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140 YEARS OF  
SERVING  
RURAL PICTOU  
COUNTY

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1879-2019

## A Message from the Warden

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It's time to celebrate!  
Our rural Municipality of  
Pictou County will be 140  
years old on April 14,  
2019.

It really doesn't seem  
long ago, for some of us,  
that we are celebrating  
our 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary.  
Any of Pictou County's  
residents who are under  
50 years old probably  
would not remember  
that mementos occasion.



Have things changed much over the last 40 years? You want to believe they have! In 1979, the rural Municipality had its own school board and was busy building schools and installing portable classrooms to handle the flood of new students. In 1982, one school board was instituted for all of Pictou County followed by the formation of a regional school board in 1996 and the total elimination of all English school boards in 2018.

In 1979, the rural Municipality also had its own health board and played a major role in our County hospitals. In 2019, our Council can only ask questions and send letters to the Nova Scotia Health Authority.

Relationships with the provincial level of government and Municipalities still exist but have changed a lot since 1979. Two pieces of legislation brought about a lot of this change.

One was the exchange of services in the early 90s that saw a province take over many people's services like welfare and the Municipalities handled more property services. This was about the time the County began 25 plus years of installing water and sewer lines in many of our more populated communities. The other big piece of legislation that changed the "water on the beans" was the Municipal Government Act (MGA) which became law in 1998 and was the new set of rules for our Municipal Government to play under.

And we are few, now 12 Councillors representing the same area and more population than 17 Councillors did 40 years ago.

Certainly, a Councillor from 1979 sitting in on a 2019 Council Meeting would notice a huge change in the responsibilities and other topics of conversation.

So why is it important that we celebrate 140 years? I believe it is worth celebrating anniversaries and birthdays because it makes us realize how fortunate we are to have our own governing bodies and can make our own local, rural, decisions.

Some of this autonomy disappears slowly over time, partially because we take for granted how good a system we have and only notice the difference when it's gone.

Please help your Council celebrate all the achievements and all the Councillors and Staff who have worked diligently to make our rural Municipality the governing body that it is today.

*Robert Parker,  
Warden of the Municipality of Pictou County*

## Getting Down to Business

In 1879, the Municipality of Pictou County was established under the County Incorporation Act after the Court of Sessions was abolished. This meant a new way of governing rural residents that included the establishment of an elected Council, hiring of public servants and taking control of roads and bridges.



**One of the first photos of Municipal Council - 1895**

The first Council of 24 representatives was elected in January 1880 and immediately settled into work by hosting a marathon 10-day meeting. At the end of their first session they had accomplished the following things:

- Employees were hired including a constable, supervisors for public grounds, commissioners for bushing ice, weighers for hay, board of health, clerk of market, overseers of the poor, overseers of roads and limits, municipal clerk and treasurer.

- Some of its first regulations included bushing ice, setting out fires and containing dogs that might be worrisome to sheep.
- No liquor licences were granted after hearing concerns from clergy that drunkenness was becoming prevalent in the streets. A tax exemption was ordered for a furniture factory in Barney's River that suffered damage because of a fire.
- A letter was sent to the provincial government asking it to amend the laws in respect to debtor's prison. In council's view, imprisonment for debt should be abolished, or if not abolished, then creditors should be liable to pay the board of prisoners jailed for debt.

## The First 100 Years: 1879-1979

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**ROADS AND BRIDGES:** The new Municipal Government of 1879 had brought with it a new highway system that included management of roads and bridges. The province would supplement County funds with grants, but the expenses were higher than the grant money so taxes had to be raised.



**Roads in the late 1800s.**

**\$4,074 – The provincial government's grant for roads in 1880 which Council split among Sections.**

But road and bridge costs were much high than the grant and Councillors heard complaints from taxpayers about unfair tax assessments and one person's road being favoured over another.

By 1883, the Province had taken over control of larger Bridges, but its problems with maintaining roads continued. When they were reconstructed, they were being built to narrow and smaller bridges were not being maintained properly causing harm to residents that resulted in lawsuits.

In addition to the roads on land, the County also had control of road ways over the harbour ice in the winter. Council appointees, chosen by tender, placed bushes at least five feet high above ice level and spaced no more than 45 feet apart along the ice routes from Pictou, River John, Caribou and Merigomish Harbours.

**1908 – Council demands the province give Municipalities power to prohibit or regulate running of automobiles on public highways.**



**Automobiles proved to be a challenge for rural roads that were too narrow for the new vehicles and the speed they drove.**

The province agreed that vehicles could only be on highways Mondays and Fridays but the \$25 fine or 30 days in jail for breaking the law did little deter motorists. By 1912 it was forgotten. By the 1920s, the Province took full control of the roads and the highway paving began in 1934.

**After nearly 50 years of Municipal responsibility for roads, the Provincial government assumed full control of them in early 1920s. Highway paving began in 1934.**

**JUSTICE:** A County Jail was built in Pictou in 1890 at a cost of \$10,660. The County and Towns shared the expense and it remained in service until 1967.

**\$1,236.09 – The bill for County jail prisoner’s board and bedding in 1915.**

**FORENSIC HISTORY WAS MADE:** The County appointed Deputy Sheriff W.H. Harris 2<sup>nd</sup> as Chief Constable of the County to investigate crime in 1929. Forensic history was made in 1930 when Harris investigated the break and enter a cottage in Black Point. Harris and New Glasgow Police Chief James a Caldwell reproduced finger prints from a broken pane of glass which matched those of an accused man. The Supreme Court accepted the finger print evidence and the accused was given a jail sentence. This was the first successful employment of finger print evidence by the Crown in a criminal action in the province.

The County jail was eventually closed due to deteriorating conditions and prisoners were sent to Truro. However, in 1979, the province was talking about the possibility of a regional jail. In 2015, the North East Nova Scotia Correctional Facility in Priestville, Pictou County opened.

**HEALTH** - The County's first hospital was built on Beeches Road by the Province and Sessions Court, but it was really an infectious disease shelter, but over time vaccinations, inoculation and quarantine reduced the number incidents.

Council took a pro-active approach in the early 1900s by subsidizing the Pictou County Medical Society in its educational campaign to raise awareness about Consumption by publishing a booklet on the disease that would reach every home. County residents were also dealing with a small pox outbreak, scarlet fever and typhoid up until the 1920s.



**Aberdeen Hospital 2019**

In 1955, the Aberdeen Hospital opened which cost \$2.1 million and the Municipal contribution was \$1.5 million of which the Municipality of Pictou County assumed 26 per cent of this cost. In 1966, the Sutherland Harris Memorial Hospital opened with 31 beds.

**EDUCATION:** The Education Act was made universal in 1864 which meant that provincial and municipal governments must financially support schools. Most of the schooling in Pictou County took place some small wooden schoolhouses built in the late 1800s or early 1900s. They were operated



by a Board of Trustees who through a school inspector, dealt directly with the Province.

April 1944 – The Municipal School Board held its first meeting. Board members were first appointed by the Province and County, but after October 1979, some members would be chosen by election.

From 1952 to 1967, nine schools were built in consolidated areas while Salt Springs Elementary was in the planning stages. The education budget from 1879 to 1979 went from \$10,000 to \$7 million which County Council contributed \$1.5 million.



**Bayview School House, Bayview Pictou County**

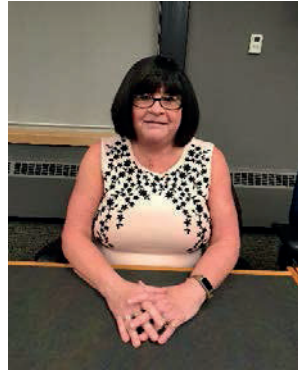
***“After 100 years, the County school houses have been replaced by structures of brick, concrete and glass which cover acres, their interiors the same as the classrooms, auditoriums, laboratories, etc. as those seen in the cities and towns. In 1979, 5,200 rural districts students were moved daily by a fleet of 66 busses to the care of 262 teachers.” – James Cameron, 100 Years of the Municipality of Pictou Count***

# Municipal Council 2016-2020

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**District 1 Don Butler**



**District 2 Deborah Wadden**



**District 3 Darla MacKeil**



**District 4 Ron Baillie**



**District 5 Wayne Murray**



**District 6 Robert Parker**

# Municipal Council 2016 -2020

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**District 7 David Parker**



**District 8 Larry Turner**



**District 9 Peter Boyles**



**District 10 Randy Palmer**



**District 11 Andy Thompson**



**District 12 Chester Dewar**

## The Next 40 Years: 1979-2019

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The next 40 years saw the modernization of today's Municipal Government, the most significant part of which was the beginning of the "infrastructure age".

The **1980s** began with the establishment of a regional transit authority, replacing a service that had previously been operated through private enterprise.



**Water infrastructure in McLellans Brook in 2019**

The first of our water and sewer projects was installed and those services continue to be installed today in many suburban areas, and more challenging, isolated areas. With them came the need for sidewalks as housing development expanded and a more fit lifestyle flourished.

**The establishment of a new landfill site** in Mt. William then saw the closure of the Priestville site.

**Early in the decade the municipal school board** evolved into a district school board. In later years, this would evolve again into a regional school board and most recently the elimination of regional boards by the Province in favor of a centralized board.

**In 1983, the Municipality undertook a water study that would lead to the establishment of a Water Utility.**

With the increasing amount of sewer and water infrastructure being installed, the Municipality hired its first Municipal Services Technician, a step that would formalize the beginnings of a Public Works & Development Department.



**Provincial, Family and Supreme Courts for Pictou County**

**Mid-decade brought about the construction of a new Justice Complex. The former courthouse in the Town of Pictou had been destroyed by fire in the waning years of the 80s.**

## Smoking was banned in the Municipal Council Chambers in 1987.

Later that year, the Municipality withdrew as a partner in the former Pictou County District Planning Commission. Relatively quickly Municipal Council adopted its own Building By-Law and hired municipal building inspectors.

## The 1990's brought an influx of infrastructure as sewer, water and sidewalks became the need of the day.

Nine projects were implemented throughout the decade. Recycling became a reality and residents wholeheartedly took on the task of separating their refuse and taking it to curbside for collection. Early on the Province undertook a taskforce on Municipal Reform.



**New Sidewalks in 2018**

**The tragedy of the Westray Mine Explosion** left an indelible mark on the County. Five homes owned by Curragh Resources were later sold by the Municipality at tax sale, one of the most popular tax sales in County history.

**The Municipality's first Emergency Measures By-Law was adopted in 1993.** It has since been replaced with a regional document that provides for a coordinated response to emergencies in all 6 local municipalities.

**The rollout of the civic addressing system** by the Province also took place at this time. It continues today under municipal jurisdiction.

**In 1994, the size of Municipal Council decreased to 14 members, a reduction of 3 seats. This was the first reduction since 1970.**

The implementation of “Municipal Reform” in this era led to a realignment of services between the Province and Municipalities. This would bring about the closure of the transit system as a result of funding reductions and the provincial take-over of the administration of social services.



**The decade ended with the roll-out of compost carts** to homeowners for the collection of organics which continue to be processed at a composting facility constructed at the Mt. William facility.

**The Millennium** brought the County’s first edition of “Rural News & Views” in an effort to keep residents informed on municipal activities and the many events happening in their own communities.

**Sunday Shopping came to the forefront with a plebiscite held on behalf of the Province in conjunction with the Municipal elections and 54.9 % of Nova Scotians voted against Sunday Shopping. Two years later, the Province, having lost a court case to grocery chains, allowed Sunday shopping to move forward.**



**Administration Building for the Municipality of Pictou County**

**Construction of a new administration building** began in 2008 and Council entered the digital age with laptop computers used as a means of conveying meeting materials. In the years to come Council technology evolved to I pads and almost no paper is used for meeting materials today.

**2009 saw the implementation of a 1% Deed Transfer Tax**, a precursor to the construction of the Pictou County Wellness Centre. The tax is used to retire the capital debt on the facility and to fund renovations to the Aberdeen Hospital Emergency Department and Pharmacy.

**Six wind turbines were installed on lands** owned by the Municipality in Riverton to generate revenue that offsets our operating expenses.

**Several infrastructure projects** were installed throughout the decade, the last of which is nearing completion.



**2014 saw the beginning of two years of intensive work** on the merits of forming an amalgamated government with the Towns of New Glasgow, Stellarton and Pictou. This work allowed voters in those municipalities to make an informed decision on the question: “Do you favor the amalgamation of the Municipality of the County of Pictou and the Towns of New Glasgow, Town of Pictou, and the Town of Stellarton into one municipal unit? A majority of residents of rural Pictou County voted “NO” to this question and Council honored their wishes and withdrew from the amalgamation process.

**A partnership with the Town of New Glasgow** developed mid-decade on the development of what would become the New Scotland Business Park.



**2014 - A mandatory electoral boundary review was undertaken which saw another reduction in Council seats, dropping from 14 to 12.**

At around the same time formed an Economic Development Committee which, over time, worked towards the recently formed Regional Enterprise Network (REN) which is devoted to economic development and sustainability in the area.

**An Alternative Voting By-Law was passed**, enabling an historic change in the way in which voters could cast their ballots.

**For the first time voters could vote by computer, telephone, or by traditional paper ballots. Also, for the first-time voters could enjoy and extended early voting process (more commonly referred to as an Advance Poll). The electronic voting option was used in both the Amalgamation Plebiscite and the Council Election and proved very popular.**

**Current day Municipal Council** is involved in several exciting initiatives. The County continues its efforts to improve communications with its taxpayers with a revamping of its website and branching into the Facebook & Twitter worlds. We now have a Communications Officer on staff who is redesigning the newsletter. Its Rural Internet & Cellular Project has it pursuing funding to improve connectivity and it is close to the development of a strategy that will redesign recreation initiatives in the future.

**Physician Recruitment & Retention Support** continues to be of importance, as are efforts to see adequate mental health services in our region. In the coming months, the County will be delving further into inter-municipal relations with its neighbouring towns, asset management, energy efficiency, grant allocation and municipal planning. A great deal has been accomplished in the first 140 years, but there is still much to do on behalf of County residents.

## Staff of the Municipality of Pictou County

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**Administrative and Recreation Staff include from the front, left: Jane Johnson, Theresa Welsh, Rhiannon McNair and Karen Cornish. Back, left: Sueann Musick, Cindy Fraser, Angela Graham, Jennifer Boyce, Carolyn MacIntosh and Brian Cullen.**



**Building Inspectors Mike MacKenzie, left, and Travis Spears.**



**Public Works Department includes from the left: Kevin Burley, Richard Daley, Andy MacDonald, Ebon MacMillan, Dan Fortune and Troy Bonvie. Missing from the photo is Anne MacCarthy.**

## Wardens – Past and Present

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1880 Daniel Hockin  
1881-90- Robert McNeil  
1891-95 – Roderick McDougall  
1896-98 – James Kitchen  
1899-1905 – John D Fraser  
1906-11- James Kitchen  
1912-13- John W. MacKay  
1914-22- George W. Thompson  
1923-24- John W. MacKay  
1925-51- Frank H. MacNeil Sr.  
1952- Dan Roderick Fraser  
1953-61 -William E. McConnell  
1962-64- Hugh D MacLean  
1965- William S. MacLean  
1966-70- Alex M. MacKay  
1971-73- Frank H. MacDonald  
1974- 82 - George W. Reid  
1983-86 -KY Parker  
1987-2000 – Hank Dunnewold  
2000-2008 - Allister MacDonald  
2009-2015 - Ronald Baillie  
2016- - Robert Parker



Frank H. MacNeil Sr. is still  
the longest Serving Warden  
for the Municipality of  
Pictou Countv.

### **Municipal Clerks**

1880-1886- David Matheson  
1887- Robert Matheson  
1888-97 – J. MacG Stewart  
1898 -06 – John D. MacQueen  
1907-20 – William Cameron  
1921-53- Andrew Fraser  
1953-73 – Helen Carson  
1973-79 – Margaret MacLean

### **Chief Administration Officers**

1979-81- Margaret MacLean  
1981-85- JW Clattenburg  
1985-2005 – Clyde Purvis  
2005-Present – Brian Cullen