

COMMUNITY REMEMBERS EDUCATOR AND LEADER

By VICKI HOGARTH
AND NATHALIE STURGEON
The Courier

Catherine (Kate) Akagi, acting mayor of Saint Andrews, longtime educator and recipient of the Order of New Brunswick, is being remembered as a deeply committed community leader whose impact will be felt for generations following her death this weekend. She was 70.

Born and raised on Indian Point, Akagi remained closely tied to her home community throughout her life. She spent more than 30 years as a teacher, and in retirement continued to share her knowledge as an Indigenous educator, working with NBCC Saint Andrews and Anglophone School District South.

A member of the Skutik tribe of the Peskotomuhkati Nation, Akagi was widely respected for her efforts to increase awareness and understanding of First Nations history and culture. In Saint Andrews, she helped lead local observances of the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation and supported initiatives that brought Indigenous voices and culture into the public space.

Her commitment to the community extended well beyond her professional work. Akagi was known for her volunteerism with groups such as Charlotte Dial-A-Ride and the Open Door Program, and for quietly stepping in wherever help was needed and community events, fundraisers, and initiatives.



Kate Akagi receiving the Order of New Brunswick. PHOTO: VICKI HOGARTH / THE COURIER

Akagi was first elected to council in 2008, serving until 2016. She returned in a 2018 byelection and was re-elected in 2021, when she was also chosen by council as deputy mayor. In 2023, she was appointed to the Order of New Brunswick, one of the province's highest honours, in recognition of her contributions to education, Indigenous advocacy and community life. She was also awarded the King Charles III Coronation Medal in 2025 for her ongoing commitment to community betterment and public service.

She is being remembered not only for her years of public service, but

for the way she carried it out: with care, humility and a deep sense of responsibility to the community she called home.

Conservative MP John Williamson said on social media he was saddened by Akagi's passing.

"She spent countless hours volunteering throughout southern New Brunswick to improve outcomes for so many residents of Charlotte County," he wrote. "Kate will be dearly missed by everyone who knew her. My thoughts and prayers are with her family, friends and the entire community of Saint Andrews during this difficult time."

Fellow Charlotte County Mayor Denny Cogswell also extended his condolences.

"Kate will be greatly missed not only in her community of Saint Andrews but all of Southwest (N.B.) where she volunteered many hours in multiple organizations," he wrote. "The service you have provided to our region has not gone unnoticed and will always be remembered."

Eastern Charlotte Mayor John Craig also extended his condolences online. He also served with Akagi on council in Saint Andrews.

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Eastern Charlotte becomes 18th age-friendly community



Members of the age friendly committee in Eastern Charlotte pose for a picture with Minister of Seniors, Lyne Chantal Boudreau. PHOTO: NATHALIE STURGEON / THE COURIER

By NATHALIE STURGEON
Editor in Chief, LJI

Eastern Charlotte has been named New Brunswick's 18th age-friendly community.

An age-friendly community encourages communities and municipalities to create policies and practices promoting healthy aging and wellness.

On Tuesday, Minister of Seniors Lyne Chantal Boudreau stopped to give the community its plaque.

"We heard so [many] positive things about that," she said, speaking

with The Courier. "Just breaking the isolation around seniors is very important and we just saw here there are so many volunteers who want to be part of [it]."

Sharon Travis, who is part of Eastern Charlotte's Age-Friendly Committee, said a lot of what the committee has been able to achieve has been done in partnership with the community.

"Really, it's listening to the people, it's giving them what they want and also, I'm a senior, this is what I want," she said. "I want events that

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Gabe Smith secures top defensive award



Smith currently plays for the Moncton Wildcats and has improved his personal best from 39 last season to 77 points.
PHOTO: JEFF LIVELY / SUBMITTED

By **NATHALIE STURGEON**
Editor in Chief, LJI

Saint Andrews native Gabe Smith has been awarded the Guy-Carbonneau Trophy for top defensive forward in the Quebec Maritime Junior Hockey League (QMJHL).

The QMJHL said this has been a breakout year for Smith, who was drafted by the NHL's Utah Mammoth in the fourth round.

Smith currently plays for the Moncton Wildcats and has improved his personal best from 39 last season to 77 points. The QMJHL placed him third amid the high-powered Wildcats.

"Of his 34 goals, 18 came on the power play, a league-high," a

release from the OMJHL said. "Smith was frequently matched against top opposing players and used his imposing 6-foot-4, 225-pound frame to disrupt opponents."

Smith was the Wildcats most used center in the faceoff circle (1,170), where he posted a 58.9 per cent success rate, according to the QMJHL. He was on the ice for 44 of the team's goals, contributing heavily to its offensive play, a key factor in his strong plus or minus rating.

Several current NHL players have earned this top award, including Nicolas Roy with the Colorado Avalanche, Phil Danault with the Montreal Canadiens, and Dawson Mercer with the New Jersey Devils.

The Wildcats have advanced to the semifinals in their bid for the Gilles-Courteau Trophy. Their opponent has yet to be decided, with the Newfoundland Regiment and Blainville-Boisbriand Armada facing off for the final semifinal spot. Last year, the team was crowned the QMJHL champions and advanced to the Memorial Cup, but were defeated by the London Knights in the semifinals of the tournament.

Smith, 19, is only one point from Wildcats captain Caleb Desnoyers, who was drafted fourth overall in the first round by the Utah Mammoth.

Tommy Beyl, the team's leading scorer, won the Raymond-Lagacé Trophy for Defensive Rookie of the Year.

NBCC students help build Christmas magic

By **VICKI HOGARTH**
Reporter, The Courier

Christmas may still be months away, but at NBCC Saint Andrews, the holiday season has been top of mind all semester after building two new wooden cabins.

As students grin inside the handcrafted structure, instructors Eugene Gowan, Brent Dunn, and Chris Hartford stand in the rain at the edges of the photo, letting their students take centre stage. For them, it is a proud moment.

For the past three years, the Saint Andrews Christmas Committee has partnered with NBCC Saint Andrews to build the cabins and market stands that have become the hallmark of Christmas Fest in Market Square.

When organizers launched the festival in 2022, the volunteer committee approached NBCC hoping students could help build a festive structure for the event. What they received exceeded expectations: a giant red Christmas cabin that quickly became the focal point of the festival.

A second followed the next year. This year, students built two more—timber cabins worthy of a European Christmas market—with plans



Students at NBCC Saint Andrews build Christmas cabins.
PHOTO: VICKI HOGARTH / THE COURIER

for additional structures already underway for the fall.

"We wanted to do something community-driven to give back," Chris Hartford, skilled trade techniques instructor at NBCC Saint Andrews, said.

"Community service is built into our curriculum, and this capstone project builds on that. Students come here from all over the globe, so to give back to the place they are now living allows them to really become a part of the community."

Hartford said the project is made possible through a collaborative effort, with local suppliers donating materials and the Christmas committee contributing modest funding toward remaining costs.

"We are a volunteer committee with a limited budget, so to have these incredible students help us make our small-town Christmas festival even more magical is extraordinary," said Katy MacDonald of the Saint Andrews Christmas Committee. "We are incredibly grateful for their ongoing support, hard work, and community spirit."

Held each December in Market Square, Christmas Fest features free visits with Santa, games, contests, outdoor fires, hot chocolate and cider, and crowd-favourite dog costume, ugly sweater, and figgy pudding eating contests.

The fourth annual Christmas Fest will take place Dec. 12 beginning at 12 p.m.

COMMUNITY REMEMBERS EDUCATOR AND LEADER

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“Kate Akagi had been a valued member of my council in Saint Andrews, and it was my honour to collaborate with her on the Service Commission board,” he wrote. “Saint Andrews has lost a remarkable community leader, someone who led with passion and dedication to her hometown and heritage. My thoughts are with her family at this most difficult time.”

St. Stephen Mayor Allan MacEachern also wrote about Akagi’s passing.

“Yesterday, I received the sad news of the passing of deputy and acting mayor Kate Akagi of the Town of Saint Andrews,” he wrote. “The service K8 provided to our region at the board level, volunteering [for] many causes and stepping up as mayor of Saint Andrews has not gone unnoticed, (K8 is also known to help out at a local restaurant while there having [their] own lunch) and she will always be greatly missed and remembered.”

Akagi was known for signing her emails with “K8.” She took on the role of acting mayor in June following the resignation of Brad Henderson for personal reasons.

On social media, Henderson wrote that Kate was on the top of the list of people who stepped up for their community.

“Hundreds of thousands of kilometres on her personal vehicle with Charlotte Dial-a-Ride, helping people without transportation get to medical appointments and obtain necessities,” he wrote. “The chain of office was very fitting around her neck. She was proud to wear it and has been a leader in our community for decades.”

Henderson extended his thoughts to her family and friends.

“My thoughts are with her family during this extremely difficult time. We are so blessed you shared her life with us,” he said.

The Southwest New Brunswick

Service Commission, for which Akagi was a board member, also extended its thoughts, noting her long-time volunteerism.

“Our most sincere condolences go out to the family of Catherine (Kate) Akagi. Kate was acting mayor of Saint Andrews and a valued member of our board. She was also a very active driver for Charlotte Dial-a-Ride. Her contributions to the Southwest community will be sorely missed. Rest in peace, K8,” the post said.

The Saint Andrews Chamber of Commerce also released a statement.

“The Chamber of Commerce is deeply saddened to learn of the passing of Catherine (Kate) Akagi, who served our community with dedication, integrity and compassion,” it said. “Kate’s commitment to public service and her tireless efforts to strengthen our community left a lasting impact on residents, businesses and colleagues alike.”

The organization’s board of directors said Akagi will be greatly missed and her contributions would never be forgotten.

Hundreds of people have offered messages about Akagi’s legacy of kindness and service online. Akagi was offering to serve her community in the upcoming municipal election as a councillor.

The Town of Saint Andrews expressed its condolences in an official statement.

“Kate always held a positive outlook and showed kindness to all. Staff will remember her visits throughout the week, making jokes, and sharing baked treats and homemade foods. Her presence will be missed at the Council table and throughout Saint Andrews,” the release said.

Coun. Steve Neil will assume the role of acting mayor until the election on May 11.

Two rural Charlotte County fire halls receive upgrades

By NATHALIE STURGEON

Editor in Chief, LJI

On the outside, the Rollingdam Fire Department may not look different, but on the inside there is about 24 inches (two feet) which will create room for a much-needed piece of equipment.

A new fire truck purchased by the province was too high for the clearance to be stored inside the building.

In April 2025, Local Government Minister Aaron Kennedy and Public Safety Minister Robert Gauvin visited the fire department alongside St. Croix MLA Kathy Bockus to discuss some of the department’s concerns.

“They addressed the problem, which was very good of them to do that,” Ivan Noddin, Rollingdam Fire Chief, said. “They came in and realized how much ... bigger it was going to be, so we bought an engineer he designed a plan for how to do it, and the contractor stepped up and they went at it, and by the end of the summer everything was complete and ... they’ve done a real good job.”

Crews worked on bracing the rafters in order to lift the roof in one section of the building.

“They call them 114 Severe Duty Freightliner and because it’s bigger and higher and the body is going to be a little higher so that’s why we had to go the extra two feet,” he said, speaking with The Courier.

Its current pumper truck, which also carries water, has passed the end of its useful life.

“We’ve had the tank out three times now to be repaired so we’re just waiting for the day for it to happen again. We had the pump tested and the pump failed, Noddin said. “There



Rollingdam Fire Chief Ivan Noddin said the new upgrades will make way for a much needed piece of equipment.

PHOTO: NATHALIE STURGEON / THE COURIER

is a capacity that the pump must do and it didn’t do it. It still pumps water ... but it’s gone to the point that it’s and is getting very rusty underneath. It’s about 38 years old so it’s done its time.”

It is unclear when the truck might arrive, but it is being manufactured by New Brunswick-based company, MetalFab.

But Noddin isn’t the only one excited about upgrades.

Just down the road in Lawrence Station, the government is investing roughly \$100,000 for upgrades to the fire hall’s heating system and other maintenance.

“There is a \$100,000 of a capital allocation this year for fire hall maintenance and a new heating system,” said Local Government Minister Aaron Kennedy during main estimates last week at the Legislative

Assembly of New Brunswick.

Marked in the cement is September 1997 showing where the first part of the building was constructed.

Deputy Fire Chief John Cliff said this is welcome news.

“The furnace was put in 2002, so it’s aging,” he said. “Everything’s aging in the building and this money is an investment for the government [in] their assets.”

The current heating system is operated by oil, and Cliff explained the upgrades would be to improve energy efficiency.

He said there are plenty of things at the fire hall that could use some of that money, but the full details are still being ironed out.

Both Noddin and Cliff are pleased the government is recognizing the needs of rural fire departments,

which are often responsible for large catchment areas.

“We’re rural, we’re way out in the woods. We have 15 or 16 volunteers,” he said. “When the alarm goes [off], we’re going, [it] doesn’t matter what time of day it is. It means a lot that the government is going to put money back into their assets.”

Noddin said it was impressive to see two ministers visit.

“We struggle day-to-day with finances and keeping up [the] roster and stuff like that and that to me showed that they do actually want to help us out and they did a very good job.”

Two Charlotte County long-term care homes to be replaced

By **NATHALIE STURGEON**

Editor in Chief, LJI

Two Charlotte County long-term care facilities will be replaced as part of New Brunswick's new long-term care strategy.

Premier Susan Holt announced the Passamaquoddy Lodge in Saint Andrews, and Lincourt Manor in St. Stephen will be two of six being replaced by 2028-2029.

It is welcome news for Caroline Davies — a member of the Passamaquoddy Lodge Foundation (PLF).

"I'm almost too stunned to feel anything," she said, speaking with The Courier at the event. "These years of work have sort of been all-consuming and ... now we've got some results."

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

Davies has held multiple open houses and a letter-writing campaign recently to spur a formal decision from the government. She said the new model, building five individual homes with 12 beds in each, was solidified during the COVID-19 [pandemic] when many seniors were separated from loved ones for extended periods of time.

"I'm pretty euphoric actually," she said. "Up until today, we couldn't do anything. We couldn't borrow money to start, we couldn't finalize our designs, but we've committed to fundraising \$20 million and couldn't start that because we had nothing to offer."

She said there are aspects to the proposal that will help further inform how long-term care is delivered in the province. The new facility will also incorporate a child care facility.

"This is breathing new life into our energy and into our vision and it is going to breathe new life into the community as a whole," Davies said.

The Town of Saint Andrews has committed to selling the foundation a plot of land off the Bar Road for \$1.

Acting mayor Steve Neil, who was a councillor at the time, said this is a good week for Saint Andrews, noting the \$1.7 million for a collaborative care clinic at the Wellness Centre inside the W.C. O'Neill Arena Complex.

"The announcement is long overdue," he said, speaking with The Courier. "We are so excited to hear this announcement from the Premier, the investment in Saint Andrews. The Passamaquoddy Lodge, as we all know, has been aging for some time."

He said the Passamaquoddy Lodge Foundation has worked tirelessly for many years to finally get to this moment.

Holt confirmed that the proposal submitted by the PLF will be the one the government supports building.

Other replacements

Lincourt Manor is a 60-bed facility in St. Stephen, and will also be among the first six long-term care facilities up for replacement.

"If you talk to the team there, there is a significant need to replace that nursing home because the infrastructure and the conditions need to be improved and they have submitted a proposal," Holt said.

Roni-Sue Moran, executive director of Lincourt Manor, said today brings positivity and relief. She spoke to the immense challenges of the facility on Chipman Drive.

"Our bathroom doors are so narrow, we have curtains hanging on them," she said.

Moran said since she joined the facility two years ago, Social Development has been at the table with them, meeting with them monthly. She added the department has been good at helping to take care of urgent needs as they come.

Often one issue can compound another, she said.

"When you're aging, this is their home," she said. "When someone is told they are going there, deep down, they know they are never leaving there. It's like grieving before you've passed."

She said being positive is important for both staff — who work closely with residents — but also residents, which in the end improves outcomes for New Brunswick seniors.

Moran said it is hard for staff to maintain morale and positivity in a facility not meeting the needs — and that can in turn impact the residents.

"These residents, their quality of life depends a lot on the culture, and the autonomy in the building and staff, and this is going to make a huge difference," she said, speaking with The Courier.



Premier Susan Holt unveils long-term care strategy. PHOTO: NATHALIE STURGEON / THE COURIER

She hopes to be part of the future planning when the process gets underway.

Other facility replacements include:

- Campbellton Nursing Home, 85 beds
- Foyer Assomption, Rogersville, 50 beds
- Résidences Lucien Saindon, Île-de-Lamèque, 52 beds
- Résidence Mgr Melanson, Saint-Quentin, 42 beds

"We listened to seniors, their families and care professionals. Their lived experiences guided us to focus on what matters most: helping seniors stay socially connected, age with independence, and receive the right care at the right time, wherever they may call home," said Minister of Seniors Lyne Chantal Boudreau in a statement.

The government also plans to add additional beds to several facilities across the province.

Villa Providence in Shediac will remain open, the government said, and 24 new beds will be created as part of the renovations.

Another 240 beds are expected to be added to existing Shannex facilities, including 120 in Fredericton, 60 in Riverview and 60 in Quispamsis.

It also announced 360 long-term care beds, with those locations being announced later on following an open request for proposals.

The long-term care strategy

The province said it is investing \$998 million in the strategy, including 624 beds. Holt said more than 23 per cent of New Brunswick's population is

over 65 years old.

"New Brunswickers deserve to age with dignity, to have the right support and the ability to make the choices about where and how they live," she said during her speech.

It will track five "over-arching measures" in the plan, Holt said. She said some measures include the long-term care assessment cycle time — which currently sits at 54 days. It will look at the percentage of people with access to home care and the level of satisfaction with those services, and the number of people waiting for nursing home care.

"We have a plan to increase our support and our investments over time," she said.

Holt told reporters that some of the facilities could be replaced and operating by 2027 because they are on provincially owned property and have reduced barriers.

"Some of those are expansions," she said, adding some initiatives in the plan could reduce the need for long-term care beds by 180, accounting for five long-term care facilities.

She said the cost of construction for some of the long-term care facilities is to be determined through a tendering process, but partners are finding ways to make the process more affordable.

As for Moran and Davies, this moment is a step forward in caring for New Brunswick seniors. Moran looks at how she can bring an environment to Lincourt Manor that reintroduces quality of life.

After seven years, Davies has a new sign that says the province said YES.



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EASTERN CHARLOTTE BECOMES 18TH AGE-FRIENDLY COMMUNITY

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I can go to. I want events that make people happy. I want things like transportation, a disability bus — we have a partner that is working on that — housing, and we're working on that, and we need a plan."

Travis leaned into the age-friendly community more following her retirement.

"It is certainly gratifying to know that people appreciate what we do and that we have fun doing it," she said.

She also thanked everyone who stepped up to help the committee make things happen.

There are four initial steps in order to

become an age-friendly community:

- secure official commitment to the age-friendly community approach with a resolution from the municipal council
- establish an Age-Friendly Steering Committee
- conduct an age-friendly community assessment
- establish a comprehensive action plan

Saint Andrews also holds the designation. St. Stephen recently formed an age-friendly committee and outgoing Deputy Mayor Ghislane Wheaton said it hopes to have a plan together within four months.



Minister for seniors Lyne Chantal Boudreau attended the announcement for New Brunswick's 18th age-friendly community. PHOTO: NATHALIE STURGEON / THE COURIER

Hillary's Hope for Hunger raises thousands for food bank

By **BARBARA RAYNER**
Reporter, The Courier

Warning: This story contains a discussion about suicide

St. George – For the past six years Patty Borthwick, with the help of volunteers, has organized an annual food drive for the St. George Food Bank, in memory of her daughter Hillary Hooper.

Hillary's Hope for Hunger is held each April on the Saturday closest to her daughter's birthday which was April 27. She would have been 33 this year.

"What a great day. The community – as usual – came through. Even Mother Nature cooperated," said Borthwick, who said this wouldn't be possible without the help of the community and their continued generosity year after year.

She thanked all the volunteers including Eastern Charlotte Fire and Rescue members who lugged the food and helped set up the parking area as well as Adam Hatt for loaning his trailer to hold the food.

Borthwick said Hillary loved to knit and would make hats and scarves to put in the Community Pantry but she would often call her mother concerned because there was little or no food in there which is why she came up with the idea of the food drive to honour her daughter's memory.

"I thought what can I do good in her memory and having the food drive helps a lot of people. To date we have raised over \$125,000 in cash and there are also food donations. We have the same volunteers every year and Hillary's girl friends come and help," she said as this year's event got under way.

Even before the Saturday drive on Main Street, she said they had a table set up at the Eastern Charlotte Night Market Friday where a number of donations were dropped off.

Since Hillary's death in December 2020, Borthwick has fought hard to remove the stigma surrounding



Hillary's Hope for Hunger is held each April on the Saturday closest to Borthwick's daughter's birthday. PHOTO: BARB RAYNER / THE COURIER

mental illness and eventually won her battle to have an inquest into Hillary's death at the Saint John Regional Hospital (SJRH).

"Under what is known as Hillary's Law, if someone dies by suicide in a provincially owned institution there is automatically an inquest so no family has to put up with the fight we went through," she said. "Come hell or high water I was getting my answers."

Hillary went into SJRH Nov. 13 2020 and, with a change in her medications and a new psychiatrist, she told her mother Dec. 9 this was the best she had felt in years while talking to her on the phone at 9 p.m.

"She said can you get my Christmas ornaments ready because she thought she was coming home. In fact, we had already decorated her house but I never let on. She texted with her boyfriend until 10:37 p.m. and at 11 p.m. they couldn't get her door open," Borthwick said.

Hillary stayed on life support for a week but Borthwick said they were told by numerous specialists she had an anoxic brain injury (when the brain is deprived of all oxygen for four or more minutes) and would

not be able to come back from that so she made the decision to take her daughter off life support.

Hillary was also an organ donor and, although making that decision was very painful, Borthwick said she thought this was the best thing they could do.

"For three years we didn't know how she died. All we knew was she had gone into the bathroom and somehow managed to hang herself. She was supposed to be on 15 minute checks but we found out later they put her on one hour checks."

Although she fought diligently for the inquest, which was held in March 2023, she said it was one of the hardest things she has ever done.

"You know you want the answers but you are not prepared to hear them," she said. "They said they worked on her for 45 minutes and you can visualize that. The inquest lasted three days and her girlfriends went with us".

Once the inquest was over and the jury came back with 15 recommendations, Borthwick said she could finally have a burial for her daughter that August because she

wouldn't do that until she had all the answers.

There is now a white heart on the grass in front of the St. George post office and she said the goal behind Operation White Heart is to get people talking about suicide and remove the stigma of mental illness.

If you or someone you know is in immediate danger, call 911. Help is available 24/7.

HERE ARE SOME RESOURCES:

9-8-8: Suicide Crisis Helpline:
Call or text 9-8-8.

Support is available 24/7.

Kids Help Phone:
1-800-668-6868

or text CONNECT to 686868

Hope for Wellness Helpline
for Indigenous peoples:
1-855-242-3310

Trans Lifeline: 1-877-330-6366

St. Stephen bids farewell to long-serving mayor, councillors

By **NATHALIE STURGEON**
Editor in Chief, LJI

Council in St. Stephen has bid an emotional farewell to two long-serving local leaders who are not reoffering in the next election in May — Mayor Allan MacEachern and Deputy Mayor Ghislaine Wheaton.

At the final regular council meeting, Chief Administrative Officer Jeff Renaud paid tribute to the entire council — thanking them for their commitment to public service.

“As we approach the conclusion of this council term, it is appropriate to pause and reflect on the work that has been undertaken, the challenges that have been navigated, and the progress that has been made on behalf of the residents of the Municipal District of St. Stephen,” he said. “On behalf of the administration, I wish to extend my sincere thanks for your commitment to public service and to the community you represent.”

Renaud said the term — totalling five years for some following amalgamation in 2023 — has not been without its moments of difficulty.

This included the death of Coun. Earle Eastman in May 2025.

“Coun. Eastman served his community with dedication and a clear sense of purpose,” Renaud said emotionally. “His contributions remain part of the work and decisions of this council and his absence has been felt by colleagues, staff and the broader community.”

Renaud previously presented staff with a challenge coin following the town’s corporate services upgrades — and at the end of the council’s term presented one to each member.

On one side is the municipality’s former logo — recently changed as part of its rebranding — and on the other a picture of the council during the swearing-in ceremony.

Deputy Mayor Ghislaine Wheaton will also not be returning to the horseshoe. She served on the council for a decade.

“It’s been a wonderful 10 years,” she

told the council. “It is my honour to offer a heartfelt thank you to Mayor MacEachern as he concludes his time in office. I especially thank him for his mentorship along my journey as a councillor. Public service is never an easy path.”

Wheaton said she isn’t done stepping up for her community, though, turning her attention to different committees — including the age-friendly committee and the wellness task force.

Coun. Emily Rodas has also decided not to re-offer. She announced she would not run in the May election in October 2025.

“I take being a councillor very seriously and I’m really proud to represent my community. I wholeheartedly believe that all councillors have a huge responsibility to the people who elected us. To hear you, and be transparent, which is why I don’t take the decision [not] to re-run lightly,” she wrote.

St. Stephen is facing significant issues like many other New Brunswick municipalities, including homelessness, affordability, and infrastructure deficits.

The local government has been dealing with approximately 100 individuals experiencing homelessness — which resulted in the provincial government opening a 30-bed shelter on 9 Main Street in late 2024.

It has been an acute source of conflict between the community and the council. Residents have expressed significant concerns about public safety, especially the neighbours in the immediate vicinity of the shelter.

A group of residents has sought a judicial review of a defeated motion to relocate the shelter to outside the municipal boundaries.

Several properties that were purchased by an out-of-province landlord who has let the buildings fall into disrepair have been the subject of the *Safer Neighbourhoods and Communities Act*. Those properties were seized by the Department of Justice and Public Safety — many



Outgoing Coun. Emily Rodas with Chief Administrative Officer Jeff Renaud. PHOTO: NATHALIE STURGEON / THE COURIER

have gone up for property tax sale.

The town has also struggled to attract developers to build affordable housing — but recently entered into an agreement with Charlotte County-native developer Tressa Bevington for a 66-unit building — known as The Dock apartments.

It is Bevington’s second property in St. Stephen, fourth in Charlotte County.

The council worked on financial incentives for developers in the last year, which has also helped attract the deWinter family for the construction of a hotel — the St. Stephen Amsterdam Inn and Suites.

But the council continues to grapple with ongoing water infrastructure issues, including a 150-year well system in danger of collapse.

The council recently approved \$4,579,309.20 for paving of roads and streets through the Municipal Capital Borrowing Board. In August 2024, it was reported that the town had a \$17 million backlog in road construction projects.

Despite promises from the Holt government to have a collaborative care clinic within the first 18 months of the mandate, it remains under construction — operating temporarily out of the Charlotte County Hospital.

Council has developed an incentive program for physicians and other

health professionals to help recruit and retain them in St. Stephen. This has led to two doctors — both of whom work in the collaborative care clinic.

MacEachern spoke at the end of the meeting thanking the community for entrusting him with 14 years — but also making a plea.

“Before I step away, I want to share something that matters deeply to me, something that goes beyond any single project or term in office is — how we care for our most vulnerable,” he said, holding back tears.

“A strong community is not measured by what we build, but by how we show up for one another.”

He said this is a moment that calls for steady leadership.

“We understood that change would not be comfortable, but staying stuck was not an option,” he said. “This is not a time for division and disruption for its own sake. The waters around us are already complex and uncertain.

“We will see the best outcomes by supporting leadership that is committed to working for everyone.”

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Council listens to outgoing Mayor Allan MacEachern at the final regular council meeting before the general election. PHOTO: NATHALIE STURGEON / THE COURIER

\$11M needed for St. Stephen airport upgrades: consultant



The Giddens Memorial Airport needs \$11 million in capital investment. PHOTO: JOYCE WRIGHT / FACEBOOK

By **NATHALIE STURGEON**
Editor in Chief, LJI

A consulting firm presented to St. Stephen Council that operating the Giddens Memorial Airport as status quo is no longer a viable scenario.

Ben Crooks, a senior planner with aviation consulting firm HM Aero based in Ottawa, presented to the council.

“The airport based on our assessment and based on available materials has positive value to the community, economic value, social value, but it’s modest in scale,” he said.

The Municipal District of St. Stephen’s (MDSS) municipal plan indicates three options for the airport’s future, including selling it to a private operator, gifting it to another public entity, and following consultation recommendations on a cost-benefit analysis of continued municipal ownership with a long-term plan.

“There has been limited investment in the airport for decades,” Crooks said. “The infrastructure that is out there is nearing the end of its useful life. Some we would classify as being beyond the end of its useful life.”

The airport is located about a kilometre away from the downtown. It is a 3,000-by-75 foot lighted runway. It is used consistently by provincial and federal law enforcement and the Canadian Border Services Agency (CBSA).

Local aviation tourism operator Flying 2 C Helicopter Tours also takes flights out of the airport.

“St. Stephen is not alone in that being the dynamic for [its] smaller community airport,” Crooks said. “Particularly, municipalities have so many different priorities like their time, financial resources and staff capacity.”

Crooks told the council the assets will continue to degrade over time, which will lead to health and safety implications.

He said even with private aviation use, tourism-based aviation and the use by first responders — the net gain is not enough to support the airport.

But it is in a good position to support the RCMP and the CBSA in its efforts on border sovereignty, with the Canadian federal government investing \$1.3 billion to bolster security at the border and strengthen the immigration system. It includes

\$667.5M for the RCMP, \$355.4M for the Canada Border Services Agency.

He said it may also become important in wildfire fighting efforts and forestry protection.

Crooks said a small fraction — about 200 respondents to a survey — said the airport is important or very important.

He said the next step is developing short-term and long-term goals, like bringing jet fuel services to the airport.

“That’s very much a critical path item for the majority of [sic] users,” he said.

The other main recommendation was to upgrade the airport terminal. Crooks said this doesn’t have to be something complicated, but perhaps prefabricated and purpose-built.

“Just a basic, clean building, fit-for-purpose for visitor access and crew support,” he said, noting it would also improve airport security so unsafe access is prevented to the greatest degree possible.

He said these would hopefully be completed by 2029-2030. Crooks explained the runway is beyond a simple pavement overlay.

“Those assets are looking for total replacement or reconstruction based on our preliminary assessment,” he told the council. “In terms of rehabilitation of the existing assets that are out there today, we’re looking at approximately \$11 million in capital investment.”

There was an overall discussion of extending the runway to 5000 feet to allow for more aircraft to make use of the airport — especially those who are using Saint John and Fredericton airports, both of which are about 133 kilometres away.

He told the council that process would involve extending roads, acquiring private property, which would tie the municipality to bringing the runway into a rehabilitated state right away — as opposed to later on when there is more financial support.

Crooks said that capital investment has been placed on the back end of the master plan to allow the town time to prepare for those capital costs — including support from the other levels of government.

He said HM Aero stopped short of recommending a formal funding and governance model, but that the firm sees a need for inter-municipal funding and regional support.

St. Stephen business closes amid high costs



Pyra the Polish Potato has closed its doors. PHOTO: PYRA, THE POLISH POTATO/ FACEBOOK

By **NATHALIE STURGEON**
Editor in Chief, LJI

A local business in St. Stephen has decided to close its doors.

Kinga Macdonald, owner of Pyra, the Polish Potato, said in a statement posted to social media that within the last three years things have changed.

“Unfortunately, hydro (NB Power) has skyrocketed and instead of paying roughly \$500 monthly, we are paying close to \$1000 monthly,” she wrote. “On top of this, rent for such a small community is beyond high and unrealistically priced.”

She said the homelessness crisis has also deeply affected her business. Locally it is estimated that 100 people are experiencing homelessness in St. Stephen.

Macdonald noted drug paraphernalia being found on the property.

“Our safety has been at risk,” she said in the statement. “Trying to stay safe as a woman running this establishment solely, we realize it just isn’t worth it.”

Macdonald said the business has been sold to a family outside of the Maritimes.

She encouraged individuals to vote in the upcoming municipal election, noting the financial challenges she and many others are experiencing.

“We appreciate everyone who ever ordered from us, to everyone who came in to eat and all those who made us smile,” she said in the post. “We are heartbroken, but we know the business will do better elsewhere.”

Presumptive case of raccoon rabies detected near St. Stephen



Any abnormal behaviour observed in wildlife should be reported to Telecare 811. PHOTO: UNSPLASH

A presumptive case of raccoon rabies has been detected by the New Brunswick Provincial Veterinary Laboratory in Little Ridge near St. Stephen, according to the Municipal District of St. Stephen.

“To protect the community and local wildlife, the Department of Agriculture, Aquaculture and Fisheries staff will be distributing vaccine baits around the area.”

Those baits were distributed on April 21 and concentrated along Routes 725, 730 and 735.

“The department advises pet owners to keep dogs on leashes for the next two weeks following the bait distribution,” the alert said. “While the baits are not harmful to pets if consumed, residents should avoid handling them.”

If contact occurs, it asks residents to wash their hands with soap and water. Any abnormal behaviour observed in wildlife should be reported to Telecare 811.

Several N.B. service fees to increase on July 1

By **NATHALIE STURGEON**
Editor in Chief, LJI

New Brunswickers can expect to see a hike in fees for certain government services.

Public Safety Minister Robert Gauvin announced the increases alongside the investments made in the Department of Justice Public Safety, totalling \$423 million.

About \$7 million has been allocated to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) for operational costs, body-worn cameras, and negotiated salary increases.

Further funding of \$1 million is going toward technical inspection services to hire more electrical inspectors and improve permit and plan review capacity.

The government is providing \$1.1 million to fully fund the Serious Incident Response Team (SiRT), which handles investigations into police conduct involving death, serious injury, assault, or any matter of public interest that may have resulted from actions by an on-or-off duty police officer in New Brunswick or Nova Scotia. The funding will also support Indigenous representation.

“Investing in public safety means making sure our law enforcement agencies have the tools and resources they need, while also strengthening accountability and improving how services are delivered,” Gauvin said in a media release from the province.

It also said improvements are coming to the criminal justice system in the form of digital upgrades, virtual bail hearings, and an addictions and mental health court in Moncton.

But it will also follow through with some of the things considered in the pre-budget consultations and in the difficult decisions document surrounding the 2026-27 budget — which is expected to carry a deficit of \$1.39 billion.

“Through our pre-budget consultations, we were clear with New Brunswickers that there would be difficult decisions ahead, and adjusting fees was one of the options on the table.”

“Many of these fees have not been updated in years, over 20 in some cases. This step helps ensure we can continue delivering the quality services people rely on every day.”

NB 911 service fee, liquor licensing, vehicle registration and driver’s licensing are all expected to see increases.

Drivers can expect an extra 2 cents per month for their licence. Vehicle registration could increase between \$5 to \$15 annually. The NB 911 fee will be increased to \$2.59 per month to enhance 911 services.

Changes are also coming to probate fees — fees used to validate wills — but the release did not indicate what those would be.

The province said these increases in fees are expected to generate \$45 million in revenue.

“We know fee increases are never easy, and that is why we have taken a careful, balanced approach,” Justice Minister Rob McKee said in a release.

“We are making sure fees better reflect the cost of delivering services, are comparable to other Atlantic provinces, and limit the impact on New Brunswickers.”

Changes are coming to multiple pieces of legislation:

- *Motor Vehicle Act*
- *Liquor Control Act*
- *Emergency 911 Act*
- *Gaming Control Act*
- *Boiler and Pressure Vessel Act*
- *Electrical Installation and Inspection Act*
- *Plumbing Installation and Inspection Act*
- *Elevators and Lifts Act*
- *Judicature Act*
- *Small Claims Act*
- *Recording of Evidence Act*
- *Probate Court Act*

New fees come into effect on July 1. The NB 911 service fee will come into effect on Aug. 1.

St. Croix Progressive Conservative MLA Kathy Bockus criticized the move online.

“Buckle up! We learned in main estimates this week that certain fees introduced by the Liberal government have come into effect today,” she wrote. “You will now pay \$100 to renew your driver’s licence for four years, up from \$90.”

She alluded also to changes expected to come to the *Gaming Control Act*. Lotteries like the Chase the Ace will be charged a three per cent fee on any jackpot larger than \$1,700.

Most new fees will come into effect on July 1. The NB 911 fee will be in place by Aug. 1.

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The Courts

Residents ask judge to move shelter out of town limits

By **ANDREW BATES**

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Neighbours of an emergency shelter in St. Stephen are asking a judge to overturn a council vote and order the facility's removal.

The lawsuit, filed in January by residents Jason Rideout, Peter Fitch, Mary Ellen Fitch and Stacy Arseneault against the Municipal District of St. Stephen and Neighbourhood Works Inc., is a request for judicial review of a council vote in October, which defeated a motion that would have moved the Lighthouse Lodge shelter out of town limits.

The shelter opened in December 2024 in the former Masonic hall on Main Street in the community of 8,730. That was the latest step in a series of efforts to establish a winter shelter in the town for the unhoused.

In 2022 an out of the cold shelter was opened in a rented space on King Street, a drop-in centre opened in December 2023 at Neighbourhood Works' King Street space and then in February 2024 it began to stay open overnight when plans for transitional housing near the highway were shelved by the province.

The new Main Street location, operated by Neighbourhood Works on behalf of the province, opened after the land became available in October 2024 and the non-profit purchased the property. The municipal zoning of the time permitted the use, but a new zoning bylaw also approved in October

created a category for emergency shelters, currently limited to two properties located elsewhere.

On Oct. 15, 2025, a group led by Peter Fitch and Arseneault came to a council committee meeting raising concerns, asking for a task force to be established and for council to pass a motion calling for the shelter to be moved. On Oct. 29, council voted in favour of a motion to set up a community wellness task force that is considering possible new locations, but voted against a motion that would have resolved to "take all necessary steps ... to seek the relocation and removal of the existing homeless shelter from within the municipality's boundaries."

The lawsuit asks a judge to overturn the vote against that motion and order the municipality to remove the shelter from its borders. It argues the vote ran contrary to the purposes of the municipality in the *Local Governance Act* to provide "necessary or desirable" services, to maintain a "safe and viable community" and to foster its "economic and social well-being."

Filed along with the lawsuit are affidavits from seven residents, including Rideout, who wrote that he is the owner of a building and accounting firm on nearby Milltown Boulevard.

Rideout alleged that he has found people who he says are shelter users doing drugs and selling drugs in the building's parking lot. He alleged

that a tenant moved in June due to the activity, and that he's had to call the police to remove people from the treed area nearby, saying the shelter "has had a serious impact on my business."

Arseneault, from Sainte-Croix Street, which runs adjacent to the shelter, said the neighbourhood has become "unsafe and chaotic," and wrote that he has called police to remove people he alleges are shelter users from the back deck of his house and to break up a fight behind his garage.

He wrote that he was "not opposed" to a homeless shelter, but said it should be "relocated to a more appropriate location" away from residential and commercial properties.

Peter Fitch and Mary Ellen Fitch wrote that they live on Main Street and are employees at St. Stephen's University, a private Christian university located next to the shelter. They write that they have heard "aggressive screaming and shouting" in the streets at all hours that "have caused us to feel unsafe on our own property and in our community."

The Fitches wrote that there was "no opportunity to voice our opinion" prior to the shelter opening.

In a letter to the court delivered March 25, Meghan Beers, lawyer for the municipality, argued the residents have not established standing, or right to sue, noting that in December, the Court of Kings Bench ruled against a request for an injunction against a transitional housing project in Fredericton for that reason.

She wrote that their proximity to the shelter doesn't give them a direct interest given that the lawsuit would seek to prevent the shelter from operating anywhere in the municipality. She added that the affidavits contained "new evidence," generally not part of a judicial review.

The parties met for a case management conference on March 26, when Jennifer Donovan, lawyer for Neighbourhood Works, said they shared the municipality's concerns.

Michel Boudreau, lawyer for the applicants, noted that while the detailed grounds for the lawsuit are not in the notice of application, they understood that they could add them as part of their written arguments. He said the applicants "clearly" have private interest standing, and may also apply for public interest standing.

He said the applicants are seeking a production order for what council used in its decision-making process, and took issue with the concerns raised around admissibility.

Beers told the court that the issues they had are not around affidavits, but around the inclusion of letters from the applicants sent to third parties such as cabinet ministers.

Justice Kathryn Gregory asked if the applicants would need time to file more materials, including an amended notice of motion, and Boudreau asked for three weeks.

Gregory, who said she would be handing off the case to another judge due to a conflict, told the applicants to put their production requests in writing. Another conference was set for April 10.

Reached by email Wednesday, Rideout said the applicants filed because the municipality "had serious, documented safety concerns brought before council and chose not to act." He confirmed the lawsuit and declined comment on the specifics, citing that the case is before the court.

Donovan declined comment on behalf of Neighbourhood Works, and Beers declined comment on behalf of the municipality.

N.B. launches fire watch season early amid dry conditions

By **NATHALIE STURGEON**

Editor in Chief, LJI

The Province of New Brunswick has launched the fire watch season early amid record-low precipitation, a lack of snow, and prolonged drought conditions.

"After what we saw last year, we know many New Brunswickers are feeling anxious about this wildfire season. That's why we've made real investments to be ready," Premier Susan Holt said in a release.

Last year, more than 400 fires burned in New Brunswick. It was considered the second-largest wildfire season in the province's history.

Funding in the provincial budget has been allocated to turn 74 seasonal forest ranger positions into year-round roles. The government also said it would be expanding its contract with Forest Protection Ltd., a Fredericton-based company, to include four new Fire Boss aircraft



Fire season started three weeks early. PHOTO: GOVERNMENT OF NEW BRUNSWICK

for wildfire suppression.

Fire Boss aircraft are a highly specialized, amphibious, single-engine air tanker, capable of scooping roughly 3,000 litres of water in 15 to 30 seconds.

"We have had one of the driest years in decades with 10 consecutive months of below-normal precipitation," John Herron, the minister of natural resources, said in a release. "Given these conditions,

as well as last year's wildfires, our wildfire team is approaching this season with extreme precaution and heightened awareness, and we are asking New Brunswickers to do the same. We need everyone on board to protect our people, forests and critical infrastructure."

The government allocated funds for 50 communities to develop wildfire resiliency plans under FireSmart, designed to identify risk management, mitigation strategies,

emergency response and community engagement.

Those plans were undertaken by the Southwest New Brunswick Service Commission (SNBSC) in Charlotte County, offering unique chapters to each region.

Each community has a copy of the draft, according to SNBSC CEO Hollis Bartlett, with the hope that final edits will be completed by the end of the month.

Budget fails gender-affirming care access: network

By NATHALIE STURGEON
Editor in Chief, LJI

The New Brunswick Transgender Health Network (NBTHN) said the provincial budget has failed to address existing gaps in gender affirming care, including a stand-alone clinic.

“New Brunswick is the only province in Atlantic Canada without a gender-affirming care clinic,” the release from the network said. “After years of attacks on trans rights under the previous government, trans New Brunswickers and allies continue to hope for repair and protection.”

It said more than 300 New Brunswickers had written in support of the network’s call to action.

Lee Thomas is a member of the NBTHN.

“I was surprised and definitely disappointed,” they said. “The gender affirming care clinic ask was such a very small percentage of overall health-care spending, and I know it would have made such a massive difference to clients and also to professionals.”

The network said it would have accounted for 0.4 per cent of the overall health care budget.

Thomas said there are often a lot of



The department of health say it is working with the RHAs. PHOTO: UNSPLASH

challenges with referrals for patients requiring gender-affirming care. A centralized location, they explained, would make the process much easier.

“I think this clinic would have cost the government very little, but not having it costs New Brunswickers a lot,” Thomas said.

Thomas said a part of the disappointment is that there was a belief this government would be different, noting campaign promises to improve billing processes and wait times for gender-affirming care.

“We’re seeing more posts on social media supporting trans people,” they said. “But that doesn’t actually make healthcare more accessible for them.”

Thomas said they believe there is a lack of political will to move forward on this promise.

But more than that, they said this will have detrimental effects on the mental and physical health of gender-diverse and transgender New Brunswickers.

“When they’re not able to access healthcare, they’re not able to participate in society as much and that’s a huge loss for everyone,” they said.

Dr. Kathleen Taylor, a physician with the NBTHN, told The Courier previously that wait times are discussed in terms of years for gender-affirming care.

“Gender-affirming care is life-saving

primary health care,” Taylor said in the release. “The absence of any targeted investment means people in New Brunswick will continue to navigate a fragmented and inconsistent system, often without clear entry points or timely access to care, which we know results in poorer mental and physical health outcomes.”

For Thomas, it comes down to the impact.

“Whether it’s healthcare providers or mental health providers, it’s hard to watch our clients be victimized by the system that’s supposed to be providing them with care,” they said.

The Department of Health said in a statement to The Courier that the government recognizes “that gender-affirming care is an important part of a respectful and inclusive health-care system.”

It did not respond to specific questions around timelines or resolving billing issues for the 2SLGBTQIA+ community.

“The Department of Health is working with the regional health authorities to identify opportunities to enhance access to gender-affirming care within their operational budgets.”

Spring fashion show aims to raise funds for scholarship

By NATHALIE STURGEON
Editor in Chief, LJI

When Shannon-May Pringle thought about the businesses along historic Water Street in Saint Andrews, she realized many of them are owned by women.

It got her thinking about how to attract more people to town in the months when temperatures are a bit colder and the pace of life is a little slower — but also the success of women in business.

“I want to be open year-round, I want to be sustainable,” she said. “To do that, we need people to know that Saint Andrews is open 12 months of the year.”

Several of the businesses got together in February, Leah Bartlett from Seaside Beach Resort, Katy MacDonald from LH Boutique, Gabby Duran from the Algonquin Resort, Shawn Richard and Tina Howlett of Café Drewhaven, Margot Berlinger from Marée, Kelly Conley from My Space Giftshop, and Andrea Vance of Warm and Coasty, and they validated her idea.



The fashion show raises money for a scholarship for women in business. PHOTO: JEFF LIVELY / THE COURIER

And Spring Fever by the Sea was born.

The pinnacle of the weekend was a fashion show at Cafe Drewhaven. The show incorporated many businesses including Pringle’s Marmalade, Jona and Jessies, The Whale Store, and local fashion designer and artist Ginny Simard.

It was moderated by local resident and actor Karen Wadall and CHCO-TV and The Courier’s Vicki Hogarth.

Conley and MacDonald helped transform the individual pieces into eight themes, totalling 39 looks. Those included: a coffee date on Water Street, a morning trip to the farmers market, going golfing at the

Algonquin Resort, a garden party, a seaside stroll, iconic whale watching, and finally after dark.

“The Business Improvement Association (BIA) and Explore Saint Andrews got behind us and provided funds to help us promote it and

Continued on Page 13

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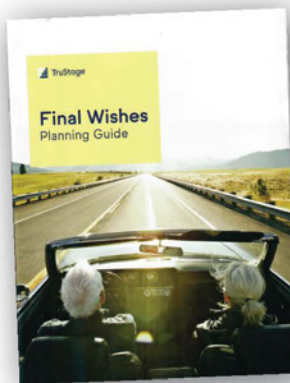


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SPRING FASHION SHOW AIMS TO RAISE FUNDS FOR SCHOLARSHIP

Continued from page 10

invest in decor,” Pringle said. “So that the fashion show could then be a fundraiser.”

The funds will go toward creating a business scholarship for women, something Pringle said would have been vital when she returned to post-secondary education at the age of 28 years old, which meant she didn’t qualify for any support.

“Because so many women start businesses or are solo entrepreneurs in most regards, they’re often left out of statistics and financial opportunities, and recognition for what they contribute to their communities,” she said. “The long term fundraising that we want to do through this event is to establish a scholarship that women wanting to pursue university, specifically business studies, can access and there is no age limit.”

The event was sold out, Pringle said. It ended up selling eight more than the limit of 80, with the group aiming to keep the show intimate. She said the group is already thinking about expanding to a twice-a-year event.

Pringle is grateful to MacDonald and Conley for their fashion expertise.

“Beyond that, it was so much fun,” she said. “Although spring fever did originate with me, it is absolutely not possible without every single person that jumped on board and not just those that are organizing it, but all the businesses that were like, sign us up, we want to participate.”



PHOTOS: JEFF LIVELY / THE COURIER

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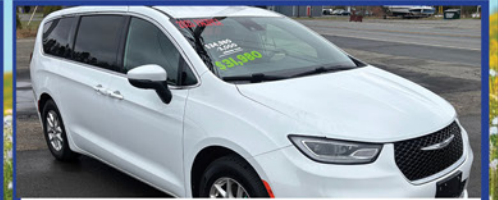
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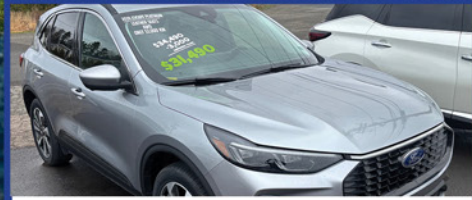
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Review recommends debt reduction, corporatization

By **NATHALIE STURGEON**
Editor in Chief, LJI

A formal report from a three-person panel on the review of NB Power says its largest power generator, Point Lepreau, should be separated from the Crown corporation, as well as forgiving a large part of the utility's growing debt.

Michael Bernstein, Duncan Hawthorne and Anne Bertrand have been working to provide recommendations to the government on how to improve performance, reliability and deal with the utility's debt.

Its debt is estimated to be around \$5.9 billion.

The 70-page report outlines 50 recommendations about the operation of the Crown corporation, noting there are no easy solutions.

"Let us start with the bad news: there is no silver bullet or easy answer to achieve the overriding goal to have affordable, reliable and sustainable electricity while meeting New Brunswickers' expectations," the report reads. "Electricity rates will inevitably rise due to the need for significant investments in new generation capacity and the upkeep of ageing infrastructure."

Reducing the debt

One of its key recommendations is for the provincial government to absorb some of the utility's debt to reduce the burden on ratepayers.

That includes the variance account, an account that makes up for what NB Power does not recoup in revenue as projected.

The report recommends writing off the variance account and forgiving matching debt.

Bernstein said that because of performance issues, including Point Lepreau being offline, the account was used to recoup costs from the ratepayer.

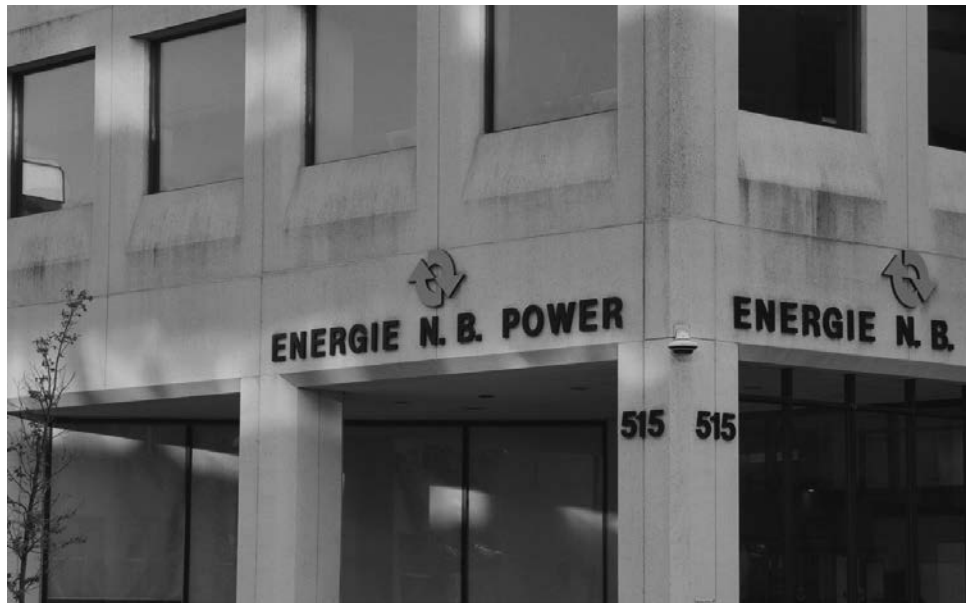
"Our view is when you're both the owner, the regulator, [and] the operator of the asset, you can do what you want," he said.

He said the burden of the performance shortfalls should be with the taxpayer because NB Power is owned by the government.

"They would be able to, essentially, write it off that account, which I think is around \$300 million, and forgive the amount, because they are on-lending to the company the matching amount of debt," he said.

It also noted the amount of debt being added by the Point Lepreau Nuclear Generating Station in Lepreau. The report said \$1.3 billion in debt is attached to the nuclear facility.

"This would be a measure that could be done in the near term to help reduce a portion of NB Power's current debt load and provide some rate relief," the report said.



NB Power headquarters in Fredericton. PHOTO: AIDAN RAYNOR / THE COURIER

The report also said a series of "constraints" on rate hikes since 2012 have resulted in power rates not growing "enough to keep pace with rising capital costs, contributing to the persistent debt pressures the utility faces today."

It said political decisions that ignored legislated requirements for rates, which cost the utility \$1.5 billion — leading to its inability to maintain aging infrastructure, meet system demands and reduce its debt over time.

It said accountability across the utility has to be improved.

"This focus has been difficult, and it's difficult to achieve at the best of times," said reviewer Duncan Hawthorne. "The situation is made more difficult when NB Power is asked by the government to manage a complex and ever-expanding list of objectives. Many [are] outside of its core business of running an efficient electricity system."

Separating Point Lepreau

The report recommends the nuclear generating station be separated from NB Power's assets.

"We are recommending that a new entity, Point Lepreau Nuclear, be set up that will have its own governance arrangement specifically focused on nuclear plant performance," the report said. "There should be an operating board populated by experienced nuclear professionals in non-executive roles and with sufficient gravitas and structure to satisfy the regulator of their ability to assume the Nuclear Site License under their purview."

It did not provide specific recommendations on how to make that change, saying there are different options available to the utility.

"Our view is that the relationship between Point Lepreau and NB Power should be more contractual than it is governance," Hawthorne, who is an industry expert in nuclear power generation, said.

The panel also said a second nuclear facility is needed.

"We recommend that the Government of New Brunswick (GNB) consider initiating the planning assessment phase for an additional large scale,

proven-technology nuclear plant to be sited alongside the Point Lepreau facility," the report said.

It recommends developing a closer relationship with CANDU 9, particularly the Cernavoda facility in Romania, which is the sister plant to Point Lepreau.

The report said the government undertaking this assessment now will save it when the generating station needs another refurbishment in 2040.

"In our view, it is this sort of long-term planning that we find lacking, and we are recommending that this option and other longer-term scenarios receive a level of attention in the short term in recognition that nothing in the sector moves at pace," the report said.

Corporatization of NB Power

The report did not recommend the complete sale of NB Power or privatization, but a hybrid model that would keep the utility as a Crown corporation.

It would remain under the ownership of the province, but operate under a privatized business model.

"If you pursue corporatization, it allows you to borrow on its own credit," Bernstein said. "Our thesis is that the company will run better if it can focus on its operations [and] less on policy issues."

Hawthorne said he understands that once a government is in power, they can make their policy decisions, even with the report.

"We have to acknowledge that there is an intent here to create stability," he said. "Everything we are saying is about — in terms [of] fit for the future — trying to put the utility into the best position to perform."

"I think our view is that if we have the utility on a good, stable financial foot with improved operational performance, then there is less likelihood of political interference."

The report directly acknowledged seven mandate letters in the last 10 years with differing priorities.

"We noted that there is also a stream of unofficial, sometimes daily, contacts with government officials,

as well as with other elected officials including municipal leaders, which can divert NB Power's executives from their responsibilities and agreed priorities," it said.

Other recommendations included:

A modernization of the Electricity Act

NB Power should not be in the business of leading economic development activities

A review of the compensation model, including implementing a bonus for meeting performance metrics

An increased deployment of natural gas for heating purposes should be considered

NB Power CEO Lori Clark said in a statement that she understands New Brunswickers feel anxious about the future.

"We want to assure our customers that they are at the heart of everything we do and every decision we make. As the report acknowledges, the challenges faced by NB Power have been decades in the making, and we need to be deliberate about planning for the future."

She said the utility is committed to making the changes that are needed.

"This independent review reflects input from New Brunswickers who care deeply about the future of their utility," Andrew MacGillivray, chair of the board of directors, said in a statement. "As a board, we respect the process and the perspectives that were shared. We will take some time to review the report in full before providing our response. We will work with the shareholder and management to act with urgency on the report."

Energy Minister René Legacy also issued a statement on Monday following the report.

"After almost a year, I am happy to have the final report from the comprehensive review of NB Power," he said. "The leads have identified some significant challenges and recommendations for how to address them."

It said it would create an action plan to address the 50 recommendations. Legacy said the department is committed to delivering the next steps by the end of May.

"New Brunswickers can trust that we will act on these recommendations in a timely and transparent way," he said.

The full report is available online.

Reading Between the Listings

How Do You Know When You're Ready to Sell in Charlotte County?



Brittany Locking

If you've found yourself casually browsing real estate listings lately, not seriously, just out of curiosity, you're not alone.

For many homeowners in Charlotte County, the decision to sell doesn't start with a plan. It starts with a thought. A quick look at what's available. A conversation at the kitchen table. A passing comment like, "I wonder what this place would sell for."

And then ... nothing. Life carries on.

In previous columns, we've talked about how our local market works, from balanced conditions to seasonal timing. But before any of that matters, there's a quieter question most homeowners ask themselves:

How do I know if I'm actually ready to sell?

The answer is rarely as clear as a date on a calendar.

More often, it shows up in small ways.

Sometimes it's a shift in how a home fits your life. The space that once felt perfect now feels like too much or not quite enough. Priorities change. Routines evolve. What worked five years ago doesn't always work today.

Other times, it's curiosity turning into awareness. You start noticing listings more often. You pay attention to sale prices. You begin comparing your home, even subconsciously.

That doesn't mean you're ready to list tomorrow. But it often means you've started thinking differently.

For many, readiness also comes down to comfort with the unknown. Selling a home isn't just a financial decision, it's a personal one. There is timing, logistics, emotions, and questions that don't always have immediate answers.



And that's okay.

In a market like Charlotte County, where timing and seasonality play a role, there's rarely a need to rush. Thoughtful decisions tend to lead to better outcomes, both financially and personally.

What matters most is not having everything figured out; it's simply recognizing when the question has shifted from "Should we ever sell?" to "What would it look like if we did?"

That shift is often the first real step.

As we move further into the spring season, more homeowners begin exploring that question in their own way. Some will act on it this year. Others won't, and that's just as valid.

Because being ready to sell isn't about hitting a perfect moment.

It's about understanding your own timing, your own priorities, and what makes sense for you and your family.

And in Charlotte County, where every move is tied as much to lifestyle as it is to real estate, that clarity matters more than anything else.

Sometimes, reading between the lines isn't about the market at all. It's about recognizing when your next chapter is starting to take shape.

Brittany Locking is a licensed REALTOR® with Fundy Bay Real Estate Group Inc.

Living Here

Notes on everyday life in Charlotte County



Busy wharf in peak season. PHOTO: CINDY KOHLER

By Brittany Locking
Community Contributor

There's a common perception that locals quietly dread the arrival of tourist season.

And to be fair, there are moments that test that idea. Streets get busier. Parking becomes a bit harder to come by. A quick trip to the grocery store can take longer than expected. It's easy to notice the changes as the pace picks up.

But that's only part of the story. Because here, in Charlotte County, our communities don't just adapt to the season, they thrive because of it. The places we visit every day, the small businesses we rely on, the experiences that shape life here, so many of them exist and grow because people choose to come here.

And what a thing that is.

To live in a place that others travel

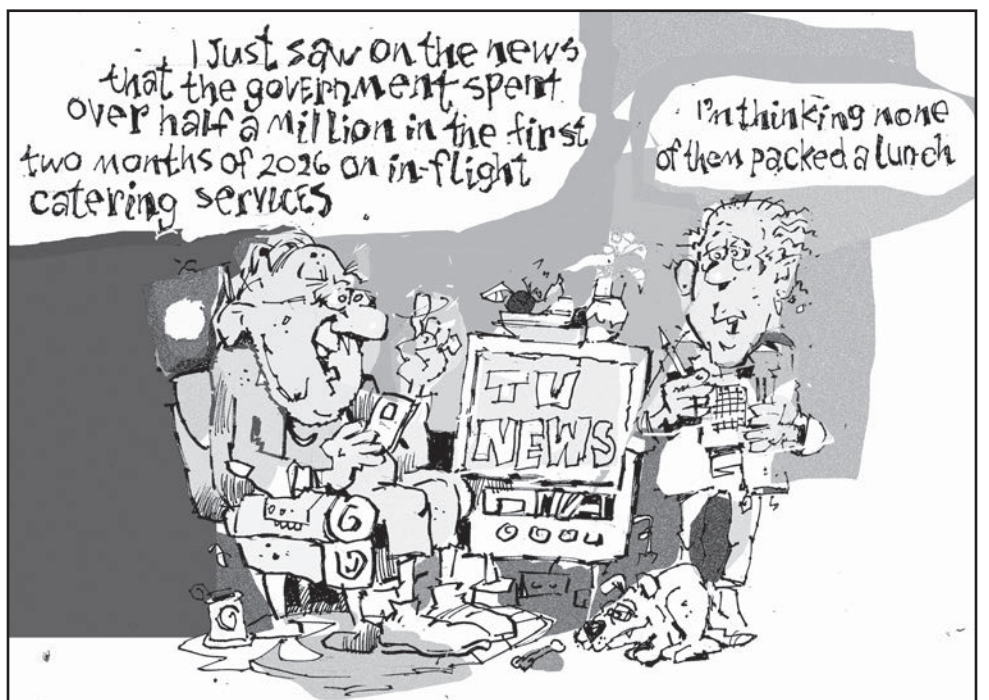
to, plan for, and look forward to all year long. A place where families come to make memories, where someone might arrive on a whim and decide to stay a little longer than expected, where the idea of East Coast hospitality isn't just a saying, but something people come to experience for themselves.

There's a quiet pride that comes with that.

Because while this is our everyday, it's also someone else's escape. The streets we walk, the views we pass without thinking, the routines that feel ordinary, they're part of what makes this place feel special to someone seeing it for the first time.

And when you look at it that way, the season doesn't feel like an interruption.

It feels like something we get to be part of and something we get to share.



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Sheryl Dawn Noble
1956 - 2026

After 5 months in the Saint John Regional hospital, our beloved sister, Sheryl Dawn Noble, passed away, April 7, 2026.

Sherry was the youngest of the three children of George A Noble and Lesslie J (Nixon) Noble, both of whom predeceased her. She is survived by her brother, Bruce A Noble, K.C. (Marilyn R Boone) Noble of Fredericton; and sister, Brenda G Noble, K.C. of Saint John as well as her nephews of whom she was immensely proud, Edward J Noble (Peggy Cooke), and Robert A. Noble, both of Toronto.

A Christmas gift, Sherry was born in Fredericton on December 22, 1956. She graduated from FHS in 1974. Her interest in baking and sewing led her to a Home Economics degree from Acadia University; her passion for people later drew her to a Social Work degree from St. Thomas University. Sherry's career as a social worker began in Slave Lake, Alberta, a job she obtained in part, due to her prior pursuit of a summer program in American Sign Language at Gallaudet University,

in Washington, D.C. In 1989, she returned to NB where she worked as a Social Worker, largely in the Long-Term Care program, until her retirement in 2023.

Sherry was a zealous animal lover, a trait she inherited from our mother. She had pets ranging from the usual cats and dogs to her more exotic hooded rat and sulfur crested cockatoo.

As a child she joined Aida Flemming's "Kindness Club", headquartered in Fredericton. She was a frequent visitor to the Flemming's home where she helped the organization as only a dedicated 8-year-old could. She continued her passion for the care and protection of animals with her involvement as a volunteer and board member of the Charlotte County SPCA. She delighted in helping with their imaginative fund-raising activities, including the annual Fundy Sand Sculpture festival, yard sales, Sundaes on a Monday etc. Sherry was an avid amateur photographer, documenting CCSPCA activities, office social functions and more. If 1 photo would do, Sherry would take 50! Her other passion was for jewelry and art purchases from local artisans. Every shiny object attracted her attention.

Arrangements are under the care and direction of Brenan's Funeral Home, 111 Paradise Row, Saint John, NB (506-634-7424). In lieu of flowers, if people wish, the family has requested donations to the Charlotte County SPCA or a charity of the donor's choice.

A Celebration of Life visitation took place at Humphrey's Funeral Home, 20 Marks Street, St. Stephen, NB on April 13, 2026.

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Byelection to be held for Saint Andrews in June

By NATHALIE STURGEON
Editor in Chief, LJ

A byelection will be held in Saint Andrews on June 22 following the death of acting mayor Kate Akagi.

The current election for councillors in Ward 3, which included five candidates — among them Akagi — will be cancelled.

“Under the rules set out in subsections 17(5) and 17(6) of the Municipal Elections Act, I am required to countermand the election scheduled for Ward 3 and to order that a byelection be scheduled for that ward,” Chief Electoral Officer Kim Poffenroth said.

Those sections state that if a candidate dies after the nomination period but before the polls close, that election is cancelled.

Elections New Brunswick said it has already printed the ballots with the names of the five candidates who submitted on April 10, but voters in Ward 3 will not cast ballots for the four councillor seats until June.



Ward 3 will still vote for mayor.

There is no election for Bayside and Chamcook due to Darrell Weare and Annette Harland's acclamation. Voters in the rural wards — Ward 1 and 2 — will vote for mayor as planned.

The process will begin again, according to Poffenroth.

“As this will be a new election, all candidates wishing to run for the four vacancies in Ward 3 will be required to go through the standard nomination process,” she said.

The nomination deadline for the byelection is May 29 at 2 p.m.



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GEORGE D. MCLAUGHLIN

It is with great sadness that the family announce the passing of George D. McLaughlin on Tuesday March 24, 2026, at Lincourt Manor in St. Stephen, N.B.

George is survived by his partner; Debra Hanley, grandson; Tristan Brown and Shane Brown, brothers; Herman McLaughlin and Joe McLaughlin (Brenda), several nieces, nephews and cousins.

Funeral service and visitation were held March 27.



JULIE DEAN

Julie Dean, 63, passed away at the Saint John Regional Hospital, Saint John, N.B. on Saturday, March 21, 2026 from triple negative breast cancer. She was born in Sudbury, Ontario, daughter of the late Jovan and Joan Martinovic.

Julie is survived by her two children, Emily Dean (Mitchell) and Alexander Dean. In addition to her parents, Julie was predeceased by her loving husband, Paul H. Dean.

Visitation was held on April 7.



JANETTE M. RUDDOCK

It is with deep sadness that we announce the passing of Janette M. Ruddock, who passed away peacefully on March 31, 2026, at Passamaquoddy Lodge, with her loving husband and children by her side.

Janette will be forever cherished by her devoted husband, John Ruddock; her son Steven (Ellen); and her daughter Anne Marie (Brian).

She was a proud and loving grandmother to Jessica (Neil) Johnson, Jonathan, Jacob, and William Ruddock, and a treasured great-grandmother to Jack and Taylor Johnson.

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

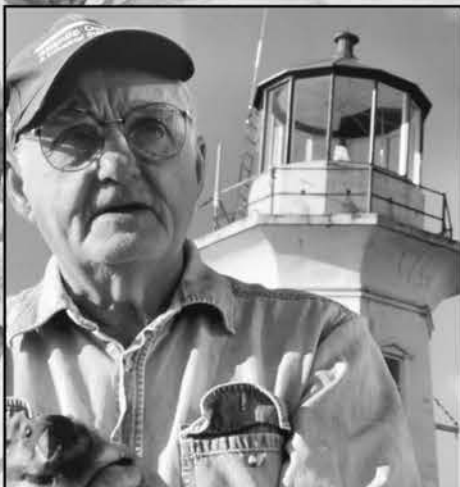


DOROTHY KEDDY

It is with great sadness the family of Dorothy Keddy of Brockway, N.B. announce her passing on Tuesday, March 24, 2026.

She is survived by her children, Shelley Keddy (Charles Lorette), Wayne Keddy (Arlene), Angela McLaughlin (James) and Michael Sode (Lynn Goreham), grandchildren, Sarah, Anna, Seth, Michael, Coleen, Jamie, Jasmine and Jenna, great grandchildren, Jaden, Dylan, Thayne, Chayse, Jayla, Jacob, Taylor, Dawson, Carmen, Kaden and Koda, great-great grandchild, Bellamy, nieces, nephews and cousins.

Funeral service was held May 1 at Brockway Union Church, Brockway



GORDON L. CLARK

Gordon L. Clark, "Knobby" at the age of 94, passed away peacefully on March 25, 2026, in Kentville, Nova Scotia.

Left to miss him dearly is his wife of 75 years, Joan, children; Heather (Barry), Nadine (Rai), Terri (Gary), Jodie and Fraser (Ronee), eight grandchildren, nine great-grandchildren, two great-great-grandchildren, two sisters-in-law; Lois (Gary), Jackie and their families.

In addition to his parents, Gordon was predeceased by his grandson; Bailey, nephew; Richard, sisters; Ruth, Betty and Haroldine and his brother-in-law; Ray.

A celebration of life will take place on June 13, 2026, at 2 pm from The S.O. Mehan & Son Funeral Home, 23 Main Street St. Stephen, New Brunswick. The family will receive friends from 1pm until service time.



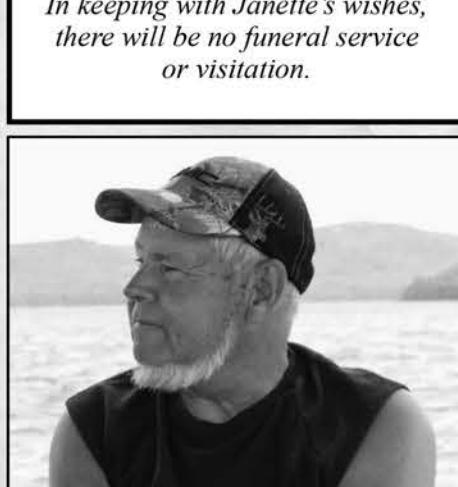
DARLENE A. WEEKS

It is with great sadness the family of Darlene A. Weeks announces her passing on Monday April 6th, 2026, at the Charlotte County Hospital, St Stephen, NB., with her loving daughters and family by her side.

Darlene is survived by her children; Jennifer Weeks (Mike), Trisha Roy (Joey), Courtney Roy (Karan), her beautiful grandchildren; Jacob, Olivia, Chloe, Aeris, Amora and Macey Mae, whom she greatly adored, her close companion for many years; Wayne, her siblings; Wanda Stewart, Kathy Weeks, Pam Gowan (Dale), Lisa Goodwin (Chris) and Clifford Weeks (Shelley), several nieces, nephews and cousins.

In addition to her parents, she was predeceased by her first love; Timothy Roy, brother; Peter Allen and brother-in-law; Gordon Stewart.

Funeral service and visitation were held April 10, 2026.



RONALD A. BEDFORD

Ronald A. Bedford of Moores Mills, NB, passed unexpectedly on April 2, 2026.

He is survived by his children; Douglas Bedford (Tammy), Holly Warden (James) and Nicole Scullion (Thomas), grandchildren; Randal, Ryan, Kyle, Kelsey, Julia, Mitchell and Grace, sister-in-law; Lori Bedford, and nephews.

In addition to his parents, he is predeceased by his first wife; Mary and common-law wife; Donna Barter, brother; Vernon Bedford and sister Betty Moore.

Visitation was held April 6, 2026



MORGAN PARKS

The family of Morgan Parks of St. Stephen, NB is devastated to announce her unexpected passing on April 4th, 2026.

Morgan is survived by her mother; Carol (Dale), her brother; Dalton (Alanna) nephew; Drew, grandmother; Marjorie Buchanan, Aunt Marion Coady (Michael), her partner; Hayden Shore, godparents; Barb and Keith Gilks and many cousins. Morgan is also survived by her two lifelong best friends; Ashley Seabrook and Anthony Daigle, along with so many other friends Morgan held close to her heart.

Visitation was held on April 9, 2026



CHRISTOPHER TUBBS

It is with great sadness that the family of Christopher Tubbs announce his unexpected passing at his residence in Charlotte County on March 19, 2026.

He is survived by his son, Emile "Jack" Caissie; mother, Annie "Penney" Tubbs; sister, Wendy James (Darren); Kimberly McAdam; and James McAdam.

He was predeceased by his partner, Robin (Nason) Hanselpacker; father, Kenneth Tubbs; and sister, Tanya Tubbs.

At this time, there will be no funeral service or visitation.



DARRELL J. GETCHELL

It is with great sadness that we announce the passing of Darrell J. Getchell on April 2, 2026, at the Charlotte County Hospital, St Stephen, New Brunswick.

Darrell is survived by his sons; Michael (Andrew), David (Alix) and DJ, three grandchildren, sister; Brenda (Colin), nephews; Bill (Amanda) and Adam, great-nieces; Chloe and Mylah, great-nephew; Tristin, aunt; Elaine Getchell and several cousins.

In keeping with Darrell's wishes, there will be no funeral service or visitation held. A graveside interment will be held at a later date.



GARNETT J. HAYES

Garnett J. Hayes passed away peacefully at the Saint John Regional Hospital, Saint John, N.B. on April 4, 2026.

Born in July of 1944 in Saint John, Garnett was the adopted son of William Hayes.

Garnett grew up in Woodstock, N.B., he spent his early years working on the railroad with his father and he also spent many years working in the stables at Island Park Raceway and Connell Park.

In 1971 he moved to St. Stephen where he made many friends.

Funeral service was held on Saturday, April 11, 2026



JUDITH SANDRA R. EVANS

It is with heavy hearts to announce the unexpected passing of Judith Sandra R. Evans at the Charlotte County Hospital, St Stephen N.B on April 5, 2026.

She is survived by her son Adam Titus brother Brian Haynes (Charlotte), grandchildren which she adored, Fur baby, Boo, Best Friend Tina Kernighan (Eddie) she was her everything sister-in-law Shirley Haynes coworker/roommate Paul McDougall nieces, nephews and cousins and many close friends.

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



RICHMOND H. TRAFTON

It is with heavy hearts, the family announce the passing of Richmond H. Trafton at the Charlotte County Hospital, St Stephen, NB on Sunday April 5, 2026, after his battle with cancer.

Richmond is survived by his children; Joey, Danny (Denise) and Mike (Susan), his brother; Theodore Moore (Marilyn), grandchildren; Roger, Cory (Michaela), Chris, Nick and Dustin, great-grandchildren; Lauryn Barry, Kendra & Gavin Shaw, Riannan Scott, Hailie, Brooke and Addison Johnson, his sisters-in-law, several nieces and nephews and of course Coco & Pepper, his precious four legged grandpuppies.

In addition to his parents, Richmond was predeceased by his devoted loving wife, Faye and granddaughter; Amy Shaw.

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



W. JOHN HIGGINS

It is with profound sadness that the family of W. John Higgins announce his passing at the age of 76, on April 9, 2026. With his humour and wit intact to the very end, John passed peacefully at home. His high school sweetheart and wife of almost 59 years, Trudy was with him at his passing, along with his son and daughter.

John was predeceased by his parents, Patrick and Edith Higgins (McAleenan), and his sister Patricia Dupuis. He is deeply missed by his loving wife, Trudy (Yardley) Higgins; his son Dana and daughter in law Tammie; his daughter Lana and son in law Tod; his cherished granddaughters Jessica, Sara, Tyler Jane, Jordan, and Carlyn; and his treasured great granddaughters Vivian, Cien-na, and Isabela. He will be lovingly remembered by extended family, with special thanks to niece Lynn Barron and to his dear sister-in-law, Pauline Devlin.

A service will be held for John on May 20, 2026, at The S.O. Mehan & Son Funeral Home Ltd., 23 Main St, St Stephen, NB at 2 PM. The family will receive friends at the funeral home on May 20 from 12- 2 PM.

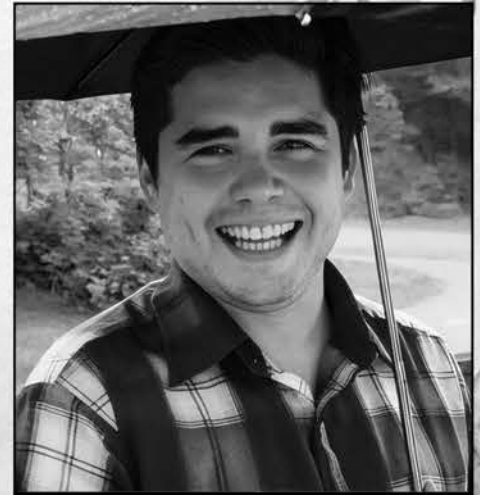


CATHERINE ANNE AKAGI

Kate (Catherine Anne) Akagi, July 6, 1955 - April 19, 2026. Kate was the 8th child born to Motosaku (Motorcycle Charlie) and Romona (Homan) Akagi. She was born in the family home on Indian Point; delivered by midwife. After the death of their Mother in 1958, Charlie raised his children on his own with the help of his 13-year-old daughter, Rose.

Kate is survived by siblings: Hugh (Lou van Eechaute), John (Theresa) Akagi, Theresa Ramona Akagi, Martha Akagi Bergantini, Cecilia Akagi (Rick) Smith. A multitude of nieces, nephews, great-nieces and nephews (Gillian is her goddaughter) who treasure their time spent with Auntie Katie, lovingly known as Aunt Cake.

Funeral service will be held at All Saints Anglican Church, St. Andrews, N. B. on May 5, 2026, at 2 PM. Due to limited seating at the church, the church hall will accommodate a small overflow, and a livestream will be provided at youtube.com/@CHCOTV



COREY J. WOODSIDE

It is with great shock and sadness that the family of Corey J. Woodside announce his passing at home in Moores Mills, NB on Tuesday, April 14, 2026 with his beloved dog Ella by his side.

Corey is survived by his siblings Katherine Carter (Arthur), Sandra Boles (Rick), Debbie Barter (Jim), Michael Woodside (Brad), Brenda Greenier, Bonny Cameron (Scott), Lori Haggerty (Mike), sister-in-law Marlene Woodside, eighteen nieces and nephews, twenty-eight great-nieces and nephews, one great-great-niece, his aunts Melva Merrill (Arnold), Judith Woodside and his many cousins and extended family and dearest friends.

A graveside service will be held at the Moores Mills Cemetery, Moores Mills, NB, on June 3, 2026 at 1pm with a celebration of life to follow at the Moores Mills Hall where all are welcome.

Find Your Best Career

AI and resume writing for job seekers



Jennifer Bouley

To adapt your resume, consider the following:

- Present your experience strategically, not stripping away experience, but rather showing what can be done for the job you are applying for. Put the most relevant items on the resume; the rest can be discussed at the interview.
- Highlight going back 10 years on your resume. If you have experience that is longer, go back to a maximum of 15 years.
- Use the job terminology and phrases in the job posting.
- Show your impact, think metrics, outcomes, and contributions.
- Keep formatting plain, no graphics, colours, pictures, just plain text.
- Your summary at the top should be geared towards the role and how you can bring impact to the role.

Finally, if you are going to use AI to write a resume, do not use it to write the entire resume. Use it if you are stuck on a phrase and aren't sure how to write it. Use it to identify missing keywords, refine bullet points, and to modernize language.

Remember when submitting a resume, some things haven't changed, such as results matter more than responsibilities, clarity beats complexity, relevance outweighs history, and relationships still open doors. Developing relationships and networking continues to be one of the most effective ways to land opportunities.

Jennifer Bouley is a Career Development Practitioner located in St Stephen. She has a passion for helping others find wellness in their careers, while finding fulfilling jobs.

Jennifer can be reached at blissplusyou@gmail.com.

The way we search for jobs is changing. Long gone are the days of simply writing a resume and submitting it to an applicant tracking system and hoping to get a response. Now, due to AI, your resume must include certain items to get through the system and on to a Recruiter. Experience and education must be presented in the right manner to get through the Applicant Tracking System.

The New Reality of Hiring

As we all know, AI is changing the way we do things. From social media to job search, AI is speeding things up faster than ever. It is now embedded in hiring processes across most industries. With the unstable labour market, we are experiencing that Recruiters and Hiring Managers are receiving hundreds to thousands of applications for a single role.

How it works

Organizations rely on AI to scan resumes for relevant keywords and phrases, rank candidates based on alignment with the job posting, and to filter out applicants who don't meet specific criteria. You can be the most qualified candidate in the pool, but if your application doesn't get past the AI screening process, you may not be noticed.

How to get your resume unstuck

Some of the challenges that professionals are facing with their resumes include long resumes (more than 2 pages), terminology that is outdated, and too much focus on responsibilities rather than measurable results. And these can affect whether your resume gets seen at all.



Procedural interpretation risks derailing progress for elder abuse victims



Heather Campbell Pope

From the perspective of older women experiencing coercive control, legal distinctions based on relationship type carry far less weight than a proposed law assumes. Often, the central concern is simpler and more urgent: she wants the abuse to stop.

Tabled in December 2025 by the federal Justice Minister, Bill C-16, the Protecting Victims Act, proposes to create a standalone offence of coercive control by intimate partners. Yet this narrow wording tells older women that the law will not recognize their suffering if the abuser is an adult son, daughter, or other family member. The message embedded in that limitation is hard to ignore: a similar pattern of domination, fear, financial restriction, and psychological harm is treated differently depending on who is exerting it.

Some older women have lived with coercive control for decades, within intimate partnerships. Others encounter it for the first time in old age, when illness, widowhood, or cognitive decline increases reliance on adult children and other relatives. In both situations, the experience is entrapment, not legal taxonomy.

With Bill C-16 currently before the justice committee, it has been suggested that any amendment expanding the language beyond intimate partners may be ruled out of order as exceeding the bill's scope, given its focus on gender-based violence and the prevention of femicide. That interpretation risks becoming a barrier that places abused older mothers and grandmothers outside the protection of the criminal law simply because the person exerting domination is an adult child or grandchild—not an intimate partner.

To be sure, the government should

be commended for taking coercive control by intimate partners seriously, given that it is a known precursor to homicide. In the face of these grave crimes against women and children, it is perhaps understandable that elder abuse was an unintentional blind spot for lawmakers, as these cases do not necessarily escalate into a final act of violence in the way domestic abuse can. Older mothers in particular may be less likely to try to escape—the moment in intimate relationships that can trigger a lethal outcome, most often by male perpetrators. Instead, the harm for an older woman abused by adult children and others can persist hidden from view and without a clear endpoint.

If the purpose of Bill C-16 is to address coercive control as a form of gender-based harm, then excluding family-based coercion risks leaving a significant gap in protection for older women. These cases may not always appear in homicide statistics, yet they can still result in serious outcomes, including severe neglect, diminished quality of life, and concerns about undetected pressure toward medical assistance in dying. The absence of a single catastrophic event does not make the coercion less real; it makes it easier to overlook.

The procedural question before government therefore carries substantive consequences. If Bill C-16's scope is interpreted too narrowly, it risks signalling to Canadians that elder abuse victims are less worthy of criminal law protections—a message the government surely does not intend to convey.

If an amendment protecting elder abuse victims is ruled inadmissible, the result should not be silence. The government should commit to introducing a separate bill to correct this oversight. Elder abuse victims deserve nothing less than immediate legislative action.

Heather Campbell Pope is founder of Dementia Justice Canada and writes on legal issues affecting older adults.

The Etiquette Guy AT LARGE

Conversations Matter



Jay Remer

When the Tone Changes, So Does the Conversation

In a place like ours, conversations still matter.

They happen every day—over coffee, at local shops, during community events, and around kitchen tables. They are part of what keeps our community connected. But even here, if we listen carefully, something has been changing. The tone has shifted.

Disagreements that used to take time to develop now escalate more quickly. People stand their ground sooner. Conversations often leave less room for curiosity or reflection than before. It's not always dramatic, and it's rarely announced, but it's definitely noticeable.

When tone shifts, behaviour tends to follow.

In many settings—such as workplaces, public conversations, and even families—there's a growing trend toward louder voices having more influence. Not necessarily because they are more knowledgeable, but because they are more assertive. Over time, this can create an environment where others start to step back.

That step back can be easy to overlook.

People keep showing up. Work gets done. Conversations still happen. But something underneath begins to shift. Questions are held back. Opinions are softened or go unspoken. Participation becomes more measured and, at times, more cautious.

From the outside, everything looks normal. Up close, it feels different.

This pattern isn't unique to any one place. It reflects a broader pressure many people are experiencing. Life has become faster, expectations higher, and the margin for pause smaller. In those conditions, it becomes harder to stay steady, especially when conversations turn difficult.

When steadiness slips, interactions tend to become narrower.

Listening becomes selective. Responses come quicker. People react not only to what is said but also to what they anticipate might come next. The result isn't always open conflict, but rather a quiet tension that people learn to navigate instead of resolve.

There's also a hidden cost.

In professions where pressure is part of the work—healthcare, education, emergency services, law enforcement—the absence of supportive conditions can be felt more deeply. The expectation to keep going remains, but the space to recover or speak openly isn't always available. Over time, that imbalance can weigh heavily.

And yet, moments that move in a different direction still happen.



They're often small. A pause before responding. A willingness to let someone finish their thought. A question asked without an edge. These moments rarely attract attention, but they tend to change the atmosphere in ways that are immediately felt.

As the conversation unfolds, we settle in and listen more carefully. What's said is more likely to be understood as intended. The topic itself doesn't need to change; the difference lies in how it's approached.

This is where civility starts to show its importance—not as mere politeness or agreement, but as a kind of stability that keeps our conversations effective, even when tough. Without it, stronger personalities tend to dominate. With it, more people can participate.

What's striking is how fast we recognize the difference. When an interaction feels steady, there's a subtle sense of ease. Our body relaxes, our attention widens, and we have room to reflect.

From there, something else becomes possible.

We may not reach an agreement, but we understand each other better. We may not seek resolution, but we make progress. In our small community, these shifts matter. They influence not just individual conversations but also the tone we carry into the next—and the next after that.

Over time, that tone becomes something we share. And what we share, quietly and consistently, often shapes us the most.

Jay Remer was raised in the United States and emigrated to Canada roughly 30 years ago. Since then, I have been involved in the writers' community and the hospitality industry. I live in Saint Andrews, NB, and look forward to the day when healthy, civil debates bear more compassionate outcomes.

Please feel free to send your questions: jayremer@chco.tv

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For the Love of Maud



The wonder of Water Street

By **VICKI HOGARTH**
Reporter, The Courier

I don't have to ask Maud if she wants to go outside. All I need to do is zip up my coat, and to Maud it may as well be the starting pistol at the Kentucky Derby.

She appears at once, as if conjured. Whatever she was just doing—napping, lounging, or conducting high-level squirrel surveillance with the focus of an air traffic controller—is abandoned without hesitation. We are going outside.

Before we leave, she performs what I can only describe as a pre-walk carb-loading ritual. Back and forth to the food bowl. A mouthful of kibble, then a quick return to the door to make sure I haven't betrayed her. Repeat. It has the anxious energy of someone eating dry cereal over the

sink before a marathon they signed up for without any real preparation.

We live on Water Street in Saint Andrews, which means going outside is less of a private activity and more of a low-stakes public appearance. You will see people. People will see you. There is no opting out unless you're willing to army crawl behind parked cars, which I've considered on the odd bad hair day.

Maud, however, thrives in this environment.

She approaches strangers with the confidence of someone who believes she has been expected. There's no hesitation, no polite internal debate. She looks directly at people as if to say, This is happening now. And just like that, it is.

A glance becomes a hello. A hello



becomes a conversation. I stand there holding a leash while Maud facilitates what feels like a town hall meeting.

Dog people fold immediately. They've been training for this moment. Names are exchanged—usually the dogs' first, which feels right, given who's actually running the interaction. Then come the details: age, breed, allergies, emotional baggage. You learn more about a stranger's dog in 90 seconds than you might learn about the stranger in a year, and somehow it feels more honest.

But it's not just dog people.

A dog is a social loophole. It gives you a reason to stop without admitting you want to. You can stand on a sidewalk talking to someone you've never met, and no one has to explain why. The dog has filed the paperwork. Also, the dog is, without question, the more compelling conversationalist—always ready to step in when the small talk starts to die a quiet, dignified death.

And in those pauses, something shifts.

The street stops being a place you move through and becomes a place you're actually in—which sounds obvious until you realize how rarely it happens anymore.

Because we don't really arrive at the world by chance anymore. We route ourselves to it.

We don't wander into restaurants—we read 147 reviews and decide in advance how much we'll enjoy the pasta. We don't meet people—we screen them. Dating apps, LinkedIn profiles, curated bios that make everyone sound both accomplished and exhausting. Even getting somewhere requires permission from a calm, disembodied voice telling you exactly where to turn and when. Recalculating, but never wondering.

We don't follow the street to see what

happens. We follow instructions. We believe artificial intelligence knows best.

And by the time we get there—wherever “there” is—we've already decided what it will be like, who we'll meet, whether it's worth our time. We've removed the possibility of being wrong, which is also the only way to be surprised.

There's no algorithm on Water Street. No rating system. No way to pre-screen the man you're now speaking to about his beagle's digestion, whose name you didn't catch and are now too far in to ask again without exposing yourself.

It's inefficient. It's occasionally uncomfortable. It's also where the interesting part lives.

Because without all that filtering, you get something else. Something unscripted. A moment you didn't plan for. A person who doesn't match your expectations and doesn't seem particularly concerned about it.

Maud doesn't curate her experience. She assumes the world is available and that the people in it are part of the offering. She doesn't hesitate or wonder if it will be “worth it.” She just goes in, fully, every time, like it might be the entire point.

By the time we turn back, she's done whatever it is she came out to do. I've had three conversations I didn't plan on having and learned the name of a terrier with a more active social life than I have.

Back inside, the leash comes off. The house goes quiet. But Maud knows—and I know—that the zipper will close again.

And when it does, she'll appear. Certain as ever. Ready.

Because she is absolutely convinced that something is always about to happen.

And, as I've come to learn, she's usually right.



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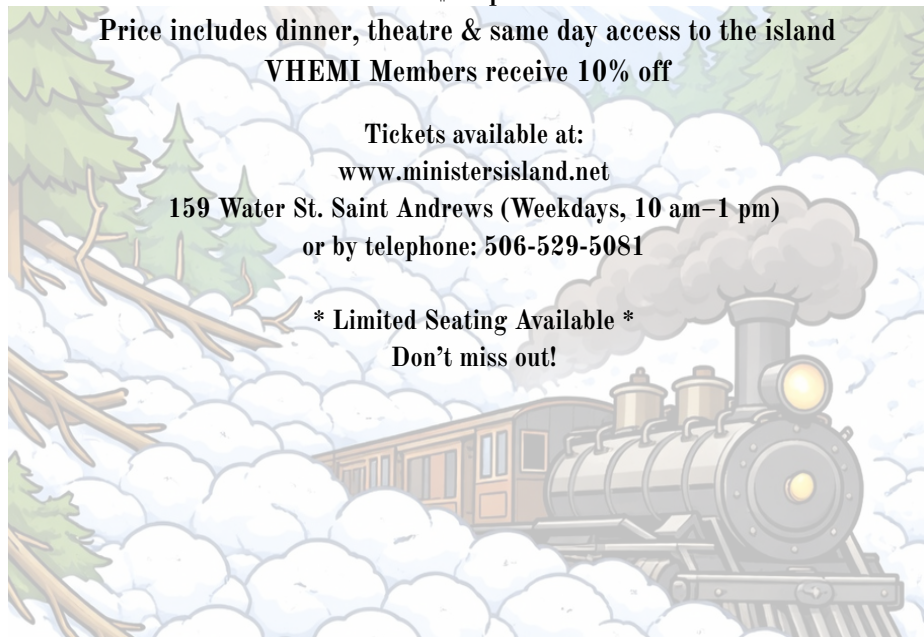
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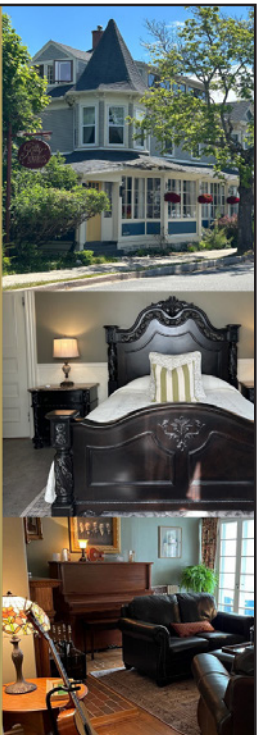
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