



MUNICIPALITY *of the*
COUNTY *of* KINGS

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September 5, 2023

Brenda Chisholm-Beaton, President
Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities
Suite 1304, 1809 Barrington Street
Halifax, NS B3J 3K8

Dear President Chisholm-Beaton and Members of the Board,

I am writing to formally express our displeasure at how the Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities has approached and participated in the "Service Exchange Agreement: MOU", and to ask that the Board and Executive revisit this.

A few points of the points of concern raised by Kings during the recent "consultations" and discussions held between municipal units included:

- Meaningful Consultation:

Effective public policy generally includes three basic attributes – program analysis, financial costing, and stakeholder consultation. Unfortunately, these basic elements have not been adequately addressed. A discussion paper should have been generated that included the program and financial analysis as a backdrop to member consultation. In the absence of a discussion paper, vagaries arose about the elements under discussion - the proposed local roads program being a prime example.

To be clear, the Joint Roads Committee recommended a transfer of 1,648 km, not 14,000 kms of local roads. We emphasized that any suggestion that the concept of the roads program being voluntary was, frankly, absurd. As only one example, the limited financial information (suggested municipal savings) provided should not be taken in isolation. We must consider at the same time where, for example, the costs of education are heading over the next several years.

- Lack of a Guiding Framework:

A framework should have been established to guide the analysis and negotiations. As an example, principled negotiations could have been based on: revenue/cost neutrality for both orders of government; disentanglement of program delivery and the payment of services by order of government; and the creation of a strong viable order of local government. In the absence of guiding principles, the most significant programs of concern to municipal units have been relegated to

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uncertain future discussions and negotiation. Deferring matters such as education, policing, and fire and emergency service governance is not acceptable.

- Overall approach:

We are aware that a selected number of folks have spent considerable time working toward a solution to recommend to the rest of us, we do not agree that the impacts have been fully considered. Nor do we accept that the group had the mandate to negotiate. With respect, SERMGAR do not speak on behalf of the municipal units. Nor if we interpret the comments that have been made in the on-line sessions correctly, have they spoken for the NSFM Board or executive.

It did not go unnoticed that a complete region of the province was not represented on SERMGAR, the Committee was needlessly subjected to Non-Disclosure Agreements, and that the NSFM Executive has yet to weigh in on the topic. With regards to the latter, I note that pursuant to s.518 of the *Municipal Government Act*, the Minister is required to consult with the executive of the NSFM. The spirit of this provision intends that the executive take a position and advise the membership. Please inform the Government that the SERMGAR proceedings do not constitute the position of the NSFM.

I trust you will agree that the lack of a framework approach, fulsome information and meaningful consultation associated with the current approach is alarming.

In the result, my suggestion for the executive is to respond to the Province of Nova Scotia with the following offer: Agree to consult with the membership in the design of a consulting framework. Following agreement on those parameters, agree to the engagement of a third-party subject matter expert to develop and table with government a package of appropriate reforms.

Yours truly,


Peter Muttart, Mayor

c. Juanita Spencer

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