

Better Connectivity for Inverness County

April 5, 2022.

Association of Municipal Administrators of Nova Scotia
Janice Wentzell, Executive Director
Suite 1304, 1809 Barrington Street,
Halifax, N.S.

Ms. Wentzell,

I am writing to the Board members of AMANS on behalf of the advocacy group, *Better Connectivity for Inverness County*. We are a volunteer committee that has been working for the past two and a half years on issues related to improvements to internet and cell service in our area, educating ourselves and others and speaking to politicians at the federal, provincial and municipal levels in support of better connectivity. Our committee has representation from communities including Glendale, Creignish, Judique, Marble Mountain, and throughout the Margarees.

We organized a meeting last week with the CAO of Pictou County, Brian Cullen to which we invited our own CAO, Keith MacDonald. We had a very open, idea exchange on how we could address the lack of cell towers, particularly in rural Nova Scotia, and ensure that they stay powered every hour of every day (24/7). We have also reached out to the Fire Service Association of Nova Scotia (FSANS) on this issue. Always-powered cell tower access is crucial for First Responders, and of course benefits us all

With the current situation, our fire departments and emergency services are at an incredible disadvantage in times of power outages, particularly as our weather events become more challenging and longer in duration. In speaking with fire department chiefs and emergency personnel across our county, and others, we know that they frequently encounter a lack of power back up in landline phone service during power outages. Combine this with insufficient access to cell phone and TMR communication coverage in numerous areas that they serve, and there are real communication issues. Because of these challenges, dealing with power outages can be both hazardous and potentially fatal for individuals in more remote areas.

As stated by a fire chief from the Margaree area of our county, in reference to emergencies,
“If someone has a medical bracelet and the phone service is down and there’s no cell service, you’ll find them dead on the floor. Plain as that!”

We are seeking the support of AMANS in that we see your members as advocates for counties and constituencies where residents and visitors expect to be able to live, work and play with access to cell phone coverage for security and safety. We also recognize that while urban areas

of the province may see cell service in rural areas as a lesser concern, we ask that those Board members consider travel across the province for holidays, for recreation and sporting events and in times of dire emergency.

Our municipalities are stronger when we all have fair and equitable access to resources.

We are hopeful that AMANS, together with the Federation of Nova Scotia Municipalities, can encourage the provincial government to move forward on this issue. We have spoken with our MLA and Deputy Premier Allan MacMaster on this matter in recent months and often over the last two years. We know that while he personally supports the need for more cell phone towers across the province and the supported 24/7 service, he has not been able to commit his government to take this project forward. Certainly, it was nowhere in the recent budget projections.

We encourage AMANS to speak to the very pressing need for the province of Nova Scotia to consider some form of partnership either with the federal government or through a long-term return on investment, business partnering arrangement that will allow construction of additional cell towers in unserved and underserved rural areas. This is particularly needed where topography and small populations have made building towers financially unattractive to major cellular service providers.

We want to be assured that fire departments and emergency personnel have the necessary cell phone connectivity to serve those in need seven days a week, 24 hours a day.

We would welcome an opportunity to begin a conversation with members of your Board to further this request. As well, we can provide additional materials to support our discussions. Our contact on this file is Bill Murphy murphywilliambill@gmail.com
Your consideration of this matter is of value to all Nova Scotians.

Sincerely,
Eileen Coady for the Committee for Better Connectivity for Inverness County

Signees on this letter:

Bill Murphy, John MacInnis, John Smokey MacNeil, John Stinson, Shelley Falik, Donald MacCuspic, Flo Campbell, Bill Legg, Claire Sampson-MacDonald, Maria Coady.
cc.

John MacKinnon. President, AMANS
Juanita Spencer, CEO, NSF
Mayor Amanda McDougall, NSF President
Mayor Brenda Chisholm-Beaton, NSF Vice President
Keith MacDonald, CAO, Municipality for the County of Inverness
Bonnie MacIsaac, Warden, Municipality of the County of Inverness
Lynn Chisholm, Councillor, Municipality of the County of Inverness
Catherine Gillis, Councillor, Municipality of the County of Inverness
Brian Cullen, CAO, Municipality of Pictou County