

P.E.I. municipalities  
respond to  
record growth

Revitalizing Communities:  
A Collaborative Approach to  
Rural Housing Development

Navigating the  
municipal role in  
the housing crisis

# Atlantic

MUNICIPAL MAGAZINE







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# What's Inside

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# Presidents' Address



**Andrew Black**  
President/Président, UMNB

**A**mid the challenges and opportunities our municipalities face due to reform, the Union of Municipalities of New Brunswick (UMNB) remains committed to collaborating with the other Atlantic associations to build stronger communities.

New Brunswick's population is growing, which is amplifying demands for affordable housing and expanded municipal infrastructure. We are proud to collaborate on the newest edition of the *Atlantic Municipal Magazine*, which offers insights and strategies for navigating these changes.

Au milieu des défis et des opportunités auxquels sont confrontées les municipalités du Nouveau-Brunswick en raison de la réforme, l'UMNB reste déterminée à collaborer avec les autres associations de l'Atlantique pour bâtir des communautés plus fortes.

La population du Nouveau-Brunswick augmente, ce qui amplifie la demande de logements abordables et d'infrastructures municipales élargies. Nous sommes fiers de collaborer à la nouvelle édition de la Magazine municipal de l'Atlantique, qui propose des idées et des stratégies pour faire face à ces changements.



**Carolyn Bolivar-Getson**  
President, NSFM

**A**s we welcome the vibrant energy of spring, it is my privilege to address the readership of the *Atlantic Municipal Magazine* on behalf of the Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities (NSFM).

In these transformative times, our municipalities stand resilient, navigating challenges with unwavering commitment to community prosperity. As president, I am inspired by the collaborative spirit that defines Nova Scotia's municipal landscape.

Together, we forge paths toward sustainable growth, fostering innovation and inclusivity. As blossoms emerge, so too does our collective determination to build a future marked by resilience, unity, and shared success.

I extend my gratitude to our dedicated municipal leaders and look forward to the prosperous endeavours that lie ahead. Wishing you a season of renewal and progress.



**Amy Coady**  
President, MNL

**M**unicipalities Newfoundland and Labrador (MNL) is pleased to participate in this latest edition of *Atlantic Municipal Magazine* and to share stories from a Newfoundland and Labrador perspective.

It is so great to share positive stories of growth and economic prosperity. These tales are the result of the hard work done by municipal leaders, who largely work in a volunteer capacity. Their selfless work to improve their communities is now paying dividends in the form of growing populations, increased economic activity, and improvements to the quality of life in these communities.

There is still much work to be done, especially in regard to housing and infrastructure. At MNL, we look forward to supporting our members as this important work continues.

Through its advocacy and program delivery efforts, MNL is progressing efforts to improve the future sustainability of municipalities in Newfoundland and Labrador. We look forward to telling those stories, as well.



**Bruce MacDougall**  
President, FPEIM

**R**ecord population growth in Prince Edward Island has created rich diversity but also contributed to challenges in providing housing, expanding municipal services, funding municipal infrastructure, and protecting our land – a vital resource.

The Federation of PEI Municipalities (FPEIM) has been supporting municipal governments by advocating for a new provincial financial framework, collaborating with the provincial government on a municipal infrastructure fund, pressing for interim measures to protect P.E.I.'s land until a provincewide land use policy is in place, and calling for restructuring to create larger and more viable municipalities right across the province.

We're pleased to partner on *Atlantic Municipal Magazine* and to share some of the work of P.E.I. municipalities to accommodate growth.



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

# Population growth in N.L. – setting the scene

Looking at Statistics Canada population data, Newfoundland and Labrador's population has risen and fallen in ways not experienced by other provinces.

Since 1950, Canada's population as a whole has been on a steady upward trend. But in Newfoundland and Labrador, the data tell a different story – a story of the fallout from the collapse of the cod fishery, the development of an offshore oil industry and, in 2023, the largest year-over-year population increase of the past 50 years.

The cod fishery moratorium came into effect in July 1992, resulting in the loss of about 30,000 jobs and contributing to provincial out-migration. While other provinces were growing year over year, Newfoundland and Labrador experienced a population exodus that began in July 1993 and continued until July 2007 before again beginning to climb.

Modest provincial population gains didn't match national growth rates, but they were an improvement from the previous pattern of decline. These population increases coincide with several economic drivers.

In the late 1990s and through the early 2000s, offshore oil production ramped up, the Muskrat Falls

hydroelectric megaproject began, construction of the Vale nickel processing plant in Long Harbour had begun, and the province was generally experiencing a boom. People who had moved away for work returned home, in addition to the new residents moving to the province.

## Labour Market Shortage Encourages Immigration Efforts

This uptick in population illustrates one of the main reasons for a focus on population growth: the need for labour. With the current population not meeting the needs of the labour market, employers and government have looked beyond provincial and national borders for the required skilled workers. But the labour market shortage is a global problem, which translates into a tough recruitment reality.

To combat this, the Newfoundland and Labrador government has stepped up to increase immigration. The provincial government sent a contingent to Europe to encourage Ukrainian refugees to relocate to Newfoundland and Labrador, leading to about 2,000 Ukrainians settling in Newfoundland and Labrador. Government representatives also travelled to Fort McMurray, Alta., to encourage former

Newfoundland and Labrador residents to return home.

The approach, combined with federal government immigration efforts, seems to be working. Newfoundland and Labrador saw its largest single year (July 2022-July 2023) population gain of the past 50 years. However, the province's low birth rate and high death rate contributed to Newfoundland and Labrador's population still being the slowest growing of all the provinces, at 1.8 per cent. In comparison, the other three Atlantic provinces each grew at more than three per cent year over year.

As of July 2023, the province's population has grown to 538,605. Although this is a significant increase from the July 2007 population of 509,047, it is still short of the population at the beginning of the cod moratorium. In January 1993, the province's population was 580,819.

The question of whether or not immigration can solve Newfoundland and Labrador's population woes is one that raises another question: will these new residents choose to stay and make a life here, or will they head to other parts of Canada? The answer to this question will be the basis of the next chapter of the history of Newfoundland and Labrador. [AMM](#)





The annual DiverseCity Festival celebrates diversity and helps newcomers and established Islanders connect – promoting newcomer retention in the process. Photo: The DiverseCity Festival visits Alberton, P.E.I. by Mostafa Alizadegan, courtesy of DiverseCity

# P.E.I. municipalities respond to record growth



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

Prince Edward Island may be Canada's smallest province, but it's also one of the fastest growing. A provincial population report in September 2023 indicated P.E.I. had a five-year growth of 14.1 per cent from 2018 to 2023, leading all provinces and territories for the period. As of July 1, 2023, an estimated 173,787 people lived on Prince Edward Island. The annual growth rate of 3.9 per cent (6,599 people) from 2022 to 2023 was eclipsed only by Alberta.

"International immigration continues to be the driver," says the report, adding that interprovincial migration has been another strong contributor. In response, P.E.I. municipalities have been expanding services, investing in infrastructure, welcoming newcomers, and working with other orders of government to address housing supply. We gathered a few examples of some of their innovative projects and partnerships to accommodate growth.



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### **Mayor's Task Force on Attainable Housing – City of Summerside**

Summerside Mayor Dan Kutcher created a mayor's task force on attainable housing to generate ideas to inform city council's work and a new housing supply strategy. Created in March 2023, the task force included the mayor plus a dozen people from municipal government, industry, non-profits, and the community.

The City of Summerside is expected to grow from about 16,000 people, as of the 2021 census, to more than 20,000 in 2031, creating the need to create 200 new housing units per year. The task force's 30 recommendations relate to areas that include the city's official plan and bylaw, programs and services, industry, and community engagement and advocacy. The city has created an implementation team to see the recommendations through.

### **Tax Incentives for Housing Development – Town of Borden-Carleton**

The Town of Borden-Carleton brought in tax incentives to help encourage development of housing. The town has a population of just under 800 people (2021 census) and provides the gateway to the island from the Confederation Bridge. New housing is needed to:

- support and attract growth
- help seniors downsize and stay in their community
- provide housing for low-income residents
- create living accommodations for local workers

In October 2023, the town issued a request for proposal for housing on two town-owned lots. As part of the request, the town offered developers of this and other housing projects rebates or phased rebates of the municipal portion of property taxes for five years.

### **More Flexible Development Options – Town of O'Leary**

The Town of O'Leary is working to promote housing supply by allowing more variety in permitted housing types in its updated official plan. The western P.E.I. town has a population of close to 900 people, according to the 2021 census.

Previously, development zones were strictly separated. With changes to the plan, the town will no longer have any single-use zone. The lowest-density zone, in particular, will offer more options. As a result, residents will have the possibility of more housing options to better meet their needs or stage of life.

For example, the new plan supports clustered housing (multiple buildings on one parcel), allows for garden suites and secondary suites, and introduces mini-homes and tiny homes into the low-density residential zone. At the time of writing, the plan was being prepared to submit to the province for final approval.

### **Open House for Newcomers – City of Charlottetown**

The City of Charlottetown revamped its annual welcome event to give newcomers more opportunity to know their mayor, council, and other community members.

P.E.I.'s capital city had held a formal welcome reception and information sessions for newcomers at city hall before the COVID-19 pandemic. After consulting with the Immigrant and Refugee Services Association (IRSA), the city wanted





The City of Charlottetown revamped its annual welcome event to give newcomers more opportunity to know their mayor, council, and other community members. Photos: Charlottetown Mayor Philip Brown poses with visitors to the city's open house for newcomers by Evelina Sharipova, courtesy of City of Charlottetown

to give newcomers more opportunity to simply mingle with municipal representatives.

As a result, the city created a drop-in style open house, where newcomers could tour council chambers, get photos in the mayor's chair, enjoy appetizers and refreshments, and chat with the mayor, council, and others in the community.

**DiverseCity Festival – IRSA and Municipalities Across P.E.I.**

The annual DiverseCity Festival has partnered with municipalities to expand across P.E.I. The IRSA festival celebrates diversity and helps newcomers and established Islanders connect – promoting newcomer retention in the process.

The festival features stage performances, food vendors, dance and sport demonstrations, and crafts from the variety of rich cultures that now make up P.E.I. The festival began in 2007 in the provincial capital of Charlottetown.

Through partnerships with municipalities and others, the festival has grown to include multiple locations each year. In 2023, the hosts included the towns of Alberton, Souris, and Three Rivers, and the cities of Charlottetown and Summerside. [AMM](#)



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Municipal breaches are becoming more common in recent years. Current programs in place to help municipalities focus on training and information, rather than offering protection. Designed specifically to keep your community's data safe, the Municipal Edge solves this.

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A small-town data breach in Ontario was reported to be \$1.3 Million, costing each taxpayer \$173.34.

The breach began on 20 July 2022 and was not deemed as concluded until November.



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### CHALLENGE: CYBERCRIME

Local government breaches have become more common recently, with incidents in St. Marys, North Bay, and Midland, Ontario; Prince Edward Island; and others. The default reaction to increase security awareness training is proving ineffective and stretching human capital budgets.

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Blocks Social  
Engineering



Blocks Unknown  
Connections

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1

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2

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3

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Vanessa Pettersson (vanessa.pettersson@umnbc.ca) est coordinatrice des communications et des événements à l'Union des municipalités du Nouveau-Brunswick.



Nackawic-Millville's story isn't merely about securing funding; it's a testament to the collaborative spirit within the community.

L'histoire de Nackawic-Millville ne se résume pas à l'obtention d'un financement ; elle témoigne de l'esprit de collaboration qui règne au sein de la communauté.

# Revitalizing communities: A collaborative approach to rural housing development

## Revitalisation des collectivités: Une stratégie collaborative de développement du logement rural

A success story is happening in Nackawic-Millville, located 65 kilometres west of Fredericton. Recently, the community received a substantial boost of \$351,450 for developing a comprehensive plan for 47 acres of municipal-owned land. In collaboration with Housing Hub of New Brunswick, this plan intends to pave the way for a sustainable housing development.

As part of the recent release of New Brunswick's "Housing for All" provincial strategy, in 2023, the Regional Development Corporation has combined two initiatives to make \$22.5 million available annually through preconstruction funding and small community housing infrastructure funding.

By addressing preconstruction needs such as the completion of housing needs assessments, feasibility studies, and preliminary technical work, the fund helps municipalities, regional service commissions, First Nations, and not-for-profit developers demonstrate the viability of proposed developments.

The small community infrastructure component supports the costs of upgrading or expanding the infrastructure

Voilà une histoire de réussite qui se passe à Nackawic-Millville, située 65 kilomètres à l'ouest de Fredericton. Récemment, la collectivité a reçu un coup de pouce considérable de 351 450 \$, pour le développement d'un plan détaillé pour un terrain de 47 acres appartenant à la municipalité. Ce plan, en collaboration avec le Réseau de logements du Nouveau-Brunswick, a pour objectif de paver la voie à un développement de logement durable.

Dans le cadre de la stratégie provinciale du Nouveau-Brunswick «Un logement pour tous» récemment rendue publique, en 2023, la Société de développement régional a combiné deux initiatives afin de rendre disponible annuellement un montant de 22,5 M\$, par l'entremise de subventions avant construction et d'infrastructure de logement pour les petites collectivités.

En répondant aux besoins précédant la construction, comme la réalisation des évaluations des besoins en logements, des études de faisabilité et des travaux techniques préliminaires, le fonds aide les municipalités, les commissions de services régionaux, les Premières Nations et les promoteurs sans but lucratif à démontrer la viabilité des développements proposés.



Nackawic-Millville Mayor Tim Fox

Le maire de Nackawic-Millville, Tim Fox

needed to create additional housing in communities with fewer than 25,000 people.

Mayor Tim Fox of Nackawic-Millville recounts the journey that led to this pivotal moment. He reminisces about the community's aspirations for economic growth, particularly through the revitalization of previously owned municipal land.

### Filling the Void of Housing Availability

Even before the inception of the provincial government's Housing for All strategy, the town had been actively exploring various avenues for development and growth, collaborating with the Destination Nackawic Economic Development Corporation (DNEDC) and envisioning a brighter future.

The DNEDC is a not-for-profit focused on promoting sustainable economic growth in the Nackawic region through collaborative efforts involving residents, businesses, and the public sector. It operates to define pathways for development while leveraging partnerships, considering the significance of the Mactaquac Headpond's geographical influence on the traditional parishes of southwest York County that border its shores.

"When the revitalized NB Housing Corporation came into the picture, discussions began with Minister Green and other housing authorities, leading to a collaboration with the Housing Hub," Mayor Fox says. "This marked our entry into the Housing for All strategy, and notably, we were the first municipality to secure funding under this initiative."

Nackawic-Millville's proactive approach toward growth and development has been fuelled by a recognition of its potential and existing challenges. The amalgamation of communities due to municipal reform signalled an urgent need to focus on the growing population and expanding the tax base. The boost in the housing market and limited availability created a significant demand for residences and rentals, highlighting the urgent need for action.

Mayor Fox points out the community is utilizing a piece of land earmarked for development since the 1970s. The current momentum represents a deliberate effort to expedite progress and fill the void in housing availability.

La composante liée à l'infrastructure pour les petites collectivités soutient les coûts d'amélioration ou d'expansion de l'infrastructure nécessaires pour créer des logements additionnels dans les collectivités comptant moins de 25 000 habitants.

Le maire de Nackawic-Millville, Tim Fox, raconte le périple qui a mené à ce moment crucial. Il se souvient des aspirations de la collectivité en matière de croissance économique, tout spécialement par l'entremise de la revitalisation d'un terrain municipal qui était auparavant une propriété privée. Avant même la création de la stratégie du gouvernement provincial Un logement pour tous, la ville avait activement examiné diverses possibilités de développement et de croissance, en collaboration avec la société Destination Nackawic Economic Development Corporation (DNEDC) en imaginant un avenir meilleur.

### Comblent le manque de logements disponibles

La DNEDC est un organisme à but non lucratif axé sur la promotion d'une croissance économique durable dans la région de Nackawic par l'entremise d'efforts de collaboration impliquant les résidents, les entreprises et le secteur public. Son travail est de définir des voies de développement tout en mobilisant des partenariats et en tenant compte de l'importance de l'influence géographique du réservoir Mactaquac sur les paroisses traditionnelles du sud-ouest du comté d'York qui longent ses rives.

«Lorsque la Société revitalisée Habitation NB est entrée dans le tableau, des discussions ont commencé avec la ministre Green et d'autres autorités en matière de logement, ce qui a mené à une collaboration avec le Réseau de logements», se rappelle le maire Fox. «C'est ce qui a marqué notre entrée dans la stratégie Un logement pour tous et, il faut le mentionner, nous avons été la première municipalité à obtenir du financement en vertu de cette initiative.»

L'approche proactive de Nackawic-Millville face à la croissance et au développement a été alimentée par la reconnaissance de son potentiel et des défis existants. La fusion des collectivités résultant de la réforme municipale a mis en lumière le besoin urgent de se concentrer sur la population grandissante et d'élargir l'assiette fiscale. La dynamisation du marché du logement et la disponibilité limitée ont créé une demande considérable en ce qui concerne les résidences et les locations, soulignant le besoin urgent d'agir.

Le maire Fox fait remarquer que la collectivité utilise une portion de terrain qui était destinée au développement depuis les années 1970. L'impulsion actuelle représente un effort délibéré d'accélérer la progression et de combler le vide en matière de disponibilité des logements.

Les initiatives de la ville vont au-delà du logement; elles comprennent des plans de développement plus approfondi du bord de l'eau, de collaboration avec des partenaires de l'industrie touristique et des discussions avec les clubs locaux pour faire de Nackawic-Millville un endroit attrayant à visiter et où il fait bon vivre.

### Les zones rurales peuvent renaître

En reconnaissant les défis uniques auxquels doivent faire face les collectivités rurales lorsqu'il est question de développement immobilier, le maire Fox souligne l'importance du soutien du gouvernement pour combler ces écarts.





As part of the recent release of New Brunswick's "Housing for All" provincial strategy, in 2023, the Regional Development Corporation has combined two initiatives to make \$22.5 million available annually through preconstruction funding and small community housing infrastructure funding.

Dans le cadre de la récente publication de la stratégie provinciale "Logement pour tous" du Nouveau-Brunswick, en 2023, la Société de développement régional a combiné deux initiatives pour mettre à disposition 22,5 millions de dollars par an sous la forme d'un financement de préconstruction et d'un financement de l'infrastructure de logement pour les petites communautés.

The town's initiatives extend beyond housing, with plans to develop the waterfront further, collaborating with tourism partners and engaging with local clubs to make Nackawic-Millville an attractive place to live and visit.

### Rural Areas can Thrive Again

Acknowledging the unique challenges faced by rural communities in housing development, Mayor Fox emphasizes the significance of government support in bridging these gaps.

Unlike urban settings where private developers swiftly build and fill subdivisions, rural areas require additional assistance due to varying market dynamics and economic considerations. He emphasizes how housing, attracting businesses, and community growth are all connected.

"Attracting businesses hinges on having available residences for potential employees. It's like solving a puzzle – each piece, whether it's housing, infrastructure, or business, contributes to the larger picture of community prosperity," Mayor Fox says.

Nackawic-Millville's success story isn't merely about securing funding; it's a testament to the collaborative spirit within the community. Mayor Fox credits the cohesive vision shared among council members, fostering an environment where consensus and shared objectives drive progress.

Having a majority of council members who were part of the transition committee during municipal reform has been instrumental in carrying forward a unified vision for growth. The town's commitment to collective success across its diverse regions sets an inspiring precedent for rural revitalization efforts that others can follow.

As Nackawic-Millville moves forward with its housing plan and various growth strategies, it shows how working together can accomplish big changes. This community proves that when everyone shares a vision and the right government supports it, rural areas can thrive again. [AMM](#)

Car, contrairement aux emplacements urbains, où des promoteurs privés construisent et remplissent les lotissements avec rapidité, les régions rurales requièrent de l'aide additionnelle en raison des dynamiques de marché et des considérations économiques différentes avec lesquelles elles doivent composer. Il souligne à quel point les questions du logement, de l'attraction des entreprises et de la croissance des collectivités sont toutes reliées.

«L'attraction des entreprises repose sur la disponibilité de résidences pour les employés potentiels. C'est comme pour résoudre un casse-tête – chaque pièce, qu'il s'agisse du logement, de l'infrastructure ou d'une entreprise, contribue au portrait général de la prospérité d'une collectivité», dit le maire Fox.

La belle réussite de Nackawic-Millville n'est pas seulement une question d'obtention de financement : c'est un témoignage de l'esprit de collaboration présent au sein de la collectivité. Le maire Fox attribue le mérite à la vision cohérente partagée par les membres du conseil, qui favorise un milieu dans lequel le consensus et les objectifs partagés conduisent à l'avancement.

Le fait que la vaste majorité des membres du conseil faisait partie du comité de transition durant la réforme municipale a été déterminant dans la mise de l'avant d'une vision commune par rapport à la croissance. L'engagement de la ville à l'endroit du succès collectif de ses diverses régions établit un précédent inspirant pour les efforts de revitalisation rurale et constitue un bon exemple à suivre pour les autres collectivités.

L'histoire de Nackawic-Millville, qui va de l'avant avec son plan de logement et ses diverses stratégies de croissance, démontre à quel point la collaboration peut engendrer de grands changements. Cette collectivité prouve que, lorsque tout le monde partage une même vision et que le bon gouvernement la soutient, les régions rurales peuvent s'épanouir de nouveau. [AMM](#)

The Regional Municipality of Halifax implemented mixed-use projects that integrate residential spaces with commercial and recreational facilities.  
Photo: The Pavillion, Halifax, Southwest Properties



# Innovative housing solutions

Addressing affordability challenges in Nova Scotia



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

In the ever-evolving landscape of municipal development, Nova Scotia municipalities stand at the forefront, pioneering innovative solutions to address the pressing issue of housing affordability.

As we delve into the Spring 2024 edition of the *Atlantic Municipal Magazine*, the Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities took a comprehensive look at the strategies employed by local governments to create diverse and affordable housing options.

## Diverse Partnerships: A Collaborative Approach

One of the key avenues Nova Scotia municipalities have pursued is fostering partnerships with private developers. Recognizing the need for creative solutions, these collaborations leverage the

expertise of both public and private sectors to optimize resources and create housing solutions that cater to the unique needs of their communities.

In Halifax, for instance, the municipality has joined forces with reputable developers to implement mixed-use projects that integrate residential spaces with commercial and recreational facilities. This symbiotic relationship not only maximizes land use but also fosters vibrant and sustainable communities.

## Zoning Changes: Paving the Way for Diversity

Zoning regulations play a pivotal role in shaping the physical and social fabric of our municipalities. Nova Scotia municipalities are proactively embracing zoning changes to encourage a diverse range of housing options. This strategic





Innovative zoning adjustments have enabled Dartmouth to develop “pocket neighbourhoods.” *Photo: Opal Ridge, Dartmouth, Clayton Developments*

shift is breaking away from conventional norms and fostering environments where a variety of housing types can coexist harmoniously.

In Dartmouth, innovative zoning adjustments have enabled the development of pocket neighbourhoods – small, community-focused clusters of homes designed to promote a sense of belonging. This departure from traditional zoning practices reflects a commitment to creating inclusive spaces that cater to the diverse needs of residents.

#### **Affordability Across Income Brackets: Inclusive Housing Initiatives**

Recognizing the socioeconomic diversity within their jurisdictions, Nova Scotia municipalities are spearheading initiatives that ensure affordable housing is accessible to individuals across various income brackets. From workforce housing to affordable rental options, these efforts seek to bridge the gap and create a more equitable housing landscape.

In smaller communities like Wolfville, innovative programs are being implemented to encourage the construction of accessory dwelling units (ADUs). This not only provides additional income opportunities for homeowners, but also contributes to expanding the availability of affordable housing options.

#### **A Blueprint for Progress**

As we reflect on the innovative housing solutions implemented by Nova Scotia municipalities, it becomes evident that collaboration, flexibility, and inclusivity are the cornerstones of success. The efforts showcased in this article represent a blueprint for progress, demonstrating how local governments can lead the way in addressing the complex challenges of housing affordability.

In the spirit of shared learning and continuous improvement, Nova Scotia municipalities invite their counterparts across the Atlantic region to explore, adapt, and build upon these innovative approaches. Together, we can create resilient communities that prioritize housing as a fundamental right and lay the foundation for a sustainable and inclusive future. [AMM](#)



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# Getting your strategic ducks in order

Local governments are complex machines, riddled with strategic and operational cogs. To serve citizens, businesses, and community organizations effectively, these cogs must be in sync. The key is to know what tool to engage and when. There's an important order to these strategic steps.

## The What

Councils set the overall policy direction and answer the question, "What future do we want?" Before planning starts or decisions are made, council must have a clear and shared understanding of its role.

Lack of role clarity is the most common root cause of council frustration. Early in their mandate, council should participate in a governance orientation. New and experienced councillors will benefit from an honest conversation around great governance. Once this foundation is set, council can move on to planning.

Council sets the vision and goals for the organization, which are communicated through the strategic plan. The strategic plan sets the tone and direction for all kinds of decisions – including budgets. It should happen soon after the election to ensure a clear path forward. It is a crucial tool for keeping the ship of governance on an even keel.

Once a strategic plan is established, annual strategic check-ins will ensure objectives are being achieved. This is not a deep dive into operations. It focuses council on determining whether the strategic milestones are being met and if any adjustments are required.

## The How

Administration focuses on how council goals are achieved. There are three key tools administration should use to ensure the strategic milestones are met and their operations are efficient.

- **1. Corporate plan** – A corporate plan builds on the goals and operating requirements of the organization. It is a roadmap for resource allocation. This is where the strategic rubber hits the operational road and is possibly the most important link in the entire strategic chain. A corporate plan should be completed as soon as the strategic plan is adopted by council.
- **2. Annual check-ins** – Annual check-ins track progress and provide an opportunity to reassess resources and priorities. Corporate plan metrics should be incorporated into regular team meetings, but the annual check-in allows for significant course changes.
- **3. Organizational review** – An organizational review helps

council and administration understand whether the organization is designed and resourced to deliver. It looks at the current service offering and staffing, potential demographic changes to the community, and the service implications of any new directions coming out of the strategic plan.

## Reality Check

It is common for local governments to find themselves with only a few pieces of this puzzle in place but wanting to make change. At that point, the last thing you want to do is spend time and money fixing the wrong problems in the wrong order.

Strategic Steps' five-step health check can help you identify what needs immediate attention and what can be assigned a lower priority. The right strategic steps in the right order are your clearest path to success.

To learn more about the steps to becoming a cohesive team, visit <https://www.strategicsteps.ca>.



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In Marystown, town council is alleviating housing pressures by selling vacant land. *Photo: Canning Bridge, Marystown, N.L.*

# Rising tides and a spirit of togetherness

On Newfoundland's Burin Peninsula, future prosperity lies in working together



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

Population decline is a classic Newfoundland and Labrador story. The province's Burin Peninsula, affectionately known as “the boot” on the island's southeast coast, was home to approximately 30,000 people according to the 1986 Census. Today, there are fewer than 20,000 people living there. The peninsula's largest community, Marystown, has experienced a population decline of 1,000 residents since 2001.

Understanding population decline on the Burin Peninsula or anywhere else in Newfoundland and Labrador is not a mystery. It's been well researched. The crash of the cod fishery in the 1990s, an aging population, rural to urban migration trends, lack of employment opportunities, and low birth rates all play a part, to a varying degree.

This trend isn't unique to the Burin Peninsula, or the province. Across the country, people are moving to the city from small towns. The question for rural municipal leaders then becomes: how do we attract people to our towns and our regions?

On the Bonavista Peninsula, Bonavista Mayor John Norman focused on heritage restoration, as well as attempting

to reverse the area's population decline by appealing to the creative class, a term invented by urban studies theorist Richard Florida describing a group of people whose economic function is to create ideas, new technology, and creative content. On the Burin Peninsula, they're taking a different approach, led largely by Marystown Mayor Brian Keating, who returned to the province after being away for more than 20 years, managing large-scale construction projects.

## Regional Approach to Affordable Housing

The population statistics may not read like a success story, but stats are hardly the whole story. The Burin Peninsula has several large business operations that have either expanded or set up shop in the past several years, and there is a sense of growth. In Marystown, town council has worked to alleviate some of the related housing pressures by selling vacant land.

“We're making sure that the council has given people the opportunity to bid on these lands. We just sold six building lots last year,” said Keating. “So it makes building lots more affordable.”

The goal, Keating said, is to provide affordable land and housing to

attract new residents. Attracting new businesses, and the jobs they bring, is a primary focus. Recognizing that partnering, versus competing, is a more effective way to operate, the communities on the Burin Peninsula have taken a regional approach to this work.

In the past year, the province opened applications for onshore wind hydrogen green energy projects. (These are projects that will use wind energy to power hydrogen production plants.) Four proposals were approved by the province, including EverWind's plan for the Burin Peninsula.

But that project still needs to go through the necessary regulatory approval steps, including environmental assessment, before being approved for the start of construction.

From a municipal budgeting perspective, shrinking populations mean a declining tax base. As Keating said, the town's infrastructure and service costs – drinking water, wastewater, snow clearing, roads maintenance – stay the same, but revenues from tax dollars are decreasing.

Keating and his council rolled up their sleeves alongside other municipalities on the peninsula. Coming together as one region, they agreed to come together to work on attracting major projects. The region had unanimous support for the wind energy plant, said Keating.

### **A United Front**

Being the hub town for the peninsula, Marystown sees economic benefits as a result of business activity in other parts of the peninsula. Keating's goal is to attract industry to the Burin Peninsula by presenting a united front to the provincial and federal governments that the Burin Peninsula are all one, and in agreement.

The work being done, he said, is for the good of the whole peninsula, and what benefits the peninsula benefits each town. That plan, Keating said, will bring people. But how does he intend to make the plan happen?

"Well, I'll be honest with you," he said. "Stop looking out for the greater of one and look out for the greater of all. It's a pretty simple concept that has been in the world forever. Like I learned in Grade 3, you have one pencil, and the teacher showed you



*Photo: Marystown Mayor Brian Keating*

to crack that pencil easily. You put 25 pencils together, it's next to impossible to crack. So that's why we are now one united front on the Burin Peninsula."

With that mindset of togetherness, Keating said, you then meet with these big companies and tell them what you have to offer and see what they have to offer. At the same time, keeping the public well informed is essential, Keating said. He went to 52 town halls with EverWind. The company shared their plan to bring wind hydrogen energy to the peninsula, and Keating told residents of the benefits the project would bring to all towns on the peninsula.

Attracting economic development to the Burin Peninsula is a co-ordinated approach. Marystown, along with 17 other communities on the peninsula, including both municipalities and local service districts, each have a voice on the peninsula's economic development board, each with an equal voice, regardless of size.

Larger companies, and the jobs they bring, are welcomed to the Burin Peninsula, but they come with a risk – one large company closing up shop can

take many jobs with it. To counter this potential problem, the region needs to at the same time attract smaller companies and one-person operations.

"Right now, we'll take one job at a time, and one step at a time, to get to the finish line," Keating said.

### **Turning the Economic Tide**

Things are looking better than they did a few years ago – a salmon hatchery has set up operation, as has a wolf fish aquaculture operation, and EverWind has hired contractors and begun preliminary work, not to mention the cannabis cultivation company operating on the peninsula. All of this has come in recent years.

The economic tide is turning on the Burin Peninsula, thanks to a co-ordinated approach of recognizing, then seizing, opportunities as they appear and figuring out how to make it work.

From where Keating sits, the future looks bright for the Burin Peninsula.

"I'll make a prediction now," he said. "By 2030 ... the Burin Peninsula will be one of the thriving regions of Newfoundland and Labrador." **AMM**





The Town of Three Rivers' municipal water and sewer services are concentrated in Montague and municipal sewer services in Georgetown.  
*Photo: Montague, Three Rivers*

# Municipalities need investments in housing infrastructure



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

**B**ordering on the coastline of scenic eastern P.E.I., the Town of Three Rivers takes in the most land of any municipality in the province.

The population of the area reached 7,883 as of the 2021 census, a growth rate of 10 per cent since 2016. Danielle Herring, manager of corporate services with Three Rivers, said rapid growth brings the potential for more municipal revenue but also the need to invest in infrastructure.

“Growth does bring more people to your tax base,” she said. “However, it also requires expenditures on the capital side of things.”

Three Rivers was created in 2018, with an amalgamation that included two former towns, five rural municipalities, and unincorporated rural communities. The land area totals 431 square kilometres. The town provides recreation and planning throughout the municipality. Municipal water and sewer services are concentrated in the former towns: municipal water and sewer in the population and commercial hub of Montague and municipal sewer services in the historic seaport of Georgetown.

“It’s just not feasible to bring the servicing to every area of Three Rivers,” Herring said, noting the size and rural nature of much of the municipality.

## Extending Services Promotes Housing Development

When discussing how municipalities can accommodate population growth, Herring stressed the benefits of directing as much development as possible to areas that already have services.

“If you have development of an already-serviced area and you’re not expanding your services, you don’t have those capital costs up front,” she said. “You’re trying to use what you already have to enhance the development to create further growth.”

Herring added that developing in serviced areas also offers social, economic, and environmental benefits – including creating walkable neighbourhoods, preserving greenspace and agricultural land, and promoting higher-density development to more efficiently address housing needs.

With its growing population, however, the Town of Three Rivers is running out of serviced areas to develop. Extending water and sewer services therefore forms part of the town’s efforts to promote housing development.

“Some unserviced areas have larger parcels of land that could be subdivided,” Herring said.

The next planned water and sewer extension will take services

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Danielle Herring, manager of corporate services with Three Rivers, said rapid growth brings the potential for more municipal revenue but also the need to invest in infrastructure. *Photo: Danielle Herring, courtesy of Federation of PEI Municipalities*

approximately 2.5 kilometres outside of Montague. During the planning of this project, infrastructure costs skyrocketed.

In 2022, the town forecast the extension would cost about \$5 million, but the price tag reached about \$7.6 million as of 2023. Due to high costs, shortages of contractors, and the desire to access more than one federal funding program, the town decided to extend the project timeline and split the project into two phases. The hope is to complete it in 2024.

## New Municipal Infrastructure Fund in the Works

Herring said having additional sources of funding for housing infrastructure could reduce borrowing costs during times of higher interest rates or allow funding to go toward other projects.

“If we have to borrow money for infrastructure, the money has to come from somewhere,” she said.

Recognizing the costs and importance of municipal infrastructure for housing, the Federation of PEI Municipalities (FPEIM) has been working with the P.E.I. government on a new municipal infrastructure fund. The program will help offset the costs of housing-related infrastructure such as water, wastewater, and roads. It will also encourage development in rural service centres to promote the sustainable, cost-effective development that Herring describes.

“By subsidizing and encouraging cost-effective infrastructure development, the fund will make home ownership a reality for more Islanders,” FPEIM President Bruce MacDougall said.

The Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) has also been advocating for municipal infrastructure support. At the federal level, FCM has called for more investment (including through the Canada Community-Building Fund) and a new municipal growth framework with revenue tied to growth.

“With every home built, there is a corresponding infrastructure need that must be met,” FCM President Scott Pearce said in a response to the federal government’s fall economic statement in 2023. “New housing depends on new municipal infrastructure.” [AMM](#)







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Miramichi Mayor Adam Lordon.  
Le maire de Miramichi, Adam Lordon.



## Q&A with Mayor Adam Lordon, City of Miramichi

## Q-R avec le maire Adam Lordon, Cité de Miramichi

The Union of the Municipalities of New Brunswick (UMNB) sat down with City of Miramichi Mayor Adam Lordon to discuss how the steady rise of newcomers is reshaping and strengthening the community. Mayor Lordon shared insights on adapting municipal operations, collaborating with associations, building workplace inclusivity, and the role the local council plays in maintaining a high quality of life for all community members.

**How can local governments adjust their operations and public communications to reflect the increase of newcomers settling in their communities?**

**Mayor Lordon:** Understanding that you need to make those adjustments and then engage those newcomer communities in those conversations.

The transformative conversations initiated by the New Brunswick Multicultural Council in Miramichi with their “New Conversations Tour” before the pandemic brought together stakeholders, newcomers, and long-standing residents.

These dialogues highlighted trends and helped pave the way for making newcomers feel not just part of the community but welcomed and informed about available resources in the community. Council continues to take part in and host a number of local events to ensure their voices are heard and celebrated.

L’Union des municipalités du Nouveau-Brunswick (UMNB) a rencontré le maire de la cité de Miramichi, Adam Lordon, pour discuter de la façon dont l’augmentation constante de nouveaux arrivants entraîne le remodelage et le renforcement des collectivités. Le maire Lordon a exprimé plusieurs idées concernant l’adaptation des activités municipales, la collaboration avec les associations, la mise en place de milieux de travail plus inclusifs et le rôle joué par les conseils locaux dans le maintien d’une grande qualité de vie pour tous les membres des collectivités.

**Comment les gouvernements locaux peuvent-ils ajuster leurs activités et leurs communications publiques pour refléter l’augmentation des nouveaux venus qui s’installent dans leurs collectivités?**

**M. Lordon:** Il faut prendre conscience de la nécessité d’effectuer ces ajustements, puis impliquer les nouveaux venus dans les discussions qui s’ensuivent.

Les conversations transformatrices entamées avant la pandémie par le Conseil multiculturelle du Nouveau-Brunswick à Miramichi, par l’entremise de la «Tournée des nouvelles conversations», ont su rassembler les parties intéressées, les nouveaux arrivants et les résidents de longue date.

What do municipal partnerships look like in building spaces for newcomers?

**Mayor Lordon:** Local governments and organizations like the New Brunswick Multicultural Council here in Miramichi have played a vital role in providing the needed discussions and resources to help newcomers settle in our city. It is our responsibility to make space in the community for these newcomer populations and really make them feel welcome and included by supporting their ideas and initiatives.

One thing I'm really proud of since I have become mayor is we established the mayor's welcome barbecue – and that was an idea that came out of the “New Conversation Tour” as well. We have had six years, including two COVID years, that we have hosted this event. The event welcomes newcomers, new residents to our community, students, and people who are moving back to our community to raise their family.

This event is held at the end of summer and includes networking opportunities, cultural performances, and practical support such as information booths showcasing city offerings, resumé building, community groups, and more. This event has become one of the largest welcome events in New Brunswick.

How can local councils support the arrival of newcomers to their communities?

**Mayor Lordon:** Council's presence and participation in events, coupled with support for newcomer initiatives, contribute to community integration.

The Fiesta Extravaganza that was held here this summer is a great example. It is a national franchise event that happens in six communities across Canada. All big cities and Miramichi, because of the local Filipino community, went out and lobbied the national organizers and national chamber of commerce and were successful. Council supported the event with a festival and event grant.



Miramichi hosting the 2023 Fiesta Extravaganza.

Miramichi accueille la Fiesta Extravaganza 2023.

Ces dialogues ont mis en lumière diverses tendances et ont aidé à paver la voie pour faire en sorte que les nouveaux arrivants n'aient pas seulement l'impression de faire partie d'une collectivité, mais qu'ils se sentent bienvenus et bien informés à l'égard des ressources disponibles dans la collectivité. Les conseils continuent de prendre part à de nombreux événements locaux, et d'en organiser, pour s'assurer que leurs voix soient entendues et reconnues.

Quels sont les partenariats municipaux existants en termes de création d'espaces pour les nouveaux arrivants?

**M. Lordon:** Les gouvernements locaux et diverses organisations, comme le Conseil multiculturelle du Nouveau-Brunswick, ont joué un rôle essentiel ici à Miramichi en fournissant les ressources et les discussions nécessaires pour aider les nouveaux arrivants à s'installer dans notre cité. Nous avons la responsabilité de créer de l'espace pour ces groupes de nouveaux arrivants dans la collectivité et de faire en sorte qu'ils se sentent réellement bienvenus et inclus, en soutenant leurs idées et leurs initiatives.

L'une des choses dont je suis vraiment fier depuis que je suis devenu maire est la création du Barbecue de bienvenue du maire. C'est une idée qui découle aussi de la «Tournée des nouvelles conversations». Nous tenons cet événement depuis six ans, incluant deux années de COVID. Il a pour but de souhaiter la bienvenue aux nouveaux arrivants, aux nouveaux résidents de notre collectivité, aux étudiants et aux gens qui reviennent dans notre collectivité pour y élever leur famille.

Cet événement a lieu à la fin de l'été et il comprend des activités de réseautage, des spectacles culturels et de l'assistance pratique, comme des kiosques d'information présentant divers services offerts par la cité, rédaction de CV, groupes communautaires, et plus encore. Cet événement est devenu l'un des plus gros événements de bienvenue au Nouveau-Brunswick.

De quelle façon les conseils locaux peuvent-ils soutenir la venue de nouveaux arrivants dans leurs collectivités?

**M. Lordon:** La présence et la participation des conseils lors des événements, associées au soutien des initiatives destinées aux nouveaux arrivants, contribuent à l'intégration communautaire.

La Fiesta Extravaganza qui s'est tenue ici cet été en est un excellent exemple. Il s'agit d'un événement d'envergure nationale qui a lieu dans six collectivités à la grandeur du Canada. Les villes hôtes étaient toutes de grandes cités, et puis il y avait Miramichi, parce que la communauté philippine locale a fait du lobbying auprès des organisateurs nationaux et de la chambre de commerce nationale, avec succès. Le conseil a soutenu cet événement à l'aide d'une subvention pour fête et événement.

Quelles sont les mesures que devraient prendre les collectivités dans la création d'espaces invitants pour les nouveaux résidents?

**M. Lordon:** Le personnel de la cité a pris part à diverses formations en matière de sensibilité culturelle pour faire en sorte qu'ils ne se limitent pas à accueillir les nouveaux arrivants dans la collectivité seulement au plan physique, mais qu'ils puissent leur offrir une forme de compréhension plus





The mayor's welcome barbecue is one of the largest welcome events in New Brunswick. Held at the end of summer, it includes networking opportunities, cultural performances, and practical support for newcomers, students, and new and returning residents to the community.

Le barbecue de bienvenue du maire est l'un des plus grands événements de bienvenue au Nouveau-Brunswick. Organisé à la fin de l'été, il offre des possibilités de réseautage, des spectacles culturels et un soutien pratique aux nouveaux arrivants, aux étudiants, aux nouveaux résidents et à ceux qui reviennent dans la communauté.

### What steps should communities take in building welcoming spaces for new residents?

**Mayor Lordon:** City staff have participated in different cultural sensitivity training to ensure they cannot just welcome newcomers physically to the community but provide that next layer of understanding, providing inclusion and integration in our community.

Our workforces need to reflect the community we are serving and that is about providing opportunities. All over the province, we see a labour shortage and an aging population that provides opportunity for workforces to grow with our changing population.

### What are your recommendations for communities in managing the effects of population growth while meeting a high standard of services?

**Mayor Lordon:** New Brunswick's consistent population growth is an opportunity for communities like Miramichi, which had previously faced population decline. The need for local governments to address challenges, including infrastructure, labour shortage, and particularly the housing crisis, shows the need for affordable housing and infrastructure development to accommodate the growing population.

We see it every day, where the needs of newcomers are also the needs of our residents. The focus remains on evolving and adapting to meet the evolving demands of all residents. [AMM](#)

poussée, afin de favoriser leur inclusion et leur intégration dans notre collectivité.

Nos employés doivent être à l'image de la collectivité que nous servons, et il est question ici d'offrir des possibilités. Nous constatons, à la grandeur de la province, un manque de main d'œuvre et des populations vieillissantes, ce qui donne aux effectifs la possibilité de croître et d'évoluer en même temps que la population.

### Quelles sont vos recommandations aux collectivités pour la gestion des effets de la croissance de la population tout en maintenant un standard élevé de services?

**M. Lordon:** La croissance continue de la population du Nouveau-Brunswick constitue une belle opportunité pour des collectivités comme Miramichi, qui faisaient auparavant face à un déclin de la population. La nécessité pour les gouvernements locaux de s'attaquer à des défis en matière d'infrastructure, de pénurie de personnel et plus particulièrement à la crise du logement, démontre la nécessité de bâtir des logements abordables et de développer des infrastructures pour subvenir aux besoins d'une population en croissance.

C'est cela que nous voyons tous les jours, car les besoins exprimés par les nouveaux arrivants sont les mêmes que ceux de nos résidents. Nos efforts demeurent concentrés sur l'évolution et l'adaptation, afin de satisfaire aux demandes changeantes de tous nos résidents. [AMM](#)



Although the Housing Accelerator Fund is new, municipalities across the country are no strangers to being the catalyst of change in affordable housing.

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# Navigating the municipal role in the housing crisis



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

In a bold move to address the housing crisis, the federal Housing Accelerator Fund has pledged \$4 billion over four years to local governments. This initiative, launched to boost housing units across the country, sparked initial skepticism among municipalities when the application window opened in June 2023.

How could increasing housing across the country be the responsibility of municipalities? Despite the reservations expressed, many municipalities in Nova Scotia soon accepted their call to action through the Housing Accelerator Fund and stepped up to formulate growth targets and initiatives designed to align with the goals set by the federal government.

Municipalities are positioned to understand and appreciate the urgent need for collaboration on housing matters. Applications were not simple, and at times confusing. Notably, municipalities could not apply for funding for specific infrastructure projects, but rather shifted focus toward planning policies and

systems that would increase the speed at which housing permits could be issued.

As municipalities formed their initiatives, it became clear that collaboration at the local level can become a powerful force for change.

## Municipal Efforts to Increase Affordable Housing

Although the Housing Accelerator Fund is new, municipalities across the country are no strangers to being the catalyst of change in affordable housing.

A 2022 research paper, “The Municipal Role in Housing,” provides many stellar examples of key policy changes for municipalities to consider in their efforts to increase affordable housing.<sup>1</sup> One such change is inclusionary zoning, which requires new buildings to incorporate affordable housing units into the design.

According to the authors, a best practice example of this policy in Canada is the City of Montreal’s

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<sup>1</sup> Gabriel Eidelman, Tomas Hachard, Enid Slack (eds). “The Municipal Role in Housing.” Institute on Municipal Finance & Governance. April 2022.



20/20/20 bylaw. The bylaw, passed in 2021, requires new buildings to have 20 per cent social housing, 20 per cent affordable housing, and 20 per cent family housing. However, challenges in enforcing such policies have emerged.

The research further highlighted instances of innovative policy implementation across Canada. In Toronto, for example, zoning requires new builds in proximity to transit stations to allocate five to 10 per cent for low/moderate income tenants. Vancouver embraced an initiative permitting the construction of six affordable housing units on what would traditionally be designated as a single-house lot. Additionally, Burnaby took initiative by introducing rental-only zoning, a measure designed to prevent conversions to condominiums.

Examining past and present practices, it is evident that municipalities have continually refined their role in addressing the housing crisis through diverse and adaptive strategies.

### Fixed-Term Leases Present Affordability Loophole

In addition to municipal policy adjustments, provinces play a pivotal role, as they have the power to enact policies that can profoundly influence housing affordability. A case in point is how the Nova Scotia *Residential Tenancies Act* treats fixed-term leases, which represent a notorious loophole that has garnered significant media attention.

Fixed-term leases grant landlords the ability to choose not to renew a lease without providing any reason, or notice.<sup>2</sup> Under this arrangement, landlords can opt for a new tenant at the commencement of each rental term, avoiding rent caps and termination laws. Consequently, the rent for the incoming tenant is unrestricted and can be increased at the discretion of the landlord.

Notably, other provinces have implemented measures to rein in the use of fixed-term leases. For instance, according to the residential tenancy policies in Ontario and British Columbia, if a new lease is not signed at the end of a fixed term, the tenant does not have to move out and the lease automatically continues as a month-to-month tenancy.<sup>3,4</sup> Prince Edward Island has adopted an alternative approach by tying rent caps to units rather than tenants.<sup>5</sup>

Ultimately, fixing the housing crisis is a shared responsibility between all orders of government. As we navigate the complexities of the housing crisis, municipalities must remain steadfast to find solutions. Further, an expanded presence of Housing Accelerator Fund contracts in Atlantic Canada is anticipated, signifying a collective stride toward a more sustainable housing future. [AMM](#)

2 *Residential Tenancies Act*. <https://nslegislature.ca/sites/default/files/legc/statutes/residential%20tenancies.pdf>.

3 “30. Fixed Term Tenancies” in Residential Tenancy Policy Guide. Government of British Columbia. July 2022. <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/housing-and-tenancy/residential-tenancies/policy-guidelines/gl30.pdf>.

4 Landlord and Tenant Board. “How a Landlord Can End a Tenancy.” Tribunals Ontario. Last modified September 2021. [https://tribunalsofntario.ca/documents/ltb/Brochures/How%20a%20Landlord%20Can%20End%20a%20Tenancy%20\(EN\).html](https://tribunalsofntario.ca/documents/ltb/Brochures/How%20a%20Landlord%20Can%20End%20a%20Tenancy%20(EN).html).

5 “Rent Increases.” Prince Edward Island Residential Tenancy Office. <https://peirentaloffice.ca/rent-increases/>.

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Through a lot of hard work, the Town of Bonavista has reinvented itself as a destination for the creative class. *Photo: Bonavista, N.L.*

# The art of population growth



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

**W**e have a vibrant cultural sector in Newfoundland and Labrador, the output of which is often promoted by government in tourism initiatives and supported through various grants and programs. The creative approach to marketing this province, as seen in the television and print ads, has garnered awards and convinced many travellers to visit the province.

When it comes to attracting people to relocate to Newfoundland and Labrador, the creative and cultural sector has the potential to play a larger role.

**Noreen Golfman: The Art Paradox**  
Dr. Noreen Golfman has been working in the cultural sector since the 1970s. In addition to an academic career focused on film studies and literature, she was a founding member of the Women's International Film Festival, hosts a monthly film night, and sits on the board of PictureNL and on the board of Business and Arts NL.

There is, she said, the potential for making Newfoundland and Labrador a destination for arts practice. Whether or not government efforts focus explicitly on encouraging arts practitioners to move to this province, it is already happening at an individual level, due in part to the efforts of government to promote the province's cultural sector through tourism advertising.

Anecdotally, Golfman said there are many stories of creative people who

moved here and chose to stay. In the late 1980s through the early '90s, many Bulgarians defected to Canada by walking off the plane during a stopover in Gander.

Most left for other parts of Canada, but those who stayed have made lasting artistic impressions. Luben Boykov's sculpture of Terry Fox marks the spot where Fox began his famous Marathon of Hope, and Vessela Brakalova has three large pieces of art displayed at the St. John's International Airport.

"We live in a culturally vibrant place, but there's a paradox," Golfman said. "Art is often seen as something that a small group does – a marginalized activity (that) doesn't necessarily participate in the larger social and economic rhythms or dynamics of everyday life."

**Bob Hallett: The Art Ecosystem**  
Producer and musician Bob Hallett – a former member of folk-rock band Great Big Sea, music consultant on the musical *Come From Away*, and current chief operating officer of Terra Bruce Productions – echoes this sentiment: "When people think of the arts, they often think of things they don't attend, like the opera or the ballet, but it's all of it. It's all the little things as well as the big things."

Among those little things are the community spaces where family events or school events take place – it's all part of the arts ecosystem, Hallett explained. "All of that matters," he said. "And it's all





After an extensive renovation, the Garrick Theatre reopened in 2010 as a social enterprise, with operations subsidized by the Town of Bonavista. *Photo: Garrick Theatre*

## Five ways your municipality can support the arts

- 1 provide post-secondary arts scholarships
- 2 make community spaces available to arts organizations or practitioners
- 3 subsidize the cost of productions by offering discounts on venue rental fees
- 4 offer tax incentives to arts-based businesses
- 5 seek out people from the arts community to act as policy advisors

part of this thing, you know, as opposed to this big gallery downtown.”

But Hallett said that, right now, the arts is not a healthy ecosystem.

“As prices have risen in the pre- and post-COVID era, how people use entertainment has changed so much,” Hallett said. “It’s really done a lot of significant damage to the ecosystem.”

The performing arts – live music, theatre, musical theatre, dance, and nearly everything else done on a stage in front of an audience – is something Hallett is quite familiar with. He spent 20-plus years as a member of Great Big Sea, playing stages across the country, more often than not flying.

They came to peace at the outset with the fact that 20 cents of every dollar the band made would be going to Air Canada. It was just part of the cost of choosing to live in St. John’s instead of a large city on the mainland (a local term for anywhere not on the island of Newfoundland).

The band, and its sound, was very much of the streets of St. John’s, Hallett said, and the band never really considered living anywhere else: “Besides, I like it here,” he said.

### Bonavista’s Creative Renaissance

Living somewhere simply because one likes it is an entirely valid reason. In a slightly roundabout way, it’s what’s driving Bonavista’s current renaissance.

Through a lot of hard work, the town has reinvented itself as a destination for the creative class, defined by author

and urban studies expert Richard Florida as “people in design, education, arts, music, and entertainment, whose economic function is to create new ideas, technology, and/or creative content.”

Appealing directly to the creative class was a deliberate move by the town, said Mayor John Norman, noting that a small but significant portion of the creative class are growing tired of city living, which has created an opportunity for smaller communities like Bonavista.

These urban creatives tend to bring their work with them, and several have opened businesses in the town. Salt makers, silversmiths, and bath and body product makers have all set up shop in Bonavista.

The approach has worked, said Norman, who has hard data to back up his claim. Fifty-six businesses opened in the past seven years by creative class entrepreneurs. Municipal revenues have grown to 11 per cent from seven per cent for the past 10 years. The town’s population has grown to 3,500 from 3,200 in the past few years.

Bonavista is a popular tourist destination. The new businesses and the influx of people in the arts sector and other creative-minded people, along with the many efforts and initiatives by the town, have contributed to building a community that people want to visit and move to. While other towns in Newfoundland and Labrador are struggling to attract health care professionals, Bonavista has managed to

retain five doctors who made the move to this rural location.

These achievements are made more noteworthy by Bonavista’s rural location. The town sits at the tip of the Bonavista Peninsula and, with a population of about 3,500, is the largest community in the region. The next largest community, Clarenville, is 111 kilometres away; the nearest city, St. John’s, is 300 kilometres away.

### Essential Infrastructure for the Arts

Bonavista was settled hundreds of years ago because of proximity to the fishing grounds, eventually growing to a population of about 5,000 in the early 1800s. In the 1990s, the cod fishery collapsed, and the town’s population began a steady decline that lasted 20-plus years. Many businesses closed, including the Garrick Theatre, which was shut down for a decade. After an extensive renovation, it reopened in 2010 as a social enterprise, with operations – including the cost of popcorn – subsidized by the town.

Getting the funding for the renovation was a struggle, Norman said, as the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency wanted to provide funding for a seasonal, tourism-driven operation. Eventually, the idea of a theatre for the community, offering film screenings and live entertainment, was accepted by funding partners, and the renovation – to the tune of some \$6 million – was approved.

This is exactly the sort of venue Bob Hallett means when he talks about the arts ecosystem. And while the Garrick



Photo: Bob Hallett by Ritche Perez

Theatre was intended as a source of entertainment for residents, it also plays an important role in providing a space for live performances.

Terra Bruce Productions, the musical theatre production company Hallett leads, has taken an active role in rebuilding the arts ecosystem with their renovation of the Majestic Theatre in St. John's.

"We know ourselves as a theatre company. We need that ecosystem to thrive, or we won't have the audience, we won't have the performers, we won't have the infrastructure to thrive," Hallett said. "The wider community needs that as well. A rising tide lifts all boats."

For those with an interest in a career in the arts, especially the performing arts, infrastructure is essential. Unfortunately, that infrastructure, or ecosystem, has crumbled and is no longer viable.

In the past, Hallett said, a band would play local shows at venues that matched their audience size, moving to larger venues as their fanbase grew. He compares it to the NHL's farm team system, with players working through the ranks of minor league teams until they get to the NHL – or sometimes dipping down to the minors for a bit until getting called back up.

For performers, small and mid-sized venues once played the part of the farm team arena. These days though, Hallett said, that system has collapsed. The venues have either closed due to economic pressure or switched format to no longer host live performances.

Hallett sees the Majestic – with a capacity of 300-plus, depending on the seating arrangement – as a contribution to rebuilding that farm team system.

"We want to lift up voices from the basement and enable artists to take their work to the next level after Majestic," he said.

With a growing film industry, a vibrant cultural sector, and a wealth of inspirational natural beauty, there are many reasons for creative people to consider relocating to Newfoundland and Labrador. There is still work to be done, but Noreen Golfman sees potential. We could, she said, make this province a destination for creatives, where artists are supported and sustained. [AMM](#)

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# Shape Stratford builds new conversations on housing



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

**T**he Town of Stratford, P.E.I., will need 4,000 housing units by 2041 to keep up with its growing population. But addressing the housing shortage involves more than understanding the statistics and even moving forward with construction.

The Shape Stratford project has been working to change perceptions about development and help residents see the human side of housing issues. “Your child’s teacher needs a home. Your favourite server needs a home. Your parents want to downsize,” read some of the messages from a Shape Stratford education campaign.

“The most effective form of education we’re doing is to put faces to the issues,” said Coun. Jeff MacDonald, who chairs Stratford’s planning, development, and heritage committee and the Shape Stratford affordable housing task force.

## Exploring the Affordability Issue

The Town of Stratford is located a five-minute drive from the provincial capital of Charlottetown, just across the Hillsborough Bridge. From 2021-2022, Stratford’s population grew to 12,414 from 11,758. That 5.58 per cent increase in one year exceeds the annual provincial growth rate.

MacDonald said growth is a “nice problem to have,” but notes it has also contributed to the housing shortage and a sharp increase in prices.

“We’re short on every form of housing,” he said, listing single-family, detached, multi-family, apartment, and townhouse units as examples of what they need.

Shape Stratford aims to reduce the barriers to addressing those shortages. The 18-month project was funded by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation through the Housing Supply Challenge. The work included creating tools to help planning staff and developers streamline the development process, but a large focus has been on educating and engaging residents.

In the rapidly growing but predominantly rural Prince Edward Island, tackling the housing issue has meant changing traditional views – including a sense that “housing” should mean a single-family house on a one-acre lot.

For his part, MacDonald said when people think of the need for “affordable” housing, they often think of transitional housing or housing for people with lower incomes.

“The scope of the affordability issue is far broader,” he said, noting that many



In the rapidly growing but predominantly rural Prince Edward Island, tackling the housing issue has meant changing traditional views – including a sense that “housing” should mean a single-family house on a one-acre lot. Photo: Town of Stratford, P.E.I., Coun. Jeff MacDonald and Wendy Watts, community and business engagement manager

families, individuals, and even professionals now struggle to find affordable places to live.

MacDonald said most new developments and subdivisions generate some opposition. On a one-on-one basis, he stresses the benefits of development to the community as a whole:

*If citizens say, “Well, we don’t want this type of development,” I ask them, “Well, do you want new sidewalks? Do you want a new skating rink? Do you want new playground facilities? Do you want better active transportation?”*

### Shaping Community Conversations

Shape Stratford has worked to show residents how development also benefits the people they know – their parents, children, health care workers, servers, and others who need more and different types of housing.

To create community conversations, Shape Stratford has hosted forums, held surveys, conducted the education campaign, and created a website with interactive tools so residents understand the implications of development decisions. For example, website visitors can:

- “Build Your Town” and see how planning choices affect a 3D model of Stratford
  - “Build Your Own Development” and see how housing choices affect the costs of developing a community
  - take a free Planning 101 course
- The website also shares anonymous housing stories submitted by residents: a young family who can’t get a mortgage and wants to find “basic affordable housing”; a couple nearing retirement who worries they will struggle to find a small house to downsize; a person with a “moderate income” who can’t find a place with “reasonable” rent to continue living in their home community.

“Telling the stories of actual residents really hits home for many,” said Wendy Watts, the town’s community and business engagement manager. “These are the real-life stories of individuals, couples, and families who are experiencing challenges finding appropriate housing in our community.”

MacDonald credits the website for reaching a broader cross-section of

residents than the town might see at a public meeting. He notes the people at public meetings about developments are often those opposed, not those who need the housing.

“Try and find voices that you don’t typically hear from,” MacDonald said.

When deciding on developments, he said municipal leaders must ultimately pay attention to the evidence and do what’s best for the municipality as a whole. He encourages other municipalities to contact the town to discuss ideas and learn about Shape Stratford.

“The focus throughout the project has been on issues directly impacting Stratford, but we’re far from alone in the issues we’re experiencing,” MacDonald said.

Shape Stratford was designed to share with other municipalities. An inter-municipal committee included representatives from the City of Charlottetown, the Town of Three Rivers, the Town of Cornwall, and the City of Summerside. To learn more about the project, or how to replicate it in your municipality, visit [www.shape.townof-stratford.ca](http://www.shape.townof-stratford.ca) or contact Wendy Watts at [wwatts@townofstratford.ca](mailto:wwatts@townofstratford.ca). [AMM](#)





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A \$100-million investment in Nova Scotia is modernizing the apprenticeship system and promoting the skilled trades, contributing to workforce sustainability within communities. *Photo: Plumbing apprentice, courtesy of Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities*

# Fostering sustainable urban growth

A conversation with Nova Scotia's Jill Balsler, Minister of Labour, Skills and Immigration



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

Jill Balsler, Nova Scotia's Minister of Labour, Skills and Immigration (LSI), has strong opinions on the intricate realm of sustainable urban growth. In a recent conversation, we spoke about population growth and its impact on attracting new residents to Nova Scotia.

Balsler was on a panel with Halifax Mayor Mike Savage and former mayor of Toronto David Miller at the Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities (NSFM) 2023 Fall Conference. Balsler cites this as a great experience as setting the stage for an in-depth exploration of sustainable urban growth. Balsler's insights into the multifaceted approach taken by her department are the foundation for understanding the nuanced strategies

employed to support Nova Scotia's rural and urban communities.

## **Skilled Workforce and Urban Growth**

Balsler details the comprehensive programs under LSI, emphasizing the integration of immigration into the department. Collaborating with employers and municipalities, a dedicated division focuses on addressing unique needs through skills and learning centres, supporting employers and job seekers.

Another notable initiative is the \$100-million investment to grow the skilled trades in Nova Scotia by modernizing the apprenticeship system and promoting the skilled trades, contributing to workforce sustainability within



communities. The overarching goal is to meet labour market demands by increasing the number of apprentices who successfully attain certification in their field.

Expanding on the programs under LSI, Balser provides a more detailed examination of the \$100-million investment, underscoring its profound impact on the Nova Scotia labour market. Balser delves into the intricacies of how this investment aims not only to attract skilled workers but also to retain them within the province, fostering a sustainable workforce for the long term. Specific success stories and examples from various regions of Nova Scotia are highlighted to showcase the tangible outcomes of these initiatives.

“There’s an incredible focus on keeping people in communities,” Balser said. “Municipalities will want to see how we can retain our workforce, allowing them to grow and learn without the necessity of leaving.”

This approach, Balser said, reflects a shared commitment to community retention and growth.

### **Collaboration with Municipalities**

Balser said the collaboration between the Department of Labour, Skills and Immigration and municipalities is crucial for effective retention strategies. She said the significance of the immigration roundtables as an initiative is fostering engagement sessions across the province.

These roundtables serve as platforms for community leaders, partners, and organizations to collectively address challenges, identify gaps, and strategize for mutual growth.

Balser said the outcomes of the immigration roundtable sessions, sharing specific instances where community leaders, mayors, and council members actively participated, were particularly important.

Balser said the success of these sessions is fostering collaboration, building partnerships, and instilling trust among diverse stakeholders. Additionally, the discussion expands to highlight the role of community organizations, non-profits, and sector-specific entities in these roundtables, showcasing a holistic approach to retention strategies.

“I’m incredibly proud of the information and the work that’s happening in these roundtable sessions and how it’s going to move forward – because now that we’ve built these partnerships, and the collaboration and trust is there, I think they’re going to be so beneficial to regions to address individual and unique needs,” Balser said. “But the wonderful thing is that municipalities can all collaborate with each other.”

### **Encouraging Rural Population Growth**

Balser underlined the importance of local municipalities in attracting and retaining residents in rural areas; in particular, the role of the community navigator working in the health space, dedicated to recruiting and retaining professionals and ensuring a holistic support system for newcomers. Balser said success depends upon community-wide efforts, making connections, and fostering a sense of belonging.

Navigators act as catalysts for community integration, addressing not only employment but also social and cultural needs. Balser said the importance of a community-driven approach is to ensure that newcomers not only find jobs but also become integral parts of the social fabric of smaller communities.



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“By having someone who is dedicated to doing that, then you have that person able to say, ‘I’ve got some nurses, trained internationally, coming in,’” Balser said. “Can we host a pot-luck? Can we host a welcoming event so that the community can get to know who this family is, and the family can start to make those connections?”

### Creating an Attractive Environment

Balser said the challenge of attracting skilled workers to smaller communities is addressed by ongoing immigration roundtables as spaces for collaboration. Municipalities are encouraged to voice concerns, share local knowledge, and participate in broader discussions. Additionally, the collaboration extends to international immigration missions, aligning job offers with destinations, and promoting programs like the Atlantic immigration program.

The Atlantic immigration program was made permanent on Jan. 1, 2022, by the federal government, with the majority of the employers designated being rural employers to enhance retention efforts. Local municipalities play a key role in shaping policies that actively support the integration of skilled individuals into the community fabric.

“What I love about that program is that it is employer driven, but you’re also bringing a whole entire family unit to the community,” Balser said. “So I think that’s where our municipalities can work together to say, OK, we’ve got some designated employers who are bringing workers here with their families. What role can we play to help with retention knowing that these individuals are going to go where the jobs are?”

### Diversifying Settlement Patterns

Balser said her department is conducting a marketing campaign, employing navigators to connect potential residents with local communities. The aim is to dispel urban-centric perspectives, showcasing the richness of opportunities in diverse municipalities. Efforts are ongoing to engage in meaningful conversations, ensuring a balanced and sustainable demographic distribution across the province.

Balser said there is a need for ongoing conversations to dispel misconceptions and promote the diverse opportunities available across Nova Scotia.

“Focusing on keeping people in the community is where Nova Scotia Works is a vital organization for an individual who might be looking for an opportunity to upskill or retrain, or if I’m currently in a job that I’m looking to grow into,” Balser said. “It’s also for employers to recognize the benefit of investing in their workforce. I think from a rural perspective that’s really important for retention, and from the workers that we’re hearing from they’re likely to stay with that employer if they feel valued, heard, and seen.”

### Collaboration is Key

The key, Balser said, is collaboration between the Department of Labour, Skills and Immigration and municipalities in fostering sustainable urban growth.

There are many initiatives, challenges, and successes in Nova Scotia’s pursuit of sustainable and balanced development. And this intricate tapestry of sustainable urban growth in Nova Scotia can only be accomplished by a concerted effort of all stakeholders. [AMM](#)





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