

Legislative Update for NSFM Members

The 2025 fall legislative sitting has been adjourned. NSFM would like to raise awareness among members of the significant pieces of legislation that were announced in the provincial legislature during this sitting. Members are invited to send any questions or concerns that they have to their Regional Representative on the Board of Directors or NSFM staff.

Of the 14 government bills put forward in the provincial legislature this fall, this update will cover the following:

- Traffic Safety Act ([Bill 130](#)) – Carried and given Royal Assent
- Municipal Modernization Act ([Bill 141](#)) – Carried and given Royal Assent
- Fire Safety and Services Act ([Bill 158](#)) – First Reading

Traffic Safety Act (TSA)

The TSA is a much-needed modernization of the Motor Vehicle Act, which accounts for modern technological advancements and prioritizes safety for vulnerable road users. The Department of Public Works and a consultant held consultation sessions with municipalities and law enforcement agencies over the summer. Further information sessions are currently planned to take place in late October or November.

The TSA grants new capabilities to all municipal councils to govern roads, including setting speed limits within a certain range, addressing excessive noise, and ordering winter parking on municipally owned roads. The TSA also provides renewed legislative backing for licensing, motor vehicle inspections, and law enforcement in pursuit of safer roads.

These new municipal capabilities will be supported by a Municipal Traffic Authority. As many members will know, some municipalities currently employ a position responsible for some aspects of road safety and governance, but not all do. Section 15 of the TSA requires that all municipal councils appoint a Municipal Traffic Authority. If a municipal council does not appoint a Municipal Traffic Authority or if the Municipal Traffic Authority is not sufficiently carrying out their responsibilities in the opinion of the Minister of Public Works, the Minister may fill the position or order their replacement.

As is found in other pieces of legislation, the TSA allows the Minister to vest a highway or portion of a highway in a municipality. This is concerning given the broad definition of highway that is largely carried over from the Motor Vehicle Act with additional details. This definition includes sidewalks, alleys, part of a public park, roads, highways, and bridges, among other assets.

Further information sessions will be organized and announced by the Department of Public Works in late October or November. The purpose of these meetings will be to provide the information necessary to plan for changes called for by the TSA. The tentative plan is for the TSA to be proclaimed in early 2026.

Given the new responsibilities that will be taken on by municipal staff and law enforcement as a result of the TSA, NSFM believes that 12-month notice is called for as stated in section 519 of the Municipal Government Act. NSFM would also like to learn more about any plans that the Minister has to vest transportation assets in a municipality.

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Municipal Modernization Act (MMA)

The MMA amends six significant pieces of legislation that govern municipalities and creates a new statute entitled An Act to Control Development Around Transportation Corridor Lands. Changes that are significant to municipalities include:

- Amendments to both the Halifax Regional Municipality Charter (HRMC) and Municipal Government Act (MGA) that allow the Minister of Municipal Affairs to designate lands for childcare facilities that are exempt from municipal planning and permitting processes.
- Amendments to both the HRMC and MGA that allow municipal councils to create a policy on continued tax relief for property owners impacted by wildfire or a natural disaster who have rebuilt their structures. This extends municipal abilities to provide tax relief to property owners impacted by wildfire or natural disasters who have not rebuilt their structures.
- Amendments that create the ability of the Minister of Municipal Affairs to order revisions of HRM's planning documents that take account of provincial priorities.
- Amending the Minister overseeing the Housing in HRM Act to be the Minister of Growth and Development, now that the housing portfolio is now within this Department.
- Amendments to the HRMC and MGA that allow municipalities to accept electronic payments or some other method of payment at a tax sale.
- Amendments that allow municipalities to announce upcoming elections online and allow electors to request that their name be obscured on any public lists of electors.
- Amendments putting the Minister of Municipal Affairs, rather than the Governor in Council, in charge of the total amount of the Municipal Financial Capacity Grant (MFCG) each year.
- Creation of the Act to Control Development Around Transportation Corridor Lands, which will allow the Governor in Council to designate priority corridor areas.

Amendments made by the MMA were proclaimed upon receiving Royal Assent, with the exception of amendments to the Municipal Elections Act.

Members are advised that tax relief policies for rebuilt structures will be challenging and will not avoid a property owner's capped assessment from being reset due to the new build. Property Valuation Services Corporation (PVSC) has provided a memo with details on this amendment.

Most these amendments are generally agreeable but do not enable the sort of municipal modernization that NSFM members have called for. NSFM defines municipal modernization as supporting intermunicipal collaboration and ensuring that municipalities are equipped with the discretion and resources necessary to address pressing issues. Municipalities stand to be helpful partners and NSFM discourages the Province from using authoritative legislation as first resort.

The Act to Control Development Around Transportation Corridor Lands will complement the Regional Transportation Plan of Link Nova Scotia. After the Governor in Council designates a priority corridor, Link Nova Scotia can order a municipality provide services and/or highway access. Negotiation of terms may take place with the municipality after Link Nova Scotia provides notice of order but this may come at the municipality's cost. If negotiations reach an impasse, the Minister of Public Works is able to make a binding decision on what work is to be done and the "provision of resources and compensation to address the effect of on the municipality", following consultation with both parties. Securing and expanding corridors is discussed in the [Regional Transportation Plan](#).

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Fire Safety and Services Act (FSSA)

Following a fire services review including consultation with fire fighters and municipalities over the summer, the FSSA establishes a plan for creating a new legislative framework for fire prevention.

The FSSA mandates the Minister of Municipal Affairs and the Minister of Emergency Management to develop this new legislative framework following six months of consultation. Consultation is mandated to include municipalities, public safety and first responder entities, sector associations, and fire fighters. Input gained during this consultation will complement the findings of the Province's 2025 value-for-money audit of the Nova Scotia Firefighters School and the recent fire services review report.

NSFM has reviewed the fire services review report produced by Transitional Solutions Inc., and finds alignment in some of the recommendations in this report. However, NSFM has questions and significant concerns, such as the **need for each municipality needing to hire a Fire Chief and any downloaded responsibilities recommended in this report**. Downloaded responsibilities without the necessary resources to fulfill them could exacerbate existing longstanding issues and miss opportunities to take fire prevention in Nova Scotia into its next chapter. NSFM will be participating in the consultation, and members are encouraged to do so as well.

This FSSA was only given first reading in the legislature and will most likely be picked up in the Spring sitting of the legislature.