

**Editorial**  
Mary Rogal-Black

**Community living should not be undervalued by NB government**

Mentally handicapped adults living in community residences get enumerated with everyone else. Armed with voter cards that get delivered to their houses, they could enter the ballot box and vote for the candidate of their choice, spoil their ballot, or just mark an uninformed X in any one of the available boxes.

This situation represented one of innumerable challenging questions I encountered while working in a community living home for mentally handicapped adults. The three 'clients' (a frequently-used term that fails to describe the warm relationships that can develop between residents and staff) I worked with did not read or write or speak in full sentences, if at all. They were not interested in watching a news cast-cartoons or figure skating were more to their liking-let alone capable of making and communicating an informed decision when it came time to vote. (Keep in mind, of course, that there is a wide range of capabilities among those classified as mentally handicapped. Examples of experiences and skill levels given here are based on the three residents I worked most closely with.) Although I was tempted to take them, voting was simply one of the many experiences my clients would not experience-and would likely not miss.

However, for the staff in the house where I worked, the issue was significant. Why shouldn't these people, who we know to have emotions, experiences and needs no less than any 'normal' person, be represented by the democratic process? Like many other facets of their lives, though, day-to-day challenges overshadow these too-complex theoretical issues and so they often remain unresolved. There is simply not the luxury of prolonged debate over the academics of your situation when bathing, cooking and doing the laundry are time-consuming learning experiences.

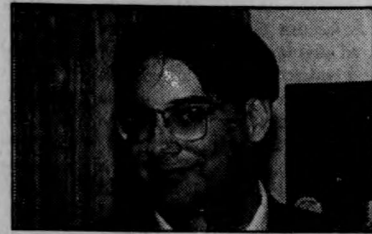
It is just that easy to leave the needs of this usually voiceless group unattended. They depend on others to defend their rights, and that is why the role of government is so important in the lives of mentally handicapped people. I'm happy to take this opportunity to commend the New Brunswick government for its strides in information technology and its Call Centre initiative, a marvel of good sense at work. But the money brought to this province by Mr. McKenna's good business sense mean nothing if its government and its people chose to ignore their responsibility to those things that fall outside the realm of economic success. Plans announced last Friday by the Department of Health and Community Services to scale back residential programs, moving people who require long-term care into nursing homes, represent a backward step and no amount of money saved will make up for the real cost in human dignity and respect.

The Health Department's press release about changes to its "long-term care strategy" provided per-day breakdown of funding to be provided to level one, level two, level three and level four clients, but unfortunately did not refer to how the changes would affect actual lives. Would clients in nursing homes have their own bedrooms? Their own kitchens in which to prepare (or learn to prepare) snacks or meals? How often could they hope for one-on-one attention from staff? Community living offers people the opportunity for wider development and fuller lives than they would have in institutions. The progress residents make following a transition from hospital to a 'normal' home, though limited, is inspiring; it can mean the difference between days spent banging your head on a drab green wall and days with the structure of a job, friends, outings and household chores. We should not make the mistake of undervaluing anyone's achievements, even if they seem at first glance to be insignificant in comparison with our own.

Fortunately, people who depend on the government's long-term care strategy did have a voice this past week. Friends and family protested the proposed changes, apparently convincingly enough to prompt the powers-that-be to reconsider. Whatever Health and Community Services Minister King decides right now though, the incident may be a reminder to all voters to examine this particular issue closely before the next election, keeping in mind that we might not just be voting for our own jobs and health care. The Internet doesn't have to be New Brunswick's only symbol of progress.

*Community living offers people the opportunity for wider development and fuller lives than they would have in institutions. The progress residents make following a transition from hospital to a 'normal' home, though limited, is inspiring...*

**But I Digress...  
Kelly Lamrock**



When I was a kid, I learned the tremendous value of saying "I'm sorry." In fact, the act of contrition is high up in a child's survival repertoire, right up there with a really good pout and the long, drawn out "Pleeeeeease, Dad!" The apology could help you gain quick forgiveness for any number of crimes, and usually without any nastier consequences, such as not being allowed to watch Speed Racer.

As a really big kid, I still know the value of the pre-emptive apology. Many a guy has earned how to apologize quickly, in a way that would make Pavlov proud, to one's girlfriend. This gains forgiveness without a fight, and avoids nastier consequences, such as not being able to er, um, ... watch Speed Racer.

The key to a good apology, however, is in knowing what you did wrong. If you have no idea, and you're just apologizing to get out of a jam, it'll be no good. If you can explain sincerely why you were wrong, what you would do differently, and why you regret what you did, then absolution is never far behind.

The reason is simple — once you know you were wrong, and admit it, there's usually nothing else for the other person to say. Unless you did something really wrong, in which case their lawyer will say it, usually in a three page letter you'll have to pay another lawyer two hundred bucks to translate to "Pay Up, Sucker". But I digress.

Politicians, at least the good ones, learn this quickly. Newt Gingrich may have saved his job by apologizing for ethical violations before someone made him admit to them. In Alberta, Ralph Klein has become a master of the art, even apologizing on the eve of an election for having cut health care too much. (I don't know why this makes people whose local hospital disappeared feel better, but polls show it does). Bill Clinton spent his last two years apologizing for the first two, which makes him, according to Guinness Book of World Records, the most politically astute wuss in North America. All of these politicians have managed to make it seem mean-spirited for critics to keep criticizing, and thus have headed off accusations more serious than the ones they admitted to. They are all still enjoying full Speed Racer privileges from the voters.

All of this makes it much harder to understand just what the blazes the McKenna government thinks it is doing these days.

By now, you've probably heard that Doug Tyler, a man I know by reputation and experience to be a

bright, honest politician, has been in a bit of hot water lately. It seems the Minister represented a constituent in a claim heard by an administrative tribunal.

The scandal is poorly understood by the public, because many people aren't sure just what an administrative tribunal does. Lawyers, because we are made to digest volumes of dense material on what you did, then absolution is never far behind.

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them at law school, know about administrative tribunals.

The premier, being a lawyer, would no doubt tell you this — administrative tribunals in New Brunswick are created to hear disputes in areas where special expertise is desirable. You've heard of the Labour Board? That's one. Because of the way the laws are written, these tribunals are basically like judges, with full power to decide cases in their area of expertise. In fact, a judge can't usually overrule them unless they make a whopper of a mistake.

So, these tribunals are, functionally, like judges. Created by statute, the salaries for these "judges" is set by the provincial cabinet. Doug Tyler is a member of the provincial cabinet.

See the problem? There is a rule that says cabinet ministers should not interfere with these tribunals. By now, you can see why I'd like to know before going into court that my lawyer sets the judge's salary, too. Since we can't have a system where a few of us get the help of cabinet ministers and others don't, they just keep out. That doesn't mean everyone's up to something funny, it just means that the

appearance of bias is too much when you're talking about the judicial system.

A court agreed, overturning the tribunal's decision because it was tainted by Tyler's participation. Bernard Valcourt, who even went to court seeking Tyler's resignation, stormed out of the Legislature in protest when the resignation wasn't offered (I missed it, but my friends gave it a 6+). All of this begs the question — who gives a damn?

We should. OK, it's true, there's lots of precedent suggesting that Tyler should resign. John Munro and Jean Charest both resigned their cabinet posts after calling judges on behalf of constituents. It wasn't a career killer — both returned to cabinet. But, you know, I don't even think Tyler should have to quit. I accept his assertion that he just wanted to help a constituent. He gained nothing. And when we make a mistake we explain what we did wrong, why it was wrong, and ....

Apologize, Doug. Apologize. I know that politicians' first instinct is to dig in your heels. I know that the job can be thankless. If in one week you worked pi out to the last decimal place, deciphered the Dead Sea Scrolls, found Jimmy Hoffa alive and went 13 dollars over budget doing it, the media would report that you went 13 dollars over budget.

I know people seem like they jump upon every shortcoming. But it comes down to a choice. You either ask people to believe that you are perfect, or you admit you make mistakes while trying to help, and ask them to judge you appropriately. You know what I've found that when the loudmouths aside, the majority of voters judge you appropriately if you square with them.

A minister making a mistake doesn't mean he should be fired. If he can tell us he knows why it was a mistake. A minister insisting he can interfere with the judicial process, aided by a premier whose law degree means he should know better, leads one to think it will happen again and again. People forgive everything except arrogance.

So we begin to notice that ministers resign in B.C. for messing with tribunals, but not in New Brunswick. Ministers resign in Ontario when their staff leaks confidential files to smear critics, but not in New Brunswick. And if those ministers said they admitted the mistake, but questioned the punishment, I would agree. Instead, we are simply told that no one in New Brunswick makes mistakes. Maybe good polls mean never having to say you're sorry. But as another old chestnut tells us... "Everything Must Change."

**There's nothing clear about clear cutting**

**Forest Breeze**

The infamous clear-cut. The non-foresters out there certainly have heard of and have probably formed an opinion on this issue. More often than not this opinion is negative or indifferent depending on the amount of controversy a given individual has had to the various controversies covered by the media in recent years. Claycoquet Sound, the Spotted Owl habitat issue, and the Maine "no clear-cut" vote are examples. For us forestry people the so-called "clear-cut controversy" has become a proverbial "Achilles heel." My aim here is not to add to the plethora of articles, critiques, editorials etc. that makes more attempts to justify a given opinion or provide some

other new argument to support one side of the debate or the other.

On the contrary I believe that both sides have valid arguments as to why clear cutting should or should not be a dominant practice in forestry. However I have to admit that the constant debate of this issue has made me very curious since it deals with what we do as Foresters and managers and how the public perceives it. I have wondered, first of all, "what, if anything, has been gained by either side?" Secondly, I asked myself whether this issue is simply one of those endless front-line skirmishes where, after all is said and done, the

reason why the war was being fought in the first place goes unsolved. My answers to these two queries (based on my limited experience) are: nothing enduring and yes.

Before I proceed with this train of thought let me first state that I know of a lot of people who would disagree with my declaration that nothing has been gained. They would furiously proceed to throttle me by saying, "would we have Spotted Owl habitat or old-growth forest, would we have this species or that species, or would we have this particular National Park if we didn't fight against

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**Mudwump**

Joseph W.J. FitzPatrick<sub>3</sub>

It's winter and you're depressed. Bravo, welcome to New Brunswick. Lovely weather we're having, except for the cold and the rain and the snow, it's fantastic!

Don't think you're alone. Heck, I'm still writing about winter, and it's Issue #14.

There is a long history to our annual bout of depression. In fact, ever since Europeans first came to Canada, we have been in constant opposition to the weather. If you think it's hard to ignore now, just think about what it would have been like before the invention of electric blankets, thinsulate, and central heating, or the moral lassitude which permits cohabitation or casual associations.

It's hard to put my finger on where the winter blahs come from. A lot has to do, I imagine, with isolation engendered by the bleak, white landscape, plus rotten driving, and the cold.

When you get right down to it, it's simply harder to enjoy everything in the winter. Think about how much easier it is in the summer, when you're pretty much free to do anything. But in winter, you always have to wear something or else die of exposure. At least, that's what my mom always said. Of course, dressing up so that you're forced to hide your face and walk like a penguin probably doesn't add to the mood.

Come to think of it, Spring is probably the time of year when a young person's heart turns to love because that's the first time you're able to distinguish body shapes. Of course, that could just be the cynic in me.

Then again, that recurd smell doesn't seem all that appealing when you stop and think about it.

To be fair, winter does have its advantages, like being about to wrap yourself in the warmth of thick blankets, bask in front of a

roaring fire, or lose yourself in the embrace of one dear to you.

And then there's the interesting contradiction of winter exhaustion. I find that there's a certain undeniable exhilaration of being able to wear yourself out outside in the cold. Your heart is pumping, your head is swimming, but your hands and feet stay cold. That flush of warmth which rushes to your face when you come inside from the cold is much more comforting than the same action in the summer. It's much easier to enjoy a hot soothing bath in the winter.

And there's also snowball fights. There's nothing like a bit of

warfare to liven up the day. Of course, unlike water balloons and squirt guns, snow balls can kill you. After all, it's all fun and games until somebody loses an eye, or at least a contact lens.

Then there's sledding. Finally, a use for the thread-bare tires! Just drive up Regent street, turn left onto College Hill, and then point down Windsor. Lock your brakes for a bit of excitement. If your car has anti-lock brakes, you can disable them if you know the right fuse to remove. Of course, you might end up electrocuting yourself, so ask a professional.

Hint: use an assumed name. And don't forget to try Beaver-bogging. Of course, these little, brown, fragile trays that Beaver uses now, are a poor substitute for the massive, multicoloured, poly-carbonate ones they used to have. But anyway, grab a tray and take a gander down Buchanan Hill.

What am I trying to say? It's winter, learn to love it. It happens every year (for the foreseeable future) and there's not much else you can do about it. Of course, all the people who complain could go live in California or British Columbia. Me, I'll take snow and freezing rain over earthquakes, mudslides and floods.

Ah, Fredericton the City of Sainly Elmoe. Who cares if your tulips won't bloom unless they're indoors, but then again, that's just me.

— Kevin Costner, Bull Durham

**Look on the bright side, it's still cold**

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**Viewpoint Banner**  
Illustrated by Kent Wiesel

*This issue is dedicated to:  
Ear wax. The best part of waking up.*

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**Phone:** (506) 453-4983  
**Advertising:** (506) 453-5073  
**Fax:** (506) 453-4958  
**E-Mail:** [bruns@unb.ca](mailto:bruns@unb.ca)  
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