful sniff and forces me to stand in the cold longer than I would prefer. I imagine the stories she's reading: who stayed home sick, who is new, who is gone, who is missed.

It's not so different from what we do.

And so I stop. I let her smell the snowbanks. I let her read the day.




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OP-ED: What it Means to be Canadian Right Now



Vicki Hogarth
Reporter, The Courier

Anger has become the background noise of modern life. It hums constantly, sharpens easily, and corrodes quickly. Outrage travels faster than context. Certainty is rewarded more than curiosity. If the 1920s were remembered as the Roaring Twenties, the 2020s may well be recalled as the Raging Twenties—an era shaped by algorithms, saturated with distortion, and marked by a steady erosion of patience and trust.

In this environment, division no longer feels exceptional. It feels routine.

And yet, every so often, Canada reminds me who we are.

After a school shooting in Tumbler Ridge, British Columbia, the country was pulled into a moment of collective grief and unease. School shootings remain, by any credible measure, a predominantly American phenomenon—tragically common there, mercifully rare here. When one occurs in Canada, it does more than frighten us. It unsettles our sense of self.

Living beside a superpower whose culture, media, and political temperature we absorb daily, Canadians are often forced to ask what separates us, and whether those distinctions still hold. In moments like this, the border feels less like a line on a map and more like a fragile idea—something that must be continually reaffirmed.

What followed offered an answer.

Two political opponents stood together in public mourning. They did not debate. They did not pos-

ture. They did not perform outrage. They held hands—not as rivals, not as symbols, but as human beings acknowledging a loss that eclipsed ideology.

The image lingered not because it was dramatic, but because it was quietly radical. In a culture increasingly shaped by spectacle, it reminded us that some moments demand restraint rather than reaction, dignity rather than dominance.

That moment captured something essential about Canada.

Canada has never been defined by unanimity. We are defined by restraint—by a shared instinct to hold the line without turning on one another. When “elbows up” resonates here, it is not a call to aggression. It is a signal of collective resolve: protecting what matters while refusing to abandon civility in the process.

Canada is often described by what it is not. *Not* American. But that framing, while convenient, misses something deeper. Unlike the United States, Canada does not have a single founding mythology that anchors national identity. There are no Founding Fathers, no civic scripture that functions as national religion.

Canadians do not look backward for certainty. We negotiate forward.

Our identity is not branded. It is regional, relational, provisional. It shifts depending on where you stand—coastal or prairie, urban or rural, francophone or anglophone, newcomer or many-generation resident. We know, deeply, that we are different across this country. What binds us is not

sameness, but a shared commitment to living with difference without letting it tear us apart.

Those values—restraint over excess, compromise over domination, pluralism over purity—are not static. They are tested, repeatedly.

Canada contains long-standing tensions about language, region, and belonging. Quebec’s separatist movement and Alberta’s growing alienation are not signs of a failing country, but one actively negotiating who it is—and who it intends to be. I lived in Quebec in the 1990s, when the question of whether the country would remain whole felt immediate rather than abstract. The discomfort was real. So was the work required to keep talking, listening, persuading.

That friction does not weaken Canada. It reveals something fundamental about us: our democracy is unfinished by design, and a muscle we need to exercise regularly. It survives not because it is simple, but because we keep choosing engagement over erasure.

As a relatively young country beside a global superpower, Canada could easily be absorbed—politically, culturally, economically—into something larger and louder. That we are not is not accidental. It is earned, again and again, through vigilance and a refusal to be reduced.

So where does that leave us now, in a moment defined by volatility and fatigue?

It leaves us with a choice.

When Canada’s sovereignty has been challenged in recent years, Canadians recognized the

moment for what it was. We did not panic. We did not posture. We stood our ground. We understood that vigilance was not weakness and restraint was not passivity. With our elbows up, we held the line. Together.

This moment calls for the same resolve, but aimed inward.

We cannot afford to become passengers of systems designed to provoke us. We must refuse the role that constant outrage assigns: loud, reactive, divided. Holding our ground now means resisting the urge to perform anger, choosing complexity over slogans, and care over contempt.

It means deciding—deliberately—how we will speak, listen, and disagree without hardening ourselves in the process.

Canada has never been held together by myth or uniformity. It has been held together by choice—made daily, imperfectly, by people willing to reach across differences even when it would be easier not to.

Elbows up does not mean clenched fists. It means standing firm without closing off. It means protecting what matters without losing ourselves. It’s a rallying call for a team of different players with different strengths but shared goals.

If there is a defining task for Canadians right now, it is this: to refuse contempt, to insist on common ground, and to remember that our unfinished, negotiated democracy survives only if we keep choosing one another.

Elbows up. Hands open.

Eastern Charlotte Mayor Faces Legal Review after Complaint

Nathalie Sturgeon
Reporter, LJI

A code of conduct complaint against Eastern Charlotte Mayor John Craig has been sent for investigation by legal counsel following a unanimous vote.

Coun. Lisa McKay, a first-term at-large councillor, submitted the complaint and read the letter in an open session of council.

McKay alleges Craig acted on several issues relating to the municipality without prior approval from the council.

It is the first instance of a code of conduct complaint being discussed in an open session for Eastern Charlotte in the last two years and since the Local Governance Commission (LGC) advised councils they could no longer deal with them in closed session, outside of the exemptions under Section 68(1) of the *Local Governance Act* including legal advice and personal information as defined in the *Right to Information and Protection of Privacy Act*.

All code of conduct complaints must be reviewed by the council but then may be sent for review by a lawyer.

“I am writing to you in my capacity as a councillor at large for the Municipality of Eastern Charlotte to formally express concerns regarding recent actions taken by Mayor John Craig that raise questions about governance procedure, transparency and adherence to the *Local Governance Act*,” McKay said during the meeting.

Letter of support

McKay went on to speak about a letter signed by Craig in support of J.D. Irving, Limited (JDI) in its request to log several thousand hectares of protected areas on its Crown timber licence in exchange for conserving forest near those communities, which she said was not brought before council for consideration.

“As you are aware, matters of this nature fall within council’s collective authority and decisions with municipal implications are expected to be reviewed and approved through the appropriate council process,” McKay said.

McKay learned the letter had been signed after reading an article by CBC New Brunswick, which she said placed council “in a difficult position” because members couldn’t respond accurately to public concerns associated with the letter.

“Further, in a council meeting held on Feb. 10, 2026, when I raised this matter in my role as an elected representative seeking clarity and accountability, the mayor responded in a manner that I believe was inappropriate for public forum and inconsistent with the respectful and professional conduct expected within council,” she went on to say.

She told the council Craig made comments like “holier than thou” and that he “was not perfect like you” during a Feb. 10 Committee of the Whole meeting. Craig would later say it was his reaction to being asked to resign twice in the same meeting, something he said the council has no authority to call for.

“Yes, I probably should have never said that,” he said. “I was attacked in a public meeting and was twice asked to resign, and I lost my composure and I apologize.”

Craig explained he signed the letter of support due to JDI’s operations in Lake Utopia, which employs a significant number of people in Eastern Charlotte, adding the context of the global strain placed on Canada’s soft wood lumber industry through the Canada-U.S. trade war.

“Council, I fully apologize for not informing you ahead of time on this matter. In hindsight I probably should have brought this to you,” he said. “Did I make a mistake? Yes. I am human.”

Trip to Ottawa

McKay also questioned a trip the mayor took to Ottawa related to the aquaculture industry without council’s prior knowledge or approval.

Craig said the purpose of the trip was to ensure a formal ban on open-net pen salmon farming scheduled to be implemented by the federal government in British Columbia at the end of June 2029 would not make its way to the East Coast.

As mayor, Craig is the spokesperson for the Municipality of Eastern Charlotte and said he regularly attends events on behalf of council.

McKay requested the full accounting of the trip, including associated costs. Craig told the council the trip was paid for by the City of Campbell River, B.C., which invited him to represent the east coast interest in the aquaculture industry, and everything else was paid for through his own earnings.

“There was nothing Eastern Charlotte paid for,” he said in response



to the letter.

He said a full financial disclosure was filed with Eastern Charlotte’s chief administrative officer, Jason Gaudet, who later confirmed that detail.

“It was not a pleasure trip. As anybody knows, I don’t like flying, [and] it was three days of lobbying MPs (members of Parliament) along with Mayor Kermit Dahl for the City of Campbell River,” he said.

Aquaculture and fisheries are significant industries in Eastern Charlotte, with Cooke — an international seafood company — and Connors Brothers, a fish-packing and processing plant, among other major employers.

Cooke employs roughly 1,500 individuals in New Brunswick and 2,500 throughout Atlantic Canada.

“The biggest thing I spoke on was ... the young people in Eastern Charlotte get to stay home; they don’t have to go out west to work because of the aquaculture industry [here],” he said.

Craig said communities need a mayor who is going to stand up for local industry.

“I don’t report to council on when I speak here in New Brunswick and I don’t believe I’ve breached any policy, any bylaw or law by doing the same there,” he said.

Craig asked the council to send the allegations to the municipality’s legal counsel to review what might have been violated.

“I need to know that and you need to know that,” he said.

Complaint sent for legal review

Craig reiterated in a statement to *The Courier* that he welcomes a legal review of the complaint.

“I will not be a weak leader [or] mayor and stand on the sidelines while our local economy is threatened by international conditions,” he said. “I know the people of Eastern Charlotte can see what this truly is really about a few months before an election.”

After Craig spoke in his defence, he left the chamber and the council openly debated how to move forward. Coun. Alexa Detorakis said Craig “went rogue” and broke one of the most basic rules outlined in the *Act*.

“I want to reiterate, this was not a rookie mistake. This was willful negligence,” she said.

Coun. Darrell Tidd said the mayor is the spokesperson for the town and can speak on any issue.

“Regarding the issue of signing the letter and us not knowing about it, I do have a little issue with that because it wasn’t brought before council, and I think it should have been,” he said.

The Courier reached out to McKay for comment but did not receive one by the time of publication.

The complaint will go to the municipality’s legal counsel for review and then be brought back before council for consideration, which is protected under Section 68(1)(f) of the *Act*.

Any vote or decision on the outcome of the review must be done in open session.

N.B. Minimum Wage to Increase on April 1

Nathalie Sturgeon
Reporter, LJI

Minimum wage in New Brunswick is expected to increase to \$15.90 on April 1.

The province said five per cent of employees in New Brunswick were earning minimum wage, which is down from six per cent in 2024. It is an increase of 25 cents.

According to the Human Development Council in Saint John, the provincial living wage is 24.77,

which is an hourly rate a household — with two working parents and two children — would require to satisfy basic needs “and live with dignity while enjoying a decent quality of life.”

The Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour said five per cent of all employees in the province were earning the minimum wage last year, a reduction of one per cent from 2024.

“A competitive minimum wage is essential to a productive prov-

ince,” said Alyson Townsend, the minister responsible for labour. “Workers in every wage bracket are important to a thriving economy.”

The department said the minimum wage rate is indexed to New Brunswick’s consumer price index, rounded to the nearest five cents.

New Brunswick sits at the third lowest minimum wage in Canada, according to the Retail Council of Canada, only above Alberta and Saskatchewan.



Former Owner of St. Stephen Building Ordered to Pay More than \$50,000

Andrew Bates
Reporter, LJI

The owner of a St. Stephen building sold in a mortgage proceeding was ordered to pay more than \$50,000 after no-showing at a trial.

Justice Kathryn Gregory awarded a deficiency judgment to Dianne Marie Sullivan Wednesday last week as part of a lawsuit filed against Starshine Properties, Ltd. over a mortgage secured against a building at 9 Schoodic Street. According to the court documents, the business, which is registered in St. Stephen with an Edmonton mailing address, was forced to sell the property last year after defaulting on a \$120,000 mortgage from Sullivan, who lives in St. Stephen.

Sullivan bought the property at a mortgage sale in July 2025 for \$68,000, according to the statement of claim, and was seeking \$56,791.35 to cover the remainder of the principal as well as accrued interest, taxes, legal fees and disbursement.

Starshine Properties, whose sole director is Annette Penkala, of Calgary, was registered as a corporation in November 2020 and was listed as the owner of 17 properties in St. Stephen as of August 2024. At least three properties owned by the firm have been the subject of closure orders under the Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act over concerns from neighbours about suspected drug activity. That included 9 Schoodic Street, where 12 people were evicted in 2022.

In May last year, provincial lawyer Richard Williams told a judge that it appears Penkala purchased the properties during the pandemic



and “hasn’t managed to keep control of them.”

No representative from Starshine attended the trial on Feb. 4, with Sullivan’s lawyer Joshua Santimaw telling a judge by phone that they have not had contact after the initial service attempt and two attempts at substituted service. According to court documents, a service package was delivered to Penkala’s front door in Calgary, and notices were purchased in the Telegraph-Journal and the Calgary Herald as well as sent by email.

Brunswick News has made a request for comment to Starshine Properties and has not received a response.

The property at 9 Schoodic Street was sold in December 2021 for \$149,000, according to Service New Brunswick, and sold for \$68,000 in July 2024 before selling again for \$43,500 in October

of that year. It has a 2026 assessed value of \$83,600, according to the property assessment online lookup.

According to the statement of claim, Sullivan lent Starshine a mortgage of \$124,134.30 in December 2021, to be repaid with four per cent interest annually, and the company agreeing to pay property taxes and the cost of recovering payments. On March 15, 2024, the defendant went into default, Sullivan argued, and the property, which had an appraised value of \$98,000, was later sold to Sullivan for \$68,000.

The remaining principal to be paid amounts to \$100,134.30, plus \$9,344.50 in interest from March 2022 to March 2024, as well as \$1,294.88 from then until the sale date in July 2024, according to the statement of claim. Minus the \$68,000 from the sale, that left \$42,773.68 outstanding, plus

\$7,742.17 in taxes and \$6,275.50 in legal fees and disbursements, the statement of claim reads.

In court, Gregory, also by phone, asked why the interest was calculated from March 2022 to the breach date. Santimaw said that the defendant “paid \$20,000 originally on the mortgage and then stopped,” and that since no interest was paid, they listed both the principal and interest before default instead of adding the numbers together, which he said was “confusing.”

Gregory approved damages in the amount of costs outstanding, revised to remove the legal fees from the damages and add a costs award of \$2,000, as well as pre-judgement interest calculated from July 2024, to be calculated by Santimaw.

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N.B Transgender Health Network Seeks Provincial Clinic

Nathalie Sturgeon
Reporter, LJI

The New Brunswick Transgender Health Network is calling on the regional health authorities and the provincial government to establish a provincial gender-affirming care clinic.

Two-Spirit, transgender and gender-diverse individuals (2STGD), the network explains, face wait times of up to five years for gender-affirming care, with many essential procedures, and services remain unfunded and inaccessible.

"The vision is to create a centralized clinic where the scattered providers, who are providing care, will be sort of housed together in order to improve access to care for individuals, and make sure that we're meeting the standards of wrap-around care," said Dr. Kathleen Taylor in an interview with *The Courier*.

Taylor is a physician, and a clinical assistant professor for the Department of Family Medicine at Memorial University in Newfoundland. She lives in Fredericton.

According to a 2020 TransPulse survey, 64 per cent of 2STGD individuals reported unmet health needs in New Brunswick.

"There was a community assessment that was done a couple of years ago focusing on 2STGD pathways and what they found was a lot of people do not have access to primary care," Taylor said, adding she knows this is also an issue facing my New Brunswickers regardless of gender identity.

She said that when looking at someone seeking gender-affirming care, there is often a mental health or social work component.

Taylor added that there is a scattered network of doctors who do provide hormone prescribing — some are primary care providers and endocrinologists — but wait times are highly variable and most of those services are only accessible by referral.

"If patients don't have access to a referring provider then they are unable, sometimes, to get their foot in the door in terms of starting their medical transition," Taylor said.

According to Statistics Canada's 2021 census data, Fredericton ranked third highest in gender diversity at 0.6 per cent, behind Halifax at 0.66 per cent and Victoria at 0.75 per cent.

Nova Scotia Health committed to expanding gender-affirming care last year by replicating a clinic opened in the Annapolis Valley in 2024, according to CBC Nova Scotia.

Prince Edward Island is ranked among the best provinces in Canada for gender-affirming care, including coverage for non-surgical needs, such as hair removal and medication, according to CBC PEI.

Advocates on the Island, though, say more support is needed for aftercare.

The organization is seeking:

- A dedicated location for coordinated gender-affirming hormone therapy, surgical navigation, and mental health support.
- In-person and virtual navigation services for patients and families around the province.
- A reliable point of contact for providers seeking consultation or clinical guidance.
- Partnerships with community organizations, Indigenous



communities, and educational institutions.

- System-wide training and a virtual community of practice.

In mandate letters released by the Holt government, Dr. John Dornan—an endocrinologist in New Brunswick—was asked to work toward adjusting the billing process to ensure gender-affirming care for the 2SLGBTIA+ community.

The promise was also included in their election platform, with the note it would provide members of the community with quality health and mental health care, including longer appointment times and gender-affirming care.

The Liberals also unveiled a new Policy 713, which had been changed under the Progressive Conservative to require parental consent for children and youth to change their name or pronoun reflecting their sexual orientation and gender identity—and then removed that requirement, saying that parental consent is "encouraged," but not required.

"I would like to see them start working on the process," Taylor said. "I think we can see from what they are doing right now with primary care that they have the ability to and the means to actually move

quite quickly on these projects."

Taylor said the province has established a number of collaborative care clinics across New Brunswick, committing during the election to having 30 by 2028. She would like to see this happen within the next year.

"We just want to see patients be able to access the care that they require and deserve within a time frame that is actually meeting their needs, and that people aren't falling through the cracks and losing access to care," Taylor said.

She explained that current providers are scattered throughout the province, and when one provider stops being able to offer that care, they are not always able to connect patients with other gender-affirming providers.

"And then patients go extensive periods of time and maybe even sometimes years in between providers," Taylor explained.

Dr. John Dornan, health minister, said the department recognizes the importance of gender-affirming care.

"The Department of Health has received a funding request and we are reviewing it as part of our budget process," he said in a statement to *The Courier*.

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Saint Andrews Council Affirms Support for Passamaquoddy Lodge Project

Nathalie Sturgeon
Reporter, LJI



The council for the Town of Saint Andrews is considering how to move forward with a commitment to the Passamaquoddy Lodge on land off Barr Road slated for development of a new facility.

At a recent council meeting, councillors discussed renewing a commitment to the foundation to sell the serviced land for \$1, with the foundation requesting a multi-year commitment to the land sale.

Caroline Davies said the council's support has been a very important part of the project.

"We did ask them to consider giving us a longer time than a council would normally sit because of the time it is taking us to get a response from the government," she said.

Davies said council's on how to move forward on the lodge speak directly to a point it continues to make to the Liberal government.

"We will have a new council in May and we can't assume that the town will continue to support us [infinitely] until the government decides what they're going to do," she said. "Council does have to move on and make decisions that affect all of Saint Andrews, not just Passamaquoddy Lodge and what our wishes are. We respect that."

Davies said land is the only location that is suitable for the project is area serviced by the municipality, with access to the potable water and wastewater.

"Otherwise, you're going to add up to \$2 million on the cost of the new complex because you'd have to run sewer and water outside the old town limits," Davies said.

The current lodge faces chal-

lenges, including limited wheelchair access through its doorways.

Visibility in the community for both seniors and young children was part of the approach, Davies said.

Both Coun. Darrell Weare and Coun. Kurt Gumushel heard feedback from the community on the town's commitment to the lodge, which is why the matter was brought forward for discussion.

"I think it's key that the town continues to offer that land at \$1 and the services put in and part of the presentation to the province that says that the town is 100 per cent behind this rebuild," Gumushel said during the meeting.

He cited both the increase in beds and the status as one of the town's largest employers. Gumushel said he would support extending the agreement for five years.

Coun. Steve Neil said the council fully supports the Passamaquoddy Lodge, but does not want to "handcuff" the next two councils without giving them the opportunity for input.

"I didn't see our commitment to them wavering," Neil said.

With an election just three months away, the municipal council could see a shakeup.

The *Courier* requested an interview with the newly appointed Minister of Seniors Lyne Chantal Boudreau, but the department said it would not be possible.

The Department of Social Development said in a statement it is aware of the request to rebuild Passamaquoddy Lodge, and while discussions and analysis are ongoing, it would not comment on any aspect of the proposal.

Davies acknowledged frustration.

"I think, in part, because we have supplied the information they (provincial government) have requested and when they asked for more, we've worked to give them more," she said. "But we're now at a point where we cannot do any more analysis or any more revisions to our concept."

She said the lodge cannot borrow money without the approval from the provincial government.

In November 2025, Davies gave a presentation to the community on the new lodge, asking residents to write letters of support for the lodge to the Liberal government.

"We have to assume the costs and we have to assume the risk and we're willing to do that," she said of the construction of the facility.

Davies said the board will not give up.

"To abandon it would mean that we're giving up on them, and we can't give up on them. So, we will continue to push," she said.

In the end, the community wrote 550 letters of support to Premier Susan Holt and The Department of Social Development.

"I cannot emphasize how much the support of the Saint Andrews council has meant to our committee and to our project and I also have to say the support of the community," she said. "I think the community support and the support of the council has been nothing short of remarkable."

Saint Andrews Residents Urge Pause on Municipal Plan

Nathalie Sturgeon
Reporter, LJI



A public hearing of objections on Saint Andrews municipal plan saw residents ask the town not to move forward with its implementation.

A municipal plan is a 10-year guiding document that guides a local government on the future of land use and development and is often complimented by a more specific zoning bylaw.

MP-25 has yet to receive first reading and is in the consultation phase. Changes to the plan can be made up until final reading.

But residents told the council they found the plan difficult to understand and raised concerns about density in the town platt.

Chamcook and Bayside were amalgamated into the Town of Saint Andrews in 2023.

Plan was 'confusing'

Lee Sochasky, a Saint Andrews resident and former planner, said she believes this is not the right plan for the area.

"Of the municipal plans adopted in New Brunswick recently, and I've reviewed many of them, this is by far the least intelligible and functional plan," she said during the meeting.

She said the plan lacked the why and the prioritization of the varying changes.

"This plan is all arms and legs, going in all directions, sometimes conflicting," Sochasky said. "It is a distinctly technical and user unfriendly document."

She said the plan was a risky experiment.

"I object that the plan, unlike our current one, doesn't recognize and does little to protect the unique national heritage; a critical corner-

stone of our identity and our economy," she said.

Sochasky said she felt there wasn't enough consultation, although the Southwest New Brunswick Service Commission said there have been 11 public engagement sessions outside of meetings with council and the Planning Advisory Committee.

"There are some good elements in the plan but they're overshadowed by the major flaws that can significantly and irreversibly affect our town's future," she said. "I urge you not to adopt the plan at this time and not shackle in the coming councils with this document."

Sochasky urged the authors and the town to go back to the drawing board.

Saint Andrews resident Charlie Creaser said the vision of the plan should come before its purpose, noting the direction coming from the provincial government.

"If you're going to get this right, you better get some things lined up," he said. "The most important aspect... is the last thing on the list on the left-hand column, which is maintaining the historical significance and the character of the Town of Saint Andrews."

Creaser said he understands the direction by the province, noting many decisions that have been made are out of the hands of council, but criticized any potential reduction to the heritage of the town.

"The shoulder of that is Bayside and the other shoulder is Chamcook because you have to drive down that road to get here," he said.

He encouraged the town and the author to reprioritize the historical significance in the plan.

Density and housing

Another major concern raised by residents is density. The plan proposes an increase in the number of dwelling units in the town platt—double the current amount.

The plan's purpose does outline the creation of housing that meets the needs of all residents, including housing that is affordable.

David Bizzo, also a resident who lives in Saint Andrews, said when he lived in British Columbia, the community he is and his life lived in was "ruined" by urban settlement expansion.

He provided an example of a property on the backside of his on Parr Street, which is slated for multi-residential housing.

"You made a lot a little bigger so they can put two houses there and they're going to put two families in each house," he said, noting a member of council who previously advocated for the development of that plot of land. "They're going to be calling Saint Andrews 'the subdivision.'"

Bizzo also questioned the ability for the town to keep up with residential growth.

He took aim at an affordable housing complex in Saint Andrews supported by the town on Mowat Drive.

Helen Smith, who has lived in Saint Andrews her whole life, said

the town needs housing, especially for business owners who are hiring staff.

"I want to keep my town small, don't get me wrong here, but we have to have housing," she said. "Try to hire staff. Try to find them a place to live. We have to have some place for people to go."

Smith said not everybody can afford to come to Saint Andrews and purchase a home. The average home price in the community is \$525,000 in Saint Andrews; and \$507,000 in Chamcook and Bayside.

Since 2023, the town has brought online one major apartment—representing 42 units.

According to the 2021 Census data, the average middle household income in Saint Andrews is between \$47,493 and \$75,988, representing about 20.44 per cent of the working population, and means households in that bracket can afford monthly housing rates between \$1,187 and \$1,900.

"My kids can't come here because they can't afford to live here," Smith said.

She said running a business is difficult when employees can't find housing. Saint Andrews sees approximately 80,000 visitors in the summer tourist season, according to Explore NB. Its largest employer is the Algonquin Resort—a premiere destination in the province.

Gillian Pedersen-Mjaanes lives in the downtown core of Saint Andrews and said the zoning bylaw is a dense 69-page document that is difficult to understand.

"It would be great if the town could explain what its vision is for the future of Saint Andrews because I get the impression that they're jumping on this bandwagon of [density]," she said, speaking with *The Courier*.

Continued on Page 16

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Congratulations to the winners of the Rotary Super Draw fundraiser!

The winners of the most recent St. Stephen Milltown Rotary SuperDraw drawn on February 19th are listed below. In addition to the cash prize winners, the proceeds go to local youth sports groups and to the Rotary Charity for many initiatives. We thank everyone who purchased a ticket.

| | |
|--|--|
| \$7,500.00 - Tim Jarvis | \$100.00 - Tom & Nicole Scullion |
| \$1,500.00 - Les Thomson | \$100.00 - June Dierrah |
| \$1,000.00 - Chris Justason | \$100.00 - Brandon McGee/Nelson Lynds |
| \$500.00 - Bryan Spires | \$100.00 - Michael Whitford |
| \$500.00 - Brian & Loretta Leavitt | \$100.00 - Staff of LK Tombs |
| \$500.00 - David & Arlene Tufts | \$100.00 - Mike Gifford |
| \$100.00 - St. Stephen Public Works | \$100.00 - Geoff Mitchell |
| \$100.00 - Lindsay Manuel/Iain Johnson | \$100.00 - Brenda & Graydon Murphy |
| \$100.00 - Brenda McGibbon | \$100.00 - Michael Whitford |
| \$100.00 - Darlene Horne | \$100.00 - Daryl & Chris Spires |
| \$100.00 - Linda Walsh | \$100.00 - Tami Matheson |
| \$100.00 - Karlene Mehan | \$100.00 - Hans Obermeier |
| \$100.00 - Mitchell Mann | \$100.00 - Guy R Day/Exit Staff |
| \$100.00 - Tyler & Erica Marshall | \$100.00 - Lisa Bishop |
| \$100.00 - Raymond Poley | \$100.00 - Nancy Nixon |
| \$100.00 - Janis Downey | \$100.00 - Patty Frost |
| \$100.00 - Nellie Donnelley | \$100.00 - Andrew Moffitt |
| \$100.00 - Shona Godsoe | \$100.00 - Wayne Wamboldt |
| \$100.00 - Dale Weeks | \$100.00 - Anthony McKnight-Whitford |
| \$100.00 - Aaron Naccarato | \$100.00 - Tom, Robin, Dawn & Matt Lyons |

Urban Service Boundary
 Rural Settlement
 Low Intensity Rural

The maps have been described by residents as confusing (Southwest New Brunswick Service Commission)

Saint Andrews Residents Urge Pause on Municipal Plan

(Continued from Page 15)

Nathalie Sturgeon
Reporter, LJI

She said she understands the principle of affordable housing, but said the plan doesn't do a good job of explaining how that is possible, outside of increasing the number of dwelling units on a property.

"I don't feel that most people would be building affordable housing in their back yard," she said. "It'd be much more likely if they built anything, it would be a bed and breakfast or an Airbnb."

In Saint Andrews, the rough estimate of short-term rental (STRs) is around 10 to 11 per cent of the housing stock, according to the town. Statistics Canada said the amount of short-term rentals are higher in tourist-based areas. STRs have increased by more than 60 per cent from 2017 to 2023.

Rural residents, both of Chamcook and Bayside, feel there are far more restrictions in the area than ever before. Both areas were subject to a rural plan, but are now being brought into the municipal-

ity under its governance.

Rural areas raise concerns

Gary James said he found the plan sporadic, adding he felt perhaps there needed to be more research done to help inform the plan.

"It looks like someone took a highlighter and coloured different areas and said this is this," he said during the meeting. "I look at my property and I look at my neighbours property and it's totally different and I'm going, 'What is the difference between my neighbours and me?'"

Craig Smith, who has lived in Saint Andrews his whole life, said the town needed to "pump the breaks" on the plan.

"Given what happened with the market, the egg on our face, the way we looked across Canada, we need to stop [and] listen to what everybody is saying and maybe come back to this at some other point down the road," he said.

Rural resident Jeff Muir said he didn't care what the province's mandate was and that he felt this plan was not right for the rural

amalgamated areas.

He said when he came from his job as a long-haul truck operator, he was met with a plan that seemed like a done deal.

"I don't think you have it, I'm concerned you're never going to have it ... none of this makes any sense," he said.

Deputy Mayor Kate Akagi said council has not met since the public hearing.

"It's not great to hear that we're not doing the proper things, but we're trying to do the proper things with what we've got left with our mandate," she said, with an election happening in May.

She said it was difficult to be accused of not doing this right because the council really wants what is best for the residents of Saint Andrews.

The council was not allowed to respond or debate during the public hearing of objections.

"This is only a draft," she said. "That's what kills me, is it's not the final copy. It's not exactly like the old one, definitely not, but that was the mandate that we started

with."

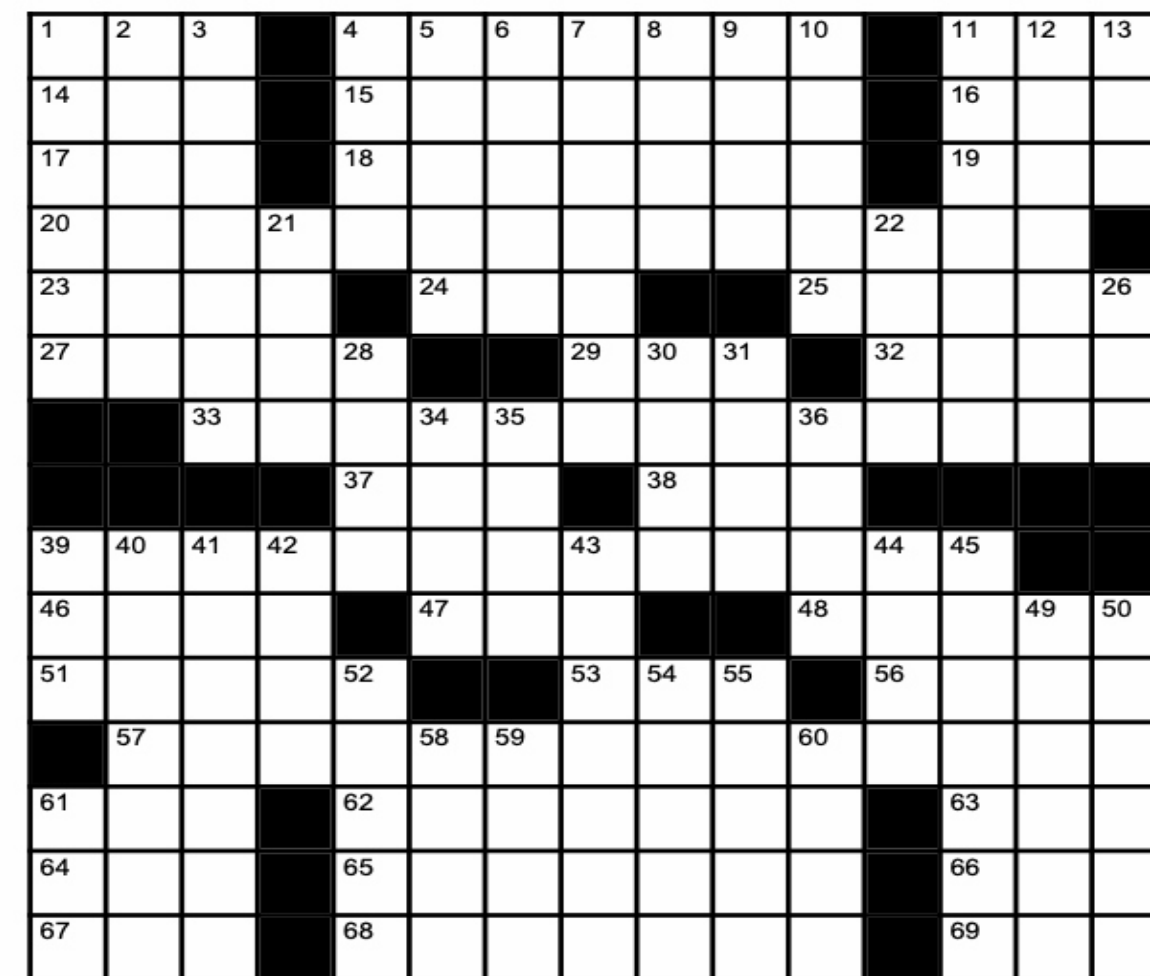
Akagi said Wednesday night was a good opportunity to hear residents' concerns, adding the plan is a working document that can be changed. She expects the council to come back with some answers in early March.

The Department of Local Government and Local Planning Act (CPA) sets out the standards for content and the process required when developing a municipal or rural plan.

"The Department of Environment and Local Government reviews these plans to ensure they meet the Act's minimum requirements," the department said. "If a municipal plan or rural plan complies with the Act, the department grants approval."

According to the CPA, a municipal plan shall—which is often interpreted as a mandatory—should include statements of policy around housing—including affordable and rental housing, urban renewal, and preservation of buildings and sites of historical interest, among others.

by Barbara Olson
© ClassiCanadian Crosswords



Across

- 1 Pouter's protrusion
- 4 Old salts
- 11 One of "the fuzz"
- 14 "Am ___ blame?"
- 15 Creator of Pooh and Roo
- 16 Play a kazoo
- 17 West end?
- 18 "Once again, ..."
- 19 UFO pilots
- 20 Diminutive head honcho?
- 23 Drooling dog in the comics
- 24 Ottawa-born Aykroyd
- 25 Bollywood wraps
- 27 Eases off a habit
- 29 Classroom helpers: Abbr.
- 32 Ancient letter
- 33 Refrigerated jalapeño?
- 37 ___ are here (mall map words)
- 38 Secondary: Abbr.
- 39 Frozen Fresca?
- 46 To ___ (just so)
- 47 Product producer: Abbr.
- 48 Aunt, in Anjou
- 51 ___ fortune (got rich)
- 53 ___ Lingus (Ireland's carrier)
- 56 Stick in an oboe
- 57 Naughty hotties?
- 61 Wearer of training pants, maybe
- 62 Turn loose, as hounds
- 63 Piano's middle key
- 64 Move it, old-style
- 65 Gentlemen start them at the races
- 66 Digital communication?: Abbr.
- 67 Like Macdonald who had a farm
- 68 Son of a you-know-what
- 69 The __, Manitoba

Down

- 1 Stay off the radar
- 2 BTO's "Let ___"
- 3 Firebird or Le Mans maker
- 4 Wind catcher on the Bluenose
- 5 Dog-__ (worn)

- 6 Petri dish organism
- 7 Take from, as a rainy-day fund
- 8 French designer Cassini
- 9 Work on, as a dog bone
- 10 Rogen and Green, for two
- 11 Lose the blues
- 12 Writer's framework
- 13 Trudeau Sr. and Jr., for two
- 21 " ... a ___ 'clock scholar"
- 22 Gunfighter Wyatt
- 26 Sun. talk
- 28 Stallone and Stone
- 30 Wee bit
- 31 Bronc rider's prod
- 34 Impending ill-fortune
- 35 Door-slammer's state
- 36 Red word near a door
- 39 Meat in a Seuss title
- 40 Bubbling, as water
- 41 Went out with again
- 42 Property purchaser's paper
- 43 Used car, likely
- 44 Bobbies' informant
- 45 Patella
- 49 Mother with a Nobel Prize
- 50 Ford flops
- 52 Feverish feelings
- 54 African antelope
- 55 Pink wines
- 58 ___ account (never)
- 59 Belarusian gymnast Korbut
- 60 Overstater's "very"
- 61 Brief "but"

Man who Fled Police at Pocologan Traffic Stop Pleads Guilty

Andrew Bates
Reporter, LJI

A man accused of almost hitting a peace officer while fleeing a traffic stop in Pocologan last year pled guilty to flight from police and 11 other outstanding charges.

Jeremy Matthew Booker, 38, of Centennial Drive in Saint John, was set for trial Feb. 5 and instead changed his pleas on a series of files from the past two years, including the traffic stop June 14 in Pocologan, about 53 kilometres west of Saint John, as well as a robbery in Saint John last March, according to court documents.

Police said in a press release in July last year that when an officer tried to arrest the driver of a rental van for an outstanding warrant at a traffic stop at about 12:30 p.m. on McCarthy's Point Road in Pocologan, he allegedly "drove off, almost hitting the officer" and fled into ongoing traffic. The man's van went off the road on Seven Mile Lake Road and he fled on foot before being arrested, police said. In court Feb. 5, Booker pleaded guilty to flight from police, dan-



gerous driving and driving while prohibited, with the Crown dropping charges of assault of a police officer and resisting an officer, according to documents.

Booker also pleaded guilty to a charge of assault causing bodily harm to a person in Saint John March 28, with a charge of assault with choking withdrawn, as well as pleading guilty to robbery of a

Honda Civic with a knife, breach of the electronic monitoring program, driving while prohibited and damaging an ankle monitor March 30 in Saint John, according to court documents.

He was also charged with flight from police and dangerous driving dated to Nov. 14, 2024 in Sussex, operation of a motor vehicle while prohibited and breach of

a release order not to drive dating to Feb. 24, 2025, in Grand Bay-Westfield and pleaded guilty, documents say. He was set for sentencing on March 11.

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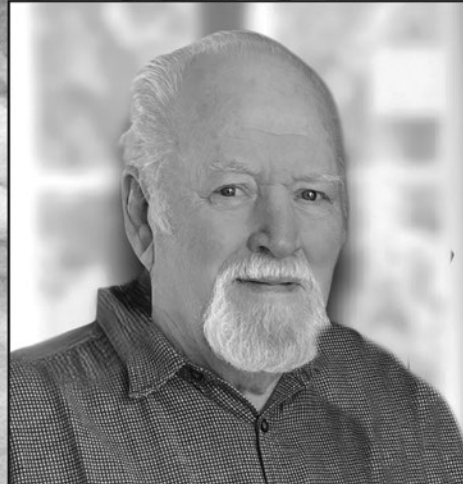
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MARVIN J. ANDERSON

Marvin J. Anderson, age 81, of McAdam, NB, passed from this life onto his heavenly one on January 29th, 2026 at Dr. Everett Chalmers Regional Hospital, in Fredericton, NB.

Survived by his loving wife, Shirley, daughters Heidi Anderson, Angela (Justin) Anderson, granddaughters: Chloe, Emma, Addisyn, Bella and Molly, sister Verna Arseneault, sisters-in-law, Harriett Garrett, Karen (Ross) Stairs, Cathy (Perry) Farrell, Mary (Rob) Carmichael, Darlene (Terry) Sullivan, brother-in-law, Joe (Helen) Godbout, very special nieces and nephews, Roger (Deborah) Vail, Lisa (Mark) Townes-Frazer, Donnie (Joanne) Raye, Joy (Charlie) Leech, Cindy (Tom) Pickering, Jeanne Anderson, Jason Anderson.

A graveside service will be announced for a later date at Rockland Cemetery in McAdam.



TERRY L. MATHESON

Terry L Matheson passed away on Tuesday February 3, 2026 at the Charlotte County Hospital, St Stephen, N.B. after a courageous battle with cancer with her family by her side.

She is survived by her common law husband, Rock Fairweather, children, Tanya Noddin (Jeremy) and Doug Johnson (Shanna), one brother, four sisters, six grandchildren: two great-grandchildren. She is also survived by two sisters-in-law, three aunts, one uncle, several nieces, nephews, cousins, great nieces and nephews.

Funeral service and visitation were held on February 7.



RITA LEBLANC

It is with great sadness that the family announce the unexpected passing of Rita LeBlanc on February 15, 2026 at the age of 92.

She is survived by her children, Brenda Olynych (Mike), Danny (Paulette), Tim (Rosina), Janet Downey (Allan) and Donna Coates, grandchildren, Monica LeBlanc Priest, Stacey Couturier, Tim Olynych (Erin), Ryan LeBlanc (Alicia), Amanda Speedy (Jason), Kayla Jo Wright (Alex), Sheena Scowcroft (Shaun) and Luke LeBlanc (Jessica), many great-grandchildren. She also is survived by her sister-in-law, Bernadette LeBlanc and several nieces and nephews.

Funeral Mass was celebrated February 20.

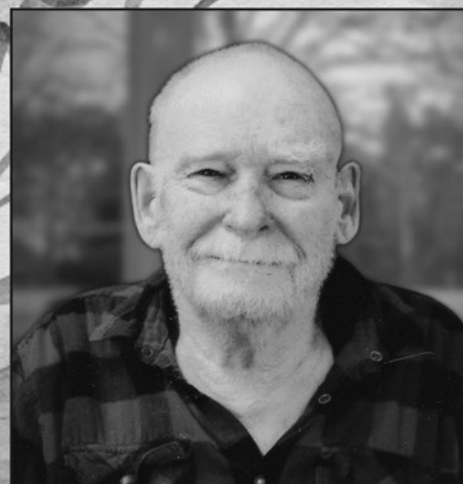


JAMES D. MARTIN

It is with heavy hearts that we announce the passing of James D. Martin of Oak Hill on January 27, 2026.

Jim will be forever missed by his loving wife, Nancy McMorrin. He will also be missed by his sons Mike and Caleb, stepson Brendan (Jamie), brothers, Mike (Rose), Dean (Kathy), sisters, Pat Bielli, Lynn Sparks (Sean) Judy Martin, Paula Cullinan (Brian), sisters in law, Jane King, Wilma Dionne (Bill), Alice Tingley (Jim), Barbara Holmes (Andy) and Luke LeBlanc (Jessica), numerous nieces, nephews, grand nieces and nephews, aunts, uncles and cousins.

Funeral service and visitation were held February 4.



EDWARD C. CARTWRIGHT

The family of Edward "Teddy" C. Cartwright are saddened to announce his passing on Tuesday February 17, 2026, at Lincourt Manor St. Stephen, New Brunswick.

Teddy is survived by his daughter, Rolana Johnson (Tim), sons; Edward Jr and Joseph (Frances), stepson; Dale Kirke (Loretta), several grandchildren, great-grandchildren, nieces and nephews.

Funeral service and visitation were held February 20.



ALAN H. BLACK

It is with heavy hearts we announce the passing of Alan H. Black on February 1, 2026, peacefully at home with the love of his life by his side.

Alan is survived by his beloved wife; Rosemarie, daughters; Tiffany, Tania, Sara and Ashley, stepdaughter; Joy, brother and best friend; Glenn Black, he will be deeply missed by nephews and nieces; Clinton, Breckon, Lena and Claire.

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



LUCILLE MATHESON

The passing of a beautiful soul we were privileged to call Mom, Lucille Matheson, occurred on January 23, 2026, at Lincourt Manor in St. Stephen, New Brunswick, after a lengthy illness.

She leaves behind her spouse of 64 years, Albert; daughters Sylvia Matheson-MacLean (Andy), Shirley Black (Henry), and Sandra Strang (Kevin); four grandchildren, eight great-grandchildren. She is also survived by her three siblings numerous nieces, nephews, and cousins—too many to mention, but all deeply loved.

A graveside service will be held in May 2026.



BERNICE C. FRASER

Bernice C. (Hopps) Fraser passed away Friday February 6, 2026, at her home surrounded by love and family.

Bernice is survived by her children; Lisa MacLean (James), Thomas and Stephanie Fraser-Brown (Kenny), her beloved grandchildren; Emily and Maxwell Brown, sister-in-law; Frances Hopps, niece; Ronda and nephew; Matthew, niece; Nancy Arseneault, her great-nephews; Mark and Alan, extended family by choice Kelly Kurtz-Johnson (Iain) and Seth Bartlett with whom she shared a special bond, she was his 'Mother Bernice'.

Funeral service and visitation were held on February 11.

FULL OBITUARIES AVAILABLE AT WWW.MEHANFUNERALHOME.CA

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In Memory



ERIN MCLAUGHLIN

It is with tremendous grief that we share the passing of Erin McLaughlin. Erin passed peacefully at the age of 25 on February 9th, 2026, in the arms of her family.

Erin is survived by her parents, Ken and Darlene, her siblings and best friends, Matthew and Katherine, her grandmother, Charlene, her many, many beloved family members and her countless friends, including Ireland, Brittney and Edwin Jones.

Erin was a soul who took the time to love and help everyone she could; it would be impossible to list the names of everyone that Erin held in her heart. Know that Erin cared so deeply for every one of her people.

Funeral service and visitation were held February 15.



DONALDINE GARDNER

It is with great sadness the family of Donaldine Gardner announce her passing at Wauklehegan Manor, McAdam, N.B. on Tuesday, February 17, 2026.

She leaves behind her daughters; Angela Kennedy (David), Penny Jordan and Melissa Voutt (Adam), grandchildren, Evan and Craig Kennedy, Adrian Voutt and Alyssa Jordan, great grandchildren; Josh, Brody, Jacob, Blaine, Willow, Parker and Kia. She also leaves her siblings, Annette, Sandra (Danny) and Donald, several nieces and nephews.

Funeral service and visitation were held February 23.



JOYCE L. SANGSTER

With heavy hearts, we announce the passing of our mother, Joyce L. Sangster at Wauklehegan Manor, McAdam, N.B. on February 18, 2026, surrounded by her family.

She is survived by her children, Mark (Shelley), Kim (Susan) and Sheila Nason (Danny), nine grandchildren, several great grandchildren, nieces and nephews.

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

JAMES H. MACVICAR

James H. MacVicar passed away at the Charlotte County Hospital St. Stephen, New Brunswick, on Monday February 2, 2026.

In keeping with James' wishes there will be no public service to be held.

MARVIN W. BOLES

Marvin W. Boles son of the late Hugh and Mary Boles passed away at the Charlotte County Hospital, St Stephen, N.B. on Wednesday, January 28, 2026 at the age of 66.

There will be no funeral service at this time. Private interment will take place at a later date.

E. JEANNINE NICHOLS

The family of E. Jeannine Nichols are saddened to announce her passing on January 23, 2026 at Wauklehegan Manor, McAdam, NB.

Jeannine is survived by her son; Derck, daughter; Penny Hornby (Richard), grandson; Justin, granddaughter; Ashley, several nieces, nephews and cousins.

In keeping with Jeannine's wishes a graveside service will be held at a later date at the Rockland Cemetery, McAdam, NB.

FULL OBITUARIES AVAILABLE AT WWW.MEHANFUNERALHOME.CA

Feature: Archives Digitization Brings History to You

Madison Johnstone Community Contributor

Two golden flowers adorn John Cadman "Caddy" Norris' sacraments of initiation card, hanging from interwoven cords to frame the dates each rite was received in St. Andrews over a century ago.

The artwork is beautiful. To see it last year, you would have had to book an appointment with our archivist and wait while she located the file for you to peruse.

Now we offer another option. Since September, the Charlotte County Archives (CCA) has worked on a digitization plan to bring the materials we preserve closer to you.

Digitization is the act of turning nondigital files, like handwritten letters, paper maps, or printed photographs, into digital ones viewable on a computer. The multi-step process begins with selecting the right materials and culminates in caring for the digital files long-term.

At CCA, digitization protects fragile documents by reducing handling. It also helps us better serve the public by offering remote

access to select items. We hope that with the ability to more easily view these materials, you will reanimate them in new ways.

Thanks to the dedicated efforts of our volunteer photo team, thousands of our photographs are already viewable online. This new digitization initiative focuses on non-photo documents.

Our first upload over the course of this project, the Norris family collection is small (about 30 documents), and contains records of family births, baptisms, marriages, deaths—information you might find in a family Bible, which is exactly where the materials were stored before entering CCA's care. It's also CCA's first collection with Black creators.

The rarity and smallness of this collection demonstrates how past choices shape the way we remember history. The sum of an archive's holdings creates a story about who we are just as much as who we were. CCA's collections tell a story about Charlotte County and the people, places, animals, industries, and ways of life that make this region unique. Knowing this, we digitized the Norris family materials first so their chapter is



remembered.

Like engines of memory, archives are activated by us and they activate us. Digitization expands the potential for this with an Internet-based viewing environment, although it does change the experience.

Someone once asked me which was better: a handwritten poem, or the digital image of a handwritten poem.

They both have their benefits, I said. Reading a handwritten poem in person, touching the paper the author poured herself into, you channel an intimacy that a scan-

ner cannot capture. Yet a digital image carries the author's message to sometimes unimaginable places, expanding its possible audiences and impact.

For archival materials, connection is a reanimating force. Digitization makes connecting with them, and our history, easier.

Archives store memories for future generations, but the deal only works as long as we in the present make use of them. So avail yourself of our digital collections; if something catches your eye, reach out. I speak for all of us at CCA when I say we are happy to help.

The Etiquette Guy at Large: Part II - Three Everyday Practices

Jay Remer
Columnist, The Courier

Three everyday practices that have taught humanity how to live together — long before we argued about how to do it.

SERIES OVERVIEW

Civility is usually discussed as a set of rules, manners, or expectations imposed on behavior. But historically, civility emerged much earlier and much more naturally — through shared cultural practices that required cooperation, restraint, emotional awareness, and mutual respect.

This three-part series explores how **music, the arts, and cooking and dining together** have quietly shaped civil societies across cultures and generations. Each essay stands alone, yet together they reveal a simple truth: civility is learned through participation, not instruction.

The series avoids politics and ideology, focusing instead on universally recognized human activities that transcend differences and foster social stability.

PART I: What Music Teaches Us About Civility — and Why It Matters Now

In a time of rising division and constant noise, it's worth asking a simple question:

How did we forget how to listen?

Civility, at its core, is not about politeness or etiquette. It is about how we live together. It requires attention, restraint, empathy, timing, and respect for something larger than us. Interestingly, all these qualities are not only taught but also practiced daily in music.

Music is one of humanity's most universal languages. Every culture has it. Long before written law, we gathered around rhythm, melody, and song. And yet, we rarely talk about music as a training ground for civility. We should.

To make music—especially with others—one must listen before acting. One must wait one's turn. One must adjust volume, tempo, and tone in response to those around them. Harmony is not achieved by dominance, but by cooperation. Even disagreement, in the form of tension and resolution, follows rules. Music teaches us that expression without awareness becomes noise.

These lessons are not abstract. They are lived experiences.

Consider an orchestra. No single instrument carries the whole piece. Each has moments of



prominence and moments of support. Success depends not on being the loudest, but on being accurate, responsive, and attuned. This form of cooperation is civility in motion.

Nowhere is this clearer than in El Sistema, the internationally respected music education movement founded in Venezuela and now present in more than 60 countries. El Sistema provides children—many from marginalized or high-risk environments—with musical instruments, instruction, and the expectation that they will practice together.

Its outcomes are remarkable, but not for the reasons people often assume.

Yes, students learn music. But more importantly, they learn discipline, accountability, patience, and mutual respect. They realize that their presence matters—and that so does everyone else's. They learn to regulate their emotions, channel their frustration, and contribute meaningfully to a group effort. These are not "soft" benefits. They are foundational life skills.

El Sistema does not begin with lectures on behavior. It starts with sound, structure, and shared purpose. Civility emerges not as a rule, but as a byproduct of participation.

This coordination matters because one of society's most significant challenges today is dysregulation—emotional, social, and cognitive. Many young people grow

up surrounded by stimulation but starved of connection. Music offers a corrective. Practicing an instrument demands focus. Playing with others demands trust. Performing requires courage and humility in equal measure.

Music also teaches something we've lost in public discourse: silence.

Rests matter. We do not need to fill every void. Listening is an active skill. Civility depends on this understanding. When we no longer pause, when we speak over one another, when volume replaces meaning, the social fabric frays.

Importantly, music accomplishes all of this without ideology. It does not ask where you come from or what you believe. It asks only that you show up, pay attention, and do your part.

If we are serious about building more civil communities—and a stronger next generation—we should stop treating music as an extracurricular luxury. It is a civic asset. Programs like El Sistema demonstrate that when we invest in shared cultural practices that cultivate listening and cooperation, society benefits downstream.

We cannot mandate civility; however, we can teach it by practicing and living it.

Music has been teaching us how for centuries.

Perhaps it's time we started listening again.

SHORT EDITOR'S NOTE

At a time when public discussion about civility often becomes political or moralistic, this series takes a different approach.

Rather than arguing about who is right or wrong, or proposing new rules for behavior, the essays that follow ask a quieter question: *How did human beings originally learn to live together at all?*

The author suggests that civility did not begin as an abstract idea or a formal code, but as a lived skill developed through shared cultural experiences — making music, creating art, and gathering around the table. These practices appear in every culture, across history, and require no agreement beyond participation.

Readers skeptical of "soft solutions" may be surprised to find that the essay series is not about nostalgia or sentimentality. It is about practical human behaviors that teach listening, emotional regulation, responsibility, and cooperation — the very capacities modern societies say they want, yet they struggle to cultivate.

Whether one agrees or not, the series invites reflection on something often overlooked: before we tried to manage civility, we practiced it — together.

Everything I Learned in Life, I Learned from my Ginkgo

Beth Moore
Community Contributor

There's a saying gardeners like to quote: First year it sleeps. Second year it creeps. Third year it leaps. It's comforting. Reassuring. It suggests effort will be rewarded on a neat and predictable schedule.

Ginkgos, apparently, did not get the memo.

Ginkgo biloba has been around for more than 200 million years, earning its reputation as a "living fossil." Individual trees can live for centuries; some temple ginkgos in China are believed to be over a thousand years old.

When you've outlived dinosaurs, urgency loses its appeal. We bought ours in 2007. My husband worked at the nursery, which softened the blow slightly, but it was still—by any honest accounting—the most we'd ever spent on a single plant. Possibly the entire year's landscaping budget in one go.

She had delicate, maidenhair-fern leaves that turned a shocking acid yellow in the fall. We were smitten.

ten.
We planted her in pride of place. And waited.
And waited.
She didn't creep. She didn't leap. She simply slept. For ten years.

I fertilized. I cajoled. I whispered sweet nothings in Mandarin. No response.

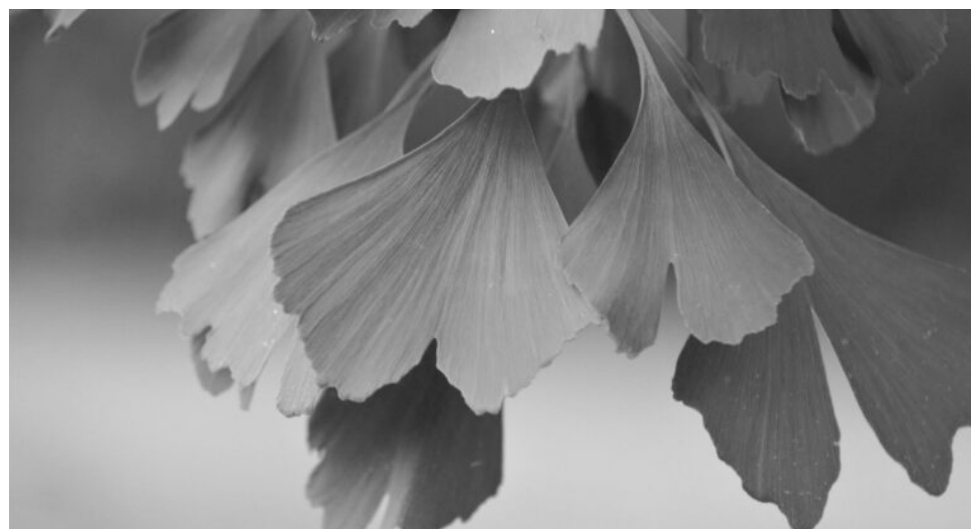
Time moved on, as it tends to do. When we moved house, I dug up the plants I couldn't bear to leave. My husband brought the ginkgo. We'd paid too much to abandon her, but also—perhaps—she deserved another chance. Somewhere else might suit her better. She sulked. Properly sulked. Her main trunk, the leader, died. We were heartbroken. It felt final.

And then something quietly miraculous happened.

She sent up shoots. A new leader emerged. She put down roots. Slowly, deliberately, she began to thrive.

That's when I understood the lesson she'd been teaching all along.

Growth doesn't follow our time-



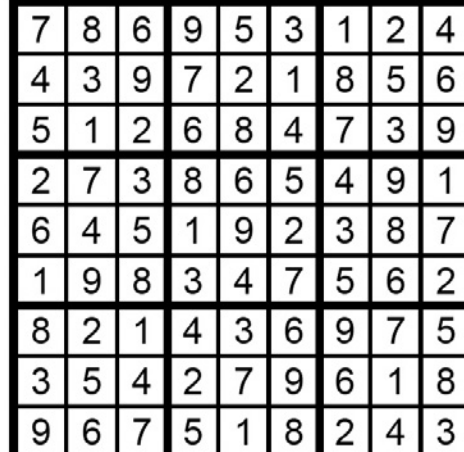
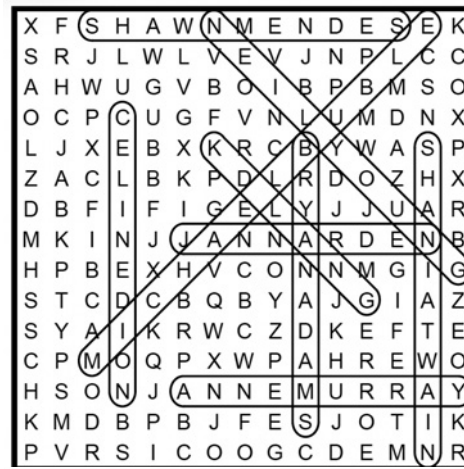
lines. Dormancy isn't failure. Loss doesn't mean the end of the story. Sometimes survival looks like waiting, and resilience looks like starting again from an unexpected place.

Every autumn now, when her leaves turn that impossible yellow, I think about patience. About how long a decade really is.

About how life can appear stalled while doing important, invisible work underground.

The ginkgo never rushed for approval. She didn't perform on cue. She simply endured—and then, when she was ready, she grew.

And honestly? That feels like a pretty good way to live.



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N.B Virtual Care Service Expected to Transition to New Provider



Nathalie Sturgeon
Reporter, LJI

The Department of Health says a new provider for virtual health care is expected to improve the service currently provided by eVisitNB to New Brunswickers.

eVisitNB, a virtual medical platform operated by Maple, launched in 2020. The River Valley Sun, an independent local newspaper in the Western Valley of New Brunswick, first reported that the contract would not be renewed and would instead move to a company called Foundever Group.

On Feb. 7, eVisitNB emailed users to say that “provincial virtual care services will transition to a new provider. As a result, eVisitNB will conclude its current service on March 31, 2026.”

Department of Health Deputy Minister Eric Beaulieu came before public accounts on Tuesday and was questioned about the transition. He said the department was satisfied with eVisitNB.

He said 50 per cent of eVisitNB users had a primary care provider. Beaulieu said the goal is to better integrate virtual health care with primary care, meeting the growing needs of patients and ensuring a continuum of care.

He cited one individual who accessed eVisitNB 90 times in a single year.

The Department of Health would not confirm to *The Courier* which company it is in negotiations with. However, CBC New Brunswick and the River Valley Sun both reported it is Luxembourg-based Foundever, which already provides 811 Telecare.

Beaulieu avoided a question from Liberal MLA for Shediac-Cap-Acadie Jacques Leblanc on what New Brunswickers could expect from the shift, instead outlining

some of the requirements for the request for proposals (RFPs).

Those included ensuring communication between the virtual service, primary care providers, and pharmacies; a triage system to access the right services; care in the individual’s language of choice; and the ability to schedule appointments.

Complaints about language requirements

In March 2024, the Office of the Official Languages Commissioner published a report finding the department failed its duty under the *Official Languages Act* ensuring eVisitNB met language requirements.

“The eVisitNB system, as it functioned for the complainants in this investigation, did not demonstrate the true and substantive equality of the two official language communities,” Shirley MacLean said in her report. “It is the institution’s responsibility to do so and, in the case at hand, to ensure that its third party complies with the linguistic obligations of the institution on whose behalf it provides services.”

MacLean reiterated that her office continues to get complaints, including New Brunswickers being told they would face longer wait times if they chose to receive service in French.

“This is not equality of service to our two official linguistic communities,” she said in her report. “In addition, although my office continues to receive and investigate numerous complaints about the MyHealthNB platform, the Department of Health has taken no steps to ameliorate the situation and implement my recommendations.”

Beaulieu also faced questions from Woodstock-Hartland Progressive Conservative MLA Bill Hogan.

“My colleagues and I have been contacted by upset New Brunswickers who want to know

why the government would change something that was working so well for them and provided by a New Brunswick company,” Hogan said.

Hogan said his understanding is that the virtual platform was designed to act as a bridge for orphan patients — or patients without a primary care provider — while collaborative care clinics are being established across the province. Beaulieu confirmed eVisitNB recorded 301,000 in the last fiscal year.

Hogan said the number signals the service is vital to health care in New Brunswick.

“We did see a need to continue to advance the process and continue that integration of health care services,” Beaulieu said.

Beaulieu said the commitment to virtual care for New Brunswickers remains the same regardless of the provider.

‘Another proponent met the requirements’

“The new provider that we’re discussing with currently for a contract to come into place has operation in New Brunswick and has been in New Brunswick for almost three decades,” Beaulieu said in response to Hogan’s questions.

According to Beaulieu, the company has more than 150 employees in the province.

“We have a commitment to New Brunswickers both from an employment standpoint and as well as on health care delivery,” he said.

Hogan asked whether the government had been lobbied by any particular company about offering the service, Beaulieu said he did not recall any formal meetings or lobbying.

He added that the province decided to issue a full request for proposal (RFP) — a process in which the government outlines the project requirements and invites contractors to submit bids.

“I want to make sure I’m clear, the conversation was never about moving away from a New Brunswick company or moving towards any other company. The conversation was about ‘lets assess the services we have right now.’”

Beaulieu said eVisitNB was aware of the request for proposals before others because of its relationship with the operator.

“The organization that is currently providing the services was able to submit and be evaluated just like everyone else within that process,” he said. “It would have

made my life and the life of government much easier had the same proponent that is offering it today been the successful proponent providing the best service going forward.

“They were not selected because the proposal we received from another proponent met the requirements stronger.”

Dr. Hanif Chatur, the founder and CEO of eVisitNB, said in a statement he was disappointed eVisitNB was not chosen to continue the service.

“Over the past four years, eVisitNB has completed more than one million consults for more than 300,000 patients, with our team of over 165 Nurse Practitioners from New Brunswick and across Canada,” he said in a statement to *The Courier*.

Chatur said eVisitNB acted quickly when concerns were raised by MacLean in 2024, which concerned complaints about accessing service in their preferred language.

“On Jan. 21, 2025, the DOH confirmed that these matters were successfully addressed to their satisfaction as of Summer 2024 and that no new complaints have been filed since then,” he said in the statement. “Furthermore, the DOH explicitly stated there has never been a complaint regarding the quality-of-care parity between English and French services provided by eVisitNB.”

He said he wanted to reassure New Brunswickers that eVisitNB will remain available until the end of March.

Health Minister Dr. John Dornan said in a statement that virtual care is an integral part of New Brunswick’s health-care system, noting the service of virtual care will remain available.

Dornan confirmed many of the points Beaulieu made to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

“The selected vendor has strong Canadian roots, all patient records will be securely stored in Canada, and the company brings more than 28 years of experience serving New Brunswickers in both official languages, with 150 employees here in the province,” he said in the statement. “Contract negotiations are now underway.”

Dornan said the aim is to ensure a seamless transition between the providers eVisitNB and the new provider to avoid any disruption to virtual care services.

Preventing the Criminalization of Dementia

Heather Campbell Pope
Columnist, The Courier

Years ago, I was told a story about an older man in a care home who would refuse to sit at the dining room table. He would just stand there. At times, staff found him agitated and difficult, trying repeatedly to make him sit. Eventually, they learned the truth: he was simply a gentleman, waiting politely for the female staff to take their seats first.

Stories like this remind us that what are often called “responsive behaviours” among people with dementia are not arbitrary mischief; they are symptoms of unmet needs, misunderstandings, or a lifetime of ingrained habits.

Sometimes, these circumstances escalate to aggression, and that is when the justice system can become involved. People with dementia can be arrested or charged for behaviours that are not truly criminal, but rather expressions of confusion, frustration, or unmet needs. Being drawn into the criminal justice system is not only unfair; it can also be dangerous and can worsen symptoms, making these situations even more tragic.

As dementia rates increase, we are seeing an uptick in these types of cases across Canada, making it urgent for all levels of government and other stakeholders to address.

New Brunswick’s new dementia strategy and action plan is a welcome step forward on this front. Released in January, the strategy rightly focuses on the fundamentals: raising awareness, improving timely diagnosis, supporting care partners, strengthening the workforce, and helping systems work together more smoothly. Invest-

ments in the U-First! training program for caregivers and the appointment of a dedicated Minister of Seniors with budgetary control signal a meaningful commitment to building the systems that people with dementia and their families need.

The provincial strategy also speaks about dignity. That language is welcome. It reflects a growing recognition that dementia is not just a medical issue, but a human one that cuts across government departments. How we design health, social and justice systems for people with dementia says a lot about what we value as a society.

This is where behavioural supports come in. The strategy commits to integrating behavioural supports in a variety of settings to help people with dementia and their care partners who are experiencing responsive behaviours.

But this action is not scheduled until year three of the plan. More urgent steps are needed now, including enhanced training for police, prosecutors, defence lawyers, and judges. This training is essential to help prevent unnecessary arrests, charges, and convictions. These are the kinds of issues that will be discussed at Dementia Justice Canada’s upcoming online symposium on dementia and human-centred justice.

New Brunswick’s dementia strategy is a good beginning. It sets the groundwork for better coordination and support. But it could go further by addressing the intersection of dementia and the criminal justice system. With the right refinements, it can help ensure that people with dementia are supported rather than criminalized. This is not just about care; it’s about protecting dignity and fairness when people need it most.



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