



**NOVA SCOTIA FEDERATION  
OF MUNICIPALITIES**

March 18<sup>th</sup>, 2020

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Town of Yarmouth

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Town of Port Hawkesbury

The Honourable Leo Glavine  
Minister, Communities, Culture, and Heritage  
P.O. Box 456, Station Centre  
Halifax, NS B3J 2R5

Delivered via email

Dear Minister Glavine:

**RE: Library Funding and Municipal Consultation**

We write to you today on behalf of the boards of directors for both the Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities (NSFM) and the Association of Municipal Administrators, Nova Scotia (AMANS). Both boards have serious concerns about the library funding model discussed in your Deputy Minister's letter of February 25<sup>th</sup>, 2020.

In that letter your Deputy puts forward the exact same funding proposal that NSFM members objected to a year ago. It is the same proposal that caused NSFM and AMANS to call for a return to the level of equal standing we had held in previous library funding reviews over the past thirty years. Yet since the time of these requests, there have been no additional opportunities for consultation.

The issue first came to our attention in a letter dated December 21<sup>st</sup>, 2018. Tracey Taweel, then Deputy Minister for Communities, Culture, and Heritage (CCH), wrote to inform NSFM about a new funding model for libraries. The letter requested a meeting with the NSFM Board and explained that the new funding model would be discussed with AMANS and other municipal stakeholders. These discussions took place during the early weeks of 2019.

By the time of the Deputy's meeting with the NSFM Board on February 22nd, 2019, AMANS and NSFM Board members had received multiple reports of serious concerns with CCH's proposal. These concerns were shared with the Deputy during that meeting and were also shared with you in NSFM's letter dated March 5<sup>th</sup>, 2019.

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In that meeting and in that letter, the NSFM Board expressed disappointment that the current review had developed without the participation of NSFM and AMANS. The letter requested that the in-progress library funding review give municipalities equal standing at the decision-making table as key stakeholders. The letter also called on you, as Minister, to explain how NSFM members would be further engaged during the review.

In your reply to that letter, dated March 27<sup>th</sup>, 2019, you acknowledged our collective concerns about the lack of municipal representation in the development of the funding model. You also recognized the substantial impact of increased expenditures for some municipal units, and you explained that your department would be in touch to arrange a meeting where these concerns could be discussed in more detail.

But NSFM and AMANS were never contacted to discuss these concerns. No word was heard from your staff on this topic until a few weeks ago, on February 25<sup>th</sup>, 2020, when your Deputy circulated a letter to all regional libraries and municipalities.

In that letter, your Deputy thanks municipalities for their “input throughout the process.” But there has been no new input in this process since the time our objections were first shared with you and your department. In that letter your Deputy also explains how municipalities will have the option to start paying the increases described in the new library funding model beginning in 2020-2021.

In speaking about this timeline your Deputy mentions a 12-month notice. It is our understanding that this would be in reference to a letter dated May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2019. In that letter, the Minister of Municipal Affairs explained that the new library funding formula could result in additional financial pressure on municipalities.

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NSFM has obtained a legal opinion on 12-month notices stating that the 12-month clock should only begin after municipalities have received enough details to make meaningful plans to prepare for the expected changes. The library funding notice included none of these details, and accordingly NSFM responded to the Minister of Municipal Affairs in a letter dated June 5<sup>th</sup>, 2019, to reject the 12-month notice on library funding for the above-stated reasons.

Municipalities have been the largest contributors of funds to libraries in the province of Nova Scotia for the last thirty years. Over the most recent 27-year period for which information is available to us (1990-91 through 2016-17), municipalities have provided 52 per cent of library funding, while the Province has provided 40 per cent.

Municipal contributions to library funding have increased by an average of 4.25 per cent per year over that time period, while year-to-year increases from the Province have averaged 2.59 per cent. It is notable that Provincial funding was nearly frozen over the last seven years of that period, starting at \$14.1 million in 2010-11 and increasing to \$14.4 million in 2016-17. During that same time, municipal contributions increased from \$18.4 million in 2010-11 to \$23 million in 2016-17.

NSFM and the Province of Nova Scotia are signatories to a Partnership Framework, a special memorandum of understanding that formalizes our commitment to work together. Through the Department of Municipal Affairs and Housing (DMAH), the Partnership Framework commits the Province of Nova Scotia to work with municipalities by engaging in regular and ongoing consultation, robust two-way communication, and the resolution of differences through dialogue and discussion. Indeed, the 12-month notice provision in the *Municipal Government Act* and other important advances have emerged from this partnership.

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We are proud of our Partnership Framework and our relationship with the Province, and with DMAH. With this relationship in mind, it is our collective hope that municipalities should not ever have to put a legal opinion to the test when working with the Province. And it is also our hope that we should be seen as deserving of an equal seat at the table when matters of municipal concern are being discussed, even without our consistently high levels of contributions to library funding.

In sum, your departmental staff have not followed through on your commitment to meet, our requests for additional consultation have not been met, and our rejection of the 12-month notice does not seem to have been acknowledged. As such, the Boards of Directors of NSFM and AMANS have no choice but to formally request that CCH halt any and all plans using this library funding model, and that CCH begin immediate plans to involve municipalities in the planning process in a meaningful way. Please provide us with an expected timeline for our request as soon as possible.

Sincerely,



Mayor Pam Mood

President, Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities



Mike Dolter, CD, MBA, CPA, CMA

President, Association of Municipal Administrators, Nova Scotia

CC: Alex Morrison, President, Library Boards Association of Nova Scotia  
The Honourable Chuck Porter, Minister, Department of Municipal Affairs and Housing  
Nancy MacLellan, Deputy Minister, Department of Municipal Affairs and Housing  
Justin Huston, Deputy Minister, Communities, Culture and Heritage  
Lynn Somers, Director, Nova Scotia Provincial Library