

August 9, 2022

Hon. John Lohr  
Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing  
14th Floor North, Maritime Centre  
1505 Barrington Street  
P.O. Box 216  
Halifax, NS  
B3J 2M4

Dear Minister Lohr,

**RE: Village Consolidation – SERMGAR Survey**

We, the undersigned Village Chairpersons, are writing to you on behalf of the seven villages in Kings County. We were shocked to learn of recent deliberations, by the Municipality of Kings, over the prospect of consolidation. It was not long ago that considerable effort was undertaken by the Nova Scotia villages to defend our right to exist as incorporated entities, against the threat of forced consolidation. If our collective reaction to these deliberations and the tone of this letter seems pessimistic, it is only because the question of consolidation was so recently decided.

We recognize that this issue is not being raised by the Department of Municipal Affairs and Housing or by the Province of Nova Scotia, rather through the Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities (NSFM). Specifically, through the Service Exchange Renegotiation and Municipal Government Act Review (SERMGAR) survey issued to municipalities across Nova Scotia.

It is important to note that the NSFM does not recognize villages, and consequently we were not asked to respond to this survey or provide any feedback. It is on this point in particular the villages are so concerned. How can an organization that chooses not to recognize villages as an important part of local government and service delivery, begin to contemplate and make representations for the role of villages in the future? Hopefully it is clear to everyone involved with the MGA review that the NSFM survey does not represent meaningful consultation or a village perspective.

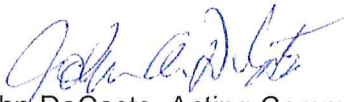
Regarding the Municipality of Kings' specific response to the SERMGAR survey, we'd like to take the opportunity to rebut the points they have raised in their public meetings. In lumping villages in with towns and districts, the Municipality of Kings is misrepresenting the financial status of villages. The average village in Nova Scotia is financially sound, maintaining important infrastructure, creating programming and recreational opportunities. Villages are a value-added entity that provide services that the Municipality of Kings does not or will not provide to its residents. Villages were incorporated for this very reason, to bring services such as potable water, wastewater services, or rural programming, to communities who otherwise were left without.

Certainly, there are always possibilities to create efficiencies for taxpayers through mechanisms such as shared services. The villages are not opposed to collaboration. In many ways the villages actively work with each other, districts, counties, and our neighbouring towns to provide high quality services at the best possible value.

We hope that the takeaway from this letter is that the villages must be consulted when planning for the future of municipal government. Whether it is regarding consolidation or the MGA review, we have legitimate considerations that represent the needs and desires of our local communities. We recognize the importance of the MGA review and look forward to sharing the village perspective through that process. We greatly encourage your department and the provincial government in general to look to the Association of Nova Scotia Villages (ANSV) for real consultation when making decisions that impact Villages.

We look forward to working with your department staff going forward in shaping the future of villages in Nova Scotia for years to come.

Respectfully,



John DeCoste, Acting Commission Chair  
Village of Aylesford




Brian Banks, Commission Chair  
Village of Greenwood



Angela Cruickshank, Commission Chair  
Village of Canning



Wayne Fowler, Commission Chair  
Village of Kingston



Colin Best, Commission Chair  
Village of Cornwallis Square



James Redmond, Commissioner  
Village of New Minas



Lewis Benedict, Commission Chair  
Village of Port Williams

cc.

Mayor Peter Muttart, Municipality of Kings  
Board of Directors, Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities  
Hon. Keith Irving, MLA Kings South  
Chris Palmer, MLA Kings West