



NOTICE

MEETING: St Mary's Municipal Council
Committee of the Whole

DATE: Wednesday, January 15th, 2025

TIME: 6:00 pm

PLACE: St. Mary's Municipality
Council Chambers, Sherbrooke, NS

Please advise if unable to attend



Municipality of the District of St. Mary's

Committee of the Whole Meeting Agenda
Wednesday, January 15th, 2025, at 6:00pm

We acknowledge that we are gathering in Mi'kmaqi the traditional unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq people.

1. Call to Order
2. Roll Call
3. Additions to the Agenda
4. Approval of the Agenda
5. Approval of Minutes: COTW held January 2nd, 2025
6. Business Arising from Minutes
7. Correspondence
 - a. Email from Brian Cullen, Chief Administrative Officer, Municipality of Pictou County
 - b. Email from Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities regarding Code of Conduct Training
8. Presentation:
 - a. Whale Sanctuary – Matt Maraynes, Charles Vinick, Lori Marino
 - b. Sherbrooke Village – York Lethbridge - Verbal
9. Other Matters of Business
 - a. Clean Foundation – QUEST Program
 - b. Clean Foundation - Climate Resilient Coastal Communities
 - c. Salary Band Review – Active Living Coordinator
 - d. Stonewall Park Tourist Interactive Panel Project
 - e. Housing Policy Support
 - f. 2025-2026 Low Income Tax Exemption Application

g. Update to Meeting Dates - Verbal Discussion

Adjournment



We acknowledge that we are gathering in Mi'kma'ki the traditional unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq people.

1. Meeting, Date & Time:

Warden Fuller called the COTW Meeting of the St. Mary's Municipal Council to order on Thursday, January 2nd, 2025, at 6:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers, Sherbrooke, N.S.

2. Attending:

Warden James Fuller
Deputy Warden Beulah Malloy
Councillor Dana O'Connell
Councillor Scott Beaver
Councillor Emma Tibbo

Also Attending:

Doug Patterson, Chief Administrative Officer (CAO)
Marian Fraser, Director of Finance (DOF)
Jadzia Rudolph, Municipal Clerk

3. Additions to the Agenda:

- There were no additions to the agenda.

4. Approval of the Agenda:

On the motion of Councillor O'Connell and seconded by Deputy Warden Malloy, Council approved the agenda as presented.

Motion approved.

5. Approval of Minutes:

On the motion of Warden Fuller, Council approved the minutes of the COTW Meeting held December 4th, 2024.

Motion approved.

6. Business Arising from the Minutes:

- There was no business arising from the minutes.

7. Correspondence:

- a. Letter from Sean Fraser regarding Fire Department Funding
- Council decided to write a letter inviting MP. Sean Fraser to the next Fire Services Advisory Committee meeting on February 26th, 2025.
- b. Letter from Port Hilford Community Centre regarding Property
- The municipality does not want to take back the facility, but will write a letter to Kim McGrail, offering district funds, and offer support and solutions that may help.

- c. Email from AMA regarding FOIPOP
- Council discussed the time and effort that it takes staff to work on FOIPOP requests.
- Council decided to write a letter in support of the Association of Municipal Administrators of Nova Scotia on the FOIPOP Act review working group recommendations to William Trask, Chair of the working group.

On recommendation of Councillor Beaver and seconded by Councillor O'Connell Council write a letter in support of the NS Association of Municipal Administrators position on the FOIPOP Act Review Working Group recommendations to William Trask, Chair of the Working Group.

Recommendation adopted.

8. Other Matters of Business:

- a. Mileage/Expense Policy
- Please see the Agenda/Package for the report.

On recommendation of Deputy Warden Malloy and seconded by Councillor Tibbo, Council readopts the Mileage/Expense policy as presented.

Recommendation adopted.

- b. Hospitality Policy
- Please see the Agenda/Package for the report.

On recommendation of Councillor O'Connell and seconded by Deputy Warden Malloy, Council readopts the Hospitality policy with amendments.

Recommendation adopted.

- c. Finance Report
- Please see the Agenda/Package for the report.
- Marian Fraser, Director of Finance informed Council of the Finance report up to November 2024. All expenses are on track, a progress report is included in the report, Marian Fraser, Director of Finance informed Council that there is an estimated surplus for year end.
- d. Dry Hydrant Appointment
- Please see the Agenda/Package for the report.
- Only one Volunteer Fire Department applied for the dry hydrant, and it was Liscomb Volunteer Fire Department which was awarded the dry hydrant at a Fire Services Advisory Committee meeting for 2024.

On recommendation of Deputy Warden Malloy and seconded by Councillor Tibbo, Council approves the selection and installation of a dry hydrant to Liscomb Volunteer Fire Department as per the Fire Services Administration Policy.

Recommendation adopted.

- e. 2025-2026 Uniform Assessment
- Please see the Agenda/Package for the report.
- The 2025-2026 Uniform Assessment the Education expense for the Municipality for the fiscal year 2025-2026 will increase by \$64,685, a 9.20% increase from 2024-2025.

f. 2025-2026 Budget Deliberation Timeline

- Please see the Agenda/Package for the report.
- Marian Fraser, Director of Finance provided Council with

On recommendation of Councillor Tibbo and seconded by Councillor O'Connell, Council recommends setting the 2025 2026 Annual General Meeting date as Wednesday, April 2nd, 2025, at 7:00pm.

Recommendation adopted.

g. 2025 Property Tax Assessment Roll Summary

- Please see the Agenda/Package for the report.
- Annually on December 31st, Property Valuation Services Corporation (PVSC) sends the complete property tax assessment roll to each municipality in Nova Scotia individually. Municipalities use the assessment roll to calculate property taxes. Once received, staff review the roll and potential revenue impacts ahead of the Municipal budgets to assist with budget deliberations. It is important to note that it is not until January 13th, 2025, that PVSC mails out property assessment notices to Nova Scotia property owners. Property owners have until February 13th, 2025, to appeal their assessments with PVSC. Appeal changes and rulings are not reflected in this year-over-year comparison report.
- There will be a \$127,504 increase if tax rates remain the same.

Adjournment

On motion of Warden Fuller, there being no further matters of business, Council adjourned at 6:31 p.m.

Motion approved.



Municipality of the County of Pictou
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November 13, 2024

Doug Patterson
Chief Administrative Officer
Municipality of the District of St. Mary's
PO Box 296
Sherbrooke, Nova Scotia
B0J 3C0

doug.patterson@saint-marys.ca

RE: "Imagine MOPC" Municipal Planning Project – Draft Documents

Dear Doug,

Please be advised that the Municipality of Pictou County (MOPC) has recently released public drafts of its new Municipal Planning Strategy and Land Use Bylaw. MOPC currently does not have comprehensive land use planning and does not currently meet the Minimum Planning Requirements Regulations. For more information on this project and to find the draft documents please visit www.imaginemopc.ca

As part of our commitment to municipal cooperation, and in fulfillment of the requirements of the *Municipal Government Act*, we invite you to review the draft documents and provide any comment you may have on shared planning issues or issues related to the Statements of Provincial Interest that we should consider as part of our review. Written submissions can be made to myself, cc'd to the project consultant, UPLAND, whose contact information is below. Alternatively, we would be happy to organize a meeting with the project consultant to discuss shared planning issues.

We look forward to working with you to advance responsible and effective land use planning in Nova Scotia. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brian".

Brian Cullen
Chief Administrative Officer
Municipality of the County of Pictou

UPLAND Planning + Design

Ian Watson
Senior Planner
ian@uplandstudio.ca
902.423.0649 x 102
1489 Hollis Street, Level 2
Halifax, NS B3J 3M5

From: [Doug Patterson](#)
To: [Jadzia Rudolph](#)
Subject: FW: Secure Your Spot for Municipal Code of Conduct Training
Date: January 7, 2025 9:24:32 AM
Attachments: [image002.jpg](#)
[image003.png](#)

From: NSFM Communications <communications@nsfm.ca>
Sent: January 7, 2025 9:14 AM
Subject: Secure Your Spot for Municipal Code of Conduct Training

Dear NSFM Members & Villages,

NSFM invites all municipal elected officials and village commissioners to register for the upcoming in-person Code of Conduct training sessions this month. These sessions are a valuable opportunity to deepen your understanding of the updated Code of Conduct and equip you with insights to excel as municipal leaders.

While in-person training is not mandatory, it serves as an excellent complement to the mandatory online training module launching in February. The January sessions will be interactive, offering a platform to engage directly with the facilitator and address your questions.

About the Facilitator:

Parker Byrne, an associate lawyer at Burchell Wickwire Bryson LLP in Halifax, specializes in municipal law, labour and employment law, and litigation. He brings practical experience advising municipalities across Nova Scotia, including handling Code of Conduct matters. With a personable approach and a robust legal background, Parker has represented clients at all levels of Nova Scotia courts and has also worked as a prosecutor.

Mandatory Online Training:

Details for the mandatory February online module will be shared with all members and village commissioners by mid-January.

Don't Miss Out!

- View the Training Schedule
- Find Your Electoral Region
- Register Now to Secure Your Spot!

[View the Training Schedule](#)

[Find Your Electoral Region](#)

[Register Now to Secure Your Spot!](#)

These sessions are your chance to ensure you're prepared for the road ahead in municipal governance.

We look forward to seeing you there!

NOVA SCOTIA FEDERATION OF MUNICIPALITIES

t +902.423.8331

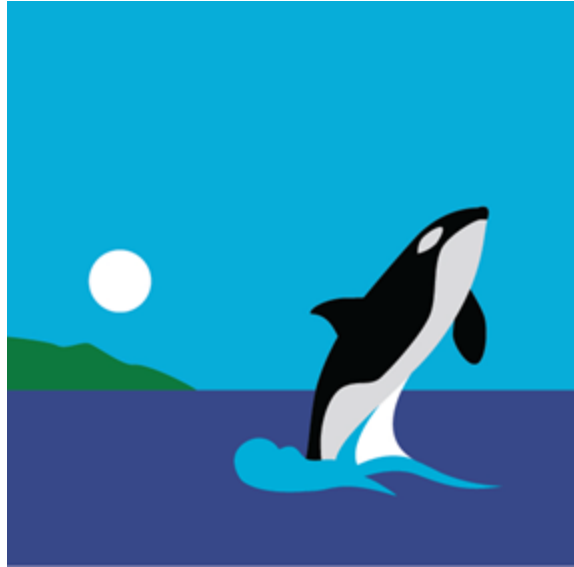
info@nsfm.ca

nsfm.ca | [facebook](#) | [twitter](#) | [linkedin](#) | [instagram](#)

NSFM is located in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaw. We are all Treaty people. We also acknowledge the histories, contributions, and legacies of the African Nova Scotian people and communities who have been here for over 400 years.

THE WHALE SANCTUARY PROJECT

Presentation to the Council for the Municipality of the District of St. Mary's
January 15th, 2025



Lori Marino, Founder & President

Charles Vinick, Chief Executive Officer

Matt Maraynes, Chief Operating Officer

Alexandra Vance, Nova Scotia Project Manager

Amy Simon, Community Liaison Officer

2024 Progress & 2025 Plans



Our mission is to establish a permanent seaside sanctuary where captive whales can live out their lives in a natural coastal ocean environment that maximizes their well-being and autonomy.

Our vision is of a world in which all cetaceans (whales, dolphins and porpoises) are treated with respect and are no longer confined to concrete tanks in entertainment parks and aquariums.



FROM THIS

TO THIS



Site Search & Selection



Third-Party Studies & Surveys

- Environmental Monitoring & Analysis (Ongoing)
- Mi'kmaq Ecological Knowledge Studies (MEKS)
- Archeological Resource Impact Assessment (ARIA)
- Overwintering Bird Survey
- Functional Wetland Assessment
- Environmental Site Assessment - Phase II
- Environmental Site Assessment - Phase III
- Geotechnical Survey (Terrestrial + Marine)
- Eelgrass ROV Survey



Third-Party Studies & Surveys

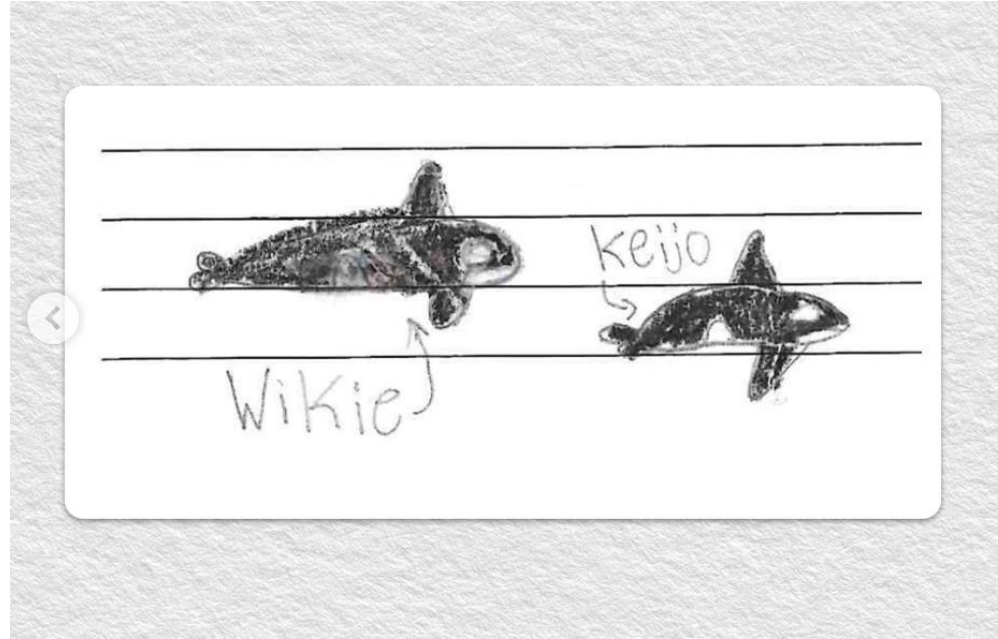
- Sanctuary site has a healthy and diverse marine ecosystem
- Water column is clean and uncontaminated
- Arsenic in sediments from gold mining is sequestered in the underwater soil; no need for remediation
- Elevated arsenic in soil on land easily mitigated by capping
- Significant presence of ecologically significant eelgrass
- Negligible risk to whales



Wikie & Keijo



Marineland Antibes
Closed January 5th, 2025

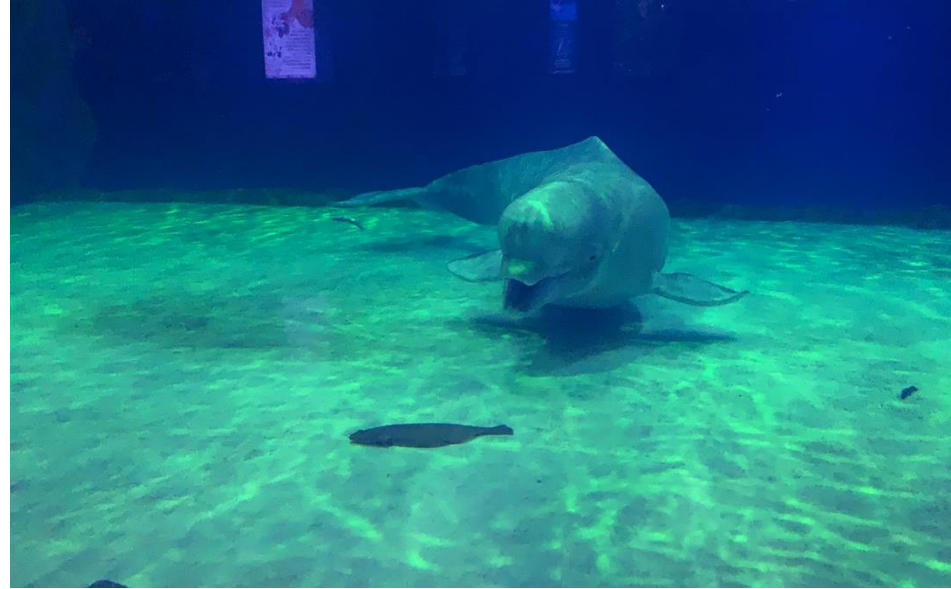


French government to decide between
Sanctuary or a Spanish Zoo

Other Whales in Need



30+ Beluga whales
Marineland Canada
Ontario



Bella the Beluga
LotteWorld Aquarium
Seoul, South Korea

Site Development



Update on Lease



Local Impact



St. Mary's first Ocean Day Celebration | 1,400 volunteer hours in 2024

Next Steps



Fundraising | News from France | Site development



Thank you

Lori Marino

lorim@whalesanctuary.org

Charles Vinick

charlesv@whalesanctuary.org

Matt Maraynes

mattm@whalesanctuary.org

Alexandra Vance

alexandrav@whalesanctuary.org

Amy Simon

amys@whalesanctuary.org

Program Opportunity for Emission Reduction Data Collection & Planning QUEST NCA Program

SUMMARY

Administered through QUEST the Net-Zero Community Accelerator (NCA) Program equips communities in Atlantic Canada with the tools and knowledge to develop and implement Community Energy and Emissions Plans (CEEP) and understand the net economic benefit they can provide. Participating communities benefit from a set of services designed to assist them in developing and implementing a CEEP, Benchmarking progress, Peer-to-peer exchange, and more. Some communities will benefit from services aimed at bringing specific projects to life.

BACKGROUND

Through this program, the municipality will develop a Community Energy and Emissions Plan (CEEP), which will integrate into the updated climate action plan, helping to identify and prioritize emissions reduction actions. Participation in the program will also strengthen Municipality of St. Mary's (MODSM) eligibility for climate mitigation grants.

Specific deliverables under the program include:

1. Energy Benchmark Assessment
2. Energy Mapping
3. Energy and Emissions Inventory
4. Community Energy and Emissions Plan with an associated Economic Impact Assessment
5. Training for Municipal Staff
6. Navigation and Coaching

The QUEST NCA program is a year-long initiative, though timelines may be adjusted based on participant availability. As part of a cohort of Atlantic communities, the Municipality of the District of St. Mary's is invited to continue participating in related activities, including working groups and training opportunities, until March 2027.

Alignment with CCC objectives & Climate Action Plan

- Participating in this program will prioritize the emissions reductions in the 2021 climate action plan which is a municipal objective for the CCC program
- The collection of emissions data will allow us to track the progress of emissions actions in the Climate Action Plan (Actions #1.1 – 2.13)
- Navigation and coaching will support the develop of local energy projects. Action #2.12

Staff Report



- Collecting this data and developing a CEEP will make MODSM more competitive for funding opportunities required to make progress on emissions reduction items

CONSIDERATIONS

The cost to participate in the program is \$3,000.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommend that Municipal Council approve participation in the QUEST NCA program at a cost of \$3,000 as part of the 2024-2025 Economic Development Climate Change projects budget.

Program Opportunity to Advance Coastal Flood Resilience

SUMMARY

This report seeks Council approval for the municipality to participate in the Climate Resilient Coastal Communities Program. The program aims to balance climate risk management with the challenges of aging infrastructure and the need for new infrastructure to support growing and developing communities.

BACKGROUND

Program Overview

The NRCAN Climate Resilient Coastal Communities (CRCC) Program is a two-and-a-half-year initiative designed to help municipalities build coastal resiliency through actionable, funding-ready adaptation plans. Delivered by a team of experts from AIM Network, Transition Bridges, Caprivian Strip, We6 Planning Group, TransCoastal Adaptations, and the New Brunswick Environmental Network, the program offers a range of services tailored to municipal needs.

Benefits for St. Mary's

Through participating in the program St. Mary's will benefit from expert guidance to address coastal flood risks and improve resiliency. This includes policy updates, climate risk mapping, and actionable adaptation strategies.

Program Deliverables

1. Policy & Planning:

- a. Policy reviews, templates, and recommendations to address climate risks.
- b. Workshops to support updates to planning regulations.

2. Asset Management:

- a. Create an inventory of municipal assets and map them in GIS.
- b. Perform risk assessments to identify vulnerabilities.

3. Climate Risk Assessment:

- a. Generate climate risk scores using the PIEVC High-Level Risk Assessment process.
- b. Provide GIS-based maps to visualize demographic and infrastructure risks.

4. Nature-Based Solutions (NBS):

- a. Train staff and residents on NBS strategies.
- b. Develop concept designs and cost-benefit analyses for priority interventions.

5. Capital Planning & Financing:

- a. Create a five-year capital financing plan.

- b. Identify funding sources and assess municipal fiscal impacts.

6. Community Engagement:

- a. Engage the public through workshops and consultations.
- b. Provide training on community-driven planning and equity considerations.

Alignment with Municipal Priorities

The program aligns with the municipality's climate action plan, specifically:

- **Flood Risk Education (Action 4.2):** Providing training to residents and businesses.
- **Asset Management Planning (Actions 5.5, 5.6, 5.9, 8.1):** Developing tools for infrastructure management.
- **Nature-Based Solutions (Actions 9.7, 9.16):** Generating implementation-ready plans for coastal protection.

CONSIDERATIONS

Total Cost of project: \$17,500

Clean Foundation Contribution: Clean Foundation will contribute \$8,750 this next fiscal year contingent on Council committing the remaining cost (\$8,750).

Municipal Contribution: Funds have been budgeted within the 2024-2025 Economic Development operating budget for Climate Change Projects. Staff are proposing that the Municipality's 50% cost share of \$8,750 for this project be allocated from that line item.

Duration: The program is scheduled to run from fall 2024 to March 2027

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommend that Municipal Council approve The Municipality of St. Mary's participation in the Climate Resilient Coastal Communities Program in collaboration with the Clean Foundation and commit \$8,750 from the 2024-2025 economic development climate change project budget.

Salary Band Review: Active Living Coordinator

SUMMARY

Part of the municipal staff compliment within the community development and recreation department is the Active Living Coordinator role. This is a vital role, integral to our public service support in providing programs to support active and healthy living.

At this time an analysis of the role's appropriate and competitive salary for St. Mary's has been completed via a review of other municipal salary levels for the same role and recent salary data attached to other municipal job opportunities for their active living coordinator.

The current St. Mary's salary band for the active living coordinator role is \$33,946 to \$42,432 per annum. This salary band has not been reviewed or changed in many years. Current data coupled with the significant skills and work responsibilities of the role are providing a clear direction that the St. Mary's salary has not kept up with inflation or salary for similar positions across the province. Current analysis indicates that more suitable band would be \$44,600 to \$55,750 from present to March 31st, 2026.

BACKGROUND

The active living coordinator role is based on the provincial Physical Activity Leader (MPAL) program which is a cost share program between a participating municipality and the Nova Scotia Department of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage. Participating Municipalities receive base funding of \$25,000 per annum from the province for the role and each municipality pays the difference to complete the funding for their local MPAL/Active Living role.

St. Mary's calls the MPAL role "Active Living Coordinator".

The similarity in the work across municipalities given the provincially supported program helps compare and evaluate appropriate salary level comparisons enabling quality conclusions at this time.

The St. Mary's Active Living Coordinator role is currently open. The municipality is accepting applications for employment for this position. Applicants are able to review the job ad including the detailed job description and qualifications under: <https://www.saint-marys.ca/job-opportunity-active-living-coordinator-1.html>. Applicants can apply for employment as the Active living Coordinator by sending their resume to Mallory Fraser, Director of Community Development and Recreation at Mallory.fraser@saint-marys.ca

Staff Report



The Active Living Community role is an exciting opportunity to be part of leading and creating valuable and diverse community activities for all ages focused on health and active living. The role is an opportunity for a rewarding career employment experience in government and public service.

CONSIDERATIONS

Upon approval of the salary band change the Department of Community Development and Recreation will continue its current hiring activities for a new Active Living Coordinator utilizing the new salary band.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommend that Municipal Council approve the salary band change for the municipal Active Living Coordinator from \$33,946 to \$42,432 per annum to \$44,600 to \$55,750 per annum beginning immediately until March 31st, 2026

Proposal for: Stonewall Park Tourist Interactive Panel Project

Background: The St Mary's River is being reviewed for potential status as an Ecologically Significant Area (ESA). Municipal council adopted the following motion in support of the ESL designation for the river.

Council Meeting: October 9th, 2024

On motion of Councillor Zinck and seconded by Councillor Mailman, Council values and supports the ongoing work of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada in their efforts to plan and evaluate the St. Mary's River for an Ecologically Significant Area (ESA) due to the many possible benefits this designation could provide.

Further, that the municipality would like to explore ways for municipal participation.

Next steps

There are potential actions for the municipality to take to support our commitment to support the River's ESA designation and enhance Stonewall park's tourism benefits as follows: This project supports our tourism initiatives and introduces support for the recent federal governments Ecologically Significant Area candidacy of St. Mary's River. The potential funder is providing funds to be used in support of ESA's across Canada. There are no other candidate rivers in Canada at this time so we should have no competition for the funds. There is 25K available.

The proposed project will consist of two displays. One a permanent photo board stand-in with approximately 4 or 5 St. Mary's River rare species characters. Examples would be Wood turtle, moose, Atlantic salmon or the Boreal owl. The second display will give a description of the creature, why it's rare and talk about why this specific species thrives in St. Mary's. The second display will also support the Ecologically Significant Area candidacy with a description of what an ESA is and what a candidacy means.

The third part of this project will be street lighting in this area at the beginning of the trail on the existing power poll. The area is currently lacking any lighting.

Potential Future projects or if the funds are available within a 25K grant fund which could be made available for municipal use.

1. 50 kilometers per hour sign could be moved from the current location out past the St. Mary's River Association. The addition of a crosswalk here from the provincial park to the stonewall park entrance would help make this area more enticing and safer for tourists and visitors.

2. Guysborough district introduced a project a few years back where they built small ice-cream type buildings (16' by 14') with the intention of offering it to summer students or other entrepreneur minded folks who want to start a small business or try a small business but don't have the space. Right beside the River association building would be a good location for such a building.

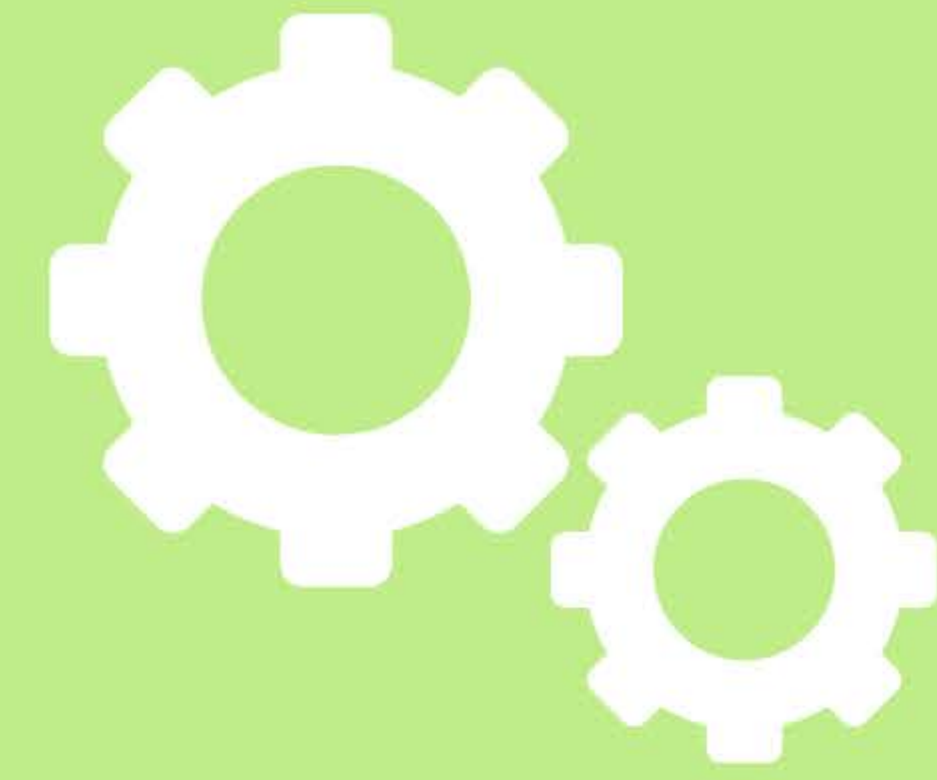
Recommendation to council: That municipal council direct staff to explore and validate available funding and terms of funding applicable to the proposed Stonewall Park Tourist Interactive Panel Project and report back to council with an implementation plan.

Link to Ecologically Significant Area Video: St. Mary's
To Download file, Copy and Paste the link below into a web browser.

[https://drive.usercontent.google.com/download?
id=1ginb1EB8lfOyuM_HkE22XmZA8vT2tgQS&export=download&confirm=t&uuid=8552f96d-39ed-46b1-997e-fe526988217a](https://drive.usercontent.google.com/download?id=1ginb1EB8lfOyuM_HkE22XmZA8vT2tgQS&export=download&confirm=t&uuid=8552f96d-39ed-46b1-997e-fe526988217a)



NAPU'SAQNUK ESA TIMELINE



Napu'saqnuq ESA Case Study (Feasibility Analysis)

1 Year+

- Develop vision
- Identify conservation interests
- Collect information
- Develop engagement strategy
- Include Mi'kmaq Knowledge - (e.g., MEKS)
- Complete feasibility analysis (e.g., regulatory gap analysis, compliance considerations)

Ongoing relationship building and consultation with the Mi'kmaq

Engagement/collaboration: Share information, visioning, determine roles and responsibilities of key partners



Planning and Development

2-6 Years+

Planning:

- Complete overview and assessment report and socio-economic analysis
- Develop a management plan including:
 - conservation and protection objectives (CPOs)
 - restoration planning
 - cultural/governance objectives
 - non-regulatory management measures
 - monitoring plans
- Complete Risk assessment

Complete regulatory documents →
publication in Canada Gazette I and II →

ESA Designation

Consultation and targeted engagement to inform decision making



ESA Management

Ongoing

- Implement non-regulatory management measures with partners (stewardship, education)
- Conduct scientific and compliance monitoring against CPOs / indicators
- Implement restoration plan (partners)
- Review and approval of activities
- Report on ESA management
- Manage adaptively

Potential co-management and partnership arrangements throughout ESA management



St. Mary's River/Napu'saqnuk

(Na-Boo-Sa-Hanook)

ECOLOGICALLY SIGNIFICANT AREA CANDIDATE

DID YOU KNOW?

- St. Mary's River (Napu'saqnuk in Mi'kmaq) is one of the most natural watersheds in Nova Scotia, with very little development, no dams impeding fish passage, and no known freshwater aquatic invasive species.
- It provides important habitat for the Southern Upland Atlantic salmon population and is one of two rivers used by Fisheries and Oceans Canada to monitor this population.
- The St. Mary's River provides habitat for some culturally significant species including American eel and Atlantic salmon.
- The river provides important habitat for brook floater and wood turtle, species at risk protected under the *Species at Risk Act* and the NS *Endangered Species Act*.
- Mi'kmaq historically used this river for travel, fishing, hunting and living.
- Many organizations, individuals, locals and the Mi'kmaq are coming together and working hard to restore and conserve the St. Mary's River.

If you have knowledge, stories or information (current and historical) of the St. Mary's River area that you would like to share, or a general interest in this initiative please email us at: DFO.MARIP-PIMAR.MPO@dfo-mpo.gc.ca

Photo credit: Scott Leslie



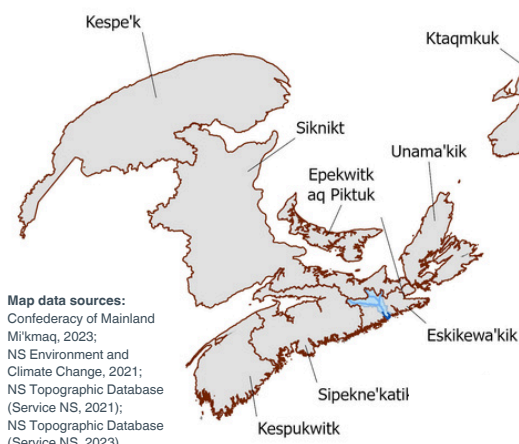
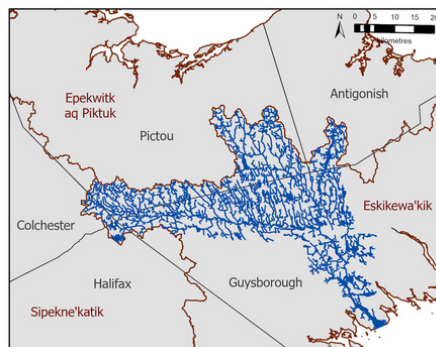
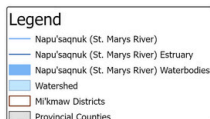
Fisheries and Oceans
Canada

Pêches et Océans
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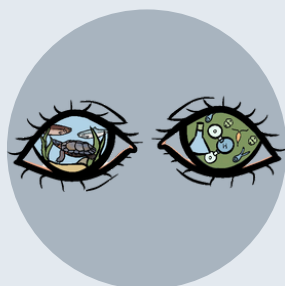


*Please note: Mi'kmaq district boundaries represented in this map are based on best available knowledge.



Map data sources:
Confederacy of Mainland
Mi'kmaq, 2023;
NS Environment and
Climate Change, 2021;
NS Topographic Database
(Service NS, 2021);
NS Topographic Database
(Service NS, 2023)

Napu'saqnuk, the St. Mary's River, is approximately 200 km from Kjiptuk (Halifax). The connected water, wetlands and estuary in the watershed and also the adjacent riparian zone comprise the Ecologically Significant Area (ESA) candidate study area. This area is in the Eskikewa'kik district of Mi'kma'ki.



Fisheries and Oceans Canada is exploring the potential of an ESA for the St. Mary's River (Napu'saqnuk) in collaboration with the Mi'kmaq and other partners.

What could an ESA mean for Napu'saqnuk?

- An ESA, made under Canada's *Fisheries Act*, is a new regulatory tool to **conserve and protect important areas for fish**, like the St. Mary's River, which is home to a variety of fish and species at risk.
- ESAs are focused on fish habitat conservation and protection and are not intended to regulate fishing.
- In an ESA, projects that present risks to fish and fish habitat would be regulated to ensure the objectives for the conservation and protection of the area are met.
- The ESA process will provide increased regulatory clarity for projects proposed in the St. Mary's River watershed.
- If an ESA were to be established for St. Mary's River, most current uses would continue.
- Non-aquatic cultural and medicinal species may indirectly benefit.
- The Department is hoping to learn more about the area as we continue to work with the Mi'kmaq, the Provincial Government and other partners.

The Department will use a two-eyed seeing approach to guide work and relationships and will continue conversations to learn about Napu'saqnuk from the Mi'kmaq.

Email us at: DFO.MARIP-PIMAR.MPO@dfo-mpo.gc.ca



Fisheries and Oceans
Canada

Pêches et Océans
Canada

Canada

St. Mary’s River named candidate for Ecologically Significant Area designation

By Joanne Jordan, Local Journalism Initiative

SHERBROOKE — The St. Mary’s River has been named a candidate for Ecologically Significant Area (ESA) designation under the Canada Fisheries Act.

Donald Humphrey, director of eco-systems management for Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO), made the announcement during an open house at the St. Mary’s River Association (SMRA) office Nov. 2.

“We have done some further work and, as a candidate, this means we can now go forward with the establishment process, which is a multi-year process to get to a

designation, meaning it will go into the planning stage and establishment of regulations,” Aimee Gromack, a DFO senior biologist – who informed Municipality of the District of St. Mary’s council recently that the federal department was carrying out work to determine the possibility of the St. Mary’s River gaining ESA status – told *The Journal* during the recent open house.

“The St. Mary’s River has now been formally named a candidate,” she said.

Gromack added, “... With our partners, and the community and part-

ners in the community, and the Mi’kmaq, we’ll be working together to figure out what it will look like in the regulations, what we are trying to protect.

“We know it will be fish habitat related, so it’s going to be salmon, eel, brook trout and other ecologically significant species.”

She noted that achieving ESA status can be a lengthy process, one that requires a cooperative effort.

“It’s a really exciting thing. Now that it’s been formally named a candidate, we can have those more formal consultation meetings, and work

together with our partners and stakeholders,” Gromack said.

Noting that the St. Mary’s River has been historically, culturally and spiritually significant – not to mention an important food source – to the Mi’kmaq people for thousands of years, Alanna Syliboy – culture, education and engagement manager of the Mi’kmaw Conservation Group, thanked everyone who is striving to secure ESA designation.

“It’s a highway, a grocery store; and, the work you are doing has turned reconciliation, into reconciliACTION,”



Donald Humphrey, director of ecosystems management for Fisheries and Oceans Canada, welcomed visitors to the open house Nov. 2 at the St. Mary’s River Association office in Sherbrooke. Joanne Jordan

she said during the open house of the effort to ensure the St. Mary’s River will be protected for generations to come and people will be able “to

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enjoy this space without hindrance.”

Scott Beaver – SMRA president – shared that, while doing the case study work for the ESA candidacy, the partners unearthed “some pretty cool stuff.”

The Confederacy of Mainland Mi’kmaq (CMM) have identified multiple species of rare freshwater mussels – also known as brook floaters – which he said are “doing fabulous” on the St. Mary’s River, an indication of a healthy ecosystem. He added that the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS) has already identified 40 rare species on the watershed route.

Due to support from partners and government, Beaver noted that approximately \$4 million of restoration work has been completed; and approximately 30 linear kilometres of river have been restored, which includes narrowing and deepening, and making it a channel of cold-water refuge for Atlantic river salmon.

Beaver said mainland moose are being spotted more often along the green protected area that runs along the river system, one that creates a corridor from Archibald’s Lake wilderness area to the Liscomb game sanctuary.

He added that one of



The Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society’s (CPAWS) Maddie Stewart (left), manager of marine programs, and Taylor Creaser - CPAWS conservation campaigner, shared information with visitors to the open house Nov. 2 in Sherbrooke. Joanne Jordan

the most significant discoveries is “the largest population of wood turtles on the planet – right here in Nova Scotia.”

With the possible ESA designation, Beaver said that the people of St. Mary’s have “a very unique opportunity to do something special and cool,” and the ability to lead Canada in the creation of ESA regulations.

He added, “It is time to come together and see what this legislation could look like.”

Beaver challenged the local community, including farmers, woodlot owners, small business owners and the municipality, to become involved with the larger groups “to carve out a very significant niche.”

St Mary’s resident Marlis Lade, who attended the open house, told *The Journal* she was “very happy” to hear the information on the wood turtle.

“We saw wood turtles everywhere,” she said of when she and her husband lived on Waternish Rd. in 2001, adding that the couple spent a lot of time “putting them off the road.”

She noted she is pleased that the Mi’kmaq community is involved in the process.

“Because this is their land - it is Mi’kma’ki territory – and they have lived here for a thousand years. I hope, I really hope, that the community is accepting that and getting involved.”

Lade offered, “It is such a beautiful area. It should be protected, and we should all work on that.”

Jordan Pye of DFO – from the conservation and protection branch – also attended the open house.

“We oversee what happens in our area,” he told *The Journal*.

If the St. Mary’s River receives ESA designation, his branch would most likely be responsible for compliance and enforcement of any additional regulations involved.

“And that is why we are here, and why we are having these conversations with members of the communities, different stakeholders and



Alanna Syliboy, education, culture and engagement manager with the Mi’kmaw Conservation Group, spoke to guests about the significance - scientifically and culturally, and for future generations - of the St. Mary’s area, and the progress being made by those working to have the St. Mary’s River declared an ESA. Joanne Jordan

organizations, and those who live, work, fish and hunt within the boundaries of those areas,” Pye said.

St. Mary’s Deputy Warden Beulah Malloy was impressed with the open house presentation, which updated the information council received during the previous committee of the whole meeting.

“I think it’s great, just great,” she said of the potential ESA designation, noting the effort of

the federal government, so far, and that there remains much work to be done by the stakeholders.

Warden James Fuller said, “We are all fortunate to live and work in the beautiful St. Mary’s watershed.

“Being the first in the nation to apply for this extra protected status for the St. Mary’s River reflects well on the leadership of the SMRA to preserving this valuable resource.”

Housing: Policy Planning for Development Support

SUMMARY

To take next steps to support and encourage the development of local housing, the municipality has a need to build tools and best practices that will enable us to work with housing developers including for profit and not for profit developers. Information and research can be done with the help of an expert consultant to create usable policy material to guide council supported actions for the municipality when is dealing with housing developers.

BACKGROUND

In summer and fall of 2024 the Municipality engaged the services of ZZAP Consulting of HRM to complete a neighborhood concept plan. The municipal Request for Proposal (RFP) for the housing concept work asked broad questions about services offered in support of municipal needs and the ZZAP proposal offered further planning support to take next steps in support of the neighborhood concept plan. Completion of work will include the following product and support:

- 1) White Paper with research and examination/analysis of tools within various government acts including the MGA, *Municipal Government Act* and other Nova Scotia acts to define municipal powers to encourage and incentivise housing development.
- 2) Working session with the municipality to present interim work for mid project direction.
- 3) Creation of a draft incentives policy for municipal long-term use.
- 4) Advice on development agreement terms and zoning/land use bylaw potential updates to encourage Land Use Bylaw (LUB) support.

Benefit of continued work on the neighborhood concept plan and housing planning in general

- 1) Provide expertise from a planning provider that has experience supporting housing projects to completion for the municipality to take further, practical steps in working with housing developers including a stronger understanding of the most valuable practices and incentives to developers.
- 2) Obtain material that can drive usable policy guidance which can support the 2024 neighborhood concept project and its subject property in Sherbrooke while being equally usable to support other properties and proposals and zoning/land use planning for the whole municipality and for use with multiple developers.

CONSIDERATIONS

Cost for the work is \$32,000.00 Plus HST.

Use of continued consultant work now can produce tools for the municipality much more quickly and completely than staff can develop internally. Therefore, the continuation of this project will help the municipality be ready and responsive.

The funds are available in the approved 2024/2025 capital budget for housing initiatives and are funded 100% through applicable grant money under the Nova Scotia Sustainable Services Growth Fund.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommend that municipal council approve the proposed housing development planning project and to award the identified work to ZZAP Consulting for \$32,000.00 plus HST and be funded under the Nova Scotia Sustainable Services Growth Fund grant.

2025-2026 Application for Residential Low Income Property Tax Exemption

SUMMARY

The Municipality of the District of St. Mary's provides assistance to low-income homeowners to help pay their residential property taxes. Qualified applicants will receive a credit which is applied directly to the tax account.

The following report is designed to provide Council with an overview of the application form, process and options for potential changes to the Municipal Residential Low Income Property Tax Exemption Program for the 2025-2026 fiscal year. Application form is attached with highlighted areas of change required.

BACKGROUND

Each year prior to Council adopting their annual budget Council reviews the qualification guidelines for the program including the amount for the annual income from all sources of all adults living in the household for the previous calendar year and the dollar amount of the credit applied.

For the 2024 application the total income threshold was set at less or equal to \$25,280 (increased from the 2023 application of \$24,400) and the tax exemption amount was set at \$180 (increased from 2023 application of \$175). Increases to the income threshold are historically increased based on the cost of living and consumer price index information (CPI). For the fiscal year 2024-2025 there were 55 (56 in 2023-2024) eligible applicants who utilized, which equaled a \$9,900 operating expense for the Municipality.

Advertisements for the program are done through the monthly municipal newsletter and on the municipal website and social media.

CONSIDERATIONS

Annual Income Threshold

- CPI data for December-to-December Nova Scotia All Items has not yet been released, but November to November NS All items CPI was set at 1.7% and October to October NS All items was set at 1.5% (which is also the PVSC Assessment CAP rate).
- Given this information the increase to the total household annual income threshold could range from \$25,660 to \$25,710. Provided that the CPI data was not available at the time of this report Council could consider setting the amount for 2025-2026 slightly higher than \$25,710 to ensure any December CPI increases are captured.

Staff Report



Tax Exemption Amount Credited to Account

- The 2024-2025 application tax exemption amount was increased from \$175 to \$180 due to the amount not being increased for several years prior.
- Council may consider leaving the amount at \$180 per application or increasing the exemption amount by CPI as well. If CPI is considered the amount should be increased to \$185 per application for 2025-26

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommend that council approve the 2025/2026 Application for Residential Low Income Property Tax Exemption with the total annual household income threshold set at less or equal to \$_____ and the tax exemption credit amount set at \$___ per application, all other eligibility requirements to remain the same as outlined in the application.



Application for Residential Low Income Property Tax Exemption 2025/26

The Municipality of the District of St. Mary's provides assistance to homeowners to help pay their residential property taxes. Qualified applicants will receive a credit which is applied directly to the tax account

To Qualify:

- You must be a **Canadian citizen and permanent** resident of St. Mary's Municipality and
- Own the assessed property and occupy it as your home and
- Prior year's property taxes must be paid in full
- Annual income from all sources for the previous calendar year for yourself, spouse, and other family members that reside in the same household was equal to or less than annual amount set (based on line 150 of the income tax *Notice of Assessment*)

Exemption Value:

The exemptions provided will be based on the following income levels:

Annual Income	Tax Exemption
Less than or equal to \$25,280 (Proposed \$25,800)	\$180 (\$185 Proposed)

 Canada Revenue Agency Agence du revenu du Canada NOTICE OF ASSESSMENT T451 E (08)

Date	Name	Social Insurance no.	Tax year	Tax centre
May 5, 2007	Jane Doe	123 456 789	2007	Shawinigan QC G9N 7S6

Summary 0000000

Line	\$ Amount
150 Total Income.....	00,000
Deductions from total income.....	000
236 Net Income.....	00,000
260 Taxable Income.....	00,000



How to Apply:

- After you have filed your personal income tax return for 2024 and received your Notice of Assessment from Canada Revenue Agency, complete the Municipal Application for Residential Low Income Property Tax Exemption form
- Attached copies of the 2024 Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) Notice of Assessment for each adult residing in the home
- Sample Notice of Assessment from Canada Revenue Agency (CRA)
- If you do not have your CRA Notice of Assessment for 2024 you can call 1-800-959-8281
- Applications must be received by the Municipality no later than December 31, 2025
- Applicants must re-apply each year



Application for Residential Low Income Property Tax Exemption 2025/26

Tax Account #	
Name of Property Owner(s)	
Complete Mailing Address	
Telephone #	
# of Adults (age 18 or over) residing in home	

(a) Applicant total income (line 150) \$ _____

(b) Spouse/Common-Law Partner (line 150) \$ _____

(c) Other individuals in same household (line 150) \$ _____

TOTAL of all Income from above \$ _____

***Proof of income must be provided (Copy of 2024 CRA Notice of Assessment for each adult living in the home)**

I _____ of _____
in the Municipality of the District of St. Mary's, in the County of Guysborough and Province of Nova Scotia, hereby apply for the **RESIDENTIAL LOW INCOME PROPERTY TAX EXEMPTION** on taxes. I/we, residents of the Municipality of the District of St. Mary's, the owners and occupants of the above property, certify that the information on the application is true and complete, and that the household income from all sources during 2022 was below the limit set out in this application. I/We understand the exemption for **2024/25** will be **\$180**. I/We understand that no application for an exemption will be received after December 31, 2025. I/We understand that no exemption will be granted to low-income applicants if prior year's taxes remain unpaid.

Signature(s) _____ **Date:** _____

To be signed by Councillor, Clerk or Commissioner of Oaths

Sworn to in the County of Guysborough and the Province of Nova Scotia this ____ day of _____ 2025

Signature: _____