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What's Inside

Spring/Summer 2025

volume 3, number 1



3 Presidential Addresses

5 Bridging communities:
Municipal partnerships with First Nations

7 Mallory Metallic: Indigenous police officer shares skill and culture

10 Rural resilience in a changing health care landscape / Établissement d'une résilience rurale dans un système de soins de santé changeant

12 Contributing to your community through council

15 Municipal leadership on equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility

18 Charlottetown works to restore urban forest

22 Leading the way: Salisbury's role in innovative pilot project on cultural policy / Montrer la voie: Le rôle de Salisbury dans un projet pilote novateur en matière de politique culturelle

24 Municipal approaches to economic development

27 Challenges in application-based infrastructure funding

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Presidential Addresses



Bruce MacDougall
President, FPEIM

As we respond to ever-changing events and emerge from winter, I find myself thinking about the importance of resilience. You'll find examples in this magazine. Our P.E.I. stories feature a municipal police officer persevering to accomplish her goals and a city working to rebuild its urban forest after post-tropical storm Fiona. Thank you to our Atlantic and magazine colleagues for helping to share these stories.

The Federation of PEI Municipalities (FPEIM) supports municipal leaders and staff as they work to build vibrant and resilient communities, and I would like to recognize someone who has contributed so much to our efforts. After 24 years as executive director, John Dewey has retired from FPEIM. Thank you for your service, John! Municipalities across P.E.I. have benefitted from your diligence, dedication, and persistence.

We look forward to our continued advocacy and support with our incoming executive director.



Amy Coady
President, MNL

On Oct. 2, 2025, residents across Newfoundland and Labrador will head to the polls for the 2025 municipal elections.

As president of Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador (MNL), I look forward to seeing people in every community across the province get involved in local government. However, I realize this will, given past trends, likely not be the case.

We have far too many acclaimed councils in this province, and a declining interest in community participation. But we are working to change that, largely through MNL's "Make Your Mark" campaign to encourage people to run for council.

Being a municipal councillor is a rewarding way to give back to your community. Yes, there can be challenges, and it is not always easy, but it is worthwhile and essential work.

Putting your name in for council is not the only way to be involved in local government. There are many committees that need community volunteers, and municipal councils often reach out for feedback from residents.

Whether through running for council, assisting with a campaign, or volunteering for a committee or community group, I encourage you to get involved in your community, to participate in municipal consultations, and to contribute to your community in positive ways.



Brittany Merrifield
President/Président, UMNb

The Union of Municipalities of New Brunswick (UMNB) is excited to partner with Atlantic associations in this edition of the *Atlantic Municipal Magazine*. This issue highlights two transformative initiatives from New Brunswick: our partnered cultural policy project in Salisbury, which celebrates diversity, and Grand Manan's innovative health care solutions, addressing local needs. These stories showcase the strength, collaboration, and leadership of our municipalities as we work toward an inclusive, sustainable, and vibrant future.

L'Union des municipalités du Nouveau-Brunswick (UMNB) est heureuse de s'associer aux associations de l'Atlantique dans cette édition du *Magazine municipal de l'Atlantique*. Ce numéro met en lumière deux initiatives transformatrices du Nouveau-Brunswick : notre projet de politique culturelle en partenariat avec Salisbury, qui célèbre la diversité, et les solutions novatrices de Grand Manan en matière de soins de santé, qui répondent aux besoins locaux. Ces histoires illustrent la force, la collaboration et le leadership de nos municipalités alors que nous travaillons à un avenir inclusif, durable et dynamique.



Pam Mood
President, NSFM

Anyone else feeling extra proud to be Canadian in these recent weeks, with being Atlantic Canadian as the cherry on top? As president of the Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities (NSFM), I have a bird's-eye view of what our municipal units are doing to navigate the challenges that continue to come at us from all directions, and all with a measure of learned resilience, dedication, and vision – with a grace that surpasses the magnitude of circumstance.

Our elected officials and staff have learned that collaboration and innovation are necessary in addressing issues of local, provincial, federal – and, of late, international – magnitude that affect our communities. We find answers wherever they are, including within these pages of *Atlantic Municipal Magazine*, where we are provided the opportunity to share best practices. Given the times we are in, doing so with the intention of helping others is imperative and oh so helpful.

I am so inspired by the collective commitment of municipal leaders and staff who work tirelessly to make communities in Nova Scotia and Atlantic Canada a better place. From sustainability to fiscal responsibility to inclusive governance, your dedication does not go unnoticed. Together, we've got this!

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Charlene Fekeshazy (cfekeshazy@nsfm.ca) is the communications advisor for the Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities.

Bridging communities

Municipal partnerships with First Nations

Across Nova Scotia, First Nations communities and municipalities are forging partnerships that not only strengthen relationships but also catalyze economic development and shared prosperity. These collaborations exemplify a growing commitment to working together to build inclusive and sustainable economies.

A recent study by Fred Bergman, senior policy analyst with the Atlantic Economic Council, sheds light on the burgeoning Indigenous economy in the Atlantic region. Conducted on behalf of the Atlantic Policy Congress of First Nations Chiefs Secretariat, the research highlights significant growth in Indigenous-owned businesses, which

are becoming key drivers of regional economic development.

Municipalities are increasingly recognizing the potential of partnerships with First Nations communities to amplify these efforts.

Strengthening Economic Development through Collaboration

First Nations and municipalities are natural allies in fostering economic growth. Shared goals – such as increasing employment opportunities, attracting investment, and developing infrastructure – provide a foundation for collaboration. For example, municipal governments can work with First Nations to enhance regional infrastructure, creating opportunities for

joint ventures in areas such as housing, renewable energy, and tourism.

One inspiring example is the work of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) through its First Nations-municipal collaboration program. The initiative provides funding and resources for First Nations and municipalities to collaborate on projects that benefit both communities.

From joint land use planning to co-managed water systems, these partnerships demonstrate the power of working together to address mutual challenges.

Case Studies: Success in Action

Several successful collaborations in Nova Scotia highlight the potential of these partnerships.



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Joint economic development plans – First Nations and municipalities have co-developed economic strategies to attract investment in renewable energy and resource-based industries, leveraging traditional Indigenous knowledge alongside modern business practices.

Tourism initiatives – By working together, First Nations and municipalities have created culturally rich tourism experiences that showcase Indigenous heritage while drawing visitors to rural communities.

Shared infrastructure projects – Co-managed infrastructure projects, such as waste management systems and community centres, demonstrate how shared resources can meet the needs of both municipal and First Nations residents.

Building Trust and Understanding

These partnerships are about more than economic gain; they are about Reconciliation and building trust. Open dialogue and mutual respect are key to the success of these collaborations. Many First Nations and municipalities have established formal agreements, such as memorandums of understanding (MOUs), to solidify their commitments to working together.

“Working alongside First Nations partners has been invaluable,” said Port Hawkesbury Mayor Brenda Chisholm-Beaton. “Together, we have created opportunities that benefit everyone, and we look forward to further strengthening these relationships.”

John Paul, a First Nations leader and executive director with the Atlantic Policy Congress of First Nations Chiefs Secretariat, had a similar perspective.

“Our partnerships with municipalities have been built over time on mutual respect and a shared commitment to creating opportunities that benefit everyone,” he said. “Collaborations in areas like tourism have proven to be win-win opportunities – enhancing economic growth while providing increased exposure and opportunities for our communities. These ongoing relationships are vital and must continue to be supported by all partners to ensure continued success.”

Looking Ahead: Opportunities and Challenges

As First Nations communities and municipalities continue to collaborate, challenges such as jurisdictional complexities and funding disparities remain. However, the benefits of these partnerships – such as increased economic opportunity, improved community relations, and stronger local governance – far outweigh the obstacles.

The insights from Bergman’s research and the initiatives supported by organizations like FCM offer a roadmap for success. Nova Scotia’s municipalities have a unique opportunity to build stronger, more inclusive communities by deepening their partnerships with First Nations.

As these collaborations grow, they set a powerful example for how local governments and Indigenous communities can work together to achieve shared goals.

By fostering mutual respect and a shared vision, First Nations and municipalities are not only bridging communities but also paving the way for a more inclusive and prosperous future. [AMM](#)



Lori Mayne (lmayne@fpeim.ca) is the communications and member services officer with the Federation of PEI Municipalities.

Even as a little girl, Det. Const. Mallory Metallic would be one of the first to run in and help if someone got hurt on the playground or the soccer field.

Mallory Metallic

Indigenous police officer shares skill and culture

“My father used to tell me that I was the type of person to never be panicked or scared of a situation,” she said. “I always kind of ran toward the danger.”

Metallic is chatting in the Summerside police station’s soft interview room, a space with comfy armchairs and toss cushions, soft blue walls, and peaceful landscape photos.

It is a place where victims and witnesses can feel more comfortable sharing their stories.

On the coffee table sits a smudging kit, with a feather, baby moccasins, and traditional medicines laid out on a small red cloth.

“There’s the sweetgrass for positivity. The tobacco is an offering. The sage is



Metallic, right, incorporated a traditional ribbon skirt into the formal dress of the City of Summerside police. Photo courtesy of Mallory Metallic

cleansing, and the cedar is calming,” Metallic said, describing the smudging kit. “When it’s all burned and smudged together, that’s the intent – to be able to release and know that you’re welcome to say what you want. It is purification, letting go of what you can. That’s what this room is for.”

Starting Out in Law Enforcement

Metallic is now a detective constable with the City of Summerside, P.E.I., and the 2024 recipient of the municipal police officer of the year award from PEI Crime Stoppers.

Metallic’s interest in policing began when she was growing up in her home community of Listuguj, a Mi’kmaq First Nation in Quebec.

She found herself fascinated by heroes in police movies. Then, a high school co-op term with the Listuguj Police Department helped solidify her interest. Among other things, she organized bike rodeos, talked to children about bullying, learned about community policing, and found a mentor in the police chief.

Not everyone encouraged her to pursue policing, due to what she describes as the community’s “weakened relationship” with police.

“Back in 1981, Listuguj was raided by the Sûreté du Québec,” she said, referring to raids by provincial police sent in to stop the fishing of salmon.

Metallic found herself questioning why these events happened, wanting to learn more about the police and how the distrust had developed.

“I want to be the person that they can trust, someone they can look up to,” she said.

Life events ultimately delayed her training. After she became a mother in Listuguj, she needed to focus on her son, whose unforeseen and rare health issues required years of hospital treatment in Montreal.

Then, after getting approval from her son’s medical team in 2017 and support from a cousin who had become chief of police in Listuguj, Metallic was able to pursue her career goals. Her son has since been fully cleared and no longer needs frequent follow-ups in Montreal.

“I’m stubborn,” Metallic said, with a laugh. “If someone tells me I can’t do something, I’ll go do it.”

She graduated from the Atlantic Police Academy in Summerside in 2018. During her training there, she decided she wanted to return to the City of Summerside – particularly after hearing a talk by one of the city’s female police officers.

“She just really spoke very highly of the department,” Metallic said. “It had a close-knit family atmosphere.”

Integrating Indigenous Culture

Metallic worked for the Listuguj Police Department for three years and then joined Summerside’s police force in 2021, becoming the city’s first Indigenous police officer.

Metallic has since moved from general patrol to major crimes, where investigations can include sexual assault, child pornography, homicide, arson, frauds, scams, and other major crimes. She is also interested in forensic investigations.

“I love puzzles,” Metallic said, explaining how she likes to gather information and find out why things happen. “I might not always find out why, but at least I’m trying.”

In her work with Summerside Police, Metallic has integrated her Indigenous culture in a number of ways, including:

- introducing the smudging kit
 - asking victims who have lost loved ones if she can honour those loved ones in her own personal smudging at home
 - incorporating a traditional ribbon skirt into the police department’s formal dress
 - maintaining a connection with an Elder and taking part in smudging and cleansing ceremonies to help with the heaviness of her work
 - encouraging other Indigenous people to get involved in policing
- Metallic has also introduced offering pouches of tobacco after speaking with witnesses and victims who are Indigenous.

“It’s a common tradition,” she said. “When we take something from someone, we have to give something back.”



Det. Const. Mallory Metallic introduced a smudging kit at Summerside Police Services. *Photo courtesy of Mallory Metallic*

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Metallic has also created a 12-foot LED dream catcher and offered it as a display for National Indigenous History Month in June.

“It just lit up city hall – it was absolutely beautiful,” she said, noting it attracted visitors from across P.E.I.

Metallic says victims and witnesses who are Indigenous sometimes seek her out, as they may feel more comfortable speaking with her.

She is not always able to take the actual investigations in these cases, as the RCMP has jurisdiction for the Island’s First Nations communities. That said, she can listen and offer support.

“We’ve all been in those situations with no one to talk to,” Metallic said. “I like to try to be that outlet as much as I can.”

Follow Your Goals

Her recognition as municipal police officer of the year has generated media attention and speaking opportunities. While she was surprised by the honour, she hopes she can help motivate others.

“If you have a career goal or anything like that, don’t give up on it,” she said. “Know that what you’re going through in the moment is all life experience. Take it one day at a time, and if it’s something you really, really want, it will happen.”

As for policing, she encourages anyone with interest to explore the career.

“The more people we have willing to want to do this – I think we need more people like that,” Metallic said. [AMM](#)



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The reception desk donated by the Grand Manan Legion at the front of the Coastal Health and Wellness Clinic.

Le bureau de la réception donné par la Légion de Grand Manan à l'avant de la Clinique de santé et de mieux-être de la côte.

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Briana Cowie (briana.cowie@umnb.ca) responsable des relations extérieures pour l'UMNB.



Rural resilience in a changing health care landscape

Nestled alongside the craggy, coastal cliffs of the Bay of Fundy, on the beautiful island of Grand Manan, N.B., an innovative response to rural health care challenges has emerged in the form of the Coastal Health and Wellness Clinic.

In 2022, the community of Grand Manan was faced with the pending closure of the only bank on the island (a 90-minute ferry ride from the mainland), compounding existing challenges of access to everyday services for the more than 2,500 residents.

Mayor Bonnie Morse said Grand Manan is a strong, tight-knit and resilient community, but it was left with an empty bank and an empty feeling by the end of the year.

“It’s hard to explain the heavy feeling in the community when the bank closed,” Morse said. “We [council] felt that feeling of heaviness would only be amplified by the community seeing the empty [former Scotiabank] building, so we stepped in to own the building as a leap of faith.”

That leap of faith paid off when council was approached by a young, passionate couple, Lauren Martin and Mike Munro, owners of the sole pharmacy on the island.

Volunteers Rally around Wellness Clinic

A shared, mutually supportive agreement was created between council and the proprietors. Council committed to enter into a rent-to-own agreement, helping out with some

Établissement d’une résilience rurale dans un système de soins de santé changeant

À cœur des falaises côtières escarpées de la Baie de Fundy, sur la magnifique île de Grand Manan, est née une réponse novatrice aux défis liés aux soins de santé en milieu rural, sous la forme d’un Centre côtier de santé et de bien-être.

En 2022, la collectivité de Grand Manan a dû faire face à la fermeture imminente de la seule banque présente sur l’île, ce qui a eu pour effet d’aggraver les défis existants en matière d’accès à des services quotidiens, pour plus que 2 500 résidents.

La mairesse Bonnie Morse a déclaré que Grand Manan est une communauté forte, grande unité et résiliente, mais qu’elle s’est retrouvée avec une banque désertée et un grand sentiment de vide à la fin de l’année.

« Il est très difficile d’expliquer le sombre sentiment qui a envahi la collectivité au moment de la fermeture de la banque. Nous [les membres du conseil] avons l’impression que cette sensation pénible ne pourrait qu’être amplifiée si la collectivité avait sous les yeux la bâtisse vide [de l’ancienne Banque Scotia]; c’est pourquoi nous sommes intervenus pour posséder la bâtisse, dans un acte de foi. »



Grand Manan Mayor Bonnie Morse.
La mairesse de Grand Manan, Bonnie Morse.

operational expenses such as in-kind snow plowing and covering some electrical services in exchange for increased quality of life for residents.

Morse noted that enthusiastic support did not stop at the doors of council chambers.

“The thing I love the most about Coast [Wellness Clinic] is that, yes, council played a role, but it was ultimately the community that rallied in the best way,” Morse said. “Our local Legion donated the money for a reception desk in memory of one of their long-time volunteers who had passed away.

“Grand Manan Rotary Club sponsored the creation of a women’s health room in memory of our nurse practitioner who passed away. A local community member has planted and maintained a community garden. And our friends at Action Ministries help to sponsor people who need help with access to therapy. It is really the volunteers that rallied behind the couple that put together the new space.”

A space that began as an expansion opportunity for the local pharmacy now provides a range of services, from dentistry, massage therapy, acupuncture, therapy, and physiotherapy. The sauna and cold plunge bath is surprisingly popular among local fishermen, Morse said.

Building Hope for Others

Up until this point, islanders had to access some health care services like dentistry on the mainland, resulting in a long round-trip ferry ride, extra travel and meal fees, and loss of work time.

“If your child needed to go to the dentist, it was a 12-hour long day for a one-hour long dentist appointment,” Morse said. “So, honestly, people just weren’t going as often as needed.”

Morse hopes other communities, especially those in rural settings, see this success story as a way to rebuild hope after the closure of an important service. By making use of the building that would have been left empty, Morse feels it shows the community that “good things can still happen here.”

As a small community and a strong council, the rural island of Grand Manan proves that when you provide the walls, and the community provides the spirit, solutions to hard problems like access to health care can be found. **AMM**

Cet acte de foi s’est avéré fructueux lorsque le conseil a été approché par un jeune couple passionné, Lauren Martin et Mike Munro, les propriétaires de l’unique pharmacie de l’île.

Les Bénévoles se Mobilisent Autour de la Clinique de Bien-être

Un accord commun mutuellement favorable a donc été mis en œuvre entre le conseil et les deux propriétaires. Le conseil s’est engagé à conclure une entente de location avec option d’achat et à participer à certaines dépenses opérationnelles, par des contributions en nature et la couverture d’une partie des services d’électricité, en échange d’une amélioration de la qualité de vie pour les résidents. Mais la mairesse Morse a noté que ce soutien enthousiaste ne s’est pas arrêté aux portes de la salle du conseil.

« La chose qui me réjouit le plus à propos du Centre côtier [Clinique de bien-être] c’est que oui, le conseil y a joué un rôle, mais que c’est la collectivité qui, en fin de compte, s’est mobilisée de la meilleure manière. Notre Légion locale a fait don de l’argent nécessaire pour construire un comptoir d’accueil, en mémoire de l’un de leurs anciens bénévoles décédé, le club Rotary de Grand Manan a parrainé la création d’une salle de soins pour les femmes en mémoire de notre infirmière praticienne qui est décédée. Un membre de la collectivité locale s’est occupé de la plantation et de l’entretien d’un jardin communautaire et nos amis d’Action Ministries contribuent au parrainage de gens qui ont besoin d’aide pour accéder à des traitements. En fait, ce sont tous ces bénévoles, qui se sont mobilisés pour épauler le couple, qui ont mis en place le nouvel espace. »

Et cet espace, qui n’était au début qu’une opportunité d’expansion pour la pharmacie locale, offre maintenant une large gamme de services, notamment en médecine dentaire, massage thérapeutique, acupuncture, thérapie et physiothérapie, et comprend même un sauna et un bassin d’eau froide qui, selon la mairesse Morse, est étonnamment populaire auprès des pêcheurs locaux.

Construire L’Espoir Pour les Autres

Jusqu’à ce moment, les habitants de l’île n’avaient accès à certains services de santé, comme les soins dentaires, que sur le continent, ce qui signifiait pour eux un déplacement d’une heure et demie en traversier, en plus des frais de voyage et de repas, sans parler des heures de travail perdues.

« Ainsi, une visite chez le dentiste pour votre enfant pouvait nécessiter une journée de 12 heures, et ce pour un rendez-vous dentaire de seulement une heure. Ce qui signifie que, franchement, les gens n’y allaient pas aussi souvent qu’ils auraient dû », a ajouté Mme Morse.

Morse espère que d’autres collectivités, et plus particulièrement celles des milieux ruraux, verront cette histoire de réussite comme une façon de rebâtir l’espoir après la fermeture d’un important service. Mme Morse croit que le fait de donner un nouvel usage à une bâtisse qui aurait autrement été laissée à l’abandon a démontré à la collectivité que « de bonnes choses pouvaient encore se produire ici. »

À titre de petite collectivité dotée d’un conseil solide, l’île rurale de Grand Manan est la preuve vivante que, lorsque vous fournissez la structure et que la collectivité fournit la volonté, il est possible de trouver des solutions à des problèmes aussi difficiles que l’accès à des soins de santé. **AMM**

Musicians perform on the new stage steps from the ocean in the Town of Torbay. Photo courtesy of the Town of Torbay



Tobias Romaniuk (tromaniuk@municipalnl.ca) is the communications and marketing officer at Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador.

Contributing to your community through council

For the community-minded person, there are many options to get involved. Service groups, like the Lions Club or Knights of Columbus; community and sports groups; and town committees all rely on volunteers.

But people often do not think of town council as a means to give back to their community. We would like to change that.

Sitting on council can be a rewarding and meaningful way to contribute to your community. Yes, there are negative aspects, like the online criticism and second guessing. And there are problems with harassment of municipal sector council and staff. But, for the most part, the benefits outweigh the negatives.

Unfortunately, there is a severe lack of interest in being a part of local government in Newfoundland and Labrador. In the 2021 Newfoundland and Labrador

municipal elections, 30 per cent of municipal councils were fully acclaimed. A further 25 per cent of municipalities did not have enough candidates to fill all available council seats.

Level of Interest in Decline

In St. John's, Mayor Danny Breen was acclaimed in the 2021 election. There is an argument to be made that running unopposed is a sign of general approval for the mayor, but it could also be argued that a lack of interest in municipal politics is also the cause.

Breen had always had an interest in politics, which he attributes to growing up in a political home, with his dad very tuned in to what was happening.

Breen was on his high school student council and served on the student union in university. Through his working years, he was involved in various

community groups and, although he was still interested in politics, he was focused on raising a family and felt he did not have the time to dedicate to public service.

Then, in 2009, with his children in university, he realized that if he did not do it now, he may not have the opportunity. So, he put his name in for council against the incumbent and won.

In 2013, he won by acclamation, then successfully put his name in for mayor in 2017. And in 2021, he won the mayor's seat again, this time by acclamation. He plans to run again in the upcoming 2025 election.

Breen still enjoys the role and hearing from residents.

"I like talking to people. I like hearing what their thoughts are," he said. "I like being involved in some of the things that we do that really make a difference

here in the city, whether it be the construction of the multi-use trail system that we're beginning or attracting events like the Brier announcement in 2026, the Brier announcement in 2017, or the Canada Summer Games."

When asked about what he is proud to have accomplished during his time in office, Breen lists the city's work on sustainability, the multi-use trail system extensions and active transportation, and the growth in MetroBus ridership. At the top of the list, though, is the city's efforts in working with neighbouring communities.

"One of the policies that I'm very proud of is regionalization," Breen said. "I think we've been able to have really good relations amongst the municipalities on the Northeast Avalon. I think that comes from leadership – and that's not just me, that's the other mayors and councils, too. I think everybody sees the advantage of working together."

Opportunity to Be Part of Something

Being out in the community at events, talking to residents, leading projects through to fruition, and giving back through community service are all rewarding pursuits that can leave one with a sense of accomplishment. But it's not something people are particularly keen to do these days.

In Breen's view, the lack of interest goes beyond the municipal sector. There is, he said, a general decline in the number of people volunteering for service and community groups and volunteering for fire departments, along with a decline in community participation compared with years past.

In the past, it was common for those around the council table to have a long record of community service, leading to the development of community leaders. And community leaders, Breen said, are what we really need.

"We want people who are going to lead the community," he said, adding that it is equally important to recognize and identify those who can lead in specific areas. "People want to be part of something. We need to make them feel like they want to be part of something again."

With 30 years of advocacy work behind her, Tina Neary understands being a part of something and being involved in the community.

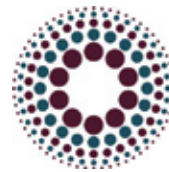
Now in her second term as a councillor in Portugal Cove-St-Philips – a town abutting St. John's with a population of 8,400 – Neary is considering a third term on council or a run at provincial politics. Prior to running for council, Neary noticed the long-standing issues within social services and the larger community were growing to crisis levels.

"I wanted a larger platform for a louder voice," she said. "And municipal government seemed to be the way to go to do that."

Building networks is a large part of community work, and those networking opportunities are amplified when on council.

"We create supportive networks with people, we meet people," Neary said. "The networking opportunities are incredible."

Once on council, there was a steep learning curve to get acquainted with the infrastructure issues and needs of the town, the complexities of taxation and mill rates, and the many other details of municipal governance. The quest to learn eventually led to her becoming chair of the public works committee.



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“That’s what excites me most,” Neary said. “The opportunity for learning, the opportunity for engagement, and the opportunity to make change.”

Contributing Positive Change

Sometimes change, and the ability to make things happen, improves the life of a fellow resident in a meaningful and rewarding way.

For instance, a local doctor called Neary to say that every time there was heavy rain, their driveway became a pond – to the point that ducks had taken up residence. It was a real problem, since the doctor needed a clear route in case they were called to a medical emergency.

Neary got on the phone, advocating for this resident, telling the people responsible that a permanent fix needed to happen. Her efforts led to the necessary work being done, with the flow of water now properly diverted to prevent flooding.

It is one of thousands of examples, Neary said, of the way that council can effect positive change.

“As long as you go to bed at night and know that you’ve done everything that you can, then you can feel good about what you’re doing and that you’re doing it for the right reasons, which is to help your community,” Neary said.

Contributing to and helping to improve the community is at the heart of why Craig Scott got involved in local government in his hometown of Torbay, another town that borders St. John’s.

Now in his second term as mayor, Scott began with a term as a councillor and intends to run for a fourth term in the upcoming municipal election in the fall.

He was raised in Torbay and, like many Newfoundlanders, left for work and world experience. When he finally returned for good, he noticed that things were not progressing the way he thought they should be.

The community centre was aging, with no plan for replacement, and other infrastructure was also lacking.

“When I originally ran for council, I saw there were things that need to be done in the town and I felt that I can contribute to that,” Scott said.

During his first term, as a member of the public works committee, he asked to have trails placed under the public works department.

When asked why, he replied that he would like to build some trails. That led to a trail around one of the ponds in the town, and the town’s trail network has continued to grow since then.

“It turns out that they are an excellent asset. They’re money well spent,” Scott said, adding that walking and other outside activities have become a popular escape for residents.

A new municipal depot, then a new community centre followed, as did work on other projects.

Scott is not finished, though, and he hopes to earn re-election to see at least two other major infrastructure projects started.

The first is a two-part drinking water project to provide water treatment to the existing supply, and to develop a secondary water supply for the town’s expansion. The second project is a wastewater treatment facility.

“When you accomplish a larger goal – something that you’ve been working toward – those rewards, they’re the reason that you’re here,” he said. [AMM](#)



Municipal leadership on equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility



Charlene Fekeshazy (cfekeshazy@nsfm.ca) is the communications advisor for the Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities.

Historical inequities, ongoing disparities affecting Black and Indigenous populations, gender-based violence, and Nova Scotia's distinction as having the highest disability rate in Canada highlight the urgent need for municipalities to prioritize equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility.

Legislative requirements, such as Nova Scotia's *Accessibility Act* (2017) and the *Dismantling Racism and Hate Act* (2022), underscore the responsibility of municipal leaders to take meaningful action.

Municipal IDEAS Program

To support municipalities in meeting these mandates, the province's Office of Equity and Anti-Racism has funded the Municipal IDEAS for Accessibility & Anti-Racism/Hate Plans program. This initiative provides workshops, networking opportunities, and educational resources to help municipalities and villages eliminate systemic barriers and advance accessibility improvements.

Julie Glaser and Roxanne Pereira, hired by the Association of Municipal Administrators Nova Scotia (AMANS), bring expertise in municipal equity,

diversity, inclusion, and accessibility. Their roles focus on helping municipal units meet legislative requirements through education, training, and collaborative planning.

Achieving these goals requires strong partnerships. Glaser and Pereira work closely with municipalities to develop training programs, facilitate workshops, and support plan development. They also guide municipal staff through discussions using tools such as a self-assessment that helps identify internal priorities.

The timeline for implementing anti-racism plans is tight, with municipal units required to ratify their plans by April 1. Collaboration across multiple agencies has been key to delivering support.

The Office of Equity and Anti-Racism; Accessibility Directorate; Department



Maritime Centre for African Dance performing at the EMBRACE Truro Festival.

of Municipal Affairs; and Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission all contribute to these efforts. Additionally, the Municipal IDEAS website (<https://www.municipal-ideas.ca/>) acts as a centralized resource hub for municipalities seeking guidance.

A key takeaway from this work is the opportunity for municipalities to engage with community partners.

“There are great opportunities to collaborate with regional partners and organizations such as the Human Rights Commission, African Nova Scotian Affairs, the Office of Lnu Affairs, Status of Women, Easter Seals, community care homes, and rehabilitation centres,” Glaser said.

Equity and Community Well-Being

Despite progress, significant challenges remain. Funding limitations, municipal staff capacity, competing priorities, tight project timelines, labour shortages, and potential labour disruptions make it difficult for municipalities to meet their commitments. Additionally, elected officials may lack the subject matter knowledge or confidence to lead these discussions effectively.

The Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities is addressing this challenge through its Equity & Community Wellbeing Committee. It is the only one specifically mandated to analyze, evaluate, and make recommendations on advocacy requests with a focus on equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility.

“A common challenge is that many of us do not have lived experiences that reflect the barriers that others face, and we are dependent on those around us to share what they have lived,” said Town of Truro Coun. Alison Graham, chair of the committee. “Communities are not always equally safe and inclusive for all citizens. Recognizing, acknowledging, and accepting this can be difficult, but it’s an important step if we want to create meaningful change.”

To comply with legislation and create more inclusive workplaces, municipalities are implementing changes such as accommodations for accessibility needs, employee resource groups, flexible work arrangements, inclusive hiring practices, and the integration of equity and anti-racism principles into decision making. The use of plain language in municipal communications, forms, reports, and policies is also becoming a standard practice.

“There are great opportunities to focus on building intentional and meaningful relationships with underrepresented and underserved communities,” Pereira said. “Equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility initiatives address the basic human need to feel safe, supported, and to belong – ultimately fostering more diverse, welcoming, and engaged communities.”

Multicultural festivals can foster understanding and appreciation of diverse cultures, helping to combat racism and discrimination.

“Events such as Black History Month, Asian Heritage Month, Pride, and Accessibility Awareness Week are now officially recognized and celebrated by many municipalities, demonstrating a commitment to awareness,” Glaser said.

Breaking Down Barriers

While the work is challenging, municipalities are making progress. Regional collaboration is fostering new relationships across sectors and communities. Increased funding allocations for staff resources and expert consultation are helping municipalities navigate these complex issues. Tools such as plain language training are improving efficiency and accessibility within municipal operations.

“Municipalities will continue to evolve into safer, healthier communities as long as we engage in meaningful conversations with our peers, diverse leaders, and all community members. Municipalities must lead by example by inviting and including residents in ways that make everyone feel comfortable sharing their thoughts and ideas,” said Graham. “When residents see themselves represented in decision-making spaces, I believe it builds confidence and trust in municipal leadership.”

With a concerted effort, municipalities can continue to break down systemic barriers, creating more inclusive and equitable communities for all Nova Scotians. [AMM](#)



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Simon Wilmot, forest and environmental officer with the City of Charlottetown, said restoring an urban forest starts with manageable goals like tree-planting in parks.



Charlottetown works to restore urban forest

Lori Mayne (lmayne@fpeim.ca) is the communications and member services officer with the Federation of PEI Municipalities.

The City of Charlottetown lost an estimated 12,600 mature trees after post-tropical storm Fiona tore through Prince Edward Island in September 2022.

Restoring the canopy over the next decade would require planting almost seven times that amount – or 84,100 trees.

“If you plant a tree tomorrow, it will take at least 50 years to reach a comparable size to most of the trees that were lost,” said Simon Wilmot, the city’s forest and environmental officer. “It takes

a lot of smaller trees to equate to the loss of one big tree.”

Wilmot himself was initially “drafted” to the municipal staff to help with the cleanup after the devastating storm.

“It was like nothing I’d ever seen before,” he said of the destruction. Huge fallen trees blocked city streets, pulled down power lines, and fell

As part of its restoration effort, the City of Charlottetown has boosted its own tree-planting numbers, resulting in the planting of more than 3,000 trees and shrubs in 2024.

onto some homes and other buildings. Winds pulled massive trees right out of the ground, displaying their huge root systems like sod-covered plates on their sides. “It was apocalyptic.”

After the initial cleanup and response, the City of Charlottetown commissioned a post-Fiona urban forest restoration strategy to guide the work ahead.

“We wanted to know the scale of it all,” Wilmot said, noting the need to understand exactly what had been lost and how to replace it in a reasonable timeline.

Urban Forest Partnership

Wilmot said that tree-planting inside the municipality doesn't only include the work by the city itself.

Most of the property inside the municipality is privately owned. The city's tree canopy, therefore, comprises trees planted by:

- residents in their yards and gardens
- businesses, schools, hospitals, and other institutions on their properties
- the municipality at its parks, natural areas, and facilities

“The urban forest is a partnership,” Wilmot said.

As part of its restoration effort, the city has boosted its own tree-planting numbers. City-led activities and partnerships resulted in the planting of more than 3,000 trees and shrubs in 2024.

A year-end review from the city's environment and sustainability department showed that number represented about 1,000 more than in 2023 and about three times the amount typically planted before Fiona.

Wilmot credits the support of local watershed groups, schools and post-secondary institutions, businesses, and external funders for helping to reach that number by working with the city on its projects.

“We have to lean on our partnerships to be able to realize our goals,” he said.

As one example, the city has expanded experiential education and co-operation with local schools.

“Educators are looking for opportunities to provide students with experience in the field,” Wilmot said.

Grade school, high school, Holland College, and University of Prince Edward Island students have all helped with city tree-planting. These activities allow students to plant trees and learn about the challenges. In turn, the city benefits from the sheer “youth and vigour” students bring to the work.

“It's quite amazing to see what a hundred high school students can do over a couple of days,” Wilmot said.

Again, with the help of partners, the city also offered a residential tree-planting program, a business tree challenge, and community planting events in 2024. Local watershed groups provided vital support to planting in natural areas.

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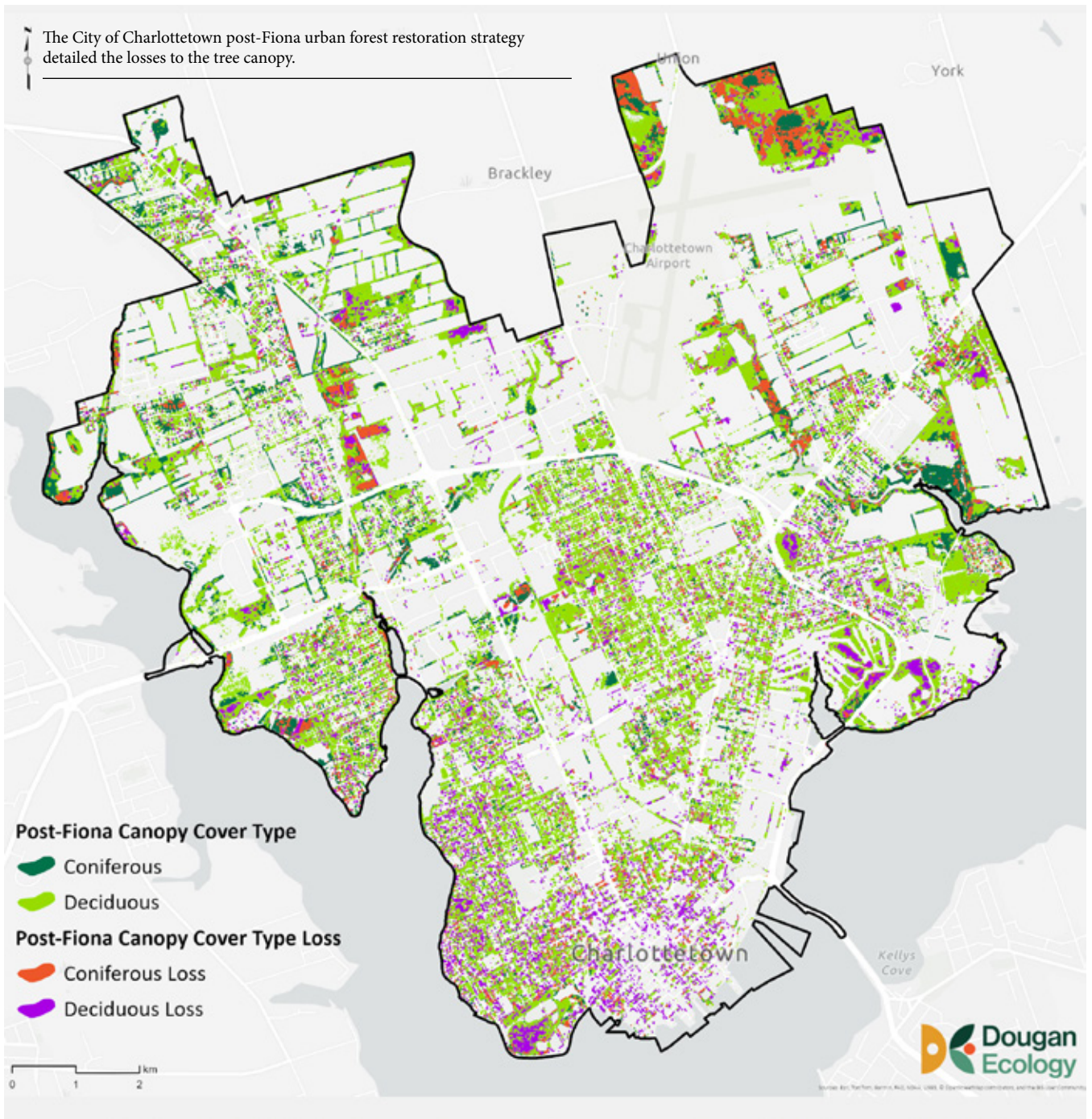


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The City of Charlottetown post-Fiona urban forest restoration strategy detailed the losses to the tree canopy.



Wilmot said the city hopes to maintain its record level of 3,000 in 2025 but, ultimately, the city has an “aspirational goal” to eventually reach 8,000 per year. But what are the limitations to reaching that number?

Challenges and Limitations

Finding human and financial resources poses a major challenge.

“It was an unprecedented natural disaster,” Wilmot said. “Existing resources responding to that level of disaster is, at best, a stretch. And we

are achieving well above our weight class right now.”

Other difficulties might not be as obvious. The majority of trees lost during Fiona were deciduous and typically 30 to 100 years old.

“Even when we plant the largest-sized tree that we can, where we have to use a backhoe to dig the hole and move the tree itself because humans can’t carry it, it still takes decades of growth for it to reach anywhere near the height of the trees that we lost,” Wilmot said.

Dryer, hotter springs make planting more difficult, and the city cannot necessarily replant trees in previous locations close to infrastructure.

“We don’t want to plant larger trees around power lines. A lot of the trees that we lost were old, so pipes had been laid in and around those trees,” Wilmot said. “We don’t want to take a backhoe to those same locations for fear of damaging the infrastructure that’s in the ground.”

Wilmot also says some people may feel nervous about having large



Local high school students help the City of Charlottetown restore a natural area. *Photo courtesy of City of Charlottetown*

trees planted too close to their homes. During Fiona, the creaking and falling of huge trees caused real trauma for residents.

“They have an understandable fear of trees being planted again around or close to their property,” he said.

Finally, rapid population growth creates another challenge.

“We are a city that is facing enormous pressure to grow, and with that comes the need to develop. Often, development comes on spaces that previously had some trees,” Wilmot said, emphasizing the importance of effective land use planning.

Benefits of Urban Forests

Wilmot stressed the need for manageable goals – breaking the problem into its “constituent parts.”

For the City of Charlottetown, such manageable goals included increasing tree planting in parks, in riparian areas, and along the Confederation Trail and active transportation routes.

Wilmot said there are benefits of building the urban forest in any municipality – whether it is to restore losses or simply enhance the canopy.

Trees encourage recreation, provide wildlife habitat, support the economy by enhancing tourism, and offer benefits for mental health and quality of life. They also help with heat, provide shade, mitigate floods and runoff, buffer winds, and reduce pollutants in the air.

“Trees represent a nature-based solution to some of the most difficult challenges posed by climate change,” Wilmot said. [AMM](#)



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Salisbury's role in innovative pilot project on cultural policy

Le rôle de Salisbury dans un projet pilote novateur en matière de politique culturelle

The Union of Municipalities of New Brunswick (UMNB) is collaborating on an exciting pilot project in the Town of Salisbury to support municipalities in the creation of new cultural policies. The project is in partnership with the Acadian Association of Professional Artists of New Brunswick (AAAPNB), ArtsLink NB, and the Francophone Association of Municipalities of New Brunswick (AFMNB).

L'Union des municipalités du Nouveau-Brunswick (UMNB) collabore à un projet pilote passionnant dans la ville de Salisbury afin d'aider les municipalités à créer de nouvelles politiques culturelles. Le projet est mené en partenariat avec l'Association acadienne des artistes professionnels du Nouveau-Brunswick (AAAPNB), ArtsLink NB et l'Association francophone des municipalités du Nouveau-Brunswick (AFMNB).

Structured Approach to Identity and Governance

Approche Structurée de L'identité et de la Gouvernance

Salisbury's elected officials, staff, and volunteers are collaborating with project partners to embed arts and culture into municipal governance and strengthen the new community's identity in light of local governance reform. This project aims to improve quality of life, foster sustainable development, and promote regional tourism by creating a shared sense of pride among residents.

Les élus, le personnel et les bénévoles de Salisbury collaborent avec les partenaires du projet pour intégrer les arts et la culture dans la gouvernance municipale et renforcer l'identité de la nouvelle communauté à l'égard de la réforme de la gouvernance locale. Ce projet vise d'améliorer la qualité de vie, favoriser un développement durable et promouvoir le tourisme régional, et créer une fierté partagée parmi les résidents.

Salisbury Mayor Robert Campbell expressed the importance of the initiative, stating, "Cultural policy was a part of my platform when I ran for mayor. This pilot project came at an important time when the council unanimously saw the need and alignment with the overall goal of our town. It provides us with a structured approach to ensure that arts and culture are embedded in our town's identity and governance."

Le maire de Salisbury, M. Robert Campbell, a souligné l'importance de cette initiative, indiquant que « La politique culturelle faisait partie de ma plateforme lorsque je me suis présenté à la mairie. Ce projet pilote est arrivé à un moment opportun, alors que le conseil, de manière unanime, constatait la nécessité d'une harmonisation des objectifs globaux de notre ville. Ce projet nous fournit une démarche

- The project will advance in three key stages:
- creating the cultural policy
 - developing an implementation plan
 - launching a unifying community project



Salisbury Mayor Robert Campbell.
Robert Campbell, maire de Salisbury.



Salisbury Arts and Culture Community committee (left to right): Mayor Robert Campbell, Sarah Irving, Mitl Gaxiola, Caroline Humar-Barrett, Michael Wood, Coun. Phyllis Bannister, Katy Doucette, and Massimo Caracristi. Absent from photo: Connie Colpitts, Dawn Beckwith, and Kimani Muir.

Comité communautaire des arts et de la culture de Salisbury (de gauche à droite) : Maire Robert Campbell, Sarah Irving, Mitl Gaxiola, Caroline Humar-Barrett, Michael Wood, conseillère Phyllis Bannister, Katy Doucette, Massimo Caracristi. Absent de la photo: Connie Colpitts, Dawn Beckwith, Kimani Muir

Salisbury will receive ongoing guidance and resources, including the translated “Guide to Help Communities in the Development of Cultural Policies,” originally produced by the AAAPNB. The project is expected to be completed by Spring 2027.

Roadmap for Cultural Policies

The impact of this project will go beyond Salisbury. The lessons learned and outcomes achieved will provide a roadmap for other anglophone and bilingual municipalities across New Brunswick interested in developing their own cultural policies.

“By engaging our residents and ensuring inclusivity in cultural policy development, we are laying the groundwork for a more connected and vibrant Salisbury,” Mayor Campbell said. “This foundation will help provide communities of all sizes the tools to build their own cultural policies.”

Campbell said the success of this project will be assured by involving everyone in the community.

“The support and involvement of community members have been vital to the project’s progress,” he said. “Volunteers, elected officials, and residents have been encouraged to bring their skills and ideas to the table to help create a policy that reflects the town’s unique identity and will foster ongoing community development through arts and culture.”

As Salisbury leads the way, this pilot project highlights how municipalities can leverage arts and culture to foster collaboration, strengthen communities, and build a more vibrant, sustainable future. [AMM](#)

structurée pour faire en sorte que les arts et la culture soient intégrés dans l’identité et la gouvernance de notre ville. »

Le projet se déroulera en trois étapes clés :

- création de la politique culturelle
- élaborer un plan de mise en œuvre
- lancer un projet rassembleur

Salisbury recevra des conseils et des ressources en continu, notamment le guide produit par l’AAAPNB, intitulé « Politique Culturelle : Guide à l’intention de municipalités ». Le projet devrait être achevé d’ici le printemps 2027.

Feuille de Route pour les Politiques Culturelles

L’impact de ce projet sera ressenti bien au-delà de la ville de Salisbury. Les leçons apprises et les résultats obtenus serviront de feuilles de route pour les autres municipalités anglophones et bilingues, à la grandeur du Nouveau-Brunswick, qui se montreront intéressées à élaborer leurs propres politiques culturelles.

« En mobilisant nos résidents et en utilisant des mesures inclusives dans l’élaboration de notre politique culturelle, nous mettons en place les fondements qui feront de Salisbury une ville plus dynamique et plus branchée. Ces fondements contribueront à offrir aux collectivités de toutes tailles les outils nécessaires pour créer leurs propres politiques culturelles. »

Le maire Campbell a déclaré que la réussite de ce projet sera assurée par l’implication de tous les membres de la communauté.

« Le soutien et l’implication des membres de la collectivité ont été essentiels à la progression du projet. On a incité des bénévoles, des représentants élus et des résidents à mettre leurs compétences et leurs idées à contribution pour aider à la création d’une politique qui reflète l’identité unique de la ville et qui favorisera un développement communautaire continu par l’entremise des arts et de la culture. »

Avec Salisbury pour ouvrir la voie, ce projet pilote souligne comment les municipalités peuvent mettre à profit les arts et la culture pour favoriser la collaboration, renforcer les collectivités et bâtir un avenir plus dynamique et plus durable. [AMM](#)



Municipal approaches to economic development



Tobias Romaniuk (tromaniuk@municipalnl.ca) is the communications and marketing officer at Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador.

The municipal landscape in Newfoundland and Labrador is a bit different than in other Atlantic Canada provinces, as there is no regional structure or regional governance. Despite this, municipalities are increasingly taking a regional approach to economic development initiatives.

We spoke with economic development directors in four of the province's larger municipalities. In each municipality, community collaboration – both in a regional context and among various sectors and groups within the municipalities – is a core element of economic development.

Grand Falls-Windsor

In Central Newfoundland, the Town of Grand Falls-Windsor, where Lawrence Ducey sits as economic development manager, is focused on encouraging

new business through land development incentives and planning to support long-term growth while pushing for infrastructure planning and funding.

Business drives development, and you need to support those businesses.

“They need to be looking at them as customers, as in these are people we need to take care of,” Ducey said.

Development, he said, is the aim and will in turn attract new residents. Ideally, a town needs to find what is most suitable for the business and service those needs. Once that happens, Ducey said, businesses will be more receptive, will have more confidence in you, and will want to invest in your community.

Putting this service-minded philosophy into action has translated into a new land development policy for the town that will, through a tax abatement plan, pave the way for previously unusable land to be turned into usable, developed land housing new businesses.

The aim, Ducey said, is to encourage new business by making these sites more attractive to development. In the short term, there is a potential reduction in business taxes collected by the town, but Ducey emphasized that a long-term planning view is required for economic development to be successful.

At the same time, there is a need to address immediate concerns in the short

term, like the problem of aging infrastructure. Much of the water pipes in the town are iron, and well beyond their expected life expectancy. But, Ducey said, through a series of past planning failures at all levels of government, there is not a clear path forward to solving the town's infrastructure problems.

The problem of unfunded infrastructure maintenance and the lack of robust infrastructure planning is a province-wide problem, which is why towns across the province have asked Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador, by way of a resolution at the 2023 annual general meeting, to advocate for the provincial government to create a long-term municipal infrastructure plan addressing the concerns of municipalities of all sizes across the province.

Ducey remains focused on achieving real, noticeable developments while working to build, through legislation and policy, the systems required to make it happen. This approach is paying off, as the Town of Grand Falls-Windsor currently has 30 different development projects underway across a range of sectors.

Mount Pearl

Mount Pearl is a city in transition, said Jeremy Schwartz, the city's manager of marketing, communications, economic

development and housing. Recruiting new business and residents to the city is a core focus, bolstered by a program of business grants provided by the city.

With other municipalities on all borders, the city is growing through planned densification. Schwartz takes a holistic approach to economic development, taking into account parks, tourism, housing, and community development, in addition to attracting business to the town.

On the housing front, the city encourages high-density housing developments. Assisted by federal housing grants, 386 new housing units are in various stages of completion. Business attraction initiatives are funded in-house, with a range of city programs that includes scaled tax systems and business improvement grants.

Attracting business and facilitating housing are only part of the plan. The city is also working to improve sports and recreation programs and services through building new facilities and enhancing existing infrastructure. One of those enhancements involved installing kiosks along the city's trail network to serve ice cream and offer bicycle rentals. On the infrastructure front, a new splash pad is being built, along with other family-oriented facilities.

Torbay

In Torbay, on the edge of St. John's, the focus is on supporting and retaining existing businesses, said Kerry Murray, the town's director of economic development, tourism, history, and culture. Alongside those efforts, multiple initiatives are underway to improve the quality of life for residents, with several projects taking on a regional focus.

Being next door to the province's capital city, many residents commute to work in St. John's. But to explain Torbay as just a bedroom community would be underselling it. It is, in its own right, a destination community. It is also the province's first Rainbow Registered town.

The recognition came about after Murray looked into what was required to be certified as a Rainbow Registered municipality by Canada's 2SLGBTQI+ Chamber of Commerce. The town, it turns out, already had most of the required policies and practices in place, thanks to council seeing the value in being an inclusive and welcoming community.

"It aligns with the values of the community and the values of council to where we can promote inclusion and equity and diversity and build on that in our community," Murray said.

On the surface, pursuing things like a Rainbow Registered certification – an initiative led by Murray – may not seem like economic development, but it is all part of a larger plan.

"I think if you create a really good environment and a really good and sustainable community, other things will follow," said Murray, whose focus is on supporting and retaining existing business.

It is not just Torbay business that Murray is looking to support, though, as he recognizes that what is good for the region is good for the town. This holds true for both tourism and public transportation.

Torbay, together with other towns in the region, is currently working on a feasibility study to introduce an electric vehicle transit system to the area. The intent is to provide increased transportation options, ideally linking in with St. John's



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Community development is often also economic development, and the lines are often blurred, but the benefit is clear: building and supporting community-minded initiatives creates a desirable town, the sort that will convince businesses to set up shop and people to set down roots. An art gallery, for example, is just such an initiative.

transit system to make the area more attractive to people who do not own vehicles.

“It allows us to be more proactive in attracting newcomers to our community and to the region,” Murray said.

To that end, the town is also in the process of hiring an immigration settlement co-ordinator to develop networks with the business community, schools, and non-profit and community groups.

Clareville

About a two-hour drive west of St. John’s, the Town of Clareville is embracing arts, culture, and a regional approach to tourism as a core component of economic development efforts.

Like many larger towns in the province, Clareville has a dedicated economic development office. Colin Holloway, as the only person in that office, is expected to have relationships across all departments, as well as the community, and an active engagement with council. The collaborative nature of the job goes well beyond the confines of town hall, as Holloway regularly engages with the wider community and region on a range of projects.

Community development is often also economic development, and the lines are often blurred, but the benefit is clear: building and supporting community-minded initiatives creates a desirable town, the sort that will convince businesses to set up shop and people to set down roots. An art gallery, for example, is just such an initiative.

Early in 2025, Clareville officially opened its new art gallery in the Clareville Events Centre. The art gallery came about through community consultations on the town’s strategic economic plan, which includes a priority to promote arts and culture and recreation in the community, including establishing a regional arts council.

Community development is not a fast process. It typically takes three to five years to see results, Holloway said, adding that the town is currently in Year 2 of the five-year plan.

It has taken some convincing to keep funders and council on board, but he has done it, albeit with some changes to plans and people along the way. The key to success in economic development is to not fall victim to pursuing short-term gains at the cost of long-term benefits.

“You’ve always got to see the big picture,” Holloway said.

AMM



Challenges in application-based infrastructure funding



Lucy MacLeod (lmacleod@nsfm.ca) the fund navigator for the Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities.

Accessing funding through application-based grants can be challenging for municipalities. While many opportunities exist, barriers in the application process for provincial programs and other funding sources can prevent municipalities from successfully securing funding.

To better understand these challenges, the Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities conducted a survey, resulting in the February 2024 report, “Improving Application-Based Infrastructure Funding for Municipalities in Nova Scotia.”

The survey, which received responses

from 34 of the province’s 49 municipalities, identified three key issues:

- limited notice and tight application deadlines
- misalignment with fiscal and construction timelines
- capacity constraints for grant applications

Funding partners – in particular, the provincial Department of Municipal Affairs – were engaged in the findings of the survey and interested in solving the issues that were identified.

Limited Notice, Tight Deadlines

Many municipalities in Nova Scotia are dealing with the challenge of limited notice and tight application deadlines for infrastructure grant opportunities. In fact, 66 per cent of survey respondents highlighted the difficulties of receiving short notice on calls for proposals, making it challenging to compile necessary documents, consult with councils, and secure required approvals.

“Specifically, applications that require municipal funding contributions require significantly more time to complete, as they require council

authorization, and this can take over a month,” one municipality said.

Recognizing these obstacles, some municipalities have emphasized the need for regular annual intakes that allow for better planning.

“The best process is regular annual intakes that municipalities can plan for. That typically results in better project planning,” one respondent said.

Programs with predictable, recurring deadlines would enable municipalities to prepare more effectively, leading to higher-quality applications and a more inclusive process for municipalities of all sizes.

Fiscal and Construction Timelines

The second major challenge reported was the disconnect between grant approval timelines, the municipal fiscal year, and Nova Scotia’s short construction season.

Municipalities often wait well into the year for funding approvals, delaying project start dates and increasing costs due to limited contractor availability.

“Approvals that end up creating late-spring or summer tendering inflate

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Small municipalities are often stretched thin, and unexpected grant opportunities can quickly become overwhelming due to the time and effort required to create a competitive application.

pricing, as most contractors have relatively full work schedules,” one municipality said.

Addressing this issue would require consultation with municipalities to establish an optimal timeline for grant applications and disbursements. Aligning funding announcements with both the fiscal year and the construction season would allow for better project planning and execution.

“Funding announcements should be made earlier in the fiscal year. Often, work must be carried out within the same fiscal year as the announcement, and if announced too late, there isn’t enough time to complete the work,” another respondent said.

Capacity Constraints for Grant Applications

Many municipalities struggle with limited capacity for grant applications, a challenge further exacerbated by tight application deadlines and short notice periods.

Small municipalities are often stretched thin, and unexpected grant opportunities can quickly become overwhelming due to the time and effort required to create a competitive application.

“Some grants come as a surprise, so we have no way to plan with such a small group of individuals. There is always low capacity for these types of applications,” one municipality said.

To help ease this burden, municipalities have advocated for a more streamlined funding approach. One suggestion is to allocate annual funding to each municipality based on set criteria rather than requiring a full application process for every opportunity. This would enable municipalities to plan more effectively and make better use of available funds.

Announcement for 2025

Recognizing these barriers, the Department of Municipal Affairs will implement changes in 2025 that will address the three key issues raised in the survey. This includes shifting to predictable annual intakes and adjusting some program timelines from spring/summer to February to better align with the construction season.

Additionally, since 2023, the department has supported the Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities’ fund navigator position, which helps municipalities identify and apply for grants – particularly those with limited capacity to navigate application processes. The program will continue to advocate for similar improvements across other funding programs to reduce timing conflicts and increase accessibility.

While progress has been made, there remains a significant gap in funding availability for municipal infrastructure. Increased, predictable, and more accessible funding is required to ensure municipalities across Nova Scotia have the resources they need to build stronger, more resilient communities. [AMM](#)



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