



NOVA SCOTIA  
FEDERATION OF  
MUNICIPALITIES

**By Will Brooke, Policy Advisor, NSFM**

The Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities (NSFM) strongly supports the new funding agreement announced today with Doctors Nova Scotia.

Our 379 members—the mayors, wardens, and councillors from Nova Scotia's 50 municipalities—are eager to welcome new doctors to their communities, but don't have the authority to hire them.

Year after year, they've heard from their residents about the difficulties in accessing primary care and finding family doctors.

Our members have heard from families in Yarmouth who were concerned about the availability of anesthesiologists to help deliver babies, and from folks in Cape Breton lamenting the closures of emergency rooms on long weekends.

In late 2017, our members voted to make doctor recruitment one of their top priorities for the year ahead.

Within months, NSFM hosted a day-long workshop to help our members understand the issues from the ground up.

Throughout 2018, we worked actively on doctor recruitment with the College of Physicians and Surgeons, Dalhousie Medical School, Doctors Nova Scotia, the Department of Health and Wellness, and the Nova Scotia Health Authority.

This collaboration helped shed new light on the role municipalities can play, and we're continuing these efforts through 2019.

We know that balanced budgets are important for the Province, and that compensation isn't the only factor in Nova Scotia's doctor shortage, so we've focused on how to do more with what we already have.

Over the last year, all the groups we've worked with have brought useful and well-thought-out ideas to the table.

- We've worked to reduce the number of steps in the recruitment and onboarding processes, and to improve our ability to help doctors relocate and become oriented when they arrive.
- We've talked about how to better promote and market Nova Scotia as a destination for doctors, both within Canada and internationally, and how to showcase our communities.
- We've also engaged with medical students and residents to find out what could be done to entice them to stay in Nova Scotia.

Some of these ideas have helped bring new doctors to Nova Scotia, and the work being done has resulted in the waitlist numbers dropping from 59,225 last November to 49,340 this November.

This work has helped make the doctor recruitment system leaner, improved our ability to retain doctors after they're hired, and extended the reach of our recruitment efforts.

But by making the compensation for Nova Scotian doctors more competitive, this new agreement will make the results of all these efforts more visible.

Setting aside \$135 million for pay increases for doctors is a significant commitment of funds, and NSFAM applauds the work of all the parties involved in reaching this agreement.

This funding will help our recruiters make a stronger pitch with doctors who are thinking about moving to Nova Scotia, and it will help us do a better job of keeping the doctors we already have.

It will help improve access to primary care and ensure that more Nova Scotians have family doctors, and greatly improve the viability of our communities.

***NSFAM's Policy Advisor Will Brooke is on the Nova Scotia Physician Recruitment and Retention Advisory Committee.***