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MUNICIPAL MAGAZINE



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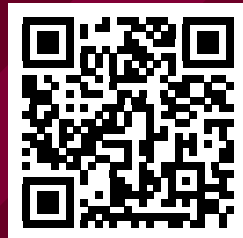
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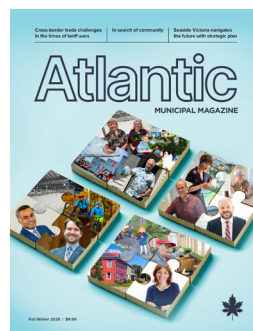
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Presidential Addresses



Bruce MacDougall
President, FPEIM

The Federation of PEI Municipalities (FPEIM) has long recognized the power of collaboration. In fact, FPEIM was founded in 1957 to provide more unified action for Prince Edward Island municipalities. We continue to share this belief in unified action, in our role as the voice of P.E.I. municipalities and in our co-operation with our municipal colleagues.

In this magazine, you'll find stories that illustrate the benefits of collaboration: how our Atlantic associations work together, how FPEIM is working with P.E.I. municipalities to find more fair recreation funding, and how a seaside P.E.I. municipality brought its community together to create a strategic plan. We hope these stories inspire even more collaboration to address the issues that municipalities face.



Amy Coady
President, MNL

Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are known for their friendliness and their willingness to help others. We seem to be born with a sense of community. This summer, we've seen that kindness, generosity, and community spirit on display in countless ways.

This past summer has been a challenging one for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, as unusually hot and dry weather helped create one of the worst wildfire seasons in recent memory. Across the province, people lost homes and businesses. In the Kingston fire in the Conception Bay North area, about 200 homes and businesses were lost to the flames.

The fires, thankfully, are now under control. In this trying time, there has been an outpouring of support from neighbours and strangers alike, as people all pitch in to help out those affected by the fires. Municipal fire departments have been crucial to firefighting efforts. We are grateful for their dedication and hard work alongside provincial and military fire crews. Now, we turn our focus to the work of recovery and rebuilding.

Through the good and the bad, we continually see the value in helping to build community. With a municipal election happening in Newfoundland and Labrador on Oct. 2, we look forward to seeing more people volunteering, to continue putting community first, and becoming involved in local government.



Brittany Merrifield
President/Président, UMN

The Union of Municipalities of New Brunswick (UMNB) is proud to partner on this edition of *Atlantic Municipal Magazine*. In recent years, regional collaboration has become more vital than ever as municipalities face shared challenges such as climate change, infrastructure demands, and population growth. This issue highlights key Atlantic advocacy efforts, alongside two New Brunswick features that showcase regional recreational partnerships and cross-border trade challenges. Together, these stories reflect the strength and resilience of our municipalities as we work toward a more inclusive, sustainable, and vibrant future.

L'Union des municipalités du Nouveau-Brunswick (UMNB) est fière de s'associer à cette édition de *Atlantic Municipal Magazine*. Au cours des dernières années, la collaboration régionale est devenue plus essentielle que jamais, les municipalités étant confrontées à des défis communs tels que les changements climatiques, les besoins en infrastructures et la croissance démographique. Cet édition met en lumière les principales initiatives de défense des intérêts de la région de l'Atlantique, ainsi que deux articles sur le Nouveau-Brunswick qui présentent des partenariats régionaux en matière de loisirs et les défis liés au commerce transfrontalier. Ensemble, ces articles reflètent la force et la résilience de nos municipalités alors que nous travaillons à l'édification d'un avenir plus inclusif, plus durable et plus dynamique.



Pam Mood
President, NSFM

As municipal leaders, we know that no challenge is faced in isolation – and no solution should be either. Across Atlantic Canada, we are seeing stronger interprovincial collaboration, shared advocacy, and an open exchange of ideas that is making a real impact.

This issue of *Atlantic Municipal Magazine* highlights two powerful examples: how our four municipal associations are working together to build capacity and influence policy, and how municipalities are driving Canada's energy transition from the ground up. These stories reflect the leadership, adaptability, and innovation that define our region.

At the Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities (NSFM), we remain committed to strengthening the collective voice of municipalities – not just in Nova Scotia but alongside our neighbours across the Atlantic provinces. Together, we are not only responding to challenges, we are shaping the future.

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

Cross-border trade challenges in the times of tariff wars

Life along Edmundston's border includes daily connections with the United States for all kinds of things from family events to business and trade. Tariffs, established by U.S. President Donald Trump's administration, continue to threaten that connection.

Canada, U.S. Share Ties

On March 4, the Trump administration enacted a 25 per cent tariff on Canadian imports. Since that time, reports show a more than 40 per cent drop in travel between the United States and Canada, specifically at the Edmundston-Madawaska international bridge.

In light of the imposed tariffs and a reduction in the number of travellers, the City of Edmundston began an internal assessment of possible next steps to navigate this new economic reality.

Mayor Eric Marquis and council immediately reviewed their trade relations with Maine, which resulted in the termination of a few contracts the municipality had with companies in Madawaska that provided services unavailable in Edmundston.

"The U.S. president's decision, along with his comments about wanting Canada to become the 51st state, completely

Les défis liés au commerce transfrontalier en période de guerre tarifaire

La vie le long de la frontière d'Edmundston comprend des liaisons quotidiennes avec les États-Unis pour toutes sortes de choses, qu'il s'agisse d'événements familiaux ou d'affaires commerciales. Et les tarifs établis par l'administration du président américain, Donald Trump continuent de menacer ces liaisons.

Le Canada et les États-Unis Partagent des Liens

Le 4 mars dernier, l'administration Trump a instauré des tarifs de 25 pour cent sur les importations canadiennes. Depuis ce temps, divers rapports font état d'une baisse de plus de 40 pour cent des déplacements entre les États-Unis et le Canada, en particulier au niveau du pont international Edmundston-Madawaska.

En raison des tarifs imposés et de la réduction du nombre de voyageurs, la cité d'Edmundston a entrepris une évaluation interne des mesures possibles à prendre en réponse à cette nouvelle réalité économique.

Le maire Éric Marquis et son Conseil ont effectué une révision immédiate de leurs relations commerciales avec le Maine, ce qui s'est traduit par la résiliation de quelques contrats entre la municipalité et des entreprises de Madawaska qui fournissaient des services non disponibles à Edmundston.

« Cette décision du président américain, ainsi que ses commentaires portant sur son souhait de voir le Canada devenir le 51^e état, nous ont carrément estomaqués », a déclaré M. Marquis. « Edmundston et Madawaska, au Maine, ont des liens tissés serrés depuis plus de deux siècles. Ces liens sont



Eric Marquis, mayor of Edmundston
Eric Marquis, maire d'Edmundston

stunned us,” said Marquis. “Edmundston and Madawaska, Maine, have had close ties for over two centuries. These ties are economic but also fraternal. Most of us have relatives and friends on the other side of the Saint John River. We never thought we would hear this kind of rhetoric from an American elected official. And clearly, we made the immediate decision to review our trade relations with Maine.”

Neighbour Interactions in Uncertain Times

The decision to terminate the contracts with Madawaskan companies was not made lightly by the council, according to Marquis. Some manufacturing companies in Edmundston have been more affected by the tariffs than others, notably the Twin Rivers plant. The Twin Rivers Paper Company regularly ships pulp from the Edmundston mill to the Madawaska mill. Despite these changes, local entrepreneurs continue to be creative, innovative, and dynamic in their ways to tap into new markets for their goods and services.

When asked if council has found any unique opportunities to change the way the municipality interacts with the United States, Marquis had this to say:

“To be honest, our interactions remain the same. Take, for example, our sharing of specialized firefighting equipment. If Madawaska suffers a major fire, our ladder truck and firefighters would be available to assist Madawaska firefighters. That will not change. Our friendship goes beyond the speeches of an elected official in Washington.”

The same frame of mind extends to local sports and supporting teams like the Maritime Major Junior Hockey League's the Edmundston Blizzard, who continue to have fans in Madawaska.

What Comes Next

Although the tariffs have changed the landscape of trade between the two countries, strong efforts by all provinces and the federal government are being made to break down interprovincial trade barriers and expand Canadian markets outside of our neighbours to the south. Edmundston will continue to examine council contracts to support local and Canadian businesses.

“We are living in a time of uncertainty, tension, and above all, misinformation. These are difficult times but, at the same time, they are pushing us to reinvent ourselves,” Marquis said. “I believe that our entire community is in this state of mind. Eventually, we will emerge stronger as a city, as a province, and as a country.” [AMM](#)

économiques, mais également fraternels. Car la plupart d'entre nous avons de la parenté et des amis de l'autre côté du fleuve Saint-Jean. Jamais nous n'aurions pensé entendre ce genre de discours de la part d'un élu américain. C'est pourquoi nous avons pris la décision immédiate de revoir nos relations commerciales avec le Maine. »

La Réévaluation des Interactions entre Voisins en ces Temps Incertains

Aux dires de M. Marquis, la décision de mettre fin à des contrats avec des entreprises de Madawaska n'a pas été prise à la légère par le Conseil. Certaines entreprises manufacturières d'Edmundston ont été plus durement touchées que d'autres par les tarifs. C'est le cas notamment de l'usine de Twin Rivers. En effet, la Twin Rivers Paper Company expédie régulièrement de la pâte à papier de l'usine d'Edmundston vers l'usine de Madawaska. Mais, malgré ces changements, les entrepreneurs locaux continuent de faire preuve de créativité, d'innovation et de dynamisme dans leurs efforts de recherche de nouveaux marchés pour leurs biens et leurs services.

Voici la réponse de M. Marquis lorsqu'on lui a demandé si le Conseil avait vu là une occasion unique pour la municipalité de changer sa façon d'interagir avec les États-Unis :

« À vrai dire, nos interactions demeurent les mêmes. Prenons par exemple notre partage d'équipement spécialisé pour le combat contre les incendies. Si Madawaska était victime d'un incendie majeur, notre camion à échelle et nos pompiers seraient disponibles pour venir en aide aux pompiers de Madawaska. Cela ne changera pas. Notre amitié va au-delà des discours d'un élu à Washington. »

Le même état d'esprit s'étend aux sports locaux et au soutien d'une équipe comme le Blizzard d'Edmundston, de la Ligue de hockey junior des Maritimes, qui a toujours des partisans à Madawaska.

Quelle est la Suite

Même si les tarifs ont changé le paysage du commerce entre les deux pays, de grands efforts sont faits par le gouvernement fédéral et l'ensemble des provinces pour faire tomber les barrières au commerce interprovincial et élargir les marchés canadiens au-delà de nos voisins du sud. La ville d'Edmundston poursuivra l'examen de ses contrats municipaux, afin de soutenir les entreprises locales et canadiennes. Le maire Marquis a conclu avec ces mots :

« Nous vivons une période remplie d'incertitude, de tension et, surtout, de désinformation. Ce sont des temps difficiles mais qui, en même temps, nous poussent à nous réinventer. Je crois que toute notre communauté partage cet état d'esprit. Éventuellement, nous en ressortirons plus forts, en tant que ville, en tant que province et en tant que pays. » [AMM](#)



The Eliyahu Wellness Centre in the Town of North Rustico serves 13 communities on the north shore of Prince Edward Island, but only the town pays to support its operations.



The Eliyahu Wellness Centre supports Prince Edward Island's north shore by providing an Olympic-size ice surface, space for the Mount Academy private school for student athletes, a home for several ice sports, a fitness centre and walking track, and rooms and spaces for meetings and local events.



P.E.I. municipalities struggle to stickhandle recreation costs

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

The Eliyahu Wellness Centre serves 13 communities on the north shore of Prince Edward Island, but only the Town of North Rustico pays to support its operations.

"It is hard for our residents because they feel like they're responsible for holding this place together," said Stephanie Moase, the town's CAO. "I understand their frustration, 100 per cent."

Moase is chatting in the centre's boardroom, along with Mayor Heather McKenna and facility general manager John-Anthony Langdale. The trio describe the impressive aspects of the

facility: the only Olympic-size ice in the province, the host of the Mount Academy private school for student athletes, the home of several ice sports, a fitness centre and walking track, and rooms and spaces for meetings and local events.

"You don't have to be a ringette player or a hockey player to step foot in the Eliyahu Wellness Centre," Langdale said, noting its development as a hub of services for the area.

Regional Facilities Facing Operational Challenges

Funding the operations of such a centre in Prince Edward Island poses unique challenges, including the small size and capacity of P.E.I. municipalities and the

large amount of unincorporated area in the province.

Though P.E.I. is the most densely populated province in Canada, 65 per cent of its land area remains unincorporated. As a result, P.E.I. municipalities like the Town of North Rustico often provide services to nearby communities but have limited revenue to do so.

"Our tax base is quite small," Moase says, noting the town's population of 648 as of the 2021 census. "However, we are a service centre for a much, much larger area."

When the Eliyahu Wellness Centre opened in 2023, it replaced the previous North Star Arena and provided a venue during the 2023 Canada Winter



Geoff Baker, CAO of the Town of Kensington, agrees a new funding model is needed to support the operation of recreational facilities that serve regional populations in Prince Edward Island.



Town of North Rustico Mayor Heather McKenna (left) and CAO Stephanie Moase (right) want the Eliyahu Wellness Centre to continue serving Prince Edward Island's north shore region. However, they say additional operation funding, such as through a provincewide recreational levy, is needed for facilities used by regional populations.

Games. Residents from the 13 communities (including 10 unincorporated areas) served by the facility vigorously fundraised for construction. However, the operation costs and capital debt ultimately fall to the Town of North Rustico.

The facility receives revenues from ice rentals, canteen sales, space rentals, sponsorships, and some continued

fundraising to help cover the \$800,000 a year it needs to run. Still, it operates at a deficit, with expenses exceeding revenues by about \$165,000 last year. The tiny town of North Rustico – already struggling with the capital debt worsened by cost overruns in construction – makes up any deficit amount.

Moase, Langdale, and McKenna emphasize they want the centre to

continue as a hub for the north shore area. They also expect more revenues after the centre's full kitchens are running and the facility can host more events. But they say other funding sources are needed to operate with more than a "skeleton" staff; offer programming; cover rising costs; and keep prices reasonable for skaters, hockey players, families, and others who use the facility.

"We have to generate revenue to keep the doors open, but we're equally sensitive to our users and their costs," Langdale said.

Resolution for Provincial Levy

Recognizing that other municipalities struggle to fund the operations of what essentially are regional facilities, the Town of North Rustico has proposed the idea of a provincial recreational levy.

A town resolution called on the Federation of PEI Municipalities (FPEIM) to advocate to the P.E.I. government for the "creation and implementation of an annual province-wide recreational levy from unincorporated areas, to be distributed in a manner that supports the fair and sustainable operation of municipal recreational facilities used by regional populations."

FPEIM's membership supported the resolution at the federation's annual general meeting in April.

Geoff Baker, CAO with the Town of Kensington, empathizes with the Town of North Rustico and understands the challenges that municipalities face running a recreational facility.

The Town of Kensington has a population of about 2,100 people. In 2012, the town took over the local recreational facility after the Kensington Area Recreation Association faced financial and operational challenges keeping the facility open.

Credit Union Centre continues to serve 29 communities, most of them unincorporated areas, and only the town contributes revenue funded through municipal property taxes. The facility includes an ice rink, ballfields, a park, a fitness centre, a seniors' centre, and a skate park.

Baker says the town has invested \$4 million into the facility since 2012. The total cost to run the facility is about \$650,000, and the town's taxpayers contribute about \$100,000 of that amount.

"We value every person that walks through the door, whether they're a resident or not," Baker said. He describes the real issue as the need for more fair funding, whether through a recreational levy or some other provincial mechanism.

"The current model of one small municipality supporting what really is a multi-community asset is unfair, for one, and certainly not viable in the long term," he said. "If we want to continue to be able to provide access to rural recreation, then a new model needs to be put in place that matches the way people in our region actually use our facility and not where they happen to pay property taxes."

FPEIM President Bruce MacDougall describes municipal struggles to operate recreational facilities as symptomatic of the need for changes to the municipal financial framework in P.E.I.

Revenues are largely based on property taxes, and P.E.I. municipalities receive one of the lowest shares of provincial revenues in the country. MacDougall says FPEIM will continue to press for more municipal revenue sources that better reflect the services municipalities provide.

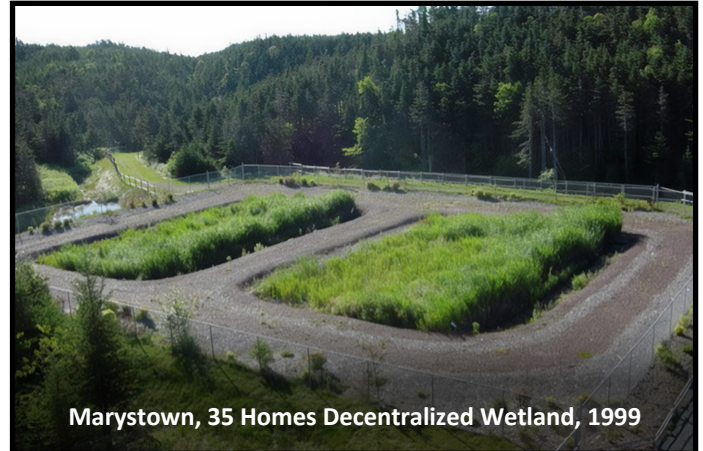
"Recreation services are valued across P.E.I., but municipalities cannot continue to shoulder so much of the financial load," he said. "A more fair funding model would allow municipalities to sustain regional facilities. It would also allow municipalities to invest more in the programming that promotes the health and quality of life of so many Islanders." **AMM**



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Across the province of Newfoundland and Labrador, there are challenges to rural living. But, in every town, it is still possible to identify a sense of community, no matter the size of the town.



In search of community



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

About 450 people once lived in the outpost community of Keels. With its sheltered, natural harbour, it was an ideal place for fishermen to settle. They raised

families, sent their children to the local school, coaxed subsistence crops from the rocky landscape, and collected firewood from the nearby woods. But that was nearly 200 years ago.

Today, the school building is closed, with the siding missing in places. The post office is a collection of roadside boxes. There is only one store, stocking a few necessities, with a tea house tucked in the back that is open on weekends.

The fall of the cod fishery, the out-migration of young people, and other factors have left the town with the dubious distinction of now being the smallest town by population size in Newfoundland and Labrador. As of the 2021 census, Keels had a population of

46, down from 51 in 2016. For all the things the town has lost, it has kept a sense of community.

Challenges in Rural Living

Across the province of Newfoundland and Labrador, there are challenges to rural living. But, in every town, it is still possible to find examples of community building and identify a sense of community, no matter the size of the town.

In Keels, there is still a strong sense of community, according to Eileen Marsh, shopkeeper and part-time town clerk, and Annie Fitzgerald, who has been mayor for the past 44 years.

In this tiny harbour town, everybody knows everyone. If someone is having



Keels Mayor Annie Fitzgerald (left) and town clerk Eileen Marsh (right) chat in the tea house.



The Town of Trinity Bay North municipal building.

trouble, Fitzgerald said, the townspeople come together to help. There is a real sense of community, she said. It's part of the reason she has remained here all these years, as she has watched so many others leave. This is her home, and she has no desire to leave. Even when on vacation, she said she can't wait to get back home.

There are challenges to living in such a small town, Marsh said, not the least of which is getting the attention of the provincial government for something as simple as installing a speed limit sign, which she has been working on for a couple of years as the town clerk.

Creating a Sense of Community

In a very small town where everyone pitches in to help each other, a sense of community is nearly the default. But what about in other, larger towns?

On the other side of the Bonavista peninsula, about 35 kilometres away from Keels, Trinity Bay North was formed 20 years ago by amalgamating the four communities of Melrose, Port Union, Catalina, and Little Catalina. The sense of community is tempered by a decline in volunteering.

Trinity Bay North Mayor Dean Lodge said he's seen a decline in committee involvement. This is an observation

echoed by councils in other municipalities in discussions at Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador events.

The question of how one builds a sense of community in rural areas is core to the work of Dr. Kelley Totten, a folklore professor at Memorial University. Pursuing the answer was partly what brought her to Trinity Bay North, and Port Union in particular.

Building a community is, in one aspect, about creating spaces and opportunities for people to feel like they belong while encouraging individual contribution and co-operation. This also happens to be one of the keys to creating

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Chad Mahar, CDM Aerial Photography Photo

Community gardens – whether in Whitbourne, Trinity Bay North, or your community – are about much more than food. They offer an excuse for people to gather and connect while sparking conversations that start with growing plants and food and continue to, in some cases, blossoming friendships.

sustainable communities, since people who feel like they belong see a future for themselves in the community, and will – in theory – work to find ways to stay instead of moving away.

This is more than abstract theory or a thought exercise for rural Newfoundland and Labrador. It is a real and present dilemma as census after census populations continue to decline in small towns across the province. This is not a new problem, nor is the question of how one creates a sense of community new, either. Scholars and researchers, including Totten, have long been pursuing these issues.

How do we preserve our rural spaces and make a vibrant community where people can stay here? This is, forever, the question, Totten said.

The answer may be rooted in the garden.

Space for Communities to Grow

To say that community gardens are the saviours of rural towns would be wildly inaccurate. But it would not be an overstatement to say that this is as good a place as any to begin looking for solutions.

On a rainy spring day in Whitbourne, volunteers are in the community garden, organizing the greenhouse, planting seedlings in the community garden boxes, and tending to the many tasks a garden demands.

Hilda Whelan, who also happens to be the mayor, is deeply involved in the community garden, not as an extension of her mayoral duties but rather as an extension of her deep love of gardening. She maintains a greenhouse and gardens at her home, in addition to the many hours spent in the community garden.

Walking through the gardens, she explains the plans for the upcoming growing season while discussing how the garden provides a place for community food sharing. Here, the garden contributes to a growing sense of community through sharing food, knowledge, and common interests.

Community gardens – whether in Whitbourne, Trinity Bay North, or your community – are about much more than food. They offer an excuse for people to gather and connect while sparking conversations that start with growing plants and food and continue to, in some cases, blossoming friendships. It is through these connections that people discover their own sense of community and find for themselves reasons to make a home and a future rather than seeking the greener pastures of urban centres or far-flung locales.

While the questions of how to create community will forever remain, for municipal leaders, the path to answers lies in creating the spaces and opportunities for community building to grow and thrive. [AMM](#)

Halifax's Common Aquatic Facility, one of Atlantic Canada's first net-zero municipal buildings, demonstrates how local governments can lead by example in advancing energy efficiency and sustainability. Photo: Maxime Brouillet / Abbott Brown Architects

Municipal catalysts in Canada's energy transition



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

As Canada advances toward its 2050 net-zero carbon emissions target, municipalities are proving indispensable in bridging national climate goals with local action. With jurisdiction over land use, transportation, building codes, and waste management, municipalities are uniquely equipped to implement – and innovate – the energy transition.

Nova Scotia communities exemplify this potential, deploying solar projects, net-zero buildings, and regional partnerships to reduce emissions while strengthening local economies. Yet, financial constraints, regulatory hurdles, and capacity gaps persist.

Land Use Planning Enabling Renewables

Municipal control over zoning allows communities to prioritize renewable energy infrastructure.

By designating sites for solar farms or updating bylaws to streamline rooftop solar permits, municipalities remove barriers to clean energy adoption. Nova Scotia's Community Solar Program, for instance, enables towns to host shared solar gardens on municipal land, offering subscriptions to residents unable to install panels privately.

The program continues to expand, bringing accessible clean energy to both small towns and rural areas. A new 2.2-megawatt "solar garden" is now in development in West Petpeswick, on the eastern shore of Halifax Regional Municipality. Built through a provincial investment of \$440,000 and powered by partnerships between AI Renewables and Chabad Lubavitch Society of Atlantic Canada, this project will significantly extend subscribers' access to affordable solar power in rural communities.

Launched in 2024, community solar gardens in places like Sydney (0.555 megawatt) supply both residential

and commercial clients and enable participants to receive bill credits for their share of generated clean energy. These installations not only democratize energy access – especially for apartment dwellers or shaded properties – but also drive regional economic benefits through local construction jobs and sustained investment.

Strategic land use also supports district energy systems, which reuse waste heat from industries or wastewater facilities to heat neighbourhoods – a model gaining traction in Halifax and Amherst.

Sydney's waterfront district energy system, fueled by waste heat from a nearby steel plant, supplies 50 buildings with low-carbon heating. The project, a partnership between the municipality and Nova Scotia Power, reduces annual emissions by 4,000 tons – equivalent to taking 870 cars off the road.

Transportation Electrifying Mobility

Municipalities are reshaping how people move through their communities by investing in low-carbon transit. In 2023, Cape Breton Regional Municipality committed to electrifying its transit system through a \$54-million investment



Supporting local municipal government in Newfoundland and Labrador



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supported by federal, provincial, and municipal funding. The project includes the introduction of six electric buses and the development of a new maintenance facility capable of supporting a full fleet transition – up to 44 electric buses – by 2030.

These upgrades not only reduce greenhouse gas emissions but also deliver long-term cost savings, with electric buses offering significantly lower operating costs per kilometre compared to diesel. In rural and small urban areas like Cape Breton, such investments signal a shift toward more sustainable, cost-effective mobility solutions that are tailored to local needs.

While larger centres like Halifax continue to integrate transit planning with active transportation and land use, smaller municipalities are showing that regional innovation and inter-governmental collaboration can also drive impactful change. As more communities follow suit, the electrification of public transit is emerging as a key pillar in municipal climate action.

Building Codes Leading by Example

The province's adoption of tiered building codes, progressing toward net-zero energy-ready (NZER) standards by 2030, demonstrates how municipalities can monitor and ensure compliance with efficiency standards.

Truro's net-zero fire hall, featuring solar panels and geothermal heating, saves \$15,000 annually in energy costs, proving the economic case for green construction. Retrofitting existing buildings remains critical, with programs like Halifax's HomeWarming offering low-income residents free insulation upgrades, reducing emissions and energy poverty simultaneously.

Halifax's Common Aquatic Facility, opened in 2023, is a leading example of net-zero municipal construction in Atlantic Canada. The centre produces as much renewable energy as it uses, thanks to rooftop solar panels, efficient heat pumps, and a well-insulated building envelope. Additional features like water recapture for irrigation and a timber roof further reduce its environmental impact.

As both a community hub and a model for climate action, this facility demonstrates how municipalities can deliver energy-efficient, low-carbon public spaces that benefit residents and advance local climate goals.

Waste Innovation Closing the Loop

Circular economy initiatives are turning waste into resources.

The Circular Cities and Regions Initiative (CCRI) has guided municipalities like Bridgewater in creating industrial symbiosis networks, where one business' waste becomes another's raw material. Meanwhile, Kentville's curbside organics collection, managed by Valley Waste, diverts about 30 per cent of residential landfill waste into compost.

This program not only cuts methane emissions but also produces valuable soil for community gardens. These local mechanisms are already yielding measurable results across Nova Scotia.

Overcoming Challenges: Funding, Policy, Expertise

Municipalities face persistent barriers in scaling up climate action – chief among them, limited revenue streams. With property taxes as their primary funding source, many towns struggle to invest in solar arrays, electric fleets, or large-scale efficiency retrofits. While federal programs like the Green

Municipalities are Canada's unsung climate heroes, transforming policies into tangible progress.

Municipal Fund offer critical support, smaller municipalities often lack the internal capacity to develop applications or manage complex projects.

Regulatory hurdles further complicate progress. Provincial utility rules can limit the scope of local energy initiatives, and outdated zoning bylaws frequently delay approvals for renewable infrastructure. For example, solar farms may not be a permitted use under current land use designations and height or setback restrictions meant for buildings can inadvertently apply to solar panels or wind turbines, triggering rezoning or variance processes that stall development.

Capacity gaps are particularly acute in rural areas. Many municipal councils are eager to act but lack the technical knowledge to assess proposals or oversee implementation. According to Clean Foundation, this lack of in-house expertise creates a critical roadblock as municipalities need access to increased staff capacity and resources to drive community-based climate solutions effectively.

Organizations like the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM), the Clean Foundation, and the CCRI are stepping in to bridge these gaps through workshops, feasibility studies, and dedicated support programs. However, long-term progress will depend on sustained investment in local capacity and updated policies that align municipal authority with provincial and federal climate goals. Partnerships accelerating progress include:

- **Intermunicipal collaboration** – The Western Valley Regional Energy Network pools resources across five Nova Scotia municipalities to fund shared electric vehicle chargers and efficiency audits, cutting costs by 40 per cent.
- **Provincial-federal synergy** – Nova Scotia's \$4-million Municipal Climate Change Action Program matches federal funds, enabling towns to hire sustainability staff and develop climate plans.
- **NGO Support** – The Clean Foundation's Shared Solar program assists municipalities in feasibility studies, securing over \$2.5 million for solar projects since 2020.

Seizing Opportunities

The energy transition isn't just environmental; it's economic. Kentville's solar garden created 12 permanent jobs, while Halifax's efficiency retrofit sector employs over 1,500. By prioritizing local contractors in procurement, municipalities keep dollars circulating regionally. Resilience co-benefits are equally compelling: during Hurricane Fiona, Berwick's solar-powered community centre served as an emergency shelter for 200 residents.

Municipalities are Canada's unsung climate heroes, transforming policies into tangible progress. With sustained funding, aligned policy, and strengthened partnerships, their impact can scale exponentially. As Nova Scotia's examples show, local action isn't a placeholder for national strategies – it's their foundation. [AMM](#)

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The trail will be exclusive to pedestrians and bicycles. It will also be accessible to people of all ages and physical conditions.

Le sentier sera réservé aux piétons et aux cyclistes. Il sera également accessible à toutes les personnes, quel que soit leur âge ou leur condition physique.



Municipal collaboration powers regional trail connection

A long-awaited trail project is gaining momentum as municipalities across southeastern New Brunswick join forces to reconnect communities through active transportation and green infrastructure.

What was once a dormant railway bed in Shediac is now being transformed into a vital link in a growing regional trail network. Thanks to strong leadership from local governments and the Southeast Regional Service Commission, a new bridge across the Scoudouc River is slated for construction, marking a major step forward for the Shore-Line Trail project.

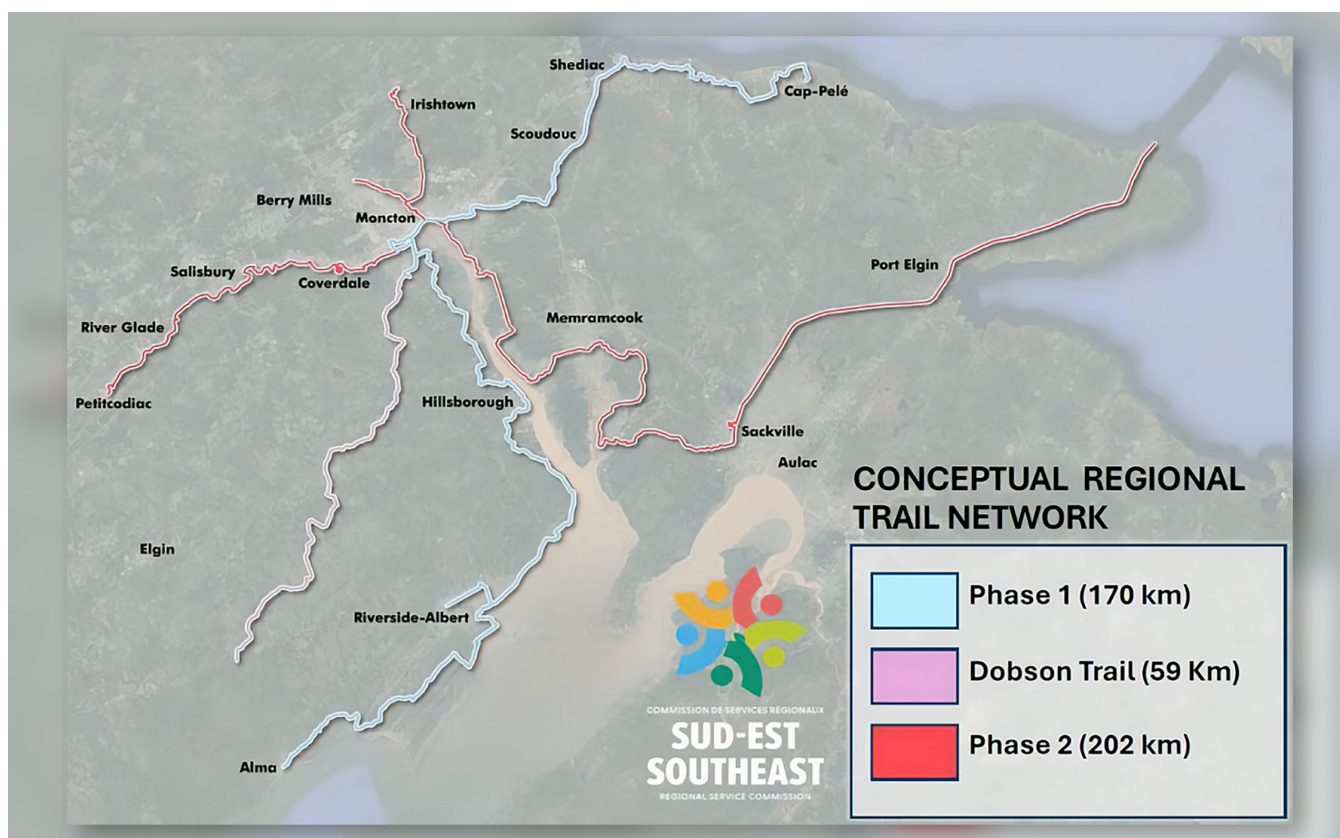
Regional Vision for Active Living, Connectivity

First envisioned in 2016, the Shore-Line Trail is designed to be a 170-kilometre route connecting 12 municipalities across

La collaboration municipale alimente la connexion de sentiers régionaux

Un projet de sentier attendu depuis longtemps prend son essor, des municipalités du sud-est du Nouveau-Brunswick joignant leurs efforts pour reconnecter leurs collectivités par l'entremise du transport actif et d'une infrastructure verte.

Ce qui n'était auparavant qu'une voie ferrée abandonnée, à Shediac, fait maintenant l'objet d'une transformation en un lien vital dans un réseau régional de sentiers en pleine expansion. Grâce au leadership dynamique des gouvernements locaux et de la Commission de services régionaux du sud-est, on prévoit la construction d'un nouveau pont au-dessus de la rivière Scoudouc, ce qui constitue une avancée importante pour le projet de sentier Ligne Côtière.



The conceptual regional trail network will connect many trails that already exist in local municipalities but don't lead anywhere.

Le réseau régional conceptuel de sentiers qui reliera de nombreux sentiers déjà existants dans les municipalités locales, mais qui ne mènent nulle part.

southeastern New Brunswick. By the time both phases are complete, it will span over 200 kilometres, linking Cap-Pelé to Alma, and reaching into municipalities like Maple Hills, Tantramar, and Three Rivers.

Municipal leaders have played a central role in pushing this project forward, from long-term visioning to land use negotiations and community engagement.

Phase 1 of the project starts at Fundy National Park and will connect Fundy Albert, Riverview, Moncton, Dieppe, Shediac, and Cap-Acadie.

Phase 2 will bring the 170-kilometre connection to over 200 kilometres by connecting communities like Maple Hills, Memramcook, Tantramar, Three Rivers, Salisbury, and Strait Shores.

Bridging Gaps between Communities

The Scoudouc River currently marks a dead-end for trail users in Shediac. Soon, that will change. A new pedestrian bridge will span the 80-metre river using the original rail piers – remnants of one of New Brunswick's first railway corridors. The design includes steel spans with a wooden deck and a mid-river observation point to take in the natural beauty of the area.

In addition to boosting tourism and cycling culture, this connection supports a larger shift toward sustainable, low-carbon transportation options and recreational equity across the region.

"Cap-Acadie is proud to contribute to the development of the Shore-Line Trail network, a vital initiative that enhances quality of life and improves access to green spaces for all our residents," said Serge Léger, mayor of Cap-Acadie.

Une Vision Régionale de la Vie Active et de la Connectivité

Imaginé au départ en 2016, le sentier Ligne Côtière a été conçu pour devenir un chemin de 170 kilomètres reliant 12 municipalités du sud-est du Nouveau-Brunswick. Lorsque ses deux phases seront terminées, le sentier s'étendra sur plus de 200 kilomètres, reliant Cap-Pelé à Alma et traversant des municipalités comme Maple Hills, Tantramar et Three Rivers.

Les dirigeants municipaux ont joué un rôle crucial dans la progression de ce projet, grâce à leur vision à long terme, leurs négociations pour l'utilisation des terres et leur engagement communautaire.

La phase 1 du projet, qui commence au parc national de Fundy, reliera Fundy Albert, Riverview, Moncton, Dieppe, Shediac et Cap-Acadie.

La phase 2 fera passer le sentier de 170 kilomètres à plus de 200 kilomètres, en reliant des collectivités comme Maple Hills, Memramcook, Tantramar, Three Rivers, Salisbury et Strait Shores.

Comblant les Espaces Entre les Collectivités

La rivière Scoudouc marque actuellement la fin du parcours pour les usagers des sentiers à Shediac. Mais la situation changera bientôt. Un nouveau pont piétonnier traversera les 80 mètres de la rivière en utilisant les piliers originaux du pont ferroviaire – des vestiges de l'un des premiers corridors ferroviaires du Nouveau-Brunswick. Le concept comprend des travées en acier avec un pont en bois, ainsi qu'un point d'observation au milieu de la rivière qui permettra d'admirer la beauté naturelle du site.

Andrew Black, mayor of Tantramar and UMNb past president
Andrew Black, maire de Tantramar et ancien président de l'UMNB



Serge Léger, mayor of Cap-Acadie

Serge Léger, maire de Cap-Acadie

Municipal Collaboration at the Core

The strength of the Shore-Line Trail lies in municipal collaboration. While many communities already have local trails, this project is about connecting them – creating seamless experiences that serve residents and visitors alike.

“With phase two of this project bringing in a larger network of trails, this connection will allow not only our residents but all our communities’ residents access to a wider regional network while showcasing our local trails to others,” said Andrew Black, mayor of Tantramar.

For some communities, participation has meant contributing land, staff time, or advocacy. Others are playing key roles in trail development, maintenance planning, and community engagement.

Funding and Future Steps

With the Southeast Regional Service Commission providing foundational support, the next phase will require deeper investments from provincial and federal partners. A parallel fundraising campaign will also seek contributions for amenities such as benches, washroom facilities, and signage – essential for a welcoming and accessible trail experience.

This project is part of a 10-year vision. The first stage – Alma to Cap-Pelé – is slated to be completed within five years. The project will lay the groundwork for the remaining trail network to connect communities, boost regional tourism, and enhance quality of life for generations to come. [AMM](#)



En plus d'être un stimulant pour le tourisme et la culture du cyclisme, ce sentier de connexion soutient un important virage vers des options de transport durables et à faible émission de carbone, ainsi que le principe d'équité en matière récréative à la grandeur de la région.

« Cap-Acadie est fière de contribuer au développement du réseau du sentier Ligne Côtière, une initiative cruciale pour améliorer la qualité de vie et l'accès à des espaces verts pour tous nos résidents », a déclaré M. Serge Léger, maire de Cap-Acadie.

La Collaboration Municipale au Cœur du Projet

La force du sentier Ligne Côtière repose sur la collaboration municipale. Bien que plusieurs collectivités disposent déjà de sentiers locaux, ce projet vise avant tout leur connexion, afin de créer une expérience en sentier ininterrompue, autant pour les résidents que pour les visiteurs.

« Grâce à la phase deux de ce projet, qui intégrera un réseau accru de sentiers, les connexions ainsi créées permettront non seulement à nos propres résidents, mais aux résidents de toutes nos collectivités, d'accéder à un plus vaste réseau régional, tout en mettant en valeur nos sentiers locaux auprès des visiteurs », a indiqué M. Andrew Black, maire de Tantramar.

Pour certaines collectivités, la participation s'est traduite par une contribution en matière de terrains, de temps de personnel ou de conseils. D'autres ont joué des rôles clés dans le développement des sentiers, les plans de maintenance et l'engagement communautaire.

Le Financement et les Étapes à Venir

Alors que la Commission de services régionaux du sud-est fournit le soutien de base, la prochaine phase nécessitera de plus grands investissements de la part de nos partenaires provincial et fédéral. Une campagne de financement parallèle sollicitera aussi des contributions pour divers aménagements, comme des bancs, des toilettes et des panneaux de signalisation, tous des éléments essentiels à une expérience en sentier accessible et accueillante.

Ce projet fait partie d'une vision étalée sur 10 ans, dont la première étape, d'Alma à Cap-Pelé, devrait être terminée d'ici cinq ans, tout en jetant les bases pour le reste du réseau de sentiers, dans le but de relier les collectivités, de favoriser le tourisme régional et d'améliorer la qualité de vie des générations à venir. [AMM](#)

The coastal views and historic charm of Victoria, P.E.I., help attract thousands of visitors every year. However, fewer than 150 people live there year-round. That tiny population translates into a tiny tax and volunteer base.

Seaside Victoria navigates the future with strategic plan



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

When Martin Ruben and his wife planned to move to Canada, they pictured a coastal life in the capital of British Columbia. But after searching online for housing listings in “Victoria,” they fell in love with a home that popped up in another Victoria – on the opposite side of the country.

“It’s the most beautiful little village in all of Prince Edward Island,” said Ruben, who is now both a resident and mayor of the Rural Municipality of Victoria on Prince Edward Island’s south shore.

Ruben is chatting in the municipal office, located in a historic schoolhouse that speaks to the charm of this picturesque seaside village.

“I find it incredibly amazing how such a small community can create such an amazing place,” he said.

The Rural Municipality of Victoria covers only about 1.5 square kilometres, but it brims with vibrant seascapes and culture. Red sand beaches and the blue waters of the Northumberland Strait contrast with brightly coloured historic homes in a village that grew around what was once a bustling seaport in P.E.I.’s shipbuilding era.

Today, many of these houses and other quaint buildings host artisans and shop-owners with artwork, pottery, stained glass, chocolates, second-hand books, and other treasures. The historic Victoria Playhouse teems with theatre and music while local restaurants serve up seafood and a coastal vibe.

“A visitor will experience a village that takes them back in time and feeds the soul,” Ruben said.



Rural Municipality of Victoria Mayor Martin Ruben says municipalities can benefit from creating a strategic plan.

But while much of Victoria’s appeal lies in the charm of the past, the municipality is also looking to the future. This year, it released a five-year strategic plan to guide the municipality’s efforts to serve residents better and promote the long-term viability of the community.

Municipal Restructuring Could Bring Opportunities

While Victoria welcomes thousands of tourists every year, its year-round population totals less than 150 (or 139, according to the 2021 census).

A tiny population means a tiny pool of people from which to draw councillors and volunteers. It also means a tiny tax base to pay for municipal services, which include water and sewer, a volunteer fire department, land use planning, green spaces, and emergency management. As the plan describes, “the Victoria community is struggling financially and suffers democratic exhaustion.”

Unlike most areas of Canada, P.E.I. has not undergone a modern process of municipal restructuring. As a result,

While Amar Seafood began operating in the Rural Municipality of Victoria before the strategic plan, the company's CEO says such a plan can help attract business, clarify economic development goals, and reduce the sense of risk in investing in a community.



most of the province's land area remains unincorporated, and many of P.E.I.'s 57 municipalities have populations of just a few hundred people.

Mayor Ruben, who has a long career in auditing and public service, says the major challenges in the Rural Municipality of Victoria all come back to the need for financial and human resources.

He agrees that provincewide municipal restructuring could give municipalities the capacity they need to thrive. But whether the province embarks on a restructuring process or not, he says the strategic plan will help Victoria direct its efforts and money wisely.

"It helps prioritize where the council and where the municipal office should focus their attention and ensures that we spend whatever resources we do have in a way that is most effective and in the interest of our residents," Ruben said.

Attracting and Retaining Residents, Businesses

The strategic planning process included a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) analysis; a consideration of risks; a council workshop; focus groups; and a public meeting to discuss priorities. The resulting "Imagine Victoria's Future" document focuses on five areas:

- governance
- development
- climate change and the environment
- community cohesion
- visitor experience

It then breaks down each of those areas with goals, actions, and timelines. Reflecting on the need for growth, the plan includes specific emphasis on attracting and retaining residents and businesses.

Light industry is a key area of development. On the causeway, across

from the village core of historic houses, shops, and restaurants, lies the home of Amar Seafood. The Norway-based aquaculture company hatches and grows wolffish and halibut.

To expand its operations, Amar is ready to break ground on a second facility across the road. The expansion will create 30 additional jobs; more tax revenue; and an interactive, interpretative centre and a shop to add to local tourism. After the expansion, it will be the largest land-based aquaculture facility in eastern Canada.

While Amar began operating in the Rural Municipality of Victoria before the strategic plan, CEO Scott Travers says such a plan can help attract business, clarify economic development goals, and reduce the sense of risk in investing in a community.

"I love having a roadmap," he said. "I find it extremely handy to know that what I'm doing as an investor is consistent with the strategic plan of a given municipality."

Victoria CAO Yves Dallaire, who led the strategic planning process, says simply having the plan has helped Victoria generate interest in development. As an example, he says housing developers have noted the plan's support for housing and childcare services.

"In a way, it's a marketing tool," he said.

Strategic Planning Advice

Dallaire, who has extensive administrative experience working with municipalities in Quebec, says the plan also helps get residents on board with municipal projects. During public meetings on housing or other developments, the municipality can now point to how a specific project aligns with the municipal priorities in the plan.



IMAGINE VICTORIA'S FUTURE



2025-2030 STRATEGIC PLAN

The Rural Municipality of Victoria, P.E.I., produced a strategic plan to guide the municipality's efforts to serve residents better and promote the long-term viability of the community.

"It's not only the council; it's the people themselves who chose these actions," he said.

Mayor Ruben says he still loves to stroll Victoria's quaint streets and chat with the people he encounters. And he says that conversation – a larger community conversation – has perhaps been the most important result of the strategic plan so far. The process gave council, business owners, residents, and others invested in the community the chance to share ideas and discuss what the future should hold.

"Those conversations were very, very valuable," Ruben said. "It's good to have people talking to one another in a way that brings about positive change."

Ruben says municipalities can benefit from the creation of a strategic plan. He offers some advice for those considering the process:

- Speak to a municipality that has completed a strategic plan and learn from that experience.
- If your municipality doesn't have strategic planning experience, bring in expertise to create an effective process and result.
- As part of the process, look at current operations and how money is being spent. Indicate what can be done better. See the strategic plan as a way to get there. [AMM](#)



Value of public art in rural communities



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

Trinity Bay North's newest mural spans about 16 feet or so across the wall of the Frank Power Chalet. The four panels, seamlessly joined as one large piece, each tell the story of one of the four communities in the amalgamated town comprised of Melrose, Port Union, Catalina, and Little Catalina.

Artist Trish Rogers is standing in front of the mural, her largest painting to date, explaining the work. This is, Rogers tells the audience, the story of the town's four communities, told in one seamless mural.

The houses and stages of Melrose, along with a storyteller, represent community. Revitalization is represented by the restored buildings of Port Union.

The Catalina harbour is included as a representation of community. Alongside those main themes, many of the other mural elements also contain meaning, Rogers said. The Catalina beacon represents guidance and hope, and the fishing nets represent unity.

The unveiling of the mural inside the Frank Power Chalet is also a small celebration of the 20th anniversary of the amalgamation of the four communities into Trinity Bay North.

The mayor and a few councillors are in attendance, along with the district's Member of the House of Assembly, the town manager, a few local artists, and a few dozen interested townsfolk. There's a cake, a ceremonial slicing photo op, and a microphone is passed around to local and provincial politicians and town staff.

Mural, Artist Residency Program

When the Our Creative Home program was announced, Trinity Bay North council was contemplating ways to celebrate the town's 20th anniversary of amalgamation, Mayor Dean Lodge said. And when a couple of councillors returned from an MNL symposium, where the program was launched, the possibility of having a mural funded seemed like a great way to do just that.

Our Creative Home was a joint project between Municipalities



Artist Trish Rogers talks about her mural at the unveiling in the Frank Power Chalet.

Newfoundland and Labrador (MNL) and Business and Arts Newfoundland and Labrador. The project was funded by the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, along with a paint and supplies sponsorship from the Paint Shop. Through the program, 12 municipalities were awarded grants to facilitate public murals or artist residencies.

Doreen Humboldt, one of the councillors who brought back the idea to put in an application, sits on the economic development committee for Trinity Bay North. A mural, Humboldt said, seemed like one more way to draw visitors to the town.

Looking at the finished mural, Humboldt feels pride in her community, in the connectedness that the mural represents, and the feeling of coming together that the mural brings her. Those feelings of connection are what Rogers had in mind when drawing the early sketches for the mural, resulting in seamless transitions from one scene to the next.

In Trinity Bay North, art has become an economic driver of sorts. Thanks to support from the Sir William F. Coaker Heritage Foundation, the town now has an art gallery, the Union House Arts, in Port Union. Housed in a restored heritage building, the art gallery regularly brings in artists showing their work, giving visitors one more reason to stop in the town.

While building an arts presence in the town, the gallery has also been building community through maker nights hosted by visiting artists. They have become something people in town look forward to, said Edith Samson, executive co-ordinator of the foundation.

“I think that community art is important, because it does help bring communities together,” Rogers said. “And it also is social, because you want to be able to talk about it with people – and it means something.” **AMM**



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Top row: Rob Nolan, CEO, Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador; Dan Murphy, executive director, Union of Municipalities of New Brunswick
 Bottom row: Juanita Spencer, CEO, Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities; Satya Sen, executive director, Federation of Prince Edward Island Municipalities

Regional voice for local strength

Atlantic Canada's municipal associations collaborating to build capacity and shape policy



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

Across Atlantic Canada, municipalities are facing significant and shared pressures, from aging infrastructure and fiscal constraints to urgent housing shortages and shifting demographics. These

complex challenges transcend provincial borders and call for collective action.

In 2020, four municipal associations – Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador (MNL), the Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities (NSFM), the Union of Municipalities of New Brunswick (UMNB), and the Federation of Prince Edward Island Municipalities (FPEIM) – formalized a partnership through a memorandum of understanding (MOU). This agreement sets out a commitment to strengthen regional co-operation through joint research, shared advocacy, and strategic knowledge exchange.

“This partnership emerged from a clear and growing realization: today’s municipal challenges do not respect

provincial boundaries,” said Juanita Spencer, NSFM’s CEO. “Whether it’s infrastructure gaps, workforce shortages, or demographic shifts, the issues our members face are strikingly similar. By joining forces, we’ve been able to amplify our advocacy, share critical insights, and approach solutions with the strength of a collective voice.”

Case for Regional Collaboration

For decades, municipalities in Atlantic Canada have operated under similar constraints – limited fiscal tools, service delivery challenges in rural areas, and the impacts of an aging population. Despite unique provincial contexts, local governments across the region are often navigating the same systemic issues.

Each association brings distinct strengths and perspectives, yet they share aligned goals in policy advocacy, capacity building, and municipal research. The MOU signaled a deepened commitment to collaboration, recognizing that shared challenges can benefit from shared solutions.

By co-ordinating efforts, these organizations are enhancing their ability to advocate with one voice, generate regionally relevant research, and provide practical, informed support to members. In short: four heads are better than one.

This collaboration also creates space for internal learning. The four associations regularly exchange best practices and lessons learned – not only on policy and member programming but also in how they govern and operate as organizations. These peer-to-peer insights contribute to stronger, more adaptive municipal associations across the region.

“A united front among municipalities – large and small, rural and urban – across all four Atlantic provinces strengthens our collective political voice,” said Satya Sen, FPEIM’s executive director. “By working together on shared challenges and priorities unique to our region, we can leverage that combined political capital and more effectively advocate for the resources and support our local governments need.”

Partnership Brings Structure, Strategy, Synergy

The partnership is grounded in regular leadership meetings, shared research agendas, and co-ordinated advocacy strategies. CEOs, executive directors, and presidents meet consistently to align priorities, exchange insights, and identify emerging policy trends.

Pooling resources has allowed the associations to reduce duplication, share costs on research and tools, and offer expanded support to members. Though governance structures vary between provinces, a collaborative spirit has enabled the organizations to find common ground and advance mutual goals.

This partnership has also improved internal capacity, tapping into wider networks, knowledge bases, and staffing supports. For municipalities, this means access to better-informed policy positions, timely research, and stronger collective representation.

“By coming together across provincial lines, we’ve built a partnership that’s greater than the sum of its parts,” said Dan Murphy, UMNB’s executive director. “With regular collaboration among our leadership and staff, it has helped align priorities, share resources, and strengthen our collective voice at the federal level. The result continues to mean better support and stronger advocacy for all municipalities in Atlantic Canada.”

Cellular, Broadband Connectivity

Reliable digital infrastructure is no longer a luxury, it’s an essential service. Yet, many rural and remote communities in Atlantic Canada still face persistent gaps in broadband and cellular coverage.

The four associations have made this a shared advocacy priority, calling on federal and provincial governments to fast-track rural infrastructure investments. They have also co-ordinated meetings with telecom providers and government officials to spotlight regional coverage disparities and push for meaningful policy reform.

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“The lack of available cellular service in rural communities is a public safety issue. When a wildfire forced evacuations and destroyed homes in the town of Small Point-Adam’s Cove-Blackhead-Broad Cove earlier this year, the lack of cellular service in the town resulted in people unable to contact friends and family,” said Rob Nolan, MNL’s CEO. “Public safety, economic development, and the ability for people to build a future in rural Atlantic Canada all depend on reliable communication networks in rural areas.”

Infrastructure Capacity

Municipalities across the region are contending with aging infrastructure – particularly in wastewater management – while also working to accommodate future development needs. Infrastructure renewal comes with high costs, and many communities lack the fiscal flexibility to modernize aging systems or expand services.

Through the MOU, the associations have co-developed recommendations for more flexible, streamlined funding frameworks that respect local conditions. They continue to share research, local data, and best practices to support their members and strengthen their policy advocacy.

“Housing and infrastructure capacity are deeply interconnected issues in Nova Scotia and across the region,” said Spencer. “Addressing one without the other simply isn’t sustainable. That’s why we’re calling for funding models that reflect the unique needs of our communities – whether urban, rural, or remote – and that allow for local innovation within a regional framework.”

Immigration, Population Growth

As Atlantic Canada looks to attract and retain newcomers, municipalities are increasingly playing a frontline role in settlement support, housing integration, and workforce development.

The four associations are jointly advocating for immigration strategies that account for rural realities and municipal responsibilities. They are also sharing innovative practices and community-based models that support long-term population growth.

In particular, smaller communities are learning from each other’s successes – whether it’s about improving access to services, attracting immigrant entrepreneurs, or building inclusive policies.

“Our municipal membership is increasingly concerned about changes to federal immigration policies,” Murphy said. “In 2025, we tabled a resolution at the Federation of Canadian Municipalities to call on the Government of Canada and the Department of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada to work with all municipal partners to ensure that changes to immigration policies do not negatively impact municipal ability to respond to community needs in areas like industry growth, care services and infrastructure development.

“The Atlantic Immigration Program was developed because the Atlantic provinces’ needs are unique,” he said. “It’s more important than ever that our associations remain united as one voice on this issue.”

Coastal Erosion, Climate Change

Municipalities across Atlantic Canada are on the frontlines of coastal change. Rising sea levels, stronger storms, and

accelerated erosion are putting communities, infrastructure, and ecosystems at risk.

Together, the associations are advocating for coastal protection policies and investments that reflect local conditions. They are also working with members to share adaptation strategies, land use planning tools, and collaborative approaches to climate resilience.

“MNL has recently launched Climate Ready NL, a two-year program to help communities prepare for the impacts of climate change,” Nolan said. “This program will enable towns with the skills and knowledge required to assess climate risks and to work toward solutions for climate adaptation and mitigation.”

“It is municipalities that must bear the financial burden of repairing damage from storms, floods, and wildfires while also battling the effects of coastal erosion,” he said. “Together, with our Atlantic municipal association partners, MNL continues to encourage federal and provincial governments to enact meaningful, effective climate policies that address the immediate needs of municipalities.”

Sen shares a similar position: “We share a strong regional identity, shaped and reinforced by our connection to the ocean. The impacts of climate change – particularly coastal erosion – pose a serious threat to our communities. Our needs are unique, but we have shared priorities in working together to protect and preserve our coastlines.”

Looking Ahead: Renewing Commitment

As the municipal landscape continues to evolve, so too does the MOU. The agreement is being updated to reflect new priorities and deepen co-operation on emerging issues such as climate adaptation, emergency management, and municipal modernization.

Looking ahead, the associations are exploring more collaborative approaches to policy development and public engagement. Whether it’s advancing joint research or aligning on federal advocacy, the potential for impact is clear.

A shared regional lens doesn’t dilute local needs; it strengthens them, ensuring that municipal voices are heard and respected across all levels of government.

“As we renew our memorandum of understanding, we’re expanding the scope of collaboration to tackle the complex challenges ahead, from climate resilience and emergency management to the modernization of municipal services,” Spencer said. “This alliance strengthens our regional voice and positions Atlantic municipalities to lead with unity, agility, and purpose on the national stage.”

One Region, Many Voices, Shared Purpose

Atlantic Canada’s municipalities may differ in size, geography, and culture, but they share a common commitment to resilient, thriving communities.

Through this strategic partnership, MNL, NSFM, UMN, and FPEIM are advancing a collaborative model grounded in practical solutions, mutual respect, and shared purpose. Together, they are demonstrating how a regional voice can deliver stronger local outcomes.

This is more than just co-operation; it is a movement that positions municipalities to lead, learn, and thrive together. **AMM**



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