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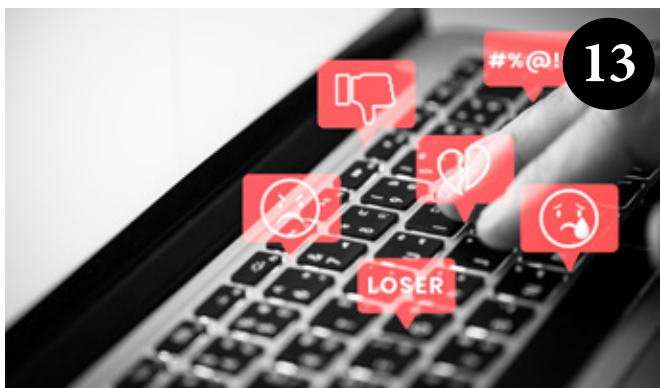
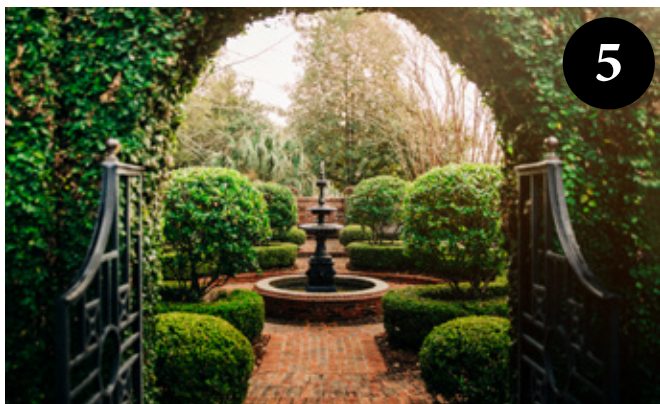


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What's Inside

Fall/Winter 2024

volume 2, number 2



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PUBLISHED AND DISTRIBUTED BY MUNICIPAL WORLD INC.
42860 SPARTA LINE
UNION, ONTARIO N0L 2L0

1-888-368-6125

3 Presidential Addresses

5 Fountain of Youth: Attracting young Islanders to municipal government

7 Innovative public spaces: Designing for community well-being

11 Community engagement fostering strong municipal culture / L'engagement communautaire au service d'une culture municipale forte

13 The dark side of public service: Harassment of municipal council members reaching crisis levels

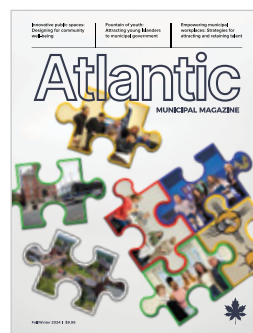
17 Community centres vital hubs

18 Portrait of the CAO

21 Empowering municipal workforces: Strategies for attracting and retaining talent

24 Fostering resilience in women leaders

26 Municipalities need increased supports to cover training costs



Cover design:
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Presidential Addresses



Bruce MacDougall
President, FPEIM

In this latest *Atlantic Municipal Magazine*, the Federation of PEI Municipalities (FPEIM) is excited to share stories about the dedication, engagement, and retention of Islanders in municipal government. We look at a project that supports women municipal leaders, talk to youth about their experiences on council, and learn from a chief administrative officer with four decades in the career.

We are again pleased to partner on this magazine with our friends at the Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities, Union of the Municipalities of New Brunswick, and Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador.

FPEIM will continue to support municipal leaders and staff as they build their communities. We hope our stories will also encourage readers to support others in pursuing municipal roles.



Amy Coady
President, MNL

Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador (MNL) is pleased to contribute to the Fall/Winter edition of the *Atlantic Municipal Magazine* with two new stories from a Newfoundland and Labrador perspective.

It is a tumultuous time in the municipal sector across our country. Nearly every day we hear stories of the challenges that municipal councils and staff face. These challenges are not just about fiscal constraints and infrastructure deficits. These are the challenges associated with not having the right resources and support to do your governance job well and, perhaps more importantly, the challenges of increasing incivility in the public sphere.

Fostering a strong municipal culture means ensuring that our councils and staff have the right training resources to build their confidence in carrying out the work expected of them. It also means coming together to say that the harassment and bullying of councillors and staff is not OK, and that a culture of respect inside and outside of council chambers is the only way forward.

Our stories from Newfoundland and Labrador illustrate the severity of incivility on the one hand, especially its impact on volunteer councillors, and the spirit of triumph on the other as councils push advocacy to support governance.

We must be stronger together.



Andrew Black
President/Président, UMN

The Union of Municipalities of New Brunswick (UMNB) is pleased to partner with the other Atlantic associations to bring you the latest edition of the *Atlantic Municipal Magazine*. As we transition from summer to fall and our regular routines, this edition, themed "Fostering a Strong Municipal Culture," offers a wealth of insightful articles. These pieces highlight collaborative efforts in building strong, vibrant communities across our region. I extend my heartfelt gratitude to our dedicated municipal leaders and staff who tirelessly work to shape and enhance our communities.

L'Union des municipalités du Nouveau-Brunswick (UMNB) est heureuse de s'associer aux autres associations de l'Atlantique pour vous offrir cette édition de l'*Atlantic Municipal Magazine*. Alors que nous passons de l'été à l'automne et à nos routines habituelles, cette édition, dont le thème est "Favoriser une culture municipale forte", propose plusieurs articles importants. Ces articles mettent en lumière les efforts de collaboration visant à construire des communautés fortes et dynamiques dans toute notre région. Je tiens à exprimer toute ma gratitude à nos responsables municipaux et à notre personnel dévoué, qui travaillent sans relâche pour façonner et améliorer nos collectivités.




Carolyn Bolivar-Getson
President, NSF

As we embrace the crisp air of fall, 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 pivotal 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 pave the way for fostering a strong municipal culture, emphasizing innovation, inclusivity, and shared success. As leaves turn and the season changes, so too does our collective determination to build a future marked by resilience, unity, and community strength. With the 2024 municipal election, I extend my gratitude to all municipal leaders who have weathered storms and tackled challenging issues, demonstrating exceptional dedication and perseverance.

Wishing you a season of growth and progress.



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

Fountain of youth

Attracting young Islanders to municipal government

When municipal officials discuss efforts to improve voter turnout and ensure strong municipal government, the conversation often highlights the importance of engaging youth. But what would encourage more young people to run for council or become more engaged with municipal government?

We talked to three youth on Prince Edward Island who have made the commitment to serve on municipal councils. We asked them why they ran, what challenges they experienced, what they like about the role, and what advice they might offer to inspire others to get involved.

Liam Ellis, Rural Municipality of Hunter River

Councillor Liam Ellis was elected in 2022 when he was 20 years old. Why did he run? The business student at the University of Prince Edward Island said his parents had both served on council. Ellis had also gotten to know some of

the people involved in municipal government through a summer job with the municipality and thought serving on council could provide him with valuable career experience.

A councillor in his first term, Ellis said it has been positive to give back to the community where he grew up, work with others, and take part in decisions that have an impact.

"I'm sure some young people may feel that their opinion isn't heard on council, but that hasn't been my experience," he said. "My council has been very inclusive."

Ellis is proud to see the tangible results of the council's decisions – things like solar panels installed at the community centre and a community fridge created to help residents experiencing food insecurity.

He said youth can bring a different and necessary perspective to local decision making.

"It's beneficial to have the perspective of a greater range of people," Ellis said, noting that councils make decisions on

a variety of local issues and initiatives. "These matters affect people of all ages."

Tips to engage youth:

1. Build more overall awareness of municipal government.
2. Emphasize the skills youth will gain from participating.

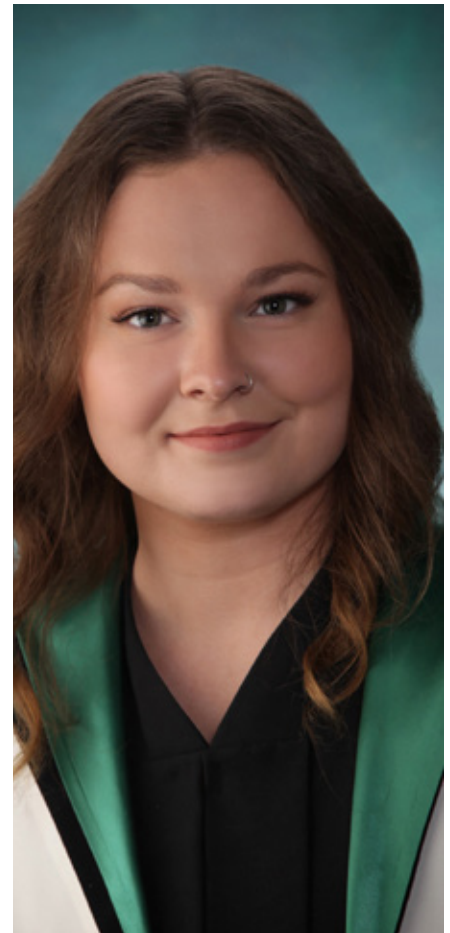
Harrison Duffy, Rural Municipality of Kinkora

Harrison Duffy was 18 years old when he was elected to council in 2020.

"I was taught that it's so important to be active within your community," said Duffy, now in his second term. "One way to give back is to offer your support by letting your name go [forward] and joining council."

Duffy is a mechanic in heavy construction and an entrepreneur. He said serving on council has given him the chance to learn new skills, plus share his own skills and advice.

"Being in municipal politics gives you the chance to make a change in your community," he said.



From left to right: P.E.I. councillors Liam Ellis and Harrison Duffy, and former councillor Lindsey Rhynes.

“We are the future. The sooner we can get involved, the more experience we’re going to gain.”

He is most proud to work together with his fellow councillors to improve the community with projects like adding an early childhood centre, expanding the municipal hall, and revitalizing a local park.

If there is a challenge, Duffy said it can be difficult to convince people of the need for change and new ways of doing things. That said, his council gets along well, Duffy said, and having youth take part helps prepare leaders for the years to come.

“We are the future. The sooner we can get involved, the more experience we’re going to gain,” Duffy said.

Tips to engage youth:

1. Encourage young people to find their own interest. “It’s very

important to get involved from a young age and express interest and ask questions.”

2. Promote participation in municipal government as one of the best ways to get involved in a new community.

Lindsey Rhynes, Rural Municipality of Miltonvale Park

Lindsey Rhynes was elected to council in 2018 when she was a 20-year-old sociology and anthropology student at the University of Prince Edward Island.

“I hadn’t really gotten to know my community,” she said, adding she wanted to feel more connected.

After working a summer job at the local hall, she developed more relationships and people encouraged her to run. Being on municipal council helped Rhynes share opinions, build connection, and become an advocate. But she also faced challenges. On one occasion, when she attended a conference, a man told her she was “too young to be there.” On council,

she also had to accept that no decision would “make everybody happy.”

After a move took her outside of the municipality, Rhynes had to resign in 2022. She said she’s proud of her participation: running, getting elected, and “continuing to show up despite the challenges.”

Rhynes said, “I definitely grew a lot.”

She still advocates for people, now in her job as a youth worker. She feels everyone should engage in politics in some way.

“As long as you’re living in society, politics is going to be a part of that,” Rhynes said. “It is the world you live in. You can either stay quiet or you can try to make it better for yourself or the people that come after you.”

Tips to engage youth:

1. Create opportunities for youth to learn about municipal politics.
2. Find ways for youth to come together, connect with the community, and have their voices heard.
3. Let youth know they belong. “The issues impact them as well and they can make a difference.” **AMM**



Transformed from an underutilized area, Truro's Civic Square now serves as a vibrant hub for events, markets, and community gatherings.



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

Municipalities across Nova Scotia and beyond are transforming public spaces into vibrant community hubs to enhance residents' quality of life. These initiatives foster social interaction, contribute to community well-being, and improve public health.

Innovative public spaces

Designing for community well-being

This article profiles several successful public space redesign projects, highlighting the pivotal role of urban planning and sharing feedback from residents and local businesses. These examples serve as inspiration for other municipalities aiming to create dynamic and inclusive public spaces.

Importance of Well-Designed Public Spaces

Well-designed public spaces are the physical and social heart of communities, offering venues for recreation, socialization, and cultural expression.

These areas are critical for fostering a sense of belonging and enhancing overall quality of life. There is a growing recognition of the significant role thoughtfully designed public spaces play in promoting community physical and mental health.

David Benoit, president and CEO of Build Nova Scotia, underscores this point:

"At Build Nova Scotia, in support of the provincial mandate, we enable vibrant, connected, healthy and growing communities through the delivery of innovative



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strategic infrastructure across the province. To deliver on these ideals, it takes a great deal of forward thinking and thoughtful planning. Two of the hallmarks of any excellent endeavour are inclusive and collaborative planning, as it results in a sum greater than its parts. It can foster a sense of community, promote a sense of belonging, and enhance the lives of Nova Scotians.

“I think it comes down to this: if you fail to plan, you plan to fail. Careful planning identifies your goals, sets realistic time-lines, and ensures resources are allocated efficiently. It means mitigating risks by developing strategies to proactively address potential challenges.”

The Halifax Waterfront is a prime example of how a well-planned public space can transform a city. This revitalization project has turned the waterfront into a bustling community hub, attracting both locals and tourists.

The redesign expanded pedestrian areas featuring relaxed seating along the walkway, including hammocks and Adirondack chairs. Green spaces were created and public art installations were added, such as the “Sail” in the new Queen’s Marque district. This sculpture, resembling the skeletal frame of a sailboat, symbolizes resilience and Halifax’s maritime heritage. These enhancements have made the waterfront a vibrant and attractive destination.

Residents have praised the project for its accessibility and the variety of activities it offers. The boardwalk, lined with cafés, shops, and seating areas, provides many opportunities for social interaction and relaxation. Local businesses have also benefited from the increased foot traffic, reporting higher sales and more engaged customers.

Role of Urban Planning in Community Health

Urban planning is at the core of creating public spaces that promote community health. Thoughtful planning considers not only the physical layout of a space, but also how it will be used by the community. This holistic approach ensures that public spaces are inclusive, accessible, and designed to meet the needs of all residents.

One key aspect of urban planning is the integration of green spaces. Parks and gardens not only beautify an area, but also provide critical health benefits. They offer residents places to exercise, relax, and connect with nature, which has been shown to reduce stress and improve mental health.

Truro’s Civic Square is another example of successful public space redesign. Transformed from an underutilized area, it now serves as a vibrant hub for events, markets, and community gatherings. The redesign introduced new seating, landscaping, and a performance stage, revitalizing the town centre and making it a focal point for community life.

The project began with a vision to create a central space for residents to come together year-round. Located in the “Civic Block” with its stunning architecture, the area was well-suited for integration with the new library and Truro Farmers’ Market. The demolition of the old library in 2016 cleared the way for this transformation.

Instead of hiring a consultant, town council opted for a community-led design process to ensure the space reflected residents’ needs and fostered a sense of ownership.

Key stakeholders, including the library, farmers' market, and the legion, contributed to the design, ensuring the Cenotaph remained a prominent feature.

The feedback from residents has been overwhelmingly positive. They particularly enjoy the variety of events, from farmers' markets to outdoor concerts, and the free ice-skating in winter. Local businesses have benefited too, with increased foot traffic and customers drawn to the vibrant activities in the square.

"The Civic Square has truly transformed our town centre," said Mike Dolter, chief administrative officer of Truro. "The enthusiastic participation of residents and the positive feedback we've received underscore the success of creating a space that the community can enjoy year-round."

The Civic Square has sparked private sector interest, attracted residential developers, and boosted economic activity downtown. More residents and events have led to lively streets and a thriving community atmosphere throughout the year. Truro's Civic Square stands as a testament to the power of innovative public space design in fostering community well-being and economic growth.

Community Engagement: Cornerstone of Public Spaces

Engaging the community in the planning process is essential for the success of any public space redesign. Residents are more likely to use and take pride in spaces that reflect their needs and preferences. This engagement can take many forms, from public consultations to participatory design workshops.

In New Glasgow, the Riverfront Revitalization Project exemplifies the power of community engagement. The town involved residents in every step of the planning process, from initial brainstorming sessions to final design approvals. This collaborative approach ensured that the project met the community's needs and desires.

The revitalized riverfront now features walking trails, playgrounds, and picnic areas, making it a popular destination for families and individuals of all ages. Feedback from residents has also been overwhelmingly positive, with many expressing pride in the new space and a sense of ownership over its success.

Economic Impact of Public Space Redesign

Beyond the social and health benefits, public space redesigns can also have significant economic impacts. Vibrant public spaces attract visitors and residents, driving foot traffic to local businesses and boosting the local economy. They can also increase property values and make communities more attractive places to live and work.

Sustainability and Resilience in Public Space Design

As municipalities plan for the future, sustainability and resilience have become critical considerations in public space design. Climate change, urbanization, and other challenges require innovative solutions to ensure that public spaces remain vibrant and functional for years to come.



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By prioritizing environmentally friendly projects, Lunenburg aims to create a healthier, more resilient community for future generations.

Lunenburg has embarked on an ambitious journey to incorporate green infrastructure into its urban planning, as outlined in the town's comprehensive community plan (CCP). While many of these initiatives are still in the planning stages, they reflect a forward-thinking approach to enhancing environmental sustainability and community resilience.

The CCP details various green infrastructure projects, such as rain gardens, permeable pavements, and green roofs. These projects aim to manage stormwater effectively, reduce urban heat islands, and improve air quality. The town further supports these initiatives by outlining measures to mitigate climate change impacts and promote sustainable development.

Feedback from residents and local businesses indicates strong support for these green infrastructure plans. Many believe these initiatives will significantly enhance the town's environmental quality and overall livability once implemented.

By prioritizing environmentally friendly projects, Lunenburg aims to create a healthier, more resilient community for future generations.

Future of Public Spaces in Nova Scotia

These examples demonstrate the transformative power of well-designed public spaces. By prioritizing community needs, engaging residents in the planning process, and focusing on sustainability, municipalities can create vibrant, inclusive, and resilient public spaces that enhance the quality of life for all.

As we look to the future, it is essential that municipalities continue to innovate and invest in public space redesigns. These projects are not just about beautifying an area. They are about building stronger, healthier, and more connected communities.

The success stories from Halifax, Truro, New Glasgow, and Lunenburg serve as a testament to what is possible when we prioritize the design and use of our public spaces. By fostering a strong municipal culture through innovative public spaces, we can create environments that promote well-being, drive economic growth, and enhance the social fabric of our communities. It is an investment that pays dividends in countless ways, making our towns and cities better places to live, work, and play. [AMM](#)



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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.



When community engagement leads to visible actions, it strengthens social bonds and fosters a sense of collective responsibility and ownership among residents. A recent highlight is the implementation of Sunday bus services.

Lorsque l'engagement communautaire se fixe sur des actions visibles, il renforce les liens sociaux et favorise un sentiment de responsabilité collective et d'appartenance chez les résidents. L'un des faits saillants récents est la mise en place d'un service d'autobus le dimanche.

From dialogue to action

Community engagement fostering strong municipal culture

Community engagement is one of many cornerstones to building strong, vibrant municipalities. It fosters a sense of belonging, encourages civic participation, and empowers residents to shape the future of their communities.

When community engagement leads to visible actions, it strengthens social bonds and fosters a sense of collective responsibility and ownership among residents. In New Brunswick, there are a number of municipalities that have innovative community engagement initiatives that serve as a great model for other municipalities.

The City of Fredericton's "Engage Fredericton and Parlons-en Fredericton" platform is a prime example of such an initiative. This platform is designed to foster a strong municipal culture by actively involving residents in the city's decision-making processes through town hall meetings and online forums. It ensures that all residents have the opportunity to contribute to Fredericton's growth.

"Engage Fredericton and Parlons-en Fredericton are innovative tools that provide insight and assist city council in making informed decisions to ensure a vibrant Fredericton for all," said Mayor Kate Rogers. "The City of Fredericton uses the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) standards to guide the engagement process. This allows residents the opportunity to learn about city projects

Du dialogue à l'action

L'engagement communautaire au service d'une culture municipale forte

L'engagement communautaire est l'une des nombreuses pierres angulaires de la construction de municipalités fortes et dynamiques. Il favorise le sentiment d'appartenance, encourage la participation civique et permet aux habitants de façonner l'avenir de leur communauté.

Lorsque l'engagement communautaire se fixe sur des actions visibles, il renforce les liens sociaux et favorise un sentiment de responsabilité collective et d'appartenance chez les résidents. Au Nouveau-Brunswick, plusieurs municipalités ont mis en place des initiatives novatrices d'engagement communautaire qui constituent un excellent modèle pour les autres municipalités.

La plateforme "Engage Fredericton et Parlons-en Fredericton" de la ville de Fredericton est un excellent exemple d'une telle initiative. Cette plateforme est conçue pour favoriser une culture municipale forte en faisant participer activement les résidents aux processus décisionnels de la ville par le biais d'assemblées publiques et de forums en ligne. Elle garantit que tous les résidents ont la possibilité de contribuer à la croissance de Fredericton.

"Engage Fredericton et Parlons-en Fredericton sont des outils novateurs qui donnent un aperçu et aident le conseil municipal à prendre des décisions éclairées pour assurer un Fredericton dynamique pour tous", commente la mairesse Kate Rogers. "La Ville de Fredericton utilise les normes de l'Association internationale pour la participation publique

Not having Sunday bus service has been a critical issue for residents and local businesses for years. Through innovative platforms like Engage Fredericton, council heard residents' and local businesses' needs in the community and was able to take action.

L'absence de service d'autobus le dimanche est un problème crucial pour les résidents et les entreprises locales depuis des années. Grâce à des plateformes novatrices comme Engage Fredericton, le conseil municipal a entendu les besoins des résidents et des entreprises locales et a pu prendre des mesures.



Fredericton Mayor Kate Rogers

La mairesse de Fredericton, Kate Rogers

and offers a space for the community to share input on city projects, ask questions, and share ideas.”

Through this initiative, the city has heard from their residents and local businesses and taken meaningful action on different services around Fredericton. A recent highlight is the implementation of Sunday bus services, to ensure there is reliable public transportation every day of the week for all residents. Through tools like Engage Fredericton and Parlons-en Fredericton, as well as investments made in transit technology to help improve accessibility, safety features, and fare payment options, these tools provided the ability to collect passenger data to provide quantitative numbers to enable council to put this plan in action.

Not having Sunday bus service has been a critical issue for residents and local businesses for years. Through innovative platforms like Engage Fredericton, council heard residents' and local businesses' needs in the community and was able to take action. This collaborative approach continues to strengthen the city's social connection, making Fredericton a vibrant, resilient community where every voice is heard and valued.

This initiative highlights just one of many municipalities in New Brunswick that use innovative approaches to community engagement, tailored to the unique needs and characteristics of their respective communities. By prioritizing community engagement, these municipalities have not only enhanced local governance, but also strengthened the social fabric of their communities.

By moving from dialogue to action, municipalities can cultivate a vibrant, participatory culture that benefits all stakeholders. This success story serves as a valuable example for other municipalities looking to strengthen community culture through innovative and inclusive engagement practices. [AMM](#)

(IAP2) pour guider le processus d'engagement. Cela permet aux résidents de se renseigner sur les projets municipaux et offre à la communauté un espace où elle peut faire part de ses commentaires sur les projets municipaux, poser des questions et partager des idées.

Grâce à cette initiative, la Ville a entendu les résidents et les entreprises locales et a pris des mesures significatives pour différents services à Fredericton. L'un des faits saillants récents est la mise en place d'un service d'autobus le dimanche, afin d'assurer un transport public fiable tous les jours de la semaine pour tous les résidents. Grâce à des outils comme Engage Fredericton et Parlons-en Fredericton, ainsi qu'à des investissements dans la technologie du transport en commun pour améliorer l'accessibilité, les dispositifs de sécurité et les options de paiement des billets, ces outils ont permis de recueillir des données sur les passagers afin de fournir des chiffres quantitatifs permettant au conseil municipal de mettre ce plan en œuvre.

L'absence de service d'autobus le dimanche est un problème crucial pour les résidents et les entreprises locales depuis des années. Grâce à des plateformes novatrices comme Engage Fredericton, le conseil municipal a entendu les besoins des résidents et des entreprises locales et a pu prendre des mesures. Cette approche collaborative continue de renforcer les liens sociaux de la ville, faisant de Fredericton une communauté dynamique et résiliente où chaque voix est entendue et valorisée.

Cette initiative n'est qu'un exemple parmi d'autres des nombreuses municipalités du Nouveau-Brunswick qui utilisent des approches novatrices en matière d'engagement communautaire, adaptées aux besoins et aux caractéristiques uniques de leurs communautés respectives. En accordant la priorité à l'engagement communautaire, ces municipalités ont non seulement amélioré la gouvernance locale, mais aussi renforcé le tissu social de leurs communautés. En passant du dialogue à l'action, les municipalités peuvent cultiver une culture participative dynamique qui profite à toutes les parties prenantes. Cette réussite est un exemple précieux pour les autres municipalités qui cherchent à renforcer la culture communautaire par des pratiques d'engagement innovantes et inclusives. [AMM](#)



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The dark side of public service

Harassment of municipal council members reaching crisis levels

Across the country, local government officials are facing increasing instances of harassment, both online and in person.

The Witless Bay Ecological Reserve, located along the southeastern side of Newfoundland's Avalon Peninsula, is the breeding ground for 260,000 puffin couples – the largest colony in North America. These small birds, described by local tour guides as having the agility and aerodynamics of a flying potato, need either the steep cliffs of the islands or open sea to take to the air.

Four islands, about one to two kilometres offshore, make up the reserve. On the shore opposite the islands is an area known as Ragged Beach. It is undeveloped and therefore dark at night, which

is an anomaly compared to the rest of the developed, seemingly suburban shoreline in the Town of Witless Bay and surrounding area.

This darkness is important for birds like the puffin and the petrel, which navigate using the light of moon and stars. Young birds are easily confused by the lights on shore and get stranded on land.

Making Progress, Making Enemies

In 2010, Lorna Yard, who was raised in Witless Bay and still lives there, joined a group working to protect the Ragged Beach area from the light of development.

"I didn't want to make enemies. That wasn't my intention," Yard said. "I just

wanted to protect the dark coastline. But that land is so valuable and it's the last real stretch of pristine coastline within striking distance of the city (of St. John's), that the battle over that coastline got really, really nasty, and I was targeted a lot by a small group of developers and their associates who basically just wanted me to go away. It was a long haul, and it was really difficult."

Yard's father was on council and her mother was a town administrator. Her parents instilled in her the importance of community service. But as for becoming a councillor herself, it's not something Lorna had really considered. Besides, she figured, people were probably tired of her and her efforts to preserve Ragged Beach. Then things came to a head.

It looked like development of Ragged Beach was imminent.

Witless Bay is a beautiful seaside town, with a deep heritage and unbeaten natural beauty. It is, in many ways, a typical Newfoundland and Labrador small town, with typical council issues of roads, water and sewer, and providing programming and activities for youth and seniors.

From Yard's perspective, progress was not being made on these issues.

"The last couple of years of the previous council, the whole focus was getting that road in, to get that land developed," Yard said. "There were no recreational activities in the town. Finally, I just got to the point where I was so fed up with seeing the potential of the town wasted, whether or not Ragged Beach was developed."

Yard decided to put her name on the ballot to be a councillor in Witless Bay, population 1,640. She was elected in 2021, serving as deputy mayor until her resignation in March 2024 due to near-constant harassment.

In Yard's work to prevent development in the Ragged Beach area, and in her subsequent work as deputy mayor, her opponents – developers, residents, and anonymous online commenters – took the discourse from one of legal protections and the rights of nature versus the rights of commerce to one of personal attacks and insults. It went from criticism to harassment. In some cases, the conversation began and ended with harassment.

"I think it's really important to differentiate between criticism and harassment, because if you put your name down and you're making policy decisions or any kind of decisions that affect people, you're going to be criticized," Yard said. "And that is completely fair. I think it's fantastic when people – voters of any level – are engaged in what their government is doing, and they should feel safe and free to criticize, to question, and that is vital to a democracy."

Facing Harassment from Start to Finish

Yard recalled nomination day prior to the 2021 municipal election, recounting how she saw people in the parking lot, watching to see who dropped off nomination papers. It was, she felt, an intimidation tactic.

"There were previous councillors who parked in the town parking lot all day

Women and those in the 2SLGBTQIA+ community disproportionately face incidents of harassment. On International Women's Day, FCM issued a release calling on all orders of government to "unite against the pervasive harassment culture, urgently addressing the toxic environment disproportionately affecting elected officials – particularly women, BIPOC, and 2SLGBTQI+ representatives."

to see who was being nominated, to the point where people were getting intimidated," Yard said. "We had to call the police on nomination day. That's when it started."

In the 2017 general municipal election, the Witless Bay council was acclaimed. In 2021, that council was replaced entirely, as the town's residents voted for the seven new names on the ballot, including Lorna Yard, replacing the four incumbent councillors (three other councillors did not run for re-election).

It was not a smooth transition. The town clerk had quit, as had the fire chief. Many of the volunteer firefighters, Yard said, were also threatening to quit. The first task, the new council agreed, would be to find and hire a town clerk.

"We had a lot of angry residents because the office hadn't been open for three or four months. They couldn't pay a bill; they couldn't get certificates for mortgages. Like, the town was not running," Yard said. "And so we walked into that, and our first meeting was ... well, how do we get a town clerk to take our minutes? You know, forget handbooks, forget training, forget orientation. It was OK – where do we find a town clerk?"

In addition to the challenges of figuring out how to get a town running again, Yard was facing a barrage of harassment. Anonymous comments, name calling, and personal attacks on social media and through email were bad enough, but people also took to name calling and insults in person.

After nomination day, someone set up a Facebook page dedicated to inviting people to tell negative stories about Yard. One of the first posts, Lorna said, was, "If you've ever had a problem

with this individual, contact us and we'll deal with her."

It didn't stop there. Yard was harassed at her work, a position completely unrelated to her work as a councillor. Bogus complaints were made to the Human Resources Department, Yard said, and they were obligated to follow-up. Nothing came of the complaints, but she admitted it was unsettling and disruptive.

This harassment of elected municipal officials – many of whom are volunteers – is a problem across the country, not just in rural Newfoundland and Labrador. As a major topic of discussion at the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM), it resulted in a resolution on harassment debated and passed by members at the annual conference in Calgary, Alta., in early June 2024. The FCM's closing conference plenary focused on harassment. Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador (MNL) CEO Rob Nolan, who attended the event, said the topic came up in discussions throughout the conference.

Support System in Need of Adjustment

Women and those in the 2SLGBTQIA+ community disproportionately face incidents of harassment. On International Women's Day, FCM issued a release calling on all orders of government to "unite against the pervasive harassment culture, urgently addressing the toxic environment disproportionately affecting elected officials – particularly women, BIPOC, and 2SLGBTQI+ representatives."

MNL supports FCM's call for action. In Newfoundland and Labrador, there is an identified need for harassment supports, said MNL Director of Programs

Bradley Power, who said work is currently underway to provide a helpline-style service to members and that there is still much work to be done.

The *Municipal Conduct Act*, which came into effect in September 2022 was, in part, intended to address issues of harassment. In some cases, however, the reverse has happened, as people use the act to submit anonymous vexatious complaints against council members, including Yard. Staff and council at the Town of Witless Bay were obliged to deal with the accusations, adding to their workload and stress.

When the harassment was really bad, Yard says her fellow councillors were reluctant to speak up in her defense, likely out of fear of becoming the targets of harassment themselves. Now that Yard has been out of council for a few months, she can look back and acknowledge that her fellow councillors were protecting themselves, but at the time, it was hard.

“You need support for the individual, but also for their colleagues and staff and other councillors so they know what to do to help get people through it,” Yard said.

Eventually, the harassment became too much to handle, and Yard, along with her husband – who also served on council – resigned in March 2024. She had served two and half years of her four-year term.

“I really, really wanted to stay in that space, and I knew I couldn’t with the way things were,” said Yard, adding that she reached out to the province and to MNL but neither were able to provide the supports she needed.

“The biggest thing I would want people to hear is that we need to recognize it. There needs to be supports put in place,” said Yard, noting the need for anti-harassment toolkits and training for administrators and council members to deal with harassment when it happens.

“A lot of the times, the reason people being harassed and abused aren’t supported is because it’s such a difficult thing – their colleagues just don’t know what to do,” Yard said. “And there needs to be a place, there needs to be mental health supports, because this is really serious.”

Dealing with harassment in a meaningful way requires a multifaceted approach. Legislation refinements are needed to fix the problems identified with the *Municipal Conduct Act*; a support talk line is needed for councillors and municipal administrators dealing with harassment; a toolkit for council and administrators needs to be developed and distributed; and a wider campaign is required to encourage people to communicate respectfully, rather than with insults and personal attacks.

For the Town of Witless Bay, the effects of Yard’s harassment go beyond the personal. The town, once again, is having difficulty in finding people interested in governing the town.

A recent by-election call for nominations to fill the positions vacated by Yard and her husband resulted in zero nominations. Yard, who tried to encourage people to put their name forward, was told a few times that the potential for harassment stopped people from putting their name forward.

As for Ragged Beach, in September 2023, the provincial government announced the creation of a new reserve in the Ragged Beach area. “As a result of the reserve, new development of Crown Land in that area will be restricted,” the government release said. [AMM](#)



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Nova Scotia's 13 First Nation municipalities enrich the province with Mi'kmaw culture, which has flourished for thousands of years. The Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Centre regularly hosts events celebrating this heritage.

Community centres vital hubs



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

Community centres in Nova Scotia serve as vital hubs for gatherings and celebrations, such as birthdays, weddings, and cultural festivals. These centres are either municipally owned or operated by local non-profits, both playing crucial roles in fostering culture within their locales. However, running these centres comes at a cost. To ensure they remain operational and vibrant, it's essential to capitalize on available funding and advocate for their importance.

These hubs provide spaces for municipalities to celebrate their unique cultures. For example, the Municipality of Clare, rich with Acadian heritage, boasts over 75 per cent of residents fluent in both English and French. The French-Acadian language and traditions are integral to the area, with local centres key to preserving and promoting this heritage.

Queens Regional Municipality's Town Hall Arts and Cultural Centre, originally built in 1902, exemplifies how historic buildings can evolve while retaining cultural significance. This vibrant arts centre, housing the Astor Theatre – the oldest performing arts venue in Nova Scotia – demonstrates the power of community spaces to adapt and thrive.

Nova Scotia's 13 First Nation municipalities enrich the province with Mi'kmaw culture, which has flourished for thousands of years. The Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Centre regularly hosts events celebrating this heritage. Municipalities like Halifax Regional Municipality collaborate with Indigenous communities to include events like KANA'TA Day, highlighting the importance of recognizing history and diversity.

By 2030, all centres are required to be accessible, ensuring that everyone can benefit from their resources. There is also a growing emphasis on energy efficiency, both for environmental and cost-saving reasons. These initiatives are important but can pose financial challenges during the installation process.

Essential Funding, Initiatives, Programming

To fund these upgrades, many centres apply to the Nova Scotia Department

of Communities, Culture, Tourism, and Heritage (CCTH), which offers more than five funding programs to support upgrades. Efficiency Nova Scotia assists in preparing facilities for retrofits and provides rebates for increasing energy efficiency. Many centres are also being equipped with generators to serve as warming centres during inclement weather, ensuring they remain operational during times of need.

Affordability is another crucial aspect, ensuring access to programming. For instance, the Municipality of the District of East Hants offers a program that allows low-income residents to participate in recreational activities at reduced rates. The Halifax Regional Municipality's Funding Access Program covers 50 to 100 per cent of the cost of recreation programs based on need. These initiatives ensure all residents can benefit from the services offered.

Community centres in Nova Scotia are remarkable in promoting culture across the province. They provide essential spaces for engagement, cultural preservation, and celebration. Through funding, energy efficiency initiatives, and inclusive programming, these centres continue to be at the heart of fostering a strong municipal culture. [AMM](#)



Bev Shaw worked as the CAO for the Town of O'Leary, P.E.I., for 44 years.

Portrait of the CAO



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

Bev Shaw worked as chief administrative officer (CAO) for Town of O'Leary residents for 44 years. When her children asked what she did at work every day, Shaw would tell them that being a CAO was kind of like running a home.

"I look after the cleaning, the lights, the sewer, paying the bills, maintaining the property, planning for the future, and fun things to do," she would explain. "Whatever you do within your house and for your family, times that by the number of households in the community that you're working for."

Shaw's last day in the office was in June 2024. Over her time with the municipality, she worked with 10 mayors, helped prepare for more than 40 budgets, saw the computerization of the office, adjusted to expanded municipal roles, and handled a burgeoning workload.

"I stuck it out. I'm stubborn," she said with a laugh, chatting at the town complex a few weeks before her last day at her workplace.

Shaw was born and raised in O'Leary, where her father once served as the only police officer. The western P.E.I. town has about 900

residents. Their municipal services now include planning, fire protection, sewer services, sidewalks, streetlights, recreation services and facilities, and policing through a contract with the RCMP.

Learning on the Job

Working as the town's CAO proved challenging from Shaw's first day in March 1980. The previous employee in the role had left, so Shaw had no one to train her on the job. Plus, she did not have other staff on hand who knew the administrative side.

Like many P.E.I. municipalities, the Town of O'Leary runs with just a few employees. Shaw recalled that in 1980 those employees included a CAO, a recreation director, and a part-time maintenance person who typically worked on-call.

To tackle her job, Shaw relied on knowledge from her business diploma, her familiarity with the town, and her practical nature.

"It was trial and error," she said, modestly.

Shaw also found advice and friendship by connecting with other CAOs. In fact, she and another CAO built

their skills by taking courses related to municipal administration through Dalhousie University in Halifax. In addition to studying by correspondence, the pair made the one-and-a-half-hour drive to Charlottetown every two weeks for tutorials.

Shaw completed the courses and kept learning on the job.

“It was tough trying to learn, trying to still do the job – and I had children!”

Wearer of Many Hats

A CAO’s work includes carrying out the policy decisions made by council and managing all work and operations of the municipality. Shaw explained a CAO needs to know a bit about everything: community development, the law, administration, facilities management, financial management, emergency measures, planning, a bit of engineering, to name a few.

“You have to be a problem solver,” she said.

Over her four decades in the role, Shaw has witnessed “dramatic” changes. She highlights three in particular:

1. Technology – In her early days as a CAO in the 1980s, municipal books were kept as ledgers with handwritten entries. “When I started, we didn’t even use computers. Even the accounting was done manually!” She noted technology has allowed for more detailed reporting.

2. Municipal roles – The roles of municipalities have multiplied. As examples, she said the Town of O’Leary has become heavily involved in areas like community development and emergency management. New roles mean CAOs must also wear new “hats” on the job.

3. Workload – As municipal roles and populations have grown, so has the CAO workload. When Shaw began in 1980, she worked about 25 to 30 hours a week. But her job became full time – and then some. She commonly worked some evenings to catch up. “It’s hard to find time to do everything that’s expected of you, let alone the stuff that’s been added on over the years.”

Tough but Rewarding

Leading up to retirement, Shaw trained the incoming CAO to both give her replacement a smoother start and leave the town’s administration in good order.

She now looks forward to free time for biking, curling, golfing, and playing her Taylor guitar – activities largely put on hold due to her packed schedule. Shaw also wants to continue volunteering with seniors’ programs.

“I love being able to help people,” she said.

As a CAO in a small municipality, Shaw didn’t just help people through her work in areas like facilities, finances, bylaws, and development. She was also the point of contact for residents who dropped into the town complex wanting a photocopy, help with navigating a government website, or advice on settling in the area.

Shaw said her work helped her make many friends, including seniors who sometimes dropped by with homemade doughnuts, biscuits, or cinnamon rolls to share.

While Shaw said it is tough for CAOs to stay on top of everything they need to know, it is rewarding too.

“I like the variety,” Shaw said. “I can’t say I’ve ever been bored.” **AMM**



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The Halifax Regional Municipality launched the Engineer in Training Program in 2016. This four-year program allows civil engineering graduates to work across four different business units under the mentorship of a professional engineer.

Empowering municipal workforces

Strategies for attracting and retaining talent



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

In an era marked by rapid change and increasing competition for skilled talent, municipalities must adopt innovative approaches to attract and retain the workforce necessary to serve their communities effectively.

Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) has developed a series of forward-thinking strategies aimed at fostering a strong municipal culture and empowering its workforce. By focusing on recruitment, retention, professional development, employee wellness, and leadership support, HRM is setting an example for other municipalities.

Innovative Recruitment Strategies

HRM has implemented several innovative programs to attract skilled employees. One such initiative is the Engineer in Training Program,

launched in 2016. This four-year program allows civil engineering graduates to work across four different business units under the mentorship of a professional engineer (PEng).

This hands-on experience, combined with successful completion of the national professional practice exams, fulfils the requirements for obtaining a PEng designation in Nova Scotia. This approach not only equips graduates with essential skills, but also embeds them in the municipal culture, increasing the likelihood of long-term retention.

Another notable initiative is the Bridging the Gap Program, which offers post-secondary graduates an 18-month paid internship. This program not only provides exposure to municipal government, but also includes mentorship from experienced public servants.



The Aspiring Leaders Program is a 10-month leadership development initiative based on three pillars: Leading with Empathy, Leading Innovation, and Leading People.

The cohort-based model fosters a sense of community and shared experience, with regular learning and development sessions and social activities.

HRM is also committed to community engagement, particularly with employment equity groups. Participation in targeted job fairs, such as the BIPOC Atlantic Job Fair, and partnerships with organizations like the Immigration Settlement Association of Nova Scotia enhance HRM's reach.

Additionally, employment circles within the African Nova Scotian community, facilitated by HRM's African Nova Scotian affairs advisor, allow for direct communication about opportunities and the hiring process. The upcoming hiring of an immigration specialist will further bolster HRM's strategy to attract newcomers and provide related support.

Retention Programs

To retain talent, HRM has developed the Aspiring Leaders Program, a 10-month leadership development initiative based on three pillars:

- Leading with Empathy
- Leading Innovation
- Leading People

Since its inception in 2018, 127 employees have completed the program, with nearly 90 per cent remaining with HRM. More than half

of these participants have advanced to formal leadership roles or progressed in their careers, demonstrating the program's effectiveness in fostering internal growth and development.

Flexible Work Arrangements

The HRM FlexWork Program, initially developed to reduce downtown traffic congestion as part of the HaliFACT climate action strategy, has evolved to meet post-pandemic needs. The hybrid work model, where feasible, has been embraced by employees and is a significant consideration for job applicants. The program's positive feedback highlights its role in enhancing employee satisfaction and retention.

Professional Development

HRM offers a range of professional development programs, facilitated by internal subject matter experts. The popular Aspiring Leaders Program is complemented by the evolving Leaders Community, which supports existing leaders' continuous development.

The Education Reimbursement Program allows for up to 50 per cent tuition reimbursement (up to \$2,500 annually) for approved programs, with participants committing to stay with the municipality for three years post-completion. Annually, about 35 employees benefit from this program, furthering their education and skills.

HRM's diverse learning and development programs include training on diversity and inclusion, resumé writing, and interview skills. These are delivered through various formats, including online self-directed learning, classroom training, and virtual instructor-led sessions.

Access to resources like Harvard Manage Mentor, LinkedIn Learning, and NS Skills Online further broadens employees' learning opportunities. The mentorship program pairs experienced employees with those earlier in their careers for a six-month mentorship, promoting skill development and knowledge transfer.

Employee Wellness

A cornerstone of HRM's strategy is its commitment to employee wellness. The municipality aims to create a healthy workplace where employees thrive.

Wellness information is disseminated through the online employee hub, monthly spotlights, and webinars. Health and wellness kiosks visit operational depots, providing information on the Employee & Family Assistance Program (EFAP), benefit plans, and life coaching resources.

Recent updates to EFAP materials and the relaunch of the annual employee wellness fair and expanded vaccine clinics demonstrate HRM's proactive approach to employee health.

Work-Life Balance

HRM supports work-life balance through flexible workplace policies. Employees can utilize the municipal FlexWork Program and, in some cases, select their work schedules, depending on operational needs. This individualized approach ensures that employees' personal well-being is supported, enhancing overall job satisfaction and productivity.

Success Stories

The corporate accommodations team exemplifies HRM's success in overcoming workforce challenges. By creating spaces that meet staff need, such as collaborative areas, focus zones, and ergonomically adjustable workstations, productivity and efficiency have increased. These efforts also foster cross-divisional engagement, enhancing teamwork and communication.

Employee Feedback

HRM conducts an employee engagement survey approximately every two years, with data analyzed by an external third party. The results inform organizational initiatives and business unit-specific engagement plans.

In 2023, an employee engagement specialist role was created to support these plans, ensuring that employee feedback is effectively addressed and acted upon.

HR Insights

From an HR perspective, one of the biggest challenges is the competitive market for talent. HRM addresses this by demonstrating to employees that they are valued, and that the municipality is invested in their future.

This is achieved through comprehensive employee well-being programs, opportunities for learning and development, and career progression. By connecting employees' work to the broader purpose of serving the community, HRM fosters a sense of purpose and engagement.

Leadership plays a crucial role in fostering a positive work culture. Municipal leaders must actively demonstrate organizational values:

- Respect
- Collaboration
- Diversity & Inclusion
- Integrity
- Accountability
- Sustainability
- Evidence-Based Decision Making

Supporting employees in their learning and development pursuits and encouraging career exploration are also vital for building a strong municipal culture.

Recommendations

For other municipalities seeking to enhance their HR practices and improve employee satisfaction, HRM recommends striving for high employee engagement rather than mere satisfaction.

Leadership ownership of employee engagement, facilitated by HR, is key. Developing a clear employee engagement strategy, with defined roles and measurable actions, ensures that feedback is taken seriously and acted upon.

Future Trends

Looking ahead, HRM is embarking on a multi-year strategy to create and maintain a psychologically healthy workplace. This includes leadership commitment, assessing current psychological health and well-being, and identifying improvement opportunities.

Desired outcomes include improved psychological health, increased employee satisfaction and retention, reduced absenteeism, and decreased total lost work time.

By adopting innovative recruitment and retention strategies, investing in professional development, prioritizing employee wellness, and fostering a supportive leadership culture, HRM is effectively empowering its workforce. These efforts not only enhance employee satisfaction and retention, but also ensure that the municipality is well-equipped to serve its community.

Other municipalities can learn from HRM's example and implement similar strategies to build a strong, engaged, and resilient municipal workforce. [AMM](#)



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The Fostering Resilience in Women Municipal Leaders workshops aim to reduce some of the stress and isolation that might be experienced by women councillors, mayors, and CAOs.



Fostering resilience in women leaders



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

After Holly Gordon was elected to town council, one of the first events she attended was a Fostering Resilience in Women Municipal Leaders workshop.

“The more I learn, the more I feel like I thrive at what I’m doing,” said Gordon, who serves with the Town of Alberton, in western Prince Edward Island.

Gordon felt some intimidation coming in to her municipal role: pressure from wanting to do her best and from following in the municipal footsteps of her late father, who had been the town’s mayor.

“Everybody loved him,” Gordon said. “Part of me was worried that I might fail.”

Creating Space for Women

The Fostering Resilience in Women Municipal Leaders workshops aim to reduce some of the stress and isolation that might be experienced by women councillors, mayors, and CAOs.

“We see low retention rates in a lot of these roles,” said Sarah Outram, executive director of the PEI Coalition for Women in Government. “These workshops help with retention by creating community.”



Pictured at a Fostering Resilience workshop are, from left, FPEIM communications assistant Sakura MacLean; PEI Coalition for Women in Government staff Chanarae Turnquest, Kari Kruse and Sarah Outram; and FPEIM President Bruce MacDougall.

The series is created and delivered by the Coalition, co-hosted by the Federation of PEI Municipalities (FPEIM), and funded by the PEI Alliance for Mental Well-Being. The idea emerged from a previous partnership, when the Coalition and FPEIM co-hosted campaign schools for women leading up to the 2022 municipal elections. At one particular school, the participants wanted less time to learn campaign strategy and more time to share challenges and discuss issues.

The Coalition identified that offering space to connect and share could assist women in their work and support their well-being.

“Workshops like this help to create a space where women can skill share,” Outram said. “They can network. They can express concerns or spearhead ideas.”

The first Fostering Resilience workshop took place in January 2023, with three or four workshops, plus other events taking place each calendar year through 2025. Each workshop includes a mix of the following:

- guest speakers on topics like mental health and resiliency, conflict resolution, grant writing, women in government, and funding and partnership opportunities for municipalities
- recurring Atlantic Summer Institute on Healthy and Safe Communities (ASI) presentations on applying a mental health lens to all policies
- breakout groups and round tables
- personal reflection

Upcoming workshops will give participants the chance to develop advocacy skills and work together to create a toolkit for future women municipal leaders. As the workshops support the women who participate, they also help support municipal governments.

“Stronger municipal leaders can dedicate more time and energy to their municipalities,” Outram said.

The workshops also help build connections between P.E.I. municipalities and provide a venue to share information and best practices on community resilience.

Empowering Women in Local Government

President Bruce MacDougall said FPEIM wants to increase the presence of women in municipal government.

“This partnership has helped us work toward our goals of encouraging more women to get involved and then supporting their work once they get there,” he said. He added that the success of the workshops has also sparked other efforts to provide spaces for municipal leaders to connect and share ideas.

Councillor Holly Gordon said Fostering Resilience has provided her with practical information – such as funding and partnership opportunities – that she’s put to use. But she says making connections with other women leaders has been the most valuable part. She now sees their familiar faces when she goes to events, and she sometimes reaches out to other participants if she’s looking for input on a challenge or question.

“It’s nice that women can feel like they’re supporting each other. They can bounce ideas off each other,” she said. “They can come together and empower each other.” [AMM](#)

There is a need for training on council procedures, such as how to effectively contribute to a meeting. Currently, this knowledge – at least in Cow Head – is passed down from experienced councillors. *Photo: Adobe Stock*



Municipalities need increased supports to cover training costs



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

On the west coast of the island of Newfoundland, in the Town of Cow Head council chambers, the newly elected council is gathered around the table, ready to start the first general meeting of their term.

Deanna Hutchings sits in the mayor's chair, feeling lucky for the opportunity to serve her community as mayor. It's the latest step in her 16 years of

volunteer community service that began with a desire to have community programming for her children. Her dedication to public service was inspired by her late grandfather, who also served on council, and stressed to Hutchings the importance of civic engagement.

"I first started on the special events committee, which hosts our lobster

festival, then I joined (the) heritage committee, ambulance committee, and an economic development board,” Hutchings said. “And then I think it just became a point where I wanted to address things that I couldn’t address on those committees.”

Sitting on committees gave Hutchings a sense of how a town council operates, but other than that, she said, she felt somewhat unprepared.

“As the mayor, particularly having to control the meeting,” Hutchings said, “I felt a little uncomfortable being the voice to say, like, this is right, or to direct people who had been on council prior.”

In September 2022, the *Municipal Conduct Act*, brought in by the province’s Department of Municipal and Provincial Affairs, came into effect. The act introduced mandatory training for municipal councillors and town clerks, managers, and chief administrative officers, in addition to requiring municipalities to enact a code of conduct for their councils and staff.

Prior to the *Municipal Conduct Act*, there was no requirement for training or professional development as a member of council, nor was there any onboarding or councillor orientation provided by the Department of Municipal and Provincial Affairs. When Hutchings joined council, she was handed a copy of the municipal council handbook, published by the Department of Municipal and Provincial Affairs, but was not given any further instruction on how to be a mayor.

“I took it upon myself to read through minutes from the past meetings and question the town clerk a lot about more of their policies,” Hutchings said. “Had I not done that, I believe I would have been left completely in the dark.”

Filling the Gaps

A few years ago, in response to hearing from members about the need for training, Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador (MNL), through a partnership with College of the North Atlantic, developed an online course based on the municipal council handbook that offered more insight and depth than simply reading the book would provide.

In addition to the course – which is currently being reworked, with a new course offering expected in 2025 – MNL’s annual spring symposium and fall conference both include professional development sessions. The Professional Municipal Administrators Association (PMA) also offers training for members.

These courses and events offered by MNL, PMA, and others come with a cost for attendees. Attending multiple events – along with the travel, accommodation, and food costs – quickly adds up, placing these opportunities out of reach for small towns that don’t have the revenue for a robust training budget.

The Department of Municipal and Provincial Affairs has long provided a training fund for municipalities. For the decade before the 2024 provincial budget, the amount remained at \$1,000 for each municipality on a cost-shared basis. This amount was insufficient to meet the needs of municipalities, prompting the Town of Cow Head to submit a resolution for the 2023 MNL annual general meeting calling for increases to the municipal training fund.

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When a new councillor was elected during a by-election, Hutchings took the time to guide the new councillor toward the information and resources needed to do the job. Realizing the importance of formalized training, and seeing first-hand the confusion created when councillors are making decisions based on outdated information, she says councillors need to stay up to date on the rules and regulations for municipal councils, whether through formalized training or through self-directed reading.

Following the adoption of the resolution, MNL, in 2024 budget consultation meetings with the provincial government, advocated for the need for additional training funds, resulting in the fund being doubled, with municipalities now able to access up to \$2,000 per year for training.

The *Municipal Conduct Act*, which came into effect in September 2022, implemented mandatory training requirements for municipal council members. The training modules, delivered online at no cost to attendees, cover the following topics:

- roles and responsibilities of councillors and chief administrative officers
- meetings and procedures of council
- budgets and financial management
- information related to access to information and protection of privacy
- conflicts of interest

From the mayor's chair, Hutchings sees room for improvement in how new council members are introduced to the role. She would have liked to see, for instance, a summary of rules for mayors when she first took the seat.

Additionally, Hutchings sees a need for training on council procedures, such as how to effectively contribute to a meeting. Currently, this knowledge – at least in Cow Head – is passed down from experienced councillors.

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"If you're not aware of what's right or wrong," Hutchings said, "then you could very well be taking your town down a path that is not good." **AMM**



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