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In the Black Cultural Centre's soaring banner hall, floor-to-ceiling displays introduce historic African Nova Scotians alongside cultural milestones and community stories. (See Page 5.)



Artist Audrey Breton (left) selling Audrey's Art From the Heart sea glass at the Farmers' Market, with her friend Anna Sampson (right) (See Page 6)

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"There's Nothing Like Musquodoboit Harbour:

By Richard Bell

There was no shortage of joy at this year's Parade of Lights in Musquodoboit Harbour. Thousands of people turned out on a cold night to watch dozens of floats go by. That joy was exactly what the founders of the parade had hoped for back in 2013, when they created the parade as a way of healing from a family tragedy.



In an interview with the *Cooperator* that sometimes brought them to tears, Darlene Brunt and Nancy McGuinness laid out the story of how they came to put together the first winter parade in 2013.

"We used to bring our children into Halifax for their Parade of Lights every year," Nancy said. "We would go to Walmart and get toys and non-perishable items for them to donate in the parade and our community. The Lions were already doing the summer parade and fair. I told my friend Darlene that we should have our own parade, and that I'd always wanted to do it."

Three years later, Nancy's partner died in a car accident in which her daughter was driving. "It was very traumatic," Nancy said. "It was 13 years ago this past Monday that he

...continued on page 16

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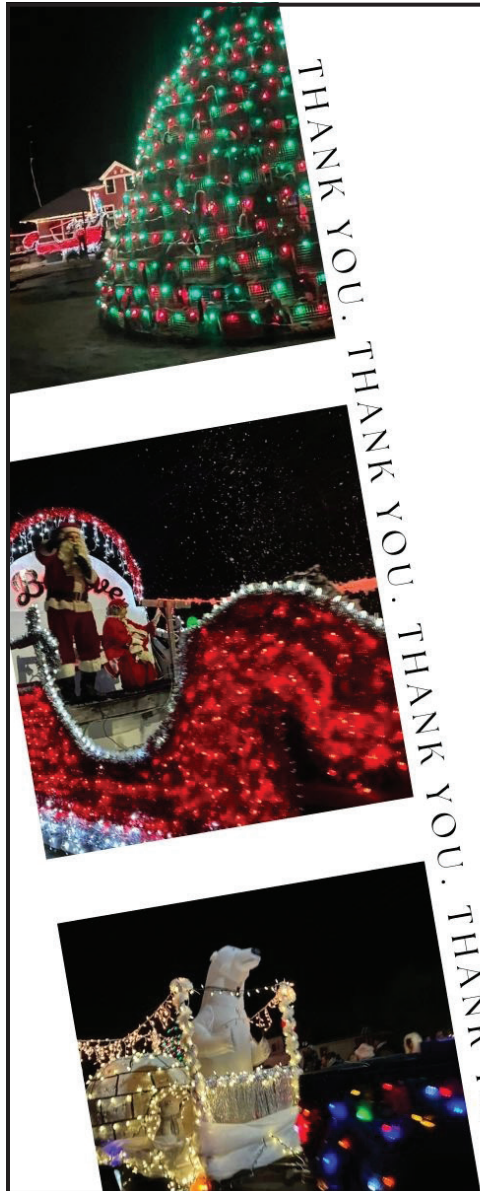
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I've seen homeowners delay listing while doing too much, then miss strong market conditions. I've also seen others focus on the right updates early and be ready when demand picked up. Preparation and timing work together.

I am here to help guide you on what to do now, what can wait, and how to position your home so you're ready to act when the market window opens, not after it has passed.



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EASTERN SHORE COOPERATOR

MARCH DEADLINE

FEBRUARY 11TH

Protecting, Preserving, and Promoting a Living History

By Mary Elizabeth O'Toole

People driving into the city from the Eastern Shore typically pass the Black Cultural Centre for Nova Scotia, perhaps intending to stop in someday. If that sounds familiar, it's time to visit – or revisit. Inside, stories of African Nova Scotian life are preserved and continually rediscovered, connecting past, present, and future.

Opened in 1983, the Black Cultural Centre (BCC) is the first and largest museum in Canada dedicated to Black history and the African Nova Scotian legacy. Established to protect, preserve, and promote that history and culture, the Centre is both a museum and a cultural gathering place, inviting visitors to explore a unique heritage that spans more than 400 years in this province.

From the moment you enter, the experience is immersive. In the soaring banner hall, floor-to-ceiling displays introduce historic African Nova Scotians alongside cultural milestones and community stories. Many voices and influences are represented, offering context and inspiration – and a compelling reason to spend time learning that history.

From hidden history to a fuller story

CEO Russell Grosse has been part of the Centre's story for 32 years, beginning as a summer intern.

"When I started, I didn't see myself reflected in schools or the community," Grosse said. "This place showed me how I was connected to the past." That experience shaped what he describes as a passion "to share all the dimensions of the Black community."

Before the Centre existed, Grosse said, much of Black history in Nova Scotia was hidden – unknown even to many Black Nova Scotians. Many carried a sense of shame, defined narrowly by enslavement rather than contribution, leadership, and resilience. The Centre set out to change that narrative by telling a fuller and more truthful story.

That commitment includes presenting the realities of slavery in Canada. At the same time, the Centre emphasizes stories of strength, community spirit, leadership, and triumph over adversity – ensuring Black history is understood not only through hardship, but through perseverance and achievement.

A living museum rooted in community

"What I find really inspiring and motivating about working here is that the story of Black history and culture is still evolving," Grosse said. "It is not a snapshot in time. Each year brings new discoveries – stories previously unknown, or new layers added to stories we thought we knew."

Nova Scotia is home to 52 historic African Nova Scotian communities, many spanning several generations. Their depth and continuity are why the province is often described as the birthplace of Black culture in Canada. The Centre reflects that reality not only through its exhibits, but as a gathering place –

hosting cultural events, educational programs, and conversations that connect past and present.

A striking reference point comes from the 1871 federal census, which first listed every person in the province and identified those 52 African Nova Scotian communities. A large map in the Centre's main hall makes their presence – and permanence – undeniable.

Truth-telling and reflection

Among the Centre's exhibits is *A History Exposed: The Enslavement of Black People in Canada*. Clear trigger warnings greet visitors at the entrance. The exhibit is difficult – intentionally so. It reveals the extent and persistence of slavery in Nova Scotia and elsewhere in Canada, challenging assumptions many Canadians still hold.

Grosse is clear that while exposing hard truths is essential, it is only part of the Centre's work. The broader goal is to inspire – by highlighting resilience, creativity, leadership, and the ways African Nova Scotian communities have shaped this province for centuries.

Representation that opens doors

The Centre's impact is especially visible in its work with young people. Grosse recalled that when he was growing up, many youth were unaware of their own history. Today, children are exposed early – through school visits, programs, and internships – and often return as they grow. That exposure, he said, fosters pride, understanding, and a sense of belonging.

Internships offer one measure of that reach. On average, about four interns come through the Centre each year – an approximation that, over four decades, represents dozens of young people introduced to Black history and cultural work.

That pathway is reflected in the experience of Seleste David, an Interpreter and Researcher at the Centre. David describes herself as an "archive nerd." She said she was not truly exposed to Black history until her second year studying history at King's College and Dalhousie University, when she took a course focused on Black experiences.

Viewing history through a Black lens was transformative. While researching, David discovered music and vocal recordings of her great-grandfather – something that can be rare for Black families. Having not just photographs but a voice made history immediate and personal. Her experience mirrors Grosse's own sense of how representation can shape identity and open doors.

A national role – and a growing future

Over the past decade, the Centre has grown rapidly, expanding its national role, and outgrowing its physical capacity. Today, it functions as a hub for Black history and culture across Canada, sharing exhibits

and loaning artifacts nationwide. Partnerships include work with Canada Post on a Black Canadian stamp series, with the Bank of Canada on the bank note featuring Viola Desmond, and with the Canadian military to help tell the story of the No. 2 Construction Battalion – the only unit through which Black volunteers could serve during the First World War.

To support its growing role, the Centre is planning a major expansion that would roughly double its size, adding about 40,000 square feet. The project includes expanded exhibit space, improved artifact storage, community-use areas, and a new 300-seat cultural theatre. With provincial and federal support, the Centre hopes to break ground within the next 12 to 18 months as fundraising continues.

February's African Heritage Month offers an opportunity to reflect on these stories, but Grosse hopes they are not confined to a single month. Black Canadian history, he said, is Canadian history – shared, ongoing, and central to understanding who we are.

For those who pass the Centre regularly and keep meaning to stop, now is the time. The stories waiting there are challenging, inspiring, and very much alive.

Learn more at bccns.com or on FB @ [bccnsmuseum](https://www.facebook.com/bccnsmuseum). Visit at 10 Cherry Brook Road (off Main Street) M-F, 9:30-4:00.



In December, the Harbour Lites Seniors Club presented the Musquodoboit Harbour Food Bank and the Chezzetcook Food Bank with a cheque for \$250.00 each. Chezzetcook Food Bank Representative, Viola, receives cheque from Harbour Lites' President Gerry Davidson.

The Cooperator Needs You!

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A Sea Glass Entrepreneur

By Richard Bell

As a lifelong beachcomber, I've always loved finding sea glass. At a recent Musquodoboit Harbour Farmers Market, I stopped to talk with Audrey Breton, one of the youngest vendors. She was selling small art works made from sea glass. After listening to how enthusiastic she was about her work, I set up an interview at her home to hear more about how she started up her own business.

Audrey is an eighth grader at École du Carrefore in Dartmouth, after starting at École des Beaux Marais in Porters Lake. She traces her artistic roots back to her grandmother, who painted and also collected, among other things, sea glass and seashells. "I like going to the beach a lot and every time I went to the beach, I had my head down the entire time looking for seashells and sea glass," Audrey said.

The idea of turning her love of sea glass into a business started with her mother. "My Mom was making a gift for my sister's tutor, and we made a sea glass piece with a tree and a person reading under the tree. It's one I still make. When we gave it to her, she said 'That's a really good business idea.' I had lots of sea glass, and that's how I started. My grandparents and lots of people in my family are entrepreneurs."

Most of the items Audrey has on sale at the market are made from sea glass on a cardstock paper. "I

use a hot glue gun," Audrey said, "but you have to make sure it's hot, or else the glass will fall out. And sometimes I make different things, like Christmas tree ornaments."

Audrey is careful about conserving the rarer sea glass colors. "The colours I have the most are green, white, and brown. And then I have a few blues, and two purples. I try not to use my most rare colours unless it looks perfect. And then some of them I keep for myself, and I don't use them. Because next thing you know, you'll think that you have more, but you don't."

Audrey's studio is in her room. "My room gets very messy every time I do it," Audrey said. "The night before the market, I make a bunch. And then I just have to do a big clean after every market."

Sitting at her market table, Audrey said she enjoys talking with people. "I'm not a very extroverted person, but I do really like selling them. Lots of the people that buy my stuff, they like sea glass too. So it's really nice to talk about it together. My friend Anne usually comes with me to the market just because sometimes there's not many people there and it gets really boring."

Audrey also makes money running the time clock at Eastern Shore Minor Hockey games. Most of the

money she makes goes into supporting another of her passions, horseback riding at Swell Equestrian Centre in East Lawrencetown, which she started four years ago. "I'm trying to save a lot," Audrey said. "I'm not sure if I want to buy a horse. I'm probably going to do it when I'm older. But I just like spending money on horses. I jump, but I like doing dressage more than jumping. I find it more calming."

Horseback riding is not Audrey's only sport. She played hockey for two-and-a-half years, "But then I fell in love with horseback riding." More recently, she's taken up lacrosse with the Eastern Shore Breakers.

When I asked about her favourite subject at school, Audrey picked band. "You had to write an essay on why you should be included in the band class. They ask you questions. I said that my mom did band. And then it asked, 'What are your strengths and stuff?' I said, 'I can learn very quickly, like music, and I can read notes. I'm really easy to be around, which is just a strength, not really a musical one.' I'm playing the trumpet. I like music a lot. That's my favorite subject."

[Audrey sells her work on Facebook at *Audrey's Art from the Heart*.]

Straight Razor in the Harbour

By Richard Bell

When I was little, I used to love going with my Dad to the barbershop on the ground floor of his office building (in Norfolk, Virginia). The shop featured a row of four barbers, and the chairs were almost always full of men reclined almost horizontal, with hot towels on their faces, waiting for a straight razor shave. Every chair had a long leather strop hanging down, and each barber had his own, almost ballet-like set of movements for putting the sharpest possible edge on the gleaming straight razors. Walking in during the winter was especially nice, with that first warm rush of hot, humid air, carrying the scents of all the soaps and lotions.

I never had enough of a beard to get a straight razor shave before I left the city, and over the decades, none of the barber shops I visited offered the experience.

So when Wayne Collette, the owner of Ship Shape Barber Shop in Musquodoboit Harbour, told me he had a new associate, Chelsey Weber, who was offering straight razor shaves, I made an appointment.

The spa-like experience, which took place over roughly 45 minutes, started with several alternations of hot towels, with applications of skin lotion in between, and one or two very light facial massages. The shave itself was slow and meticulous; I had the sense that she was cutting whiskers that I didn't even know I had. And at the close, a final hot towel and some bracing aftershave.

Afterwards, I talked with Chelsey about how a farmer's daughter from Saskatchewan ended up living in Little Harbour and doing straight razor shaves in Musquodoboit Harbour.

Chelsey got started working with hair in high school through a cosmetology course from grades 10 to 12. "I had just graduated from high school, and I wanted to go somewhere different," she said. "My friend Giselle talked me into moving to Nova Scotia. She thought I would really like Halifax. So I came to Halifax and stayed for 15 years. I loved it!"

In Nova Scotia, she went to an aesthetics school, and then hair school. "That's why my aesthetics background comes in handy with the shaves, because of the facials and stuff and the massage techniques."

She moved into men's shaves after she got a job at the Dartmouth location of the national barbershop chain Tommy Gun's. "I started off doing women's hair, and I just didn't like doing colours and all that. Then I got a job at Tommy Gun's doing men's hair. We had to do shaves there, so I was shave-trained. At first, I was scared shitless, but then it just became, like, natural, and I really enjoyed it. I became one of Tommy Gun's educators teaching other staff. Then I incorporated my aesthetic background, trying to think of ways to make the experience one where men can feel pampered. And I still do women's hair, but only short hair."

After 15 years in Halifax, Chelsey moved back to Saskatchewan, where she was teaching hair, but then decided to move back to Nova Scotia. "I just love the ocean, and I missed it," she said. "But this time I wanted to be a little bit farther from the city and closer to the ocean. I'm an ocean friend."

"My partner found a house in Little Harbour," Chelsey said. "It's sort of an obscure place to end up. I was like, 'Oh, that seems like a little too far,' because I was looking in the Musquodoboit Harbour area. But honestly, I really love it. I love the spot. My neighbours are great!"

One of the things I had noticed during the course of my shave was that she was not stropping the blade. Nor was there a tube with a dark green liquid in it where the razor rested between shaves.

Turns out that concerns about sanitation were behind the virtual disappearance of straight razor shaves for a while. "Now we use disposal blades," Chelsey explained. "It looks like a straight razor, but the blade just goes in for the shave, and then out, for sanitary reasons. Because, technically, now you'd need an autoclave to properly sterilize your blade between shaves."

[Appointments at 902-889-2071, 8339 Highway 7, Musquodoboit Harbour]

Sheet Harbour Marina Moves Closer

By Richard Bell

Members of the Sheet Harbour Marina Association are encouraged by the findings of the Coast Guard's first technical assessment of the state of the wreck of the 166-foot *Arctic Trader* on the bottom at the wharf on the East River. The wreck lies next to the site that the Association has identified as the best location for a full-service marina.

Plans for a Sheet Harbour marina go back at least as far as a 2009 report by the design firm Ekistics, which suggested a site at the upper end of the harbour near the MacPhee House.

A small group working through the Sheet Harbour Chamber of Commerce began serious work on identifying a site, formally organizing as the Sheet Harbour Marina Association in 2021.

In the end, the group settled on an old wharf site on the East River just below the bridge. There was only one problem: in 1993, the Coast Guard had seized the *Arctic Trader* in a drug raid, and tied it up at the wharf site, where it sank in 1994 after two arson fires. The wreck became a go-to site for scuba divers, with the upper parts of the wreck barely six feet below the surface.

"We never thought it would take this long to get the Coast Guard to act," said Marilyn Munroe, president of the Association. "We understood a year or more back when we were talking to funders that they weren't receptive to starting any types of funding conversations until we had some kind

of a confirmation from the Coast Guard as to what they were going to do with the *Arctic Trader*."

In September of 2025, the Coast Guard finally hired a firm to do a one-day assessment of the wreck and the nearby bottom. "They thought the ship was in remarkable condition for being there for thirty years," Munroe said. "But that didn't surprise me because there's fresh water coming out of the river there. They did some paint sampling, and some soil sampling near the wreck itself." (The Coast Guard had already confirmed that they had removed all



the oil and hydraulic fluids before the ship sank.)

The assessment showed that there were contaminants present. But Munroe said it remains unclear whether the contaminants came from the ship. "There's been all kinds of activity on that river for more than 200 years, industrial, agricultural, fishing," Munroe said. "So the next step will be for Environment Canada to come in and do much more thorough testing to determine what's specific to the ship."

The wreck is now about one-third

filled with sediment. Raising the ship to take to a wrecking yard is an option, but would require removing this contaminated sediment and finding a place to dispose of it.

Association member Peter Stein said he was almost certain that the Coast Guard would reject this option. "The second option would be site remediation," Stein said. "They would cut off higher parts of the *Arctic Trader* to provide a minimum depth of 15 feet over the wreck at low tide, so that it is not a navigational hazard for boats docking at the marina."

The assessment is still not public. But on December 16, 2025, the Association held an in-person meeting in Sheet Harbour with HRM Councillor David Hendsbee, MLA Kent Smith, and MP Sean Fraser to go over the assessment and talk about next steps. "They were very interested and are committed to

helping us out with the Coast Guard and funding and everything else," Munroe said. "We need assistance going to the next step for design, for site assessment, for engineering design, for budgeting and funding. Those types of things are well beyond our area of expertise."

"The Coast Guard dropped the ball in 1994," Stein said. "But the Coast Guard people we've been working with have been very helpful. The guys we're talking to now, some of them weren't even born by 1994, and none of them were working for the Coast Guard."

Why I Can't Raise Turkeys Anymore

I was running a bakery. I'd be in my kitchen, working away, but the door would be open. And the three turkeys would be lined up on the porch railing in a row, sitting there, looking in the kitchen door, and cocking their heads at whatever I was doing.

Then they would turn to each other – and they have very high little peep voices for such a big bird. And they'd speak, peep, peep, peep, peep, talking to each other, and observing what was going on, and commenting on it, which I thought was very thoughtful. They liked shiny things. They were really fascinated by my bicycle. These turkeys were just engaging.

And in the end, after that season of raising turkeys, and interacting with them, and watching them do things in their turkey culture, I had to stop raising turkeys because butchering them was like trying to butcher your dog.

So, I can't raise turkeys anymore, because I can't kill them off.

– Anonymous

Foxes are Cool

It was this morning, like about 5.30 a.m. My mom woke up early because she had to go take a sip of water, and she saw a fox by her garden door. And the fox, he laid there, and then he curled up like a dog and just slept there.

But the next time my mom woke up, he was gone.

I love foxes. We saw a lot of them, like on the cabin deck. They were like, pretty cool. One of them came on my birthday!

– Anonymous

Harbour Lites Seniors Club

"What's Going On" in January-February

Tuesday, Jan. 20
Bingo 2:00pm

Thursday, Jan. 22 & 29
Jam 2-4pm

Dinner, Jan. 27
Bingo 2:00pm

FEBRUARY
Sunday, Feb. 1
Crib 1:30pm

Wednesday, Feb. 4
Directors Meeting at 1pm

Thursday, Feb. 5, 12, 19, 26
Jam 2-4pm

♥ ****NEW**** ♥
Friday, February 13
Karaoke 6:30-9:30pm

Tuesday, Feb. 10
General Meeting 1pm
Pot Luck Lunch – 12:30pm

Wednesday, Feb. 11
Story Time 1:30pm
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MLA MEMO

Hi everyone and thanks for taking the time to read through my update! I hope you have all had a great start to 2026 and are excited for what the rest of the year has in store.

Last year was a very busy year on the Shore, and there continues to be a lot of development to keep an eye on.

Some examples:

- The Eastern Shore Lifestyles Centre in Sheet Harbour is advancing as planned.
- There are advancements with NSLC to return to the Shore. I still don't know exactly what it will look like, but rest assured it's going to happen.
- The Green Bridge in Musquodoboit Harbour is progressing beautifully, and is scheduled to be complete by September.
- The lot between the library and Harbour Fish & Fries in Musquodoboit Harbour changed hands at the end of 2025, and clearing work is well underway. The developers have exciting plans, and will share them when they're able to.
- The Province's 5-year highway improvement plan was released in December (<https://novascotia.ca/tran/highways/5yearplan/highway-plan-2026-27.pdf>) and there are several Eastern Shore projects. Most notable is 5.3km of repaving in Quoddy.
- Plans are underway for a new crosswalk in Porters Lake. It is a process and involves both the Provincial Department of Public Works and HRM's Public Works Team. We should see the project begin this year.
- The preliminary groundwork for the 2 new passing lanes on the 107 is complete. Work will recommence later this year.

There are also a number of provincial initiatives that may be of interest:

Income Assistance Rate Increase

Nova Scotians receiving income assistance will see their payments increase by 1.6 per cent in 2026, marking the second year rates have been indexed to inflation.

"Rising costs for essentials like rent, groceries and utilities put real pressure on household budgets," said Barbara Adams, Minister of Opportunities and Social Development. "By continuing to tie rates to the cost of living, we're providing more stability for individuals and families and reinforcing our commitment to supporting those who need it most."



Disability Support Program participants receiving the standard household rate will also see an increase of 1.6 per cent.

These changes reflect the Province's commitment to supporting Nova Scotians facing financial challenges and addressing the added costs associated with inflation.

Quick Facts & Additional Resources:

- as of December 1, there were 38,558 people in the Employment Support and Income Assistance Program, including 14,039 people who receive the disability supplement
- about 3,600 people in the Disability Support Program receive the standard household rate
- income assistance payments increased by 3.1 per cent in 2025
- Information on who can receive income assistance: https://novascotia.ca/coms/employment/income_assistance/Eligibility.html

New Grant Program Funds Food Security Initiatives

Millions in funding for food-related initiatives will flow to communities across the province in the coming weeks using \$4 million in proceeds from the sale of U.S. alcohol products.

The new Feeding Communities Fund will provide one-time funding to support meal programs, community fridges and pantries, mutual-aid groups and affordable food box or market programs.

"Today's announcement is about turning the sale of U.S. alcohol products into meaningful, community-level impact, putting food on kitchen tables across the province," said Premier Tim Houston. "The grant program ensures food-security organizations of all sizes, inside and outside traditional food banks, have an opportunity to access this support."

The fund will have \$2 million available for identified organizations (listed below), and the remaining \$2 million will be available to other eligible organizations.

Funding is available to non-profit societies, community organizations that are registered with the Registry of Joint Stock Companies, and federally registered charities or not-for-profit corporations.

Applications open Monday, December 29, and close Thursday, January 29. The funding must be used to purchase food for distribution or meal programs.

New Platform to Improve Delivery of Home Care

A new provincial technology platform will better connect the home care sector to support front-line staff and provide quality care, faster for Nova Scotians.

The platform will connect all publicly funded home care agencies with Nova Scotia Health's Continuing Care program, enhancing information sharing and coordination to support those delivering and receiving home and community care services.

Real-time access to information will allow home care staff and the Continuing Care team with Nova Scotia Health to connect client assessments and care planning more directly with scheduling and delivery of these services. It will immediately show cancelled appointments, ensuring open spots are rebooked quickly, which will improve efficiency and increase the number of people receiving care.

About 40,000 Nova Scotians receive support through provincial home care programs, including home nursing and support, nursing care in community clinics, equipment and funding programs.

Expanding access to home care with investments in technology is part of Action for Health, the Province's strategic plan to improve healthcare.

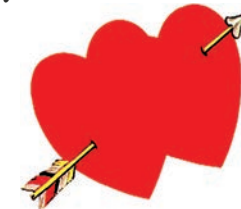
Quick Facts & Additional Information:

- Continuing Care at Nova Scotia Health manages the intake, assessment and care planning for people who need home care and support; these services are delivered by publicly funded home care agencies throughout the province.
- as of early December, the wait list for home care support was the lowest it has been since March 2019.

Salvation Army's Heat Fund

The Salvation Army's Home Energy Assistance Top-up (HEAT) Fund in Nova Scotia provides emergency heating help for low-income residents, often starting in January, in partnership with the Province and Nova Scotia Power. While the main Heating Assistance Rebate (HARP) for 2025-26 offered \$400 until March 31, 2026, the separate HEAT Fund helps with immediate crises, requiring applications through the Salvation Army's website and proof of low income/emergency. Expect the 2026 HEAT Fund to open in January 2026 for emergency aid, with details on its operation available on the Salvation Army Atlantic or NSPower websites.

Happy Valentine's Day



Upcoming event

I'm hosting an Open House & Public Skate on Monday, February 16th from 2:00-3:30 at the rink in Musquodoboit Harbour.

Please put it in your calendar and I'd love to see you there!



KENT SMITH
MLA, Eastern Shore

EasternShore.MLA@novascotia.ca | 902-989-3772

6321 Hwy 7, Unit 104
Head of Chezzetcook
Office Hours 9:00AM-4:00PM Mon-Fri

Seaforth Int'l Film Festival – 2025

By Sandra Beazley

This year's annual Seaforth International Film Festival (Instagram page @seaforthfilmfestival) was held at St. Theresa's Community Centre in Grand Desert, NS. It's original birth was 2007 – 2015, then resurrected in 2022 and was held at the Seaforth Community Hall. However, due to its growing popularity, this two-hour social event had to be relocated. This year had over 140 attending, along with 14 local participants providing their less than 5-minute classic film screenings – it was truly a jewel of excellence within Eastern Shore's finest film makers.

I personally felt the evenings' ambiance was a friendly/upbeat atmosphere enjoyed by all who were present. Special mention to local businesses: Rose and Rooster, Fancy Lucky Vintage, DeeDee Morris Photography, Saltbox Media, Mike Lewis (visual artist) providing their expertise to ensure the whole evening went off without a hitch.



Participants, left to right: Daniel Amireault, Gerard Waters, Isla McEachern, Kyra Day, Astrid and Jessica Brannen, Breanna Lebel, Aviva Troemel, Caralee Murphy, Stephen Wentzell, Sunyata Choyce, Brian Staple, Andrew Pearson, Franzi Fischer, Eva Brannen. Good job guys, well done.



Sleigh Bells Ring Variety Show at the Neri Performance Centre on December 14th did not disappoint! We were blessed with great music by great performers. From left to right: Bruce Walton, Ian Flewwelling, Dave and Trish Ingram, Christine Deleseleuc, Brian Staple and Will Laxton. \$2200 was raised to be shared by ESGSR and the Food Bank. Thanks to all who attended.



Cathy Jakobsen dances it up with Judy and Ken White at one of the Harbour Lites Seniors December Jam sessions. The Seniors Club is an enjoyable place to attend. Jams, Bingos, Crib, Dinners, Kitchen Parties, Story Time and starting on February 6th will be Karaoke, 6:30-9:30pm. Schedule on Page 7.



At the Train Station on December 6



Warming up at the fire pits, The Lions serving Chili, the Ginger Bread Express and people listening to the music in front of the Polar Bear Express. Looks like everything went as planned at this year's **Parade of Lights**. So nice to see the community come together for this event and many volunteers this year made it alot easier. Thank You!



The Chezzetok Lions Club held their Christmas Party with a Pot Luck Supper and Dance on December 6. Bruce Carpenter and the Hwy 7 Band provided the entertainment. Everyone had a fun time.





MLA TWILA GROSSE MLA, PRESTON

mlatwilagrosse@gmail.com | 902-377-3299

18 Wilfred Jackson Way, Suite 210
Dartmouth, Nova Scotia B2Z 1A8
Office Hours 9:30am-4:00pm Mon-Fri



February is African Heritage Month and this year's provincial theme **Strength in Unity: Moving Forward with Purpose, Prosperity, Power, and Progress** — calls us to honour our past, celebrate our present, and build a future rooted in collective strength.

We uplift the voices, stories, and leadership of African Nova Scotians who continue to shape our province with resilience, brilliance, and unity.

For more information about African History Month, please contact the Black Cultural Centre for Nova Scotia: phone: (902) 434-6223 or email: contact@bccns.com



New Year Greetings from MLA

As we step into a new year, I extend my heartfelt wishes to you and your loved ones. May 2026 be a year of renewed strength, meaningful connection, and shared progress across our communities in the constituency of Preston.

The start of a new year invites us to pause, reflect, and look ahead with purpose. I am deeply grateful for the trust you place in me as your MLA and for the countless ways you contribute to the well-being of our province through your work, your volunteerism, your advocacy, and your care for one another.

Thank you for your resilience, your generosity, and your unwavering community spirit. May this new year bring you peace, joy, and the confidence to embrace every opportunity and challenge before you.

All The Best!
Twila Grosse, MLA Preston



Income Assistance & Disability Support Rates Increasing

Nova Scotians receiving income assistance will see their payments increase this year, marking the second year that rates have been indexed to inflation. Payments will rise by 1.6 per cent in 2026.

Participants in the Disability Support Program who receive the standard household rate will also see a 1.6 per cent increase. This year's adjustment builds on other improvements made to both programs, including the increase to standard household rates introduced in July 2024. By connecting rates to the cost of living, the Province is helping ensure that supports keep pace with rising prices and offering greater stability for individuals and families who rely on this assistance.



Nova Scotia Heritage Day

Heritage Day will be celebrated across Nova Scotia on **Monday, February 16, 2026**, offering communities a moment to honour the people, cultures, and stories that shape our province. Observed annually on the third Monday in February, this holiday invites reflection, learning, and celebration of the diverse legacies that define who we are.

February 14th



Lift up your
VOICES
A celebration of choral music making!

March 1st
3 pm
Musquodoboit Harbour United Church

Featuring:
Musical Friends & Coastal Voices Men's Choir

Tickets \$20
cash at the door



Musquodoboit Harbour & District Lions
43 East Petpeswick Road
Musquodoboit Harbour



We are Lions!!! Hear Us ROAR!!
Where there's a need, there's a Lion

Happy 2026 Let me begin by wishing everyone a healthy, happy and productive year ahead and taking a moment to give thanks for the tremendous community support we enjoyed in 2025. It is both humbling and joyous to experience the community as volunteers in a service organization. Thank you.

At this time we have a few regular upcoming events planned and are working on finalizing details for others. Stay tuned for updates.

Monthly Breakfast: The last Saturday of each month, January to May. Beginning Saturday January 31st Breakfast is **\$10.00** per person – children under 10 eat free. Please join us and community members for a tasty morning meal. Ham and sausages, eggs, hashbrowns, pancakes, coffee/tea, juice/milk, toast and best of all camaraderie. The monthly breakfast is really such a wonderful opportunity to catch up with folks and support a good cause.

Lions Cribbage is ongoing every Thursday night at 7:00 – must have a partner and a good sense of humor.

Interested in becoming a Lion – we meet the second and fourth Monday of every month – feel free to drop in or call the club at 902-889-2725 for more information.

Lionism is incredibly rewarding.

Hosting an upcoming event, the Lions Club is available for rent (capacity 60). Convenient location, full kitchen facilities and Wifi. (902) 889-2725 or follow the e-clubhouse.org.

Please remember that if you, or anyone you know, is in need – we are here to help.

Our mission is to serve. Contact us at 902-889-2725 or via Facebook private messenger.

HAPPY VALENTINE'S DAY





The community crowded into St. Anslem's Church in West Chezzetcook on December 14th for a Community Celebration of the on-going repurposing of the building, and the opening of a 25-year Time Capsule. The time capsule included dozens of items, including the earlier Eastern Shore publications the *Community Connections* information bulletin and the *Eastern Shore Observer* newspaper. There were performances by a harpist and the Beaux-Marais choir, and table after table of homemade cookies, confections and sweets from La Cuisine de Brigitte.



EASTERN HRM RURAL TOURISM WORKSHOP & TRAINING SERIES

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February 18-19

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Fire Cider: An Herbal Antidote to Winter

By Savayda Jarone, Herbalist

If you're feeling bogged down by the cold, dark, and damp of winter, it may be time to turn up your internal heat. When temperatures drop, our natural instinct is to seek warm food and drink. Fire cider takes this instinct one step further – using common kitchen spices to create a potent, time-tested home

remedy.

Winter can settle into both mind and body. Low energy, brain fog, lethargy, achiness, lingering colds, and persistent damp coughs are common at this time of year. Naturally, we want to warm up, stimulate circulation, and dry

excess phlegm. This is precisely where warming spices shine.

Fire cider is a spicy, vinegar-based herbal preparation popularized by renowned herbalist Rosemary Gladstar. What began in small herbal circles has now made its way onto market shelves, thanks to its effectiveness as a natural remedy for colds and flu. The good news is that fire cider is easy and inexpensive to make at home, using accessible ingredients you may already have on hand.

Fire Cider Recipe

Ingredients

- 500 ml apple cider vinegar
- 3 cloves garlic

- 1 inch fresh ginger root
- 1 inch horseradish root
- 1 spicy pepper (jalapeño or cayenne)
- 1 tsp black peppercorns
- Thyme, rosemary, sage, or other herbs and spices as desired
- Honey (optional)

Method

Chop all ingredients and place them in a 500 ml glass jar. Cover completely with apple cider vinegar, filling the jar to the rim. Use a plastic lid, or place wax paper under a metal lid to prevent corrosion. Let the mixture steep for one to two weeks. Strain, then add honey to taste if desired and shake well. Label the jar

...continued on page 17



Chezzetcook and District Lions Club

89 East Chezzetcook Rd., Head Chezzetcook
902-827-5871

Facebook: Chezzetcook & District Lions Club

The Chezzetcook and District Lions Club welcomes you into 2026, may this be a year of happiness and peace.



Happy Valentine's Day

Regular bingo continues every Monday night. Bingo starts at 7pm, doors open @ 5:30pm.

If you are interested in serving your community do not hesitate to visit our club. Meetings take place on the 1st and 3rd Tuesday of every month starting at 7pm.

Our Branch Club the Sociable Cupcakes are always looking for additional service and or volunteers, if you have any ideas or questions please feel free to reach out by calling 902.827.5871

Our next bake sale will be on Monday, February 16, 2026 at our regular Monday night Bingo. Sales start at 5:30 pm. All proceeds will be donated to Hear@Dal for the Hearing Aid Program.



For hall rentals call 902.221.7983.

Always here to serve the Chezzetcook and District Area.



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FINANCING AVAILABLE

Thinking of starting a business?

The Self Employment Benefits Program can help!

- You can apply if you meet the following criteria:
- have a current Employment Insurance (EI) claim
- have had an EI claim that ended within the last 60 months
- have received benefits under the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) within the previous 60 months
- have been employed with gross insurable earnings of \$2000 or higher annually, in at least 5 of the last 10 years

The Program:

- Supports new business or an existing one in which you had no prior ownership.
- Provides up to 40 weeks of funding to cover living expenses
- Requires you to devote at least 35 hours each week to develop and carry out your business plan. You must also show proof of personal financial investment in the business.

CBDC Blue Water is proud to be the coordinator for the Self Employment Benefits Program.

For further information, contact Sheila Spicer, Self Employment Benefits Coordinator, at 902-827-5564 or toll-free at 1-800-565-2773.
Unit 103, 61 Stella Drive
Porters Lake, NS B3E 0G4





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HALIFAX

DISTRICT 2 COUNCILLOR'S COMMUNIQUE JANUARY 2026 - ISSUE # 338 – HAPPY NEW YEAR



PROPERTY ASSESSMENT APPEALS

Property Assessment Notices will be mailed out in mid-January. Then there is a 31-day official Appeal Period from that date whereby property owners can review and perhaps refute their appraisals. You can also access your property file on-line. Your Notice will provide you with an AAN – Assessment Account Number with a PIN to view your data. If you feel it is not assessed properly, then you should contact the NS Property Valuation Services Corporation (PVSC) and speak with an Assessment representative. You can also appeal the assessment, ownership or classification of another property in the municipality where you live or own property. You must provide written notice of the appeal to the property's owner. A copy of this written notice must be included in your appeal submission. There is no fee to file an assessment appeal.

PVSC Assessment Office is located at Park Place Two, 238-A Brownlow Avenue, Suite 200, Dartmouth, NS, B3B 2B4. Toll-free Phone: 1-800-380-7775 or Fax: 1-888-339-4555. Their offices are not open to the public. They are available to answer questions and discuss assessments Monday to Friday from 8:30AM to 4:30PM at 1-800-380-7775 or inquiry@pvsc.ca.

Property owners are encouraged to call and talk to an Assessor, prior to appealing an assessment. His approach may answer and clear up some questions that you may have, hopefully avoiding the time and expense of an appeal. If not, you have the right to make a formal appeal, (in writing) either by letter, email or fax which must be received by their office on, or before the deadline date. For more info, refer to your assessment notice or go to: <https://www.pvsc.ca/pvsc-forms-and-guides>. If you should have any further enquiries about property valuation, please refer to their web-site at: www.PVSC.ca for more details.

NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION TAX RELIEF

The HRM Tax Relief for Non-Profit Organizations Program can help eligible non-profit and charitable organizations reduce the amount of property tax they pay each year. This program is now accepting applications. Organizations applying for acceptance into the program (or the addition of another property) must submit a complete application on or before Monday, Feb. 2nd, 2026. Late or incomplete applications will not be considered, and not all applications will be funded. Every organization accepted into the program in the past must submit an annual confirmation form on or before Feb. 2nd as well. This form is to confirm there has been no change in ownership, occupancy of the property or a change in the property use. A confirmation form would have been mailed with your organization's final tax bill and a fillable form is also available on this program's web-page. Late confirmation applications received by the HRM after Monday, Feb. 2nd will receive a reduction of 50% up to a maximum of \$5,000. This reduction in level of tax relief will be applied to the tax bill(s). If the confirmation form is not received for three consecutive years, the property will be automatically removed from the program. You can find

the application and confirmation forms online at: www.halifax.ca/business/doing-business-halifax/tax-relief-non-profit-organizations or by e-mailing nonproffitax@halifax.ca.

2026/27 HRM BUDGET KEY DATES

There are several meetings in the annual municipal budget process. Here are the key dates for the 2026/27 municipal budget debate:

Tuesday, December 9th – Capital Budget Program Update & Advanced Tenders Report

Tuesday, January 27th – Public Presentations

Wednesday & Friday: January 28th & 30th (contingency) – Capital Budget Plan for Multi-year Projects & Reserve Withdrawals

Wednesday, Thursday, Friday: February 4th, 5th, & 6th – OPERATIONS: Major Projects Office; Strategic Infrastructure & Transportation Planning; Halifax Transit; Parks & Recreation; Planning & Development; Property, Fleet & Environment and Public Works.

Wednesday, Thursday, Friday: February 11th, 12th, & 13th – PUBLIC SAFETY: Community Safety; Halifax Regional Fire & Emergency; Halifax Regional Police; and RCMP Halifax Regional Detachment.

Wednesday, Thursday: February 18th & 19th – CORPORATE SERVICES: Chief Administrative Office; Mayor's Office, Finance & Asset Management; Human Resources; Information Technology; Fiscal Services, Legal Services, Auditor General and Halifax Public Library

Friday, February 20th – Budget Contingency Date for any carry over of departments

Wednesday & Friday, March 4th & 6th (contingency): Budget Adjustment List Review for items that were additions ("overs") and subtractions ("unders").

Tuesday, March 31st - Budget & Business Plan Approval.

Residents have the opportunity to speak directly either in person or online to the Regional Council Budget Committee during the debate process. During each meeting, time is set aside for Public Participation to provide insight and comments from the general public. If you wish to address HRM Council, please contact the Clerk's Office at 902-490-4212 or by email: clerks@halifax.ca. Anyone can attend in person at Halifax City Hall to observe our deliberations or watch it live or stream it on the Halifax Regional Municipality YouTube channel. Please note these dates are subject to change. For more up-to-date information on the 2026/27 budget process, visit www.halifax.ca/budget.

FEDERAL ARTS & CULTURE GRANTS

The Federal Department of Canadian Heritage (DCH) has a Building Communities Through Arts and Heritage (BCAH) Program. Does your community organize a local festival? There are three intake period deadlines for applications under the Local Festivals component of the BCAH program: January 31st, April 30th and October 15th. Is there a significant local anniversary in our municipality or in your community in 2026? If

the anniversary marks a 100th anniversary or greater, in increments of 25 years (e.g., 125th, 150th) and it commemorates a significant local historical event or pays tribute to a significant local historical personality, consider applying to the Community Anniversaries component of BCAH www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/building-communities/festivals.html. The deadline is January 31st for festivals starting between September 1st and December 31st of the same calendar year. April 30th for festivals starting between January 1st and June 30th of the next calendar year. And October 15th for festivals starting between July 1st and August 31st of the next calendar year. For details, please contact them via e-mail at: pch.enligne-online.pch@canada.ca or call Toll-free 1-866-811-0055 or TTY 1-888-997-3123.

The Legacy Fund component which provides funding for community capital projects that commemorate significant anniversaries and involve the restoration, renovation, or transformation of existing buildings and/or exterior spaces with local community significance; encourage arts and heritage activities in your community; and are intended for and accessible to the general public. For more details about the Legacy Program, www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/building-communities/legacy-fund.html e-mail them at: PCH.bcah-dcap.PCH@canada.ca or call them at the same phone numbers listed above. There is no established deadline date to submit a funding application under Legacy Fund component, as applications are accepted on a continuous basis. However, you must submit your application no later than the date of the anniversary being celebrated. You are encouraged to submit your application at least 12 months prior to the proposed start date for your project (or six months prior for smaller projects with total costs of 200K or less).

FULL-TIME FIREFIGHTER HIRINGS

Halifax Regional Fire & Emergency (HRFE) will accept applications for career firefighters from January 6th to 20th, 2026. Career firefighters protect life, property and the environment through emergency response and preparedness. The recruitment process includes multiple phases: an application, aptitude testing, physical abilities testing and a panel interview. Each phase assesses skills and competencies required for the role. Becoming a firefighter requires dedication, preparation and a strong commitment to meeting the physical and mental demands of the profession. Firefighting is both challenging and rewarding, with long shifts in highly physical environments. Careers with HRFE offer competitive salaries and a flexible work schedule. For more details, visit HRM website: www.halifax.ca/about-halifax/employment/work-halifax-fire.



Councillor David Hendsbee
Councillor – Councillor municipal – Comhairlaiche – Wunaqapeme'j
District 2: Lawrencetown – The Lakes – Chezzetcook – Eastern Shore

Railway Museum – #7895 Highway #7
P.O. Box 2, Musquodoboit Harbour, NS, B0J 2L0
1841 Argyle Street, Councillor's Support, 4th Floor
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HALIFAX

DISTRICT 2 COUNCILLOR'S COMMUNIQUE FEBRUARY 2026 - ISSUE # 339 – HAPPY VALENTINE'S



42nd NS AFRICAN HERITAGE MONTH

This year's African Heritage Month provincial theme: "Strength in Unity – Moving forward with Purpose, Prosperity, Power and Progress". This theme highlights the living legacy of Black Nova Scotians, honouring the impact and perseverance of the long-standing community. Nova Scotia has 52 historic African Nova Scotian communities with a long, deep and complex history dating back over 200 years. African Heritage Month provides us with another opportunity to celebrate the culture, legacy, achievements, and contributions of our Black people – past and present. For a list of African Heritage Month events and proclamations across the province, go to: www.ahm.bccnweb.com.

NATIONAL FLAG DAY & HERITAGE DAY

The Federal Government has proclaimed February 15th as National Flag of Canada Day. In 1965, sixty years ago, the old Red Ensign Flag with the British Union Jack was replaced with the Red Maple Leaf. To know more facts about our nation's flag and/or other official national symbols of Canada: www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/official-symbols-canada.html.

And be sure to wave our own Provincial and Municipal Flags too! Heritage Day is the third Monday in February each year is set aside as an annual reminder of our storied past and an opportunity to honour the remarkable people, places and events that have contributed to this province's unique heritage. This year's date is February 16th. So please enjoy the day! More info at: <https://heritageday.novascotia.ca/>. Heritage Day 2026 will honour Joseph William Comeau. For more information about him: <https://heritageday.novascotia.ca/content/past-and-future-honourees>.

CAMP COURAGE APPLICATION TIME

Camp Courage is a First Responder's Society, that is a registered charity dedicated to inspiring young women and gender-diverse youth, aged 15 to 19 with the skills, mentorship, and confidence to pursue emergency service careers – and the results are nothing short of extraordinary to pursue careers in emergency services. Since 2006, its award-winning, volunteer-driven programs have empowered hundreds of future leaders, creating a ripple effect that continues to strengthen emergency services and communities nationwide. For 20 years, Camp Courage has been more than a program – it has been a movement. It instills confidence, promotes values of courage and service, enhances diversity in emergency services, and builds stronger, more inclusive communities. Participants take part in immersive, hands-on experiences that mirror the realities of emergency service work: climbing 100-foot ladders, conducting water rescues, learning self-defence and de-escalation, performing medical simulations like airway management and childbirth, and taking part in firefighting, crime scene investigation, and resilience training. Each challenge strengthens not only physical and mental readiness but also leadership, teamwork, and confidence. The 20th Anniversary of Camp Courage will be held July 4th –12th, 2026, with applications due February 7th, 2026. Applicants are encouraged to apply early for their chance to take part in this once-in-a-lifetime experience. For more details;

contact: Andréa Speranza, Executive Director via email: andrea@campcourage.ca Phone: 902-488-1188 www.campcourage.ca.

COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT GRANTS

The NS Department of Communities, Culture, Tourism, and Heritage's (CCTH) Community Infrastructure, and Access-Ability grant programs are now open for applications for the fiscal year 2026-27. This is an important opportunity for local organizations and entities to enhance and improve community facilities and help to support a more accessible and vibrant future for everyone.

Business ACCESS-Ability Program: Offers cost-shared grants to businesses for accessibility related improvements. <https://cch.novascotia.ca/business-access-ability-grant-program>

Community ACCESS-Ability Program: Supports renovations and improvements to make community buildings more accessible. <https://cch.novascotia.ca/investing-our-future/community-funding-and-awards/community-access-ability-program>

Community Facility Improvement Program: Aids in repairs and upgrades to community facilities open for public use, such as community halls. <https://cch.novascotia.ca/investing-in-our-future/community-facilities-improvement-program>.

Legion Capital Assistance Program: Assists Royal Canadian Legions with capital upgrades. <https://cch.novascotia.ca/investing-our-future/community-funding-and-awards/legion-capital-assistance-program>

Recreation Facility Development / Rink Revitalization Fund: Supports repairs and upgrades to community recreation facilities and rinks. <https://cch.novascotia.ca/investing-our-future/community-funding-and-awards/legion-capital-assistance-program>

Application Deadline for all these programs is February 14th.

They recommend all potential applicants discuss their projects with a CCTH regional manager or program officer before submitting an application. This will ensure that you are well-informed and best positioned to succeed in securing the support you need.

Contacts for Program Inquiries:

- Community ACCESS-Ability: AccessAbilitygrants@novascotia.ca
- Community Facility Improvement & Legion Capital Assistance: Communitiens@novascotia.ca
- Recreation Facility Development and Rink Revitalization (Contact Regional Manager): Central Region (HRM): Andrea Redmond (centralregion@novascotia.ca)

ICE & SNOW WINTER MAINTENANCE

The Nova Scotia Department of Public Works (NSDPW) does most of the snow removal, ice control and winter road maintenance services in District 2. Our local NS Highway Depots are in West Chezzetcook and

Spry Bay. You can e-mail any roadway concerns to the attention of the NSDPW Operations Contact Centre, to: DPW-OCC@novascotia.ca or call 1-844-696-7737. The NSDPW will log it, assign a service ticket number and send it to the appropriate local supervisor. The Province as an online "plowtracker" tool that citizens can track snowploughs on a provincial zoom in map: <http://novascotia.ca/tran/winter/plowtracker.asp>. Or you can see current highway conditions by going online to the roadside camera website: <https://novascotia.ca/tran/cameras/>. Drivers can also get up-to-date road conditions across Nova Scotia by calling the SNOW-line: 1-800-307-SNOW (7669) or 511 or 1-888-432-3233, or visit <http://novascotia.ca/tran/winter>.

The SNOW-line is updated regularly at 7 AM, 1 PM, and 5 PM or more frequently in case of a major storm event. You can also follow them on Twitter: @NS_PublicWorks. If you have any concerns or complaints about snow removal service in your area that is served by NSDPW, then please contact your Eastern Shore MLA office: _ or call 902-989-3772. With respect to the communities of North Preston, Westphal, East Preston, Lake Echo, Mineville and all of the Lawrencetown subdivision streets west of the Mineville Road, these areas are being done under the auspices of HRM with a Performance Base Contracted Out Service provider: Ocean Contractors. If you have any concerns about our Snow and Ice Control winter road maintenance, please call the HRM Contact Centre at 311 or reach out to me. For information about HRM Winter Road Maintenance, please go to: www.halifax.ca/transportation/winter-operations.

NO MORE ICE THICKNESS REPORTS

Please note that the municipality is no longer conducting ice thickness testing. Over the last number of years, there has been a decline in the number of days available for skating. Based on these changed climate patterns, including rapidly fluctuating temperatures, ice thickness testing is no longer feasible. We realize that some residents may wish to continue skating on lakes, and there may occasionally be times when it is safe to do so. Residents are asked to take safety precautions for themselves and their families by avoiding any further recreation activities on frozen lakes and ponds, including walking, snowmobiling, and skating.

The Red Cross recommends the following:

- 15 cm (6") for walking or skating alone
- 20 cm (8") for skating parties or games
- 25 cm (10") for snowmobiles and ATV's

For more information about Ice Safety Tips, please visit the Canadian Red Cross website: www.redcross.ca/blog/2019/12/ice-safety-know-when-it-s-safe-to-play.



Councillor David Hendsbee
Councillor – Councillor municipal – Comhairlaiche – Wunaqapeme'j
District 2: Lawrencetown – The Lakes – Chezzetcook – Eastern Shore

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P.O. Box 1749, Halifax, NS, B3J 3A5

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On Nature: Grosbeaks and Finches

By Eric Cole

We'll be well conditioned to the cold by the time you read this, but it's the first blast of winter that always shocks the system. The sudden plunge overnight to fifteen below that had us digging for touques and mitts in the corners of closets. Granted, it's not Manitoba, but it still calls for an extra layer or two to venture outside.

The first significant snowfall revealed signs of the local wildlife, especially those of a nocturnal persuasion and those normally overlooked thanks to shy dispositions. Meanwhile out on the flats the last black bellied plover looked stunned while a clump of five or six dunlins huddled together against the wind-chill. A solitary greater yellowlegs poked around the jagged skirt of ice which had formed on the shoreline. I willed these long-distance laggards to get going south on the peril of their lives.

One clear morning was further brightened by a flock of evening

grosbeaks descending on us, the first time I'd seen them around here. A few American robins also showed and snatched at the last few berries from a tiny shrub I'd never noticed before. It struck me then that there were no berries on our mountain ash this year and indeed we haven't seen any clusters of their red fruit anywhere, which was a sight so ubiquitous last year. Such is the vagaries of the fruit and seed crops of the wild woods on which our resident birds depend for winter food.

These cyclical inconsistencies and irregularities account for what we call irruptions of boreal forest birds out of their usual haunts. The annual winter finch report predicts these movements species by species, based on the location and availability of forest nuts, fruit and cone crops.

This last year for instance, saw widespread spruce budworm outbreaks, which can devastate the

cone crop. Evening grosbeaks and purple finches benefit from these outbreaks in the summer as infestations of caterpillars provide a banquet for these birds to raise bumper crops of chicks. Come winter however, birds that depend on spruce and fir cones will find very few across the affected areas and so must travel, sometimes far out of their normal range for food.

By late fall purple finches and eed-breasted nuthatches had already moved much farther south than normal, so expect to see less of them this winter. Redpolls and siskins are on the move too due to a poor crop of birch and ash seeds, though I've seen no reports of them showing up here in any numbers.

There are however lots of reports of evening grosbeaks, on the Eastern Shore and throughout Nova Scotia. Ironically, this irruptive species is in serious decline, for reasons such as

deforestation, pesticide spraying and climate change. If you are lucky enough to spot them or have a flock drop in you will notice their large size, their unique quilt-like plumage, the spectacular males, with their rich green mantels and yellow unibrows.

I've noticed how they move in much tighter groups than the flocks of goldfinches do. They are also really flighty, if one takes off, the rest all mindlessly follow. Another odd thing is that they only come by on clear, calm days, I don't see them when there's wind. I wonder if they always behave like this or is it because they find themselves out of their comfort zone, navigating through our strange world of cleared yards and bird feeders.

You may also notice that once they do settle down a bit, they have a voracious appetite for sunflower seeds. So you better stock up if you have a feeder and want to attract them.

On Flawing

By John English

Recently, in a ruminative state, I came up with the word "unflawing." Google suggested that, while not a "standard English word," it most likely referred to being without blemishes or flaws, perfect. ChatGPT thought I meant "inflating," "inflation," or "deflation."

None of these words or meanings caught the essence of my drift, but I persisted, and a light bulb came on in Mr/Mrs/Ms ChatGPT's head, resulting in this definition: "...the process of healing, integrating, or transforming one's flaws...accepting and integrating flaws until they no longer define or limit you". It went on to suggest that I had come up with "something quite profound"! I humbly agreed!

Unflawing is not, in my mind, a process of becoming perfect. I am fully conscious of my lack of perfection. Rather, it is the process of forgiving and accepting imperfections, of "owning the flaws," and embracing my humanity in all its good, bad, and ugly states of being.

ChatGPT put forward three crucial phases of unflawing:

1. Awareness. The idea here is that I cannot unflaw what I don't acknowledge. But I recognize the flaws without judgement, am

curious about them, and bring them into consciousness so that they can be explored.

2. Compassion. Understanding that my flaws are the result of old wounds, probably from childhood, to which I have adapted. These wounds need to be seen with compassion and gentleness.
3. Transformation. I see the potential opportunity in the flaw. For example, if my perceived flaw is anger, then I can use this anger as energy to fuel and direct a determination to change an aspect of my life that does not serve me well.

So much of what I see as flaws reflects the disowning of parts of myself and a shame that I carry into my relationships and my daily life. But how can I be whole if I reject and cast aside aspects of self? Is there a way that I can look with compassion at my imperfections and reframe them into strengths?

I asked ChatGPT to write a poem about unflawing. These opening lines struck me as particularly beautiful:

Unflawing begins the moment you stop polishing your soul for display and start listening to the parts that ache in shadow.
You stop asking to be perfect and begin longing to be real.

... Parade of Lights Continued from page 2

passed away. It's hard to believe. He was a larger-than-life man and loved by everybody that knew him and my family and friends just embraced him."

"I lost my joy," Nancy said. "I was quite down."

Darlene remembered when they decided to do the first parade in 2013. "We were sitting at the beach, both crying," Darlene said. "And I said to Nancy, 'You need to get some joy back. Do you still want to do that damn parade?' She said yes, and I said well, let's just do it. I just want to see you smile and laugh again."

The two of them set out, going to stores throughout the Eastern Shore looking for sponsors. "We looked into licensing to see what we needed to do for insurance, everything like that," Nancy said. "We talked with the ones who did the summer parade about what was involved. The Santa float had the chair from my living room for Santa to sit on!"

The start of the parade was an emotional moment for them. "When those big trucks started pulling into the high school parking lot to line up for the parade, the tears were just flowing," Darlene said. They started off walking hand-in-hand behind their Santa float. "We cried some more when

we got closer to the Harbour, and saw the amount of people who showed up, knowing the grief and trauma that this started from."

"Everyone coming together was so wonderful," Nancy said. "The library was doing a warming station, and the first couple of years, the Lions were helping, the Royal Bank had hot chocolate set up at a table by the road. There's nothing like Musquodoboit Harbour and the sense of community. I've never felt like that any other place.

They went on to produce five parades, by which time their children had all graduated. When their daughters were little, they had become friends with Anne Jennings-DeBaie, who was a Girl Guide Leader. Anne and her husband Dennis had entered a sleigh float, and Nancy got them to use the sleigh as that year's Santa float.

"We got closer with Ann and Dennis, and when we felt like we needed to hand it off, we told them you guys would be absolutely perfect to take over," Darlene said. "When we chose Ann and Dennis, we had no idea how much enthusiasm and love and joy they would put in it. They've just taken it and run with it and exceeded our expectations."

Childhood on the Farm

By *Edyth Shuman*

Nothing could be more wonderful for a young child than growing up on a farm and being around lots of animals, young and old. Perhaps I had the best of both worlds, living on a farm until I was 14 years old, when the farm was sold and we moved to the nearest town.

When I think back about those farm years, my mind floods with memories of baby animals, chickens, ducks, and goslings. Every spring brought a whole new set of playmates.

I had an old fox pen cleaned and painted by my mom and dad to make suitable for a playhouse for me and my animals. Not only did I spend hours and days in my little hideaway, but so did all my animal friends. My guardian dog Pal and the cat spent most of their leisure time with me.

One of my most memorable farm pets was my calf, Andy. He was born in April, so by the time the nice weather came, he and I could run and play around the fields and farm buildings.

Young children learn from a young age the ways of farm life. Andy was left off the "goodbye list" longer than most because of his friendship with me. But at bath time one day after Andy and I had been running around and playing, Mom found some bruises. Andy was gone the next day.

Mom made most of my clothes. When I was about five years old, she made me

a smocked dress. I tried it on and loved it. My dad and brother had gone to town, leaving me with only one person to show my new dress to, our hired man Charles.

I ran across the fields to where he was working and jumped on the grain skewer running board. The horses were still moving, and my skirt got caught. All I had left to go back to Mom with was the bodice. Poor Mom!

It was important to keep small children away from the heavy machinery on the farm. Most of the time, I had harmless fun mimicking what the adults were doing. Until the day I was pretending to be putting gas in my trike. There was a hose laying on the ground, having just been used to fill Dad's tractor. I had watched the adults siphon gas, so I tried sucking on the hose. There was no liquid, but they were so scared they rushed me 10 miles away to the nearest doctor anyway.

Then there were the rabbits. My favourite cousin bought me three rabbits one Easter. I planned to go into business selling baby rabbits. We kept the prolific rabbits penned for many months. A year later, if you drove into the yard at night and turned off your headlights, all you would see were eyes shining all around the yard. It wasn't possible to get an exact count, but I decided to try and lost count after one hundred!

... Fire Cider Continued from page 12

with the contents and date. Store in the refrigerator for up to three months.

Dosage

Take 1-2 teaspoons in ¼ to 1 cup of water, as needed.

This is a basic recipe, but fire cider invites creativity. You can adjust the proportions to suit your taste and heat tolerance. Some people add onion, fresh turmeric root, or lemon slices. I prefer to add honey to the finished cider, though it can also be added to the cup when taking it. For extra flavour and forest medicine, I like to include fresh pine, spruce, or fir needles.

Fire cider delivers instant warmth, awakens the senses, and boosts energy through increased circulation. With regular use, it supports digestion and

immune health and is especially helpful for stubborn colds and wet, lingering coughs.

There is a special joy and empowerment in making home remedies – transforming simple kitchen ingredients into a healing tonic. When winter winds howl outside, you'll have the comfort of a jar of fire cider on hand: a true winter warmer, brewed by you, to help keep the cold at bay.

Trees Keep Us Breathing

By *Jeddore John*

We need a lot of oxygen every day to live. The average human breathes in roughly 500-600 litres of oxygen a day, more with strenuous physical activity.

To get that oxygen, we need trees.

Lots of trees.

Trees produce about 28 percent of the world's oxygen; the rest comes from phytoplankton and ocean plants. According to the website, Onetreeplanted.org, "A mature oak tree can produce, on average, 100,000 liters of oxygen a year. That's about 274 litres of oxygen a day – roughly half of what the average human needs. In other words? It's in our best interest to be vastly outnumbered by trees." (And let's not forget that those trees are producing all this oxygen by breaking down carbon dioxide, slowing global warming!)

But our steadily growing global population is consuming more and more oxygen. We use vast amounts of oxygen in the cars we drive, the buildings we heat, the factories we operate, the planes and ships we rely on. Gas and oil well flares used to dispose of excess combustible gasses work around the clock converting oxygen into carbon dioxide. And there are about 2,280 oil-fired power plants around the world. All of these activities convert the oxygen we need into more carbon dioxide in the atmosphere.

Now for the insane part. Everywhere around the world, we are cutting down the largest, most valuable oxygen-producing trees to make toilet paper, paper towels, newsprint, Timbits boxes, and a thousand other throw-away items. In the process, we are mowing down the smaller trees which are our future oxygen producers.

This is even more insane when you realize there are better ways to manage our forests that don't entail

destroying them and then waiting for nature to rebuild them. Trees can still provide us useful products while at the same time cranking out life-giving oxygen. But they can only do this if we stop viewing them as infinite and disposable and start viewing them as an essential resource to be protected and managed responsibly.

If we fail to make this attitude change, we will be spelling the end of our forests and eventually, the end of ourselves. The first step in making this attitude change is identifying who is responsible for this carnage. Not hard to determine. Governments that allow and support this destruction are responsible, as are multinational and national paper companies who get harvest licenses, clear cut the lands they are granted access to, and then move on to find the next sucker.

This isn't just a Nova Scotian, Canadian, or North American problem. In China, Asia, South America, Central Africa, the story is the same – greedy megacorps move in, trash the region, and move on.

Sadly, all this clear cutting is just half the story. Here is the other half. The world's most widely used herbicide (plant killer) is Roundup, also known as Glyphosate. Farmers use it to kill off unwanted plants amongst their crops, and forestry operators use it to suppress new plant growth while they plant the tree varieties they want. After all, we need toilet paper, right?

The problem is that the herbicides don't stay where they're sprayed. They wash down into our lakes and rivers and ultimately, the oceans. When these chemicals reach the ocean, they kill off some varieties of phytoplankton and disrupt the natural balance of phytoplankton species, which you may recall, produce 72% of the planet's oxygen.

Are you worried yet? If you are, that's OK. If you're not, you should be.



Memorial Hearts 2026

First United Church, Musquodoboit Harbour
Twelfth Annual Memorial Hearts
February 15th.

Church Service at 10:30am followed by
Pot Luck Lunch (downstairs).
All welcome.

Have someone you would like to include? Ensure your info, along with photo or photos are in by February 1st at the latest to be placed on our Memorial Tree and TV. For info contact: **Edyth Schuman, 902 889-2802**. There is no charge for this, but a donation to the church is greatly appreciated.

Honouring Dr. Geraldine Browning

On January 5, the Black Cultural Centre for Nova Scotia and the Black Cultural Society announced the passing of Dr. Geraldine Browning, a founding member, former Board Chair, and lifelong champion of Black heritage, community advancement, and human rights. The BCC issued the following statement:

Dr. Browning was an extraordinary community leader whose commitment to social justice, education, and cultural preservation shaped the landscape of African Nova Scotian heritage in our province and beyond. She was a founding member of the Black Cultural Society of Nova Scotia and served with distinction as Board Chair, helping to guide the Society in its mission to protect, preserve and promote the culture and history of Black Nova Scotians through the Black Cultural Centre since its early development.

Raised in East Preston and later becoming a vibrant member of Gibson Woods in the Valley, Dr. Browning dedicated her life to community service

and advocacy. Her work extended far beyond our organization; she was instrumental in establishing the Black Business Initiative and the Valley African Nova Scotian Development Association, and she served on numerous boards and committees advancing human rights, equity, and community development. An active member of the African United Baptist Association and the Gibson Woods United Baptist Church, she brought people together and blazed trails for future generations.

“Dr. Browning’s vision helped shape our Centre and the broader heritage landscape of Nova Scotia. Her wisdom, compassion, and relentless pursuit of equality have left an indelible mark on our community,” said Russell Grosse, CEO of the Black Cultural Centre. “We honour her memory by continuing the work she began, educating, inspiring, and uplifting future generations.”

Memorial service details will be shared as they become available.

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2026/27 Municipal Budget

The municipality is working through the budget and business planning process for 2026/27.

Each year, residents have an opportunity to speak directly to Regional Council about their budget priorities. During each meeting, time is set aside for the public to provide insight and comments and residents are encouraged to pre-register to speak in a meeting.

**Access the full list of in-person meeting dates and times for all budget presentations by visiting halifax.ca/budget or calling 311.*

How to participate
Registration is required to be added to the speakers list. Please contact the Clerk's Office at 902.490.4210 or by email at clerks@halifax.ca. Virtual participation will also be available and residents who wish to speak through the virtual option must still pre-register by no later than 4:30 p.m. the business day prior to the meeting.

During the meeting, after all pre-registered speakers have been called, the chair will call three times to ask if there is anyone else present who would like to speak. At that time, anyone who has not pre-registered will have the opportunity to speak to the Budget Committee.

**Meeting dates may be subject to change and any new dates will be communicated on halifax.ca/budget.*

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RED BARON SHERPA-LINED LEATHER WORK GLOVES
#94002XL
\$19.99 PAIR



EASTERN FLAME BRIQUETTES
#EFB REG \$6.99
\$3.97 12 PACK



EASTERN EMBERS WOOD PELLETS
#WDPELLETS
\$7.79 18KG



MILWAUKEE 2471-21 COPPER TUBE CUTTER KIT
#9516964 REG \$324
ONLY 6 AVAILABLE
\$99.97

CLEARANCE

Nutrience & Zoë
PET FOOD & TREATS



20% OFF



20V ATOMIC COMPACT DRILL KIT
#DCD794D1 REG \$219
OR
20V ATOMIC IMPACT DRIVER KIT
#DCF809D1 REG \$219

\$128.00

SPECIAL OFFER



STANLEY FATMAX 30' TAPE MEASURE
#8549099 REG \$25.99

\$18.97

PRICES IN EFFECT JANUARY 4th - FEBRUARY 28th 2026 ~ IN STOCK ITEMS ONLY ~ WHILE STOCK LASTS ~ NO RETURNS ON CLEARANCE ITEMS ~ TAXES & DELIVERY EXTRA



WE FILL PROPANE
99¢ / LB



PARTY ICE
\$2.99



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U-FILL WATER
\$1.99



WATER SOFTENER SALT
\$8.89

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