




PARTNERSHIP FRAMEWORK - ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT

January 24, 2018

As outlined in Partnership Framework (signed December 1, 2016), both the UNSM and DMA commit to reviewing progress towards the joint priorities of the framework on an annual basis.

Consultation Protocol	
1	Develop a protocol for consultation on legislative and regulatory changes that may impact municipal governments
Status – In Progress	
	<p>The Department of Municipal Affairs has developed guidelines for municipal consultation, which outline the principles of a systematic approach to working with municipalities during the early development of provincial regulation and legislation that may impact municipalities.</p> <p>Based on the feedback and discussion of the Provincial Municipal Roundtable, this document could represent significant progress towards achieving this priority.</p> <p>Working toward the principles and commitments outlined in the guidelines will require coordination throughout government departments. Integration into the policy development cycle will be an ongoing process.</p> <p>Municipalities appreciate the opportunity to provide input on potential legislation and regulations. Municipal knowledge and experience can help ensure legislation is the best means to achieve the department's outcomes, and enhances the success of the initiative.</p>

Accountability and Transparency	
2	Collaborate on the Joint Municipal Accountability and Transparency (JMAT) committee to develop a standardized regulatory framework for municipal expense policies that includes online reporting
Status – In Progress	
	<p>Based on the recommendations of the JMAT committee, legislation to help municipalities and villages be more consistent and accountable for expense reporting and accountability became law on October 26, 2017.</p> <p>Under the amendments, municipalities are required to begin posting expense reports, hospitality expense reports and annual summary reports online.</p> <p>The legislation also contains provisions to strengthen policies and practices around expenses; requires municipalities to adopt a code of conduct and makes improvements to audit committees.</p> <p>By collaborating with the UNSM and Association of Municipal Administrators (AMA) from an early stage, municipalities have already been able to plan for the adoption of these reporting requirements. Indeed, 23 municipal units currently post expense reports online, with efforts underway to achieve province wide adoption.</p> <p>The minimum requirements for municipalities to establish expenditure reimbursement policies and hospitality policies are being developed by the Financial Reporting and Accounting Manual (FRAM) committee, with representation from AMA and municipal auditors.</p>

MGA and Charter Review	
3	Continue to review the <i>Municipal Government Act</i> and <i>Halifax Regional Municipality Charter</i> and recommend changes to modernize the legislation
Status – In progress	
	<p>The MGA Review Committee, formed between the UNSM, AMA and DMA has reviewed over 500 submissions for change, gathered through extensive consultation in Fall 2015.</p> <p>Recommendations were prioritized in terms of their anticipated impact, relevance and alignment within existing municipal and provincial priorities.</p> <p>The committee has prioritized recommendations relating to Economic Development, Mandatory Planning, and Accountability & Transparency.</p>

MGA and Charter Review cont.

Several issues raised during consultation can be addressed through existing legislative authority. DMA will develop information bulletins to clarify where such authorities exist.

DMA and Halifax are currently in the process of a comprehensive legislative review of the HRM Charter. This includes consideration of 'natural person powers' as well as 'peace, order, and good governance'. Both parties are working towards recommending amendments within the coming year.

Municipal Modernization

- 4 Review municipal governance models and identify options for structural change that strengthen municipal viability

Status – In progress




Both the province and municipalities are focused on the viability of local government. Structural change is one means of increasing municipal viability, but it is not the only means. Forced structural change typically raises difficult challenges.


The Towns Task Force concluded efforts should be made to encourage greater cooperation amongst municipal units, especially in areas where economies of scale can be realized. A recent review of structural change experience noted the same conclusion. Staff of the UNSM, AMA and DMA have been developing recommendations to facilitate a cooperative, coordinated approach to planning, economic development and infrastructure.


Through a facilitated CAO forum and subsequent planning sessions, the concept of 'municipal modernization' has developed as an attempt to refocus solutions to municipal structure away from "fewer is better" and towards ensuring that municipalities are working collaboratively to plan and share limited resources.


Rather than setting regional governments as an end goal, the municipal modernization working group have developed recommendations that support *regional governance*.

A meeting of Mayors, Wardens and CAOs is scheduled for January 31st, 2018 to discuss the concept of municipal modernization and provide input on how to move forward with supporting regional collaboration.

Financial Condition Index	
5	Continue to support the Financial Condition Index as a tool to help municipalities improve their fiscal capacity
Status - Complete	
	<p>A collaborative review was conducted by the Municipal Indicator Committee which drew on user feedback along with expert knowledge of current and emerging practices. The review noted high satisfaction as a result the revisions to indicators was kept to a minimum. Revisions consist of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Removal of the Commercial Property Assessment Indicator; • Replacement of 5 Year Capital Purchases and 5 Year Contributions Indicators with a Combined Reserve Indicator; • Minor revision to Debt Service Indicator; • Revision to the Outstanding Debt Indicator to align with borrowing limits; • Revisions to the thresholds to implement a more risk based approach that is aligned with other jurisdictions. <p>As well this year letters were sent by Municipal Affairs to municipalities experiencing an ongoing large number of red flags, offering assistance to help them address their financial issues. This was a recommendation of the Fiscal Review and municipalities appreciate the help being offered.</p>

Regional Planning Support	
6	Provide continued regional planning support including developing minimum planning standards
Status – In progress	
	<p>DMA staff are researching approach options for establishing minimum planning standards and the role that regional planning may play in this.</p> <p>This work intersects with the MGA Review recommendations relating to mandatory planning, as well as the barriers to regional planning identified in developing the municipal modernization proposal. It will also respond to recommendations in the Towns Task Force.</p> <p>DMA staff are reviewing the Statements of Provincial Interest (SPI), both in content and application, as they relate to the objective of supporting regional planning and the establishment minimum planning standards.</p>

Asset Management	
7	Continue to support the development of the Asset Management System
Status – In progress	
	<p>DMA has developed a Province-wide asset management approach for municipal infrastructure which relies on the leadership, direction and support of a multi-disciplinary working group comprised of our municipal partners.</p> <p>Two cornerstone projects which will complement each other are currently underway in parallel:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Asset Management Pilot Project - focuses on linear infrastructure and has begun preliminary data collection within five participating municipalities: Port Hawkesbury, Mahone Bay, Lockeport, Shelburne (T), Argyle. Allows opportunities to test templates and data collection tools and methodology developed by the Working Group. Results and lessons learned from this initial phase will be made available province-wide and aid in guiding next steps, anticipated by Winter 2017/18. 2. Asset Registry Project - supported by the Provincial Tangible Capital Asset Funding, this project will develop a platform for the storage, mapping and reporting of municipal infrastructure assets. It is currently in the Registry design stage and will allow for testing of data collected from the AM Pilot Project. We anticipate this phase to be complete by early Fall 2018. <p>UNSM and DMA have been working closely on assisting municipalities with understanding the benefits and tools available to assist councils in preparing asset management plans. UNSM, with support from DMA, developed a proposal to FCM for asset management capacity building and was successful in their application. This work is being closely coordinated between DMA and UNSM staff.</p>

Regional Enterprise Networks	
8	Continue to support the Regional Enterprise Network Model (REN) to enhance economic development throughout the province
Status – In progress	
	<p>Representatives from DMA have met with CEOs and Board Chairs to discuss outcomes, worked with Colchester, Cumberland and Pictou municipalities to support organizational formation. In addition to the operational funding provided to RENs, DMA provided support to the REN Conference held in Baddeck (September 2017), and the REN Portal, that will host resources and materials developed by the RENs.</p>

Regional Enterprise Networks Continued

DMA is continuing to meet with REN Boards and Liaison & Oversight Committees to determine what is working, what improvements could be made and how better measure outcomes. UNSM is willing to help facilitate this work.

In 2017 government announced it would provide funding to the Western REN and Cape Breton RENs to expand the Connector program providing young people and newcomers with the opportunity to connect with business to find jobs. Government has also supported these RENs to assist in the delivery of the Atlantic Immigration Pilot. This work is ongoing.

Fire Services Review

9 Continue work on the Fire Services Review

Status – In progress



UNSM and AMA, with the financial support of the Province of Nova Scotia, engaged a consultant to facilitate a discussion on fire services. A Project Steering Committee comprised of representatives from UNSM, AMANS, the Fire Services Association, and the Department of Municipal Affairs (the Fire Marshal's Office) provided oversight.

The consultants' report was released in August 2016 and it recognized the shared responsibilities for fire services in the province.

The report is an important first step and municipalities, the fire service, and the Province agree that the need to work together is paramount. As a result, a joint committee was created this past fall. Representatives are being named from municipalities, the fire service, and the Province who will review the report, prioritize the issues to be addressed in the short and long term, and develop an action plan including areas for collaboration. Committee members will be meeting early this year to begin this important work.