



**NOVA SCOTIA FEDERATION
OF MUNICIPALITIES**

March 18th, 2020

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Town of Yarmouth

VICE-PRESIDENT:

Deputy Mayor Emily Lutz
County of Kings

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Halifax Regional Municipality

REGIONAL CAUCUS CHAIR:

Councillor Clarence Prince
Cape Breton Regional Municipality

RURAL CAUCUS CHAIR:

Deputy Mayor Geoff Stewart
County of Colchester

TOWNS CAUCUS CHAIR:

Mayor Brenda Chisholm-Beaton
Town of Port Hawkesbury

The Honourable Chuck Porter
Minister, Municipal Affairs and Housing
P.O. Box 216, Halifax, NS B3J 2M6

Delivered via email

Dear Minister Porter:

RE: Partnership Framework and Library Funding

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). We wish to express our concern regarding the effectiveness of the Partnership Framework, and to request your assistance in the matter of the current library funding review process.

Our boards and members believe in the value of libraries. Over the past thirty years, AMANS and NSFM have been formal participants in every library funding review, save for the most recent. We are confused about this recent exclusion, and we were surprised when a new library funding model was unveiled to our members last year without our participation in the process.

At that time, we wrote to the Minister responsible—with copy to yourself, dated March 5th, 2019—to request that AMANS and NSFM be restored as equal stakeholders in library funding review process. We explained to Minister Glavine that the proposed changes would be financially onerous for many municipal units. We also explained that the lack of consultation in the review process was a serious concern and communicated our expectation that we be further engaged during the review.

A few months later, on May 1st, 2019, you sent NSFM a 12-month notice letter. On June 5th, 2019, we replied to that letter to reject several portions of the 12-month notice letter, including the section concerning library funding. The reason provided for this rejection cited a legal opinion we have obtained regarding section 519(1) of the *Municipal Government Act*.

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That opinion instructs us to count notice as having been served only when enough detail (about anticipated increases in expenditures or decreases in revenues) has been provided to allow municipalities to prepare for the changes being proposed. The notice you provided had no details, and only explained that the new library funding formula could result in additional financial pressure on municipalities.

Minister Glavine responded to our request by committing staff at Communities, Culture, and Heritage (CCH) to reach out to NSFM to arrange further involvement in the funding review process. But no further meetings have taken place, and on February 25th, 2020 we received a letter from the Deputy Minister for CCH indicating that their department intends to move forward with the new funding model.

We are concerned by this development, considering Minister Glavine's commitment to further consultation and our rejection of the 12-month notice. We have written Minister Glavine to request that the current funding review process be put on hold until AMANS and NSFM are represented as key stakeholders in the current funding review.

A memorandum of understanding (MOU) preceded the current Partnership Framework. That MOU provided for regular and ongoing consultation, robust two-way communication, and the resolution of differences through dialogue and discussion. During those years, AMANS and the former UNSM enjoyed a good working relationship with the departments responsible for library funding.

We are deeply concerned that the current Partnership Framework appears to have been ineffective in ensuring that the Province and municipalities, through AMANS and NSFM, are working together on the issue of library funding. We need the Partnership Framework to ensure that municipal requests for consultation are responded to seriously.

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As Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing we request that you and your staff work with Minister Glavine and CCH staff to rectify this situation. We respectfully request that the current library funding review process be put on hold until AMANS and NSFM representatives are restored to our status key stakeholders, as was the case in prior funding reviews over the past three decades.

AMANS and NSFM believe that Nova Scotians must have access to a thriving library service. The track record of municipal contributions to libraries is evidence of this fact. We look forward to continuing this trend of contributions in the future, but we must have a voice in the process.

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
Nancy MacLellan, Deputy Minister, Department of Municipal Affairs and Housing
The Honourable Leo Glavine, Minister, Communities, Culture and Heritage
Justin Huston, Deputy Minister, Communities, Culture and Heritage
Lynn Somers, Director, Nova Scotia Provincial Library