

ECPA



THE EAST COAST PARALEGAL

A Magazine for Paralegals
& Paraprofessionals

Ann-Marie Allen, Editor-in-Chief
www.theeastcoastparalegal.blogspot.com

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of Nova Scotia

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ECP TEAM

Editor-In-Chief



Ann-Marie Allen

amallen@eastlink.ca

Editorial Consultant



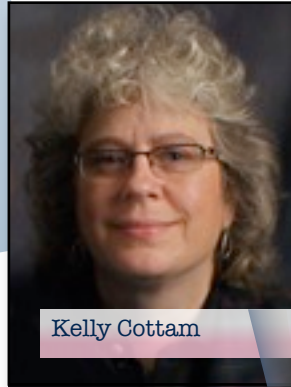
Cyndi Murphy

Marketing Consultant



Catherine Stevens

Photographer



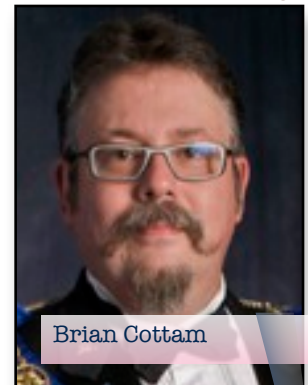
Kelly Cottam

IT Administrator



Anthony King

Layout / Design



Brian Cottam

On a very personal note I want to thank some very special people at ECP. This doesn't all come together without a lot of time, effort and team work. My sincere and special thanks to you, Cyndi, Catherine, Kelly, Brian and Anthony.

I could not have come this far without your help and support. You've contributed to make ECP the success it has become and it's my honour to work with such kind and caring people.

Thank you !! **

WELCOME

Wow... can you believe the Winter edition is here already. How the year has flown by. Well, here's another issue of good reading for those cold nights. We hope you like **ECP's** new cover and we are excited to implement our signature "paralegal pink" colour throughout the magazine.

We have the continuation of our **Health** series and **The Centre for Women in Business** have been kind enough to come onboard with us this issue. Please support this group of very fine and dedicated women. They are very valuable to all of us ! We are also very fortunate to have a **Family Court Officer** with us and the Piece de Resistance **The Lieutenant Governor of Nova Scotia** graced us with an interview in this issue as well. The perfect way to end our year!!



In the New Year we will again be searching for the Spring edition's **ECP FEATURE PARA-PROFILE**. Nominate a paralegal or paraprofessional in your office who you feel exceeds the needs of the office and the people she/he works with or if they have experienced a personal quest that they have worked through then we want to make them **ECP'S FEATURE PARA-PROFILE**. This edition we feature **Marilyn Dillman** of **TMC Law**.

As always, I hope you enjoy this issue and I hope to hear from all of you with your ideas and comments. Remember, we are only as good as you help us to be and our major goal is to support each other. (www.theeastcoastparalegal.blogspot.com)

We hope everyone has a great holiday season. See you in 2010 !!

Merry Christmas

Happy Hannukkah.....

Joyeux Noelfrom everyone at

The East Coast Paralegal

Ann-Marie ** Cyndi ** Catherine ** Anthony ** Kelly ** Brian

Ann-Marie Allen, Editor-in-Chief



amallen@eastlink.ca

Centre for Women in Business

“Let us help you Start, Grow or Advance Your Business”



Start, Grow or Advance your business with the Centre for Women in Business. The Centre assists entrepreneurial individuals at all stages of business. Located on the Mount Saint Vincent University campus in Halifax, the Centre has been helping women business owners across the province since 1992. To date, Centre staff worked with more than 5500 clients.

If you're just starting out and need advice on setting up your business, need training about how to write a business plan, or want to build a network of like-minded individuals, the Centre's business advisory service, Blueprint for Success workshop series and women's networking nights are just the solution. The great thing about our Blueprint workshop is that you can choose to take it in a traditional classroom setting, or learn on your own schedule and from the comfort of your own office with our new online blueprint option.

Our regional training workshops offer useful business management training opportunities right in your area on topics that will benefit your business. For business owners looking to grow their businesses, our new Growth Strategies series comes in handy because this four-part workshop series helps participants develop a plan for growth. We also deliver an intensive program for established business owners looking to take their businesses to the next level. Called ADVANCE, this program includes workshops and one-to-one work with a consultant to get you to where you want your business to be.

Our annual conference on November 12 & 13, brings women business owners together for networking and training. Plus this year we've added an awards luncheon to the event.



No matter what stage you're at, our membership program connects women business owners from across the province. From preferred pricing on our programs and services, to marketing and networking opportunities membership can make a difference.

The Centre is here to help. We're just a phone call or mouse click away. Check us out online at www.centreforwomeninbusiness.ca and be sure to check out Biz Beat, our online newsletter.

FASHION – Business v. Casual



My philosophy of casual dressing is pretty simple. Over the years my idea of business casual has not altered. But sadly the corporate world is having an identity crisis.

What is business casual; is casual Friday one and the same? The operative word in the phrase “business casual” is business.

Whatever your style, regardless of age, your clothes express who you are, not just in the working world does what you wear indicate who you are. Studies have shown that successful people in virtually every aspect of their lives have developed a look and image that implies success. Dressing casual can look professional and successful. Casual Friday does not mean dressing cheap or sloppy. Nowhere in the office scene are miniskirts, belly tops, ripped or embellished jeans and tight pants appropriate attire. I would be quick to add to that list; sneakers, shorts, tanks tops, crocs, see through blouses and graphic T-shirts.

Like it or not, clothes say a lot about who you are and what you do. Passing judgement (right or wrong) is something we have all been guilty of at one time or another. I know of some business offices that have adopted a casual dress code excluding jeans. The purpose is to maintain a consistent; albeit, relaxed atmosphere. For some reason jeans seem to give people the freedom or the permission to dress less than professional, which is unfortunate. A great pair of dark wash jeans in the classic trouser style paired with a tailored blouse and covered up with a trendy jacket or sweater could go a long way in an office environment. The fit should be appropriate for your body shape but the look the same; put together and polished.

I find it ironic that casual Friday and business casual were designed to give the masses the opportunity to dress more comfortable while most people are uncomfortable with their clothing choices. The women I have talked to and have assisted in dressing agonize over the casual part of their wardrobe. The traditional office wardrobe did not allow for much choice, but throw in a casual day and they are lost. Casual, to a lot of women after wearing heels and pantyhose is sweats and sneakers.

My rule of thumb for dressing successful on casual day is; change one thing. If a dress, blazer and heels are your “go to” business uniform change out the dress for a trouser jean or casual skirt paired with a blouse and keep the rest. Basically it has got to be three. Three pieces of clothing, not including under garments, shoes and accessories goes a long way in making a complete outfit.

At the end of the day business must get done. If plans involve drinks after work then your best bet is to cover up that sexy top till after 5. As well; faded jeans, graphic t-shirts and sneakers have no place in an office environment, regardless of how relaxed the atmosphere is. There are fantastic choices at all price points when it comes to casual wear. I have seen casual outfits that cost as much as a mortgage payment but I can reassure you that it can be done on a budget and no one will be the wiser; a particular grocery store comes to mind. Their line of clothes will rival most high end names; the fabrics, the style and the fit are amazing and did I mention the prices. Regardless of where you shop, there is usually a choice of dressy, business and casual. The trick is in knowing how to mix and match so that you are able to go from work to play without a full wardrobe change.

Ladies next time you dress for a casual day remember these three simple words; style, tailored and fit.



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The card features a woman in a polka-dot dress looking at a gift box, with a cherry blossom in the bottom left corner.



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To empower and contribute to the knowledge and success of Paralegals through the practical enhancement of their professional journey

ANN-MARIE ALLEN
Executive-Law Paralegal Consulting
Coldbrook, Nova Scotia, Canada
(902) 670-4112
amallen@eastlink.ca

**** To read more articles written by Ann-Marie and published in the United States log onto ParalegalGateway.com and More.com ****

HOW DID I GET HERE? FAMILY COURT OFFICER

I am sitting at a brand new desk with a brand new computer... nothing at all like the ones we were trained on in school... Those were word processors.... they did not have all the extra programs like the one that was just placed in front of me..... and I am now expected to learn these programs and run the office for eight agents and probably one of the busiest real estate office in the Greenwood/Middleton area. I am 20 years old, just got my first full time job, bought my first car, which means I have bills.... What have I gotten myself into and when did I grow up???

That was 1988.... and now it's 2009, 21 years later and I am the Family Court Officer for the Department of Justice. I am divorced once, happily remarried and have three amazing children. How did I get here?

I worked at that small but very successful real estate office for three years. Probably three of the more enjoyable years of my working career so far. We were all young and positive and loved what we were doing. We socialized outside of work as well as laughed hard during the day.

I had graduated from Community College with my secretarial program and they hired me after completing my job training. I felt like I had the world by the tail. Then one day, a lady walked into our office and asked if I was interested in other jobs, higher pay, more opportunity. I was 23 and knew that the chances to advance within this office was not very likely. I applied for a job, with her reference, with a local law firm. Not sure if I was ready to leave the security of my little office and all my friends, but I was getting married and seen the chance to grow. They offered me the position of receptionist for their smaller office. I took the job in March of 1991 got married in April and moved from my parent's home for the first time in my life.

Things were crazy for awhile but once again, I thought I had the world by the tail. It wasn't long before they noticed that I was capable of much more than what they had offered me and began to train me as a Property Paralegal. I was moved from the front desk shortly after I became pregnant with my first daughter, 1993. My career with the firm lasted until shortly after my second daughter was born in 1999. I was always very thankful that the management team at the Firm recognized my ability and offered me the opportunity to train in all the areas of law that I could soak up. I worked between two offices in as many fields as I could. My goal was to learn as much as possible so that if another opportunity presented itself, I would be ready.

Then shortly after my second daughter was born... the unimaginable happened. DIVORCE! My life was absolutely turned upside down... and I'm serious - upside down! I was now a single Mom of a 5 year old and a newborn. My focus was my children of course.. but also driven to prove to my children that I was a mother worth having. I choose during those years to leave the comforts of the law firm and move into a different field... Marketing. Again, I was approached in my office one day by a friend who was looking for someone to take on some marketing for his financial firm. So... I took the offer and moved on once again.

In January, 2000 I was now a Marketing Assistant. I had never seen a Power Point program nor had I ever put together a newsletter... but I guess I was going to learn. I had also never had to put together spread sheets using Quattro Pro... but I am going to do it for clients who have thousands and thousands invested. I was working full time taking one day off every two weeks to spend with the kids. Unfortunately my employer wasn't "child friendly" I had met my future husband and had discussed the possibility of returning to part-time work. I started applying for other jobs. My interest was to return to law and watched the postings within government all the time.

It was at that point in time that the stars aligned and things started to change for me.... maybe it was fate, maybe it was all my years of hard work and perseverance.... but my employer called me into his office and informed me that he could no longer afford to pay me... and that chances are my current pay cheque would bounce. Well... what do I do now? I had just moved myself and the girls into my new husband's home, this was the perfect time to sit back and be the stay at home Mom I wanted to be... Right???

Two weeks later I received a call from the Department of Justice calling me for an interview for a casual position within the Family Court. I went, interviewed well, was offered the position and went back to work before I had a chance to receive one employment insurance cheque. I remained in that position for six months... six months into my pregnancy with my youngest child. That's right, I started with the DOJ and found out I was expecting!!! My term finished up in March and I was home with the kids, without a job to return to and expecting a child in July and I was okay with it. I did some contract work with the school board to fill in some time here and there and continued to make as many contacts as possible. My son was born on July 22nd and I could not have been happier. Life was good. But like everything else, change is only a phone call away. My former supervisor called and told me about an upcoming position with the Family Court, Intake and Family Court Officer he thought I would like to apply. Needless to say, I did apply, again interviewed, did well and was offered the position, something I never ever thought would happen. Now I was forced with the choice of leaving my five month old baby and take, what I thought, the position of a lifetime. This was the position I was meant to do.... and if I turn it down now.... I will likely never get the chance again. I accepted and have been at it every since... and I love my job.



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I have again worked myself into a higher position with a great deal of responsibility, have gained the respect of the local Barrister's Society and am available to the stakeholders of my county when they need me. I can honestly say, it's the only job I can imagine living the life I do for.... I work five days a week - seven and a half hours (just like everyone else...:) and then go home and do another full time job as mother, wife, sister and daughter.... with a huge dose of best friend in there as well. I volunteer on a regular basis for many school committees, am the vice-president of the school band association and am the secretary for two other organizations.

I am fortunate to have a supervisor that understands my life and respects my need for time off so that I can spend the in service days at home with the kids or leave a little early to get to the barn to watch a riding lesson for my daughter. The Government provides the ability to have days without pay. If it weren't for those days...I would have cashed it in a long time ago. They help me keep some balance.

I am blessed with my family, great kids who are wonderful students and excellent people and a job that I never, ever would have thought I would qualify for. I am here based on my belief that hard work does pay off and was lucky to have met a few people along the way who truly believed in my abilities. My life is crazy, there is no question about that... but would I change anything - NOT A CHANCE!!

DEBORAH J. BENT PAGE
Family Court Officer/Intake Parent Information Coordinator
Kentville Justice Centre
Nova Scotia, Canada



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ECP's FEATURE PARALEGAL

Marilyn Dillman



My career as a paralegal began rather unexpectedly in 1973 when friends gave my name to a young lawyer who was moving to Windsor, Nova Scotia, to open a law practice. I recall he visited me at my home in Hantsport and after the interview he hired me to go to work the following Monday.

For five years prior to this time, I had been a stay-at-home Mom looking after my husband Elwood and children, Jane and Christopher. It was not my intention to go back to work after my children were born but when this job opportunity arose, I decided to meet the challenge of becoming a working Mom. Although there were, indeed, many challenges along the way, particularly in the 70's, I was quite successful in balancing work outside of the home with being a wife, mother, homemaker and very active in my church and community.

After graduating from West Pictou High School and Business School in 1963, at the age of 18, I went to Halifax and found employment at Harris & Roome, a well-known electrical supplies company. During my five years with this Company I worked as the secretary to the sales managers and later as secretary to the president.

In 1968 two life changing events happened. Our daughter was born in August and my husband accepted a position with one of the Jodrey Family Companies, CKF Inc. in Hantsport. Of course, this meant moving from Halifax to the Annapolis Valley. As I was born in River John, Pictou County, I was pleased to move to a more rural area. After the move, I can remember walking to choir practice one night, in particular, and just stopping in my tracks to reflect and be thankful to be back to friendly country living.

During the five years I worked for Roy I. Logan in Windsor, he had no choice but to take time to patiently teach me many aspects of the legal business. As I was the only one in his employ, I had to learn very quickly how to incorporate a company, conduct property transactions, prepare divorce documents, litigation documents, wills and estate documents and to do the bookkeeping. I did have a "leg up" on the bookkeeping as I had taken an extensive accounting course at business school that has proven to be very helpful to me to this day. During this time, I had the opportunity to take a business course at Acadia University along with staff members at CIBC in Windsor. The instructor was a young lawyer named Garth C. Gordon now Garth C. Gordon, Q.C. one of the partners at TMC LAW.

In 1979, Mr. Logan was offered a teaching position at Mount Allison University and he closed his practice. I was now unemployed.

After a year being again a stay-at-home mother, not intending to return to work, another opportunity arose unexpectedly. While attending a political meeting in Kentville, one of the partners with Thorpe,

Buntain, Muttart & Forse mentioned to my husband that they were planning to hire a legal assistant. Arrangements were made to meet with two of the partners that same week. I can recall I had an interview on Friday and was hired to go to work the following Monday. During the first twelve of the fifteen years I worked with this firm, I was an assistant to one of the senior partners and was responsible for all aspects of his practice with the exception of corporate and property work. For the last three years in this employ, property work was added to my responsibilities.

Early in 1995, after much reflection, I decided to take a break from the work world. However, the break did not last long and in May of 1995 I was given an opportunity to work with another Kentville law firm, then known as Taylor, MacLellan & Cochrane. Of course, this adds almost another fifteen years to my work experience and quite an experience it has been. For the last twelve years, I have been working on a part-time basis as an estate paralegal in the Estate Department. This position has given me the opportunity to work with several lawyers in our firm and to hone my skills in one particular area of the law.

In 1997 I was appointed as a Justice of the Peace for the Province of Nova Scotia and continue to work as a JP, in particular, conducting civil marriage ceremonies.

Although I am now nearing forty years in the work force, thirty-five of those years in law firms, each day seems to throw a new learning curve. I have to say that I am proud of the work that has been accomplished in organizing the Estate Department since my appointment as Estate Paralegal at TMC LAW. Each day, along with our Estate Team, I strive to live up to its Mission Statement:

To uphold our firm motto to be "Client Focused" by serving our clients to the best of our ability and to carry out all work that is the responsibility of the Estate Department in the most efficient, conscientious and cost-effective manner based on commitment, cooperation, consideration and respect among the team members.

Over the years, I have worked with many lawyers and staff members and dealt with clients in every walk of life. The knowledge and experience I have gained as a paralegal is immeasurable. I am proud to be associated with TMC LAW and to have the opportunity to go to work each day and carry out my duties to the best of my ability.

Marilyn Dillman



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YOUR HEALTH

DON'T BE A "C"..... BE AN "I" - Part 2

Squeezing the Neck

It's easy for your neck to become tense, especially when you are seated at a desk. When the neck muscles tense up, your neck often loses its mobility. A neck massage helps to restore muscle flexibility and release built-up tension.

1. Place your right hand on the right side of your neck and position your fingertips just to the right of your neck bones.
2. Keeping your fingertips together, massage the neck muscle using a gentle, circular motion. Without straining, move your hand up and down the neck muscle. Keep your neck in a neutral position as you massage.
3. Repeat the procedure using your left hand on the left side of your neck.
4. Repeat the procedure again using both hands and massage both sides of the neck at the same time.

Hints:

Don't press your neck so hard that you feel compelled to counteract the pressure in order to keep your neck from being pushed out of a neutral, upright position.

Watch out for the tendency to hunch your shoulders, especially as you increase the pressure.

Don't let your head fall backward into your hand or forward into an extreme bend. Keep it level and in a neutral position.

Pressing the Temples

It's almost instinctive to rub your temples and forehead when you are fatigued or stressed. Exerting pressure on the temples does help relieve headaches and jaw pain, and often releases tension of the facial muscles.

1. Place the index, middle and ring fingers of each hand against the corresponding temple on either side of your head.
2. Close your eyes press gently and slowly move your fingers in small circles for about 15 seconds.
3. Rest for 15 seconds and then repeat, with the fingers moving in the opposite direction.

Hints:

Rest your elbows on the desk as you massage.

Don't press too hard; otherwise you might irritate the delicate skin over the temples. If you want to use the pressure technique, keep your fingers still and slowly increase the static pressure.

Move your fingers very slowly. The slower the movement, the more relaxing the massage.

Using the same circular movement, massage up your temples and across your forehead.

About The Author

Heather Porter
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AD)))

PIECE DE RESISTANCE

ECP

's Winter and end of the year 2009 edition was graced by an interview with Her Honour the Honourable Mayann E. Francis, O.N.S., Dhuml, Lieutenant Governor of Nova Scotia.

I first want to mention that my initial contact with Her Honour's office was very pleasant. Her Executive Assistant, Julie Culliton and Dr. Christopher McCreery, Private Secretary and Executive Director were very obliging and most cordial, but then I had expected nothing less.

Although my "interview" with Her Honour was to be "official" I found myself forgetting for a moment where I was and who I was with as familiar legal terms were spoken and paralegal experiences were exchanged. Her Honour was very articulate and engaging telling of her "paralegal" days. As she said more than once **"this was one of the best professional experiences of my career"** and I could tell. I commented on how much she smiled and how her face lit up when talking about her days as a paralegal.

"Her Honour's" paralegal story began like many of us finding a job.... searching through the newspaper. She had graduated from Long Island University, Brooklyn, NY with a Certificate in Paralegal Studies and now the job search had begun.

Her first interview, again, as many paralegals, did not pan out. She was interviewed by a law firm on Wall Street. But the decision to not hire her was not because of her lack of education or experience; it was because of her color. To this day when I hear such a thing I am still appalled. But Her Honour did not let this stand in her way even though she was told this was the reason. Shortly thereafter this same firm called her back for a second interview, and she contributes that call back to the persistence of the office manager. But this time she did get the job starting in litigation and then moving into corporate law.

When I asked her who was her mentor or who inspired her during this part of her career she told me there were two people. One was the actual lawyer who because of her color did not want to hire her from the first interview. As it turned out she became invaluable to him and the firm. The other was an associate lawyer who was actually just leaving the firm at that time. The advice given ... **"never be afraid to ask questions"**. This was advice she has taken with her throughout her entire career and life in general. That advice we should all adhere to.



So of course I wanted to know....were there any paralegals on her staff?? The answer... well....actually... her Executive Assistant was employed at a law firm at one time during her career as a Legal Assistant. Needless to say a big smile came across my face.



And then onto something more serious. Sacrifices. We have all had to make them and so has Her Honour. Her answer was her personal life. She concentrated on the next opportunity and climbing the ladder to success. But when asked about regrets, she had none in this regard. Becoming the Lieutenant Governor of Nova Scotia as Her Honour put it, is the **“icing on the cake”, “it just doesn’t get any better than this”**, and quite frankly, no one could dispute that !

I did ask why with such great success in her paralegal career she did not attend law school. She advised me that some of it was fear at that time and self doubt but basically she did not have the interest to take that route when it came to law. She decided instead to take her Master of Public Administration.

So of course I saved my best question from all of us for last. What advice would she give to paralegals. The answer of course was like the rest of the interview, not disappointing to any degree. She advised that we should all believe in ourselves and our professional qualifications. She did quote that we are not lawyers **BUT** that they rely and depend on us fully and when needed to go the extra mile **BUT** the days of fetching coffee and delivering donuts is very much in the past.

She believes that her paralegal career has helped her achieve her professional goals to this point and that that education and experience she can take with her wherever she or any paralegal/legal assistant wishes to go. The relationships she developed with other paralegals were an asset. She would encourage anyone to take this professional route as it opens many doors and leads to opportunities which may not be open to everyone. She mentioned more than once how proud she was to have been a paralegal. This was apparent in the way she expressed herself speaking about that time in her life.

So to say the least this was the perfect way to end 2009 for us at ECP. I hope that this interview/information will give all of you the courage, if needed, to go forward or continue on with your career and education. This lady has proven how far we have gone and how far we can go in this profession.

I wish to personally thank Her Honour once again for allowing us the opportunity to profile this part of her career and for being such an inspiration to all paralegals. We should all try to achieve the **“icing on the cake”**.

Ann-Marie Allen
Editor-in-Chief, ECP
amallen@eastlink.ca

www.theeastcoastparalegal.blogspot.com



Letter to the Editor

Hi Ann,

I just got finished reading your article, I love it. I know I'm not a paralegal or anything close, but I love how it inspires me to be a better ME !!! I can't wait for your next issue. Reading your first article inspired me to start my own business and I took that first step, now I just have to run with it. It is definitely empowering information for woman.... And I love it. It is so inspirational. Keep up the good work...

Darlene Cole
Amherst, N.S.

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A PERSONAL NOTE FROM ANN-MARIE

As always I want to thank everyone who contributed to this edition of ECP. But I want to remind everyone to check out *ECP's Blog*. (<http://www.theeastcoastparalegal.blogspot.com>)

To spearhead a **Paralegal Society** would take the commitment and contribution of all paralegals in the Province of Nova Scotia.

This would be the opportunity to create and continue your future and be involved in the enhancement of your own career. You would have the opportunity to speak about your career wants and needs and help to implement legislation and educational advances for yourself and your fellow colleagues.

“If you want to be successful, be excellent...
If you want the best the world has to offer..
Offer the world ... your best !

***** As an aside I want to make note of a very special legal secretary even though we did not know her.**

On October 27, 2009 Rachel Annie Shutt passed away.

Ms. Shutt was a legal secretary for Weatherhead & Weatherhead in Toronto for 55 years. This milestone is an inspiration to all of us. ***

Ann-Marie Allen, Editor-in-Chief



amallen@eastlink.ca

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