



**NOVA SCOTIA FEDERATION
OF MUNICIPALITIES**

May 8, 2020

PRESIDENT:

Mayor Pam Mood
Town of Yarmouth

VICE-PRESIDENT:

Deputy Mayor Emily Lutz
County of Kings

IMMEDIATE PAST-PRESIDENT:

Councillor Waye Mason
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

Catherine McKenna, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Infrastructure and Communities
House of Commons Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A6
Via email: infcm.infc@canada.ca;
Catherine.McKenna@parl.gc.ca

Dear Minister McKenna:

**RE: NSFM's Support for FCM's Request for Emergency Financial Aid for
Municipalities**

I am writing on behalf of the Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities (NSFM), which represents all 49 of Nova Scotia's municipalities and the 376 mayors, wardens and councillors who govern them. We formally request the federal government provide greater financial and economic support to assist municipalities across the province affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

As you are aware, the COVID-19 outbreak has caused all orders of government to adjust to an ever-changing reality. Municipalities across Nova Scotia are on the front lines of the COVID-19 pandemic as they continue to deliver essential services to Nova Scotians such as fire protection, police services, water filtration, and waste management.

In Nova Scotia, the primary focus for municipalities has been providing essential services to residents and businesses while remaining financially solvent. This is challenged by the number of businesses and residents facing financial hardship from the ongoing COVID-19 crisis. Municipalities across Nova Scotia are expecting one-third of taxpayers to have difficulty meeting their tax bills in 2020. Since municipal liquidity is dependent on prompt payment of property taxes, significant financial strain has been placed on all municipalities while local Councils have no legal ability to run operating deficits.

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Minister Catherine McKenna

Page 2

May 8, 2020

The loss of user fees from transit, parking and community, culture, and recreation facilities is another source of foregone revenue. Many municipalities have already temporarily laid off staff at these facilities, and in these programs, to reduce costs.

We support the call by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) on the federal government to deliver at least \$10 billion in emergency municipal operating funding. Municipalities require direct tools such as the Gas Tax Fund allotment top-up and expediting Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program (ICIP) applications.

A federal infusion to the Gas Tax Fund is the most direct funding support program available to municipalities and it would not only enable municipal shovel-ready projects to begin but also support local economic growth. Moreover, it is critical that the approval of ICIP applications at the federal level be accelerated and that ICIP funds are fully utilized by implementing flexible funding streams.

Although this pandemic has been challenging for all, the economic slowdown also continues to exacerbate the digital divide between communities. Many Nova Scotians have struggled to access federal supports in a timely manner due to poor broadband Internet connectivity in many parts of the province. This reality also has consequences on obtaining real-time public health information as well as distance education since some rural areas of Nova Scotia have some of the slowest Internet speeds in the country.

Therefore, it is vital that the federal government immediately launch the Universal Broadband Fund to accelerate funding to advance shovel-ready connectivity projects. Taken together, the NSFMC believes these options will act as immediate measures to help support municipalities both economically and financially.

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Minister Catherine McKenna

Page 3

May 8, 2020

Now more than ever, all orders of government must collaborate on a coordinated response to address this national crisis. I assure you that local governments are fully committed and ready to help protect and support Canadians, and we thank you for your ongoing engagement during these challenging times.

Signed,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "P Mood". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Mayor Pam Mood,

President, Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities

CC: The Honourable Maryam Monsef, Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Rural Economic Development

CC: The Honourable Andy Fillmore, MP, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities

CC: The Honourable Gudie Hutchings, MP, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Rural Economic Development