

March 12, 2018

TO: Mayors, Wardens, Clerks, All Units

FR: Geoff Stewart, President, Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities

RE: UNSM BOARD REPORT, MARCH 2, 2018

I am pleased to send you the UNSM Board Report from our March 2, 2018, meeting. We ask that you include this report on your Council Agenda. We would be pleased to answer any questions that may arise, or hear any comments and/or suggestions.

Also attached is the update on our initiatives report.

1. **Municipal Modernization:** The Board endorsed a Letter of Understanding with the AMANS, Department of Municipal Affairs and UNSM to enter into a partnership to complete the first (development) phase of the Municipal Modernization project. This phase will develop a framework for the project, identifying the approach, timelines, and possible actions leading to better understanding of how municipal modernization might best be achieved. It will also identify the issues that would not be included in the project. A decision to continue to Phase 11, or implementation, would need to be made following discussion of the framework developed.
2. **Rebranding:** The Rebranding Committee met with the Executive to choose colours for the logo and the tagline. The Board agreed that the UNSM would go forward with the launch at the Spring Workshop. The new website will also go live at that time.
3. **PVSC Memorandum of Understanding:** The governance changes to the PVSC Legislation are expected to be tables in the spring sitting of the Legislation. One of the elements of the governance changes supported by UNSM included a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the two organizations. The Board discussed a proposed MOU, but will wait until the actual legislation is tabled before signing off on the MOU
4. **211 Nova Scotia Board Appointment:** Councillor Tina Connors, District of Chester, was appointed to the 211 Nova Scotia Board.
5. **Resolutions Process:** The Board discussed feedback from last year's resolution. Ideally, the resolutions developed would align with UNSM priorities. The Board agreed to seek Council feedback on the priorities the UNSM should address this year. To this end, a request will be sent to every council, asking them to discuss their top priorities. The priorities identified by councils will be presented at the UNSM spring conference. Further discussion at that meeting will provide input to the development of the 2018 resolutions.

- 6. Advocacy Strategy Workshop:** The Board agreed to participate in workshop to review current advocacy strategies, to receive information on best practices, and to develop an advocacy framework.

The Board also agreed to hold Advocacy Days in the Fall.

- 7. Fire Services:** A few changes to the Fire Services Phase I, Terms of Reference were needed. The Board approved these changes.

UNSM Initiatives Report – March 2, 2018

UNSM Vision: *Effective local government and strong, sustainable communities*

UNSM Mission: *To enable effective local government for Nova Scotia’s communities by facilitating strategic advocacy, education and collaboration*

Initiatives

1. Partnership Framework

Description/Update

The Ministers Roundtable approved three documents, which are being distributed to UNSM membership:

- the terms of reference for the Roundtable were revised, integrating the UNSM resolutions process into the schedule of meetings and establishing the Roundtable as the forum to monitor progress under the Partnership Framework.
- A consultation guide for the development of new legislation and regulations impacting municipalities was agreed to with Municipal Affairs,
- A progress report of the Partnership Framework.

2. Resolutions and Statements of Municipal Concern

Description/Update

Five resolutions were sent to the Province as approved at the UNSM Fall Conference and focus on CAP; Connectivity; Doctor Shortages; Municipal Funding; and Roads. In addition, resolutions on affordable housing and the governance of PVSC were approved. The Ministers Roundtable meeting discussed the resolutions and a formal reply will be forthcoming. The upcoming spring legislature is expected to introduce PVSC governance changes, and work is underway on a draft MOU between PVSC and UNSM.

UNSM is currently planning workshops on physician recruitment for the spring, and one on connectivity in the fall.

Statements of Municipal Concern have been sent to the ministers responsible for housing, agriculture, deer, regional enterprise networks and regional planning. A response to the deer issue was received from the Minister of Natural Resources, and is available on the UNSM Website.

Discussions are underway to establish joint provincial/municipal committees on roads. UNSM President has written the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructural Renewal to request his department present at the UNSM Spring Workshop.

Work to develop a joint committee on housing is underway.

UNSM is participating in an agricultural land use committee under the Federation of Agriculture.

Other topics were identified through the resolutions process last year, and UNSM is monitoring a number of these.

- Libraries: The Province is providing extra funding for libraries this coming year. A letter from the Minister of to Warden Jimmy MacAlpine confirming the funding is available on the UNSM website/
- Seniors: Work continues on the development of a memorandum of understanding with the Department of Seniors.
- Forestry: The Department of Natural Resources had allowed an extension to the work by Professor William Lahey. The report is not expected for another two months, the end of April.

3. Cannabis Legalization

Description/Update

The Joint Municipal Provincial Committee on Cannabis met in February, and discussed the costing to municipalities from the legalization of cannabis. The province confirmed they will undertake education and communications around provincial laws. Decisions on public consumption are needed to better determine municipal implications.

In the meantime, the UNSM/AMA Municipal Cannabis Working Group has been meeting. UNSM has supported FCM financially in the development of a guide for municipalities, and this guide should be released in mid to late March. It deals with planning and other issues, but not directly with policing. It is anticipated the province will table legislation in the spring sitting, and more will be known at that time.

4. Fire Services Review

Description/Update

The Board approved appointments to the NS Joint Municipal Fire Services Committee Phase I. Those appointed to represent UNSM are: Councillor Jennifer Daniels, District of West Hants, and Councillor Wayne Thorburne, Bridgewater. All committee members have now been appointed, and the first meeting is scheduled for February 28th, 2018.

5. Accessibility Act

Description/Update

Municipalities will need to implement the requirements under the new Act. A Joint Provincial/Municipal Committee is being formed to assist municipalities in fulfilling their requirements under the Act. The UNSM Board appointed Councillor Laurie Cranton, County of Inverness, Mayor Jeff Cantwell, Town of Wolfville, and Councillor George MacDonald, CBRM, to the committee. The first meeting of the committee was held February 15, 2018, and work is underway to develop tools for municipalities in developing their advisory committees and action plans. For now, municipalities are encouraged to begin documenting their existing assets for accessibility.

6. Parental Accommodations Committee

The Parental Accommodations Committee submitted their report to the Deputy Minister of Municipal Affairs, and the report is under consideration, and is available on the UNSM website. The report makes three recommendations:

- Amend legislation to allow exemptions to new parents and pregnant women to the “three meeting” rule. This would mean that for a minimum period of 17 weeks, a new parent or pregnant woman does not have to obtain council approval to miss three consecutive meetings of council.
- Required municipalities and villages to adopt a parental accommodation policy, with regulated minimum content, including a plan to ensure continued representation for constituents, and the number of weeks notice required to give notice of leave.
- Develop a model “parental leave accommodations policy for elected officials.

The report contains information on the principles used in reviewing options, describes the current situation in NS and elsewhere, summarizes the consultation undertaken, including with experts.

7. Asset Management

UNSM continues to support municipalities with asset management planning, as a requirement of the 2014-24 Gas Tax Fund Agreement. UNSM recently submitted its Progress Report for the funding it received from FCM from the [Municipal Asset Management Program](#) to provide basic training and skill development resources to Nova Scotia municipalities. The Progress Report was approved by FCM and it will disburse \$33,480.77 to UNSM for the work completed to date, which represent approximately 40% of the total funding. UNSM completed its 6 training courses at the later part of 2017 and is currently developing an online course for elected officials on the basics of asset management. The final initiative UNSM will produce with the FCM funding is an online module based on the Province of Nova’s asset management pilot project “how to” guide for collecting data and completing condition assessments for linear assets.

8. Upcoming Events

- [Safety Services Nova Scotia 36th Annual Workplace Safety Conference](#) - April 9-10, 2018, Halifax Convention Centre, Halifax, NS
- UNSM Spring Workshop - May 10–12, 2018, Mariners Centre, Yarmouth, NS
- [The Atlantic Active Transportation Summit](#) - May 23-24, 2018, Halifax Central Library, Halifax, NS
- [FCM Conference](#) - May 31 - June 3, 2018, Halifax Convention Centre, Halifax, NS--We encourage you to take advantage of the Halifax location and attend the Conference. It is a wonderful learning opportunity. also watch for an e-mail regarding the opportunity to showcase your community and successes to the over 3,000 delegates, companions and exhibitors expected to attend.