



**NOVA SCOTIA FEDERATION
OF MUNICIPALITIES**

February 3, 2021

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Honourable Chuck Porter
Department of Municipal Affairs
14th Floor North, Maritime Centre
1505 Barrington Street
P.O. Box 216
Halifax, NS
B3J 2M4

Delivered via Email

Dear Minister Porter

RE: Affordable Housing Commission Working Group

I am writing to follow up on our January 29th phone conversation regarding the Affordable Housing Commission and NSFM's invitation to join the *Partnerships and Integration Work Group*. As I communicated to you at the time, after considerable discussion the Board of Directors has opted to decline the invitation.

NSFM is the legislated collective voice of all 49 municipalities in Nova Scotia, and we are the level of government closest to the people. We firmly believe that we should be a full member of the Affordable Housing Commission and not just a member of the working group. Our members represent all Nova Scotians and see firsthand the housing challenges in this province. Municipalities are invested in supporting housing for their residents and communities in need.

Since the Affordable Housing Commission was announced, NSFM has truly appreciated the opportunity to have open dialogue with you and your staff to highlight what we believe to be an oversight in our exclusion. We formally requested a seat on the Commission in our December 9 correspondence to you, and were denied on January 22 in a letter from Deputy Minister Berliner.

Since communicating our intent to decline participation in the working group, we have been asked by DMAH how to best engage municipalities in this process. We believe the simplest answer is to include NSFM on the Commission.

Three main reasons have been cited for excluding NSFM. First, that the Commission is not political in nature; second, that NSFM CEO Juanita Spencer is not a housing expert; and third, that many other stakeholders have made similar requests and the Commission is not able to accommodate everyone.

The Board strongly rejects these arguments.

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To respond, Ms. Spencer is not an elected official, but rather the non-political staff representative of our members. The municipal perspective is paramount to any recommendation put forward by this Commission.

Ms. Spencer's position as CEO of NSFM makes her the best person to bring that perspective forward in an objective fashion, ideally in partnership with AMANS.

While it has been noted that Ms. Spencer is not an expert in housing in particular, an invitation on January 28 to sit on the *Partnerships and Integration Work Group* of the Commission specifically mentions her experience and expertise in providing municipal insight. Ms. Spencer is further backed by municipal experts from both rural and urban communities across the province who make up our membership.

Municipalities are not just a stakeholder, but rather another order of government, and should be viewed as a valued and essential partner in this process. This is crucial if the recommendations resulting from the Commission's work have an impact on municipalities and our residents.

In the early days of COVID-19, NSFM and DMAH worked closely together and achieved many outcomes that benefitted Nova Scotians and their communities. We regret that DMAH has taken the stance they have on this matter.

NSFM will respond on behalf of municipalities to the recommendations of the commission that are brought forward by the province.

Sincerely,



Emily Lutz
President, Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities

CC: The Honourable Stephen McNeil, Premier of Nova Scotia
Tim Houston, Leader, PC Party of Nova Scotia
Gary Burrill, Leader, NDP
Iain Rankin, Liberal Leadership Candidate
Randy Delorey, Liberal Leadership Candidate
Labi Kousoulis, Liberal Leadership Candidate