

FALL 2019

Municipal observer

The Magazine for the **Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities**

Municipal Collaboration

Navigating the Cliffs of
Fundy Global Geopark



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Kayakers get ready to push off into the Bay of Fundy for a Cliffs of Fundy
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The NSFM is a not-for-profit organization mandated to represent the interests of municipal governments across Nova Scotia. Total membership is 379 elected officials representing all 50 municipalities.

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Getting Results: NSFM's New Direction

By President Wayne Mason

I want to thank the membership for your support and confidence as we work to transform NSFM's advocacy into the more aggressive approach you've seen throughout the year.

Our focus remains on our members' five resolutions. We've made some good headway on the CAP this fall, leaving us focused on addressing the capacity grant component of our funding resolution by spring budget. The roads and EPR processes are well underway and should resolve by next summer.

In short, we have never been closer to several substantial breakthroughs, and our new approach has gotten us there.

To continue that momentum, NSFM needs take the lead in the modernization discussion by first consulting with members and then clearly defining the ask to the province. There could be a goal of bringing a resolution forward by the end of 2020.

As I wrote in an opinion piece recently published both in the

Cape Breton Post and *The Chronicle Herald*, it is important to know that the recently released Grant Thornton study about the future viability of CBRM could be about almost any municipality in Nova Scotia.

CBRM's challenges, rooted in outmigration and the rising cost of municipi-

We want the parties to support our requests, rather than creating their competing solutions.

pal services, are affecting many of the province's other towns and communities.

The study offers no surprises, and proposes a series of well-reasoned recommendations needed to help CBRM survive. These recommendations overlap with NSFM's own resolutions, approved by consensus of our members in November 2018, calling for action on our top five municipal priorities.

Given the programs and services that CBRM — and all our members — provide their communities, they need and expect the support of all MLAs, inside and outside of government, to see these resolutions acted on fully and promptly.

Without action from the province, CBRM and other municipalities will reach a state where they are also no longer viable.

CBRM — and all our member municipalities — deserve support for all our top five priorities from all MLAs.

Now is not the time for partisan politics — the citizens we represent require swift, decisive, and non-partisan action.

The board and staff of NSFM need your help to make these changes a reality.

Take a moment to go to your MLA's office, meet them for coffee, chat with them at an event, and drive home how important these five resolutions are. Ask them if they sup-

port our resolutions. Ask them to tell their party leader they support our resolutions. Ask them to go to Halifax looking to see the changes made to ensure our communities can thrive.

In order to secure the economic well-being, quality of municipal services and quality of life of Nova Scotians, no matter where they live,

these fundamental changes need to be made, and quickly.

We want the parties to support our requests, rather than creating their competing solutions. Municipalities know what they need better than anyone. We need the support of all political parties to ensure immediate action to address our resolutions in the House this fall, next spring

in the next budget, and throughout 2020.

It has been a huge honour representing the membership as the 112th president of the Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities; it has been an amazing year. I want to thank Judy, Debbie, Will, Amanda, Amy, and of course Juanita for everything they do for the president, board and membership. I also want to thank my board colleagues, who have had my back every step of the way.

I know at times our members have not always seen what NSFM is doing, and I hope we have been able to show more and involve you more in what we are working on.

I thank you all so much for your support, kindness, and great ideas as we work hard together to transform the organization and our relationship with the province.

Waye Mason is a councillor in Halifax Regional Municipality and president of the Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities.

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NSFM: We Are Stronger Together

By CEO Juanita Spencer

There's a reason why there's strength in numbers.

Far more can be achieved in a group, compared to someone acting alone.

A group of people has more influence and power than just one person.

I've seen this in action during my nine months on the job.

I've had the chance to travel to your towns and communities, to witness firsthand the incredible work being done when consensus is involved.

I've met you in your boardrooms, council chambers, hotel conference rooms and civic centres to talk about your concerns and priorities.

My CEO Roadshow has pulled up alongside more than half of your 50 municipalities, and I've been amazed at the united community spirit I've seen along the way.

The stories in this first edition of our revamped magazine reflect those first impressions: How more can be achieved when people pull together.

The stories in this first edition of our revamped magazine reflect those first impressions: How more can be achieved when people pull together.

In the Annapolis Valley, seven municipalities joined forces to achieve one common goal.

Their recent certification, as the world's first **Smart and Sustainable Rural Region** by the World Council on City Data, wouldn't have succeeded if they were only pulling for themselves.

Instead, their joint application "crossed their artificial municipal boundaries to take in the common needs and concerns of all the citi-

zens of the Valley," Mayor Peter Muttart of the Municipality of the County of Kings said when they first applied in 2018.

The same is true for the province's Parrsboro Shore, where the municipalities of Cumberland and Colchester counties united to propel the Fundy Cliffs towards another international first for the province. Their aspiring Geopark application is currently under review by two UNESCO evaluators, and an announcement will be made in the months to come.

As tourism officer Stephanie Moreau put it: Tourists don't recognize political lines when they visit the province.

"We started this with both municipalities on board. This is one time that bigger really is better."

Those words aptly reflect NSFM's mission statement: Effective local government and strong, sustainable communities.

We can only achieve that when we are united in our front, just as the stories on these next few pages illustrate.

And you'll notice when you turn the page that the magazine, like NSFM, is undergoing a bit of modernization.

Our new magazine is setting the tone for the future, by changing the past narrative.

And the new name, *Municipal Observer*, reflects our role as an association that follows events — especially political ones — closely, and comments publicly on them.

We observe, engage and advocate on our members' behalf.

The magazine revamp is one of the tasks undertaken by our new communications advisor.

Now, the NSFM — the voice of municipalities since 1906 — can turn up its volume to reach new and broader audiences, both inside the membership and with outside stakeholders.

We'll be doing that in November, when NSFM convenes its annual conference and AGM in Halifax.

Some of the sessions highlight how the best decisions are made when council and staff have a certain level of harmonization, as the Association of Municipal Administrators will highlight during their presentation on the political-administrative dichotomy.

The best decisions are not the result of one of these perspectives triumphing over the other, but those that integrate the technocratic public-service view with the hands-on

leadership and grassroots experience that municipal elected officials bring to the table.

And Bill Carr's keynote address is about bringing us back to a *shared commitment* to serve. *Deep Service: A Call to a Higher Level* seeks to unite us all.

I hope you'll join me, and the NSFM staff, when the conference gets underway.

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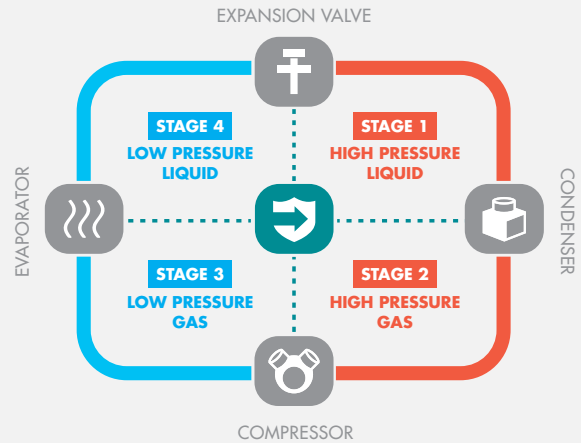
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3. RETURN

Once the leak has been resolved, the refrigerant can be transferred from the SMART Transfer back into the system.



Growing Municipal Collaboration in the Annapolis Valley

How Seven Municipalities Became Smart and Sustainable Together

By Amy Pugsley Fraser

The Annapolis Valley has just been certified as the first Smart and Sustainable Rural Region, a unique designation that positions it among the most intelligent, prosperous and inclusive communities in the world.

The certification, done by the World Council on City Data (WCCD), means the region is equipped with high-calibre data it can use to compare itself with peer cities and communities worldwide.

“It puts them on the global map with other cities that are also ISO certified,” says WCCD President and CEO Dr. Patricia McCarney, referring to their standardization and quality-assurance process.

The Valley’s head-of-the-class ranking also comes with a Gold Certification level, which puts it in the top tier of cities across the globe.

It wasn’t easy: Seven Annapolis Valley municipalities — Berwick, Middleton, Kentville, Windsor, Wolfville, Annapolis Royal and Municipality of the County of Kings — took two years to compile the required benchmarking data.

Most municipalities already track data, including mobility, safety, and education. But the WCCD categorizes them under 17 themes that rate their services and quality of life.

“It’s really all the things that mayors and city councillors already worry about.”

According to McCarney, drilling down into the numbers meant searching through councils and departments all over the Valley.

“The data we needed was spread across departments, like in a metal filing cabinet in the water department, or a digital file in the police department, or sometimes in the provincial ministry of health or national statistics office.”

Since the model used by the WCCD puts together the methodologies for about 100 indicators, the Valley info had to be properly standardized so it could be collected and compared against its peers.

Now, the work done by the seven municipalities eases the burden for others in the province looking to be certified too.

“It’s a really exciting place for other communities in Nova Scotia who might say, ‘We’re too small’ or ‘We don’t have the data’ because a lot of the heavy lifting

has already been done to help build those data gaps,” says WCCD Vice President James Patava.

“It’s not this daunting challenge, it’s doable. It’s been done.”

Getting Smart

The World Cities team was first approached in 2016 by Terry Dalton, the president of a not-for-profit organization called iValley that works with communities, economic developers, businesses, resources and service providers to create a smart innovative community region. He heard McCarney speaking at an event in Toronto about how a small community of 20,000 people outside Quebec City got certified.

“iValley was grappling with how to take these global buzzwords of sustainability and smartness down to the Valley level,” says Patava, “and he figured that if a Quebec community that size could do it, it could be applicable to them too.”



MUNICIPALITIES WORKING TOGETHER From L to R: Mayor **Don Clarke** (Berwick); Mayor **Peter Muttart** (Municipality of the County of Kings); **John Lohr**, MLA, Kings North; Mayor **Sylvester Atkinson** (Middleton); Mayor **Sandra Snow** (Kentville); **Dr. Patricia McCarney**, WCCD President & CEO; Mayor **Anna Allen** (Windsor); Mayor **Jeff Cantwell** (Wolfville); Mayor **Bill MacDonald** (Annapolis Royal); **Keith Irving**, MLA, Kings South; and **Terry Dalton**, President, iValley

Leading the charge was “an enthusiastic group of mayors that jumped on board and said they wanted to be a part of it too,” with Patava noting the additional work done by the Valley Regional Enterprise Network.

Collectively, the municipalities paid a \$10,000 US certification fee, a cost that goes to cover the in-house support from WCCD and a third-party verification process.

It’s worth it, says Windsor Mayor Anna Allen.

“Being known as a Smart Region will showcase our communities on the international stage and position us as a leader in rural investment readiness and competitiveness.”

Amy Pugsley Fraser is the communications advisor to the NSF.

A Great Future Ahead for FIANS

By Alfred Doucet, President Fire Inspectors Association of Nova Scotia

Have you noticed the ad in the last number of *Municipal Voice* (now *Municipal Observer*) publications from FIANS? Do you know who we are? Do you know why we support your association? Surely some of you have asked these questions.

As the Fire Inspectors Association of Nova Scotia (FIANS) celebrates its 25th anniversary this year, now is a great time to look back on our past, reflect on our present and turn our mind to the future. I am happy to share some of this with you.

From the beginning in 1994, FIANS has been a member-driven organization dedicated to the fire-inspection and fire-prevention industry in our province. It is hard to believe that some 25 years ago, a group of fire inspectors and members of the Office of the Fire Marshal gathered and formed the association originally named the Nova Scotia Fire Inspectors Association. Plans and meetings started straight away, and by June of 1995, there were close to 100 members and the first AGM took place at the Cole Harbour Fire Department. The first program included sessions on Fire Statistics in 1994, Fire Inspection and the Law, and Introduction to Fire Prevention. In 1999, the association's mission was established and stated: to coordinate and standardize the overall fire inspection and fire prevention programs throughout the province by providing consistent training and education.

This is something that is still near and dear to our hearts today.

Over the next couple of decades, the association went through the regular ebb-and-flow of any organization. There were adjustments made to the training programs, more opportunities for networking were developed, and continued outreach with community members on education around life-safety requirements was encouraged.

In 2002, the *Fire Prevention Act* was introduced in Nova Scotia and this dramatically changed the landscape of the industry. This new document required municipal units to set up a schedule of inspections within their jurisdiction, and set standards for fire prevention and safety. This act, the subsequent *Fire Safety Act* and the regulations that accompany the act reinforce the role that fire inspectors play in our province.

Fast forward to 2019: We are coming to the end of our most recent five-year strategic plan, and gearing up for our next one. Our mission is to offer proven and innovative services to enhance the proficiency and accomplishments of members within their fire-safety professions. Our vision is to empower members through an interactive learning environment for the achievement of their accredited certification.

Over the last five years, our strategic plan has guided us. While our training program is one of the best in the

country in terms of thoroughness and depth, we did undertake a substantive review of our materials and further enhanced them. We also concentrated on our fiscal house, and spent time developing policies and templates to make our systems more transparent and efficient. Finally, we continue our discussion with the province and other stakeholders on how best to move forward with proper recognition for our inspectors and others in the profession.

All of this work has set the stage for the next phase of strategic planning for FIANS. We will be embarking on an exercise to outline our activities



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for the next five years before the end of 2019, and I look forward to sharing this plan with you.

I hope that while this is a short piece, you can now see why this matters to you and why we want to work together. The responsibility for fire inspections in many occupancies falls within your jurisdiction, and we need to make sure that we meet this benchmark as outlined in the *Fire Safety Act and Regulations*.

There is a great future ahead for FI-ANS and we, as an association, look forward to working with you to further improve fire safety and prevention in Nova Scotia.



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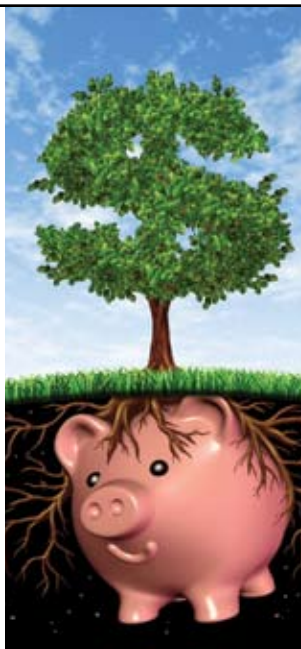
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Municipal Partnership Floats Cliffs of Fundy Geopark

By Amy Pugsley Fraser

Long before he was a geologist, Dr. John Calder had an inkling that Nova Scotia's Parrsboro Shore could someday put the province on the map.

Back in the 1960s, he used to read chapters of the *Columbia Encyclopedia* when the one-volume reference was serialized and distributed at the Amherst grocery store where his family shopped.

"One day, my mother brought home the Js and I flipped through it and found Joggins. And I thought, 'Wow, what the heck?!'"

Now, Calder is leading the charge to get Joggins and its surrounding shoreline designated a UNESCO Global Geopark.

The UNESCO stamp of approval attracts tourists eager to explore the connections between geology, local communities, culture and nature. The geoparks are designed to promote tourism and celebrate a region's uniqueness.

"It was a slow-dawning of the knowledge of all of this for me," says Calder, who went on to study geology at both St. Mary's and Dalhousie universities, "and now I'm



***The Cliffs of Fundy Geopark is
“a shining example of leadership”
by Colchester and Cumberland counties,
“which are tied together like they’re in a
three-legged race.”***

– Dr. John Calder

Community and cultural programs in and around the proposed Fundy Cliffs Geopark, like this session of Sunrise Yoga at Cape d’Or Lighthouse, are essential to selling the whole area as a complete travel destination for international visitors.

just trying to bring them to the world’s attention through the UNESCO programs.”

The Joggins Cliffs contain the oldest dinosaur fossils in Canada and are the best example in the world of the coal age — some 300 million years ago.

And the broader Cliffs of Fundy tell the story of the formation of the supercontinent Pangea in that age, and its ripping apart 100 million years later.

“There’s no place better in the world to see the coming together of Pangea, and its breaking apart, than along the Parrsboro shore,” Calder says.

By definition, global geoparks need a geologist to lead the charge, but they also need local champions to ensure their success.

“They’re meant to be a bottom-up, community-run initiative and everyone involved has made sure that’s happened,” Calder says of the charge lead by the volunteer board of the Fundy Geological Museum.

Calder points to the leadership shown by Colchester and Cumberland counties, who both got on board early by holding a series of public meetings.

“Right off the bat, this had a very strong municipal backing, and that was very important.”

Today, each municipality has an officer on the executive, and the chair alternates each year.

“It’s kind of like a three-legged race, where they’re tied together in the bylaws of the society. They are really the rocks on which the geopark is based. It’s a shining example of leadership by the municipalities and of course, the county councillors all being involved, it just shows that strong support.”

Equally important is the community commitment and support which “won over the geopark evaluators.”

“They know, for the long-term sustainability of a project like this, it has to have buy-in at the grassroots.”

The project also has the formal support of the Confederacy of Mainland Mi’kmaq, an important approval given the indigenous storyline of the geopark.

“The Cliffs of Fundy area stretches from Debert to Isle Haute, the



A tour group gets a guided fossil tour this summer through the Fundy Geological Museum. (Photo Credit: Nova Scotia Tourism)



The Cliffs of Fundy Geopark logo honours the ethical space of the Mi'kmaq people and their oral traditions of cultural geoheritage.

homeland of Kluscap, and it's very central and sacred to the Mi'kmaq and their traditional stories," says Calder.

There are 30 points of interest along the way, including Fundy Ocean Research Centre for Energy (FORCE), Spicer Cove, Squally Point and the Three Sisters.

"The sites have always been here — the Cliffs, the Views, and everything else — but the geopark is a way to put it all together," says Don Fletcher, a Cumberland County councillor and chair of the Cliffs of Fundy Geopark Society.

"I believe it's going to really showcase our area, to draw that high-yield international visitor, while creating opportunities for locals. It's really going to help keep people in the area, and that's super-exciting."

Optimism for the area's future hasn't always been there, says Fletcher, born in Advocate Harbour.

"When I grew up in the late '60s, if you didn't want to run a power saw or go on a fishing boat, there wasn't much else for you here. Like many kids, we couldn't wait to get out of here. I left after high school, or vocational school, and moved to Ontario like everybody else."

He was in the army for almost three decades and returned 23 years ago.

That's when he noticed the beauty and serenity of the area, and the potential it could hold for the next generations.

"It's really going to bring people here to see these sites...and there could be all kinds of jobs that could come of this, from heli-tours to day hikes.

"People will want to know about the area and the history and they'll need people here to tell them what it is."

When that happens, visitors won't be basing their decision on which county to visit, says Stephanie Moreau, Tourism Officer for the Municipality of Cumberland, who's working on the project with Devin Trefry from the County of Colchester.

"Whether they're in Cumberland or Colchester is irrelevant as long as we're bringing people to the area, so we need to create special projects with that in mind."

The geopark team is awaiting the report by two international evaluators, who visited from Spain and Greece over a weekend in July.

"We haven't approached this as two separate municipalities. It really has been the two of us, recognizing the value of this project and working in alignment to get done what needs to be done with the big picture in mind.

"We started this with both municipalities on board. This is one time that bigger really is better."



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The Importance of Welcoming Newcomers

By Carla Arsenault, President & CEO of the Cape Breton Partnership & CBRM REN

According to Engage Nova Scotia, Cape Breton has recently ranked as one of the happiest places in Canada – and we believe it. The evidence of this claim is all around us, after all. We see it at the local ceilidhs, on the beaches, and at the community suppers.

At the same time, the realities of outmigration and demographic shifts are deeply felt in Cape Breton. Our population is declining, and it is declining quickly. Since 2001, more than 1,000 people have left our beautiful island each year. But the story does not end there: There is reason for optimism – and a lot of it.

The solution to our population challenge in Cape Breton is multifaceted. It involves coordinated strategies for supporting and retaining youth. It involves bringing Cape Bretoners back home from around the world, while attracting and retaining newcomers.

Newcomers are choosing to make Cape Breton their home and build their futures on our island. The number of new permanent residents coming to Cape Breton is on the rise, with a 20% increase year over year since 2015. Outstandingly, the first two quarters of 2019 saw a 75% increase over the same two quarters in 2018 for permanent-residency admissions. Meanwhile, our island's university is welcoming record numbers of international students: At present, there are more than 3,000 international students at Cape Breton University, representing more than half of its student population and contributing an estimated \$60 million to the local economy each year. Trends like these are supporting an emerging – and well-founded – sense of progress in Cape Breton.

Together, newcomers and long-time residents are effectively applying their know-how, resolve, and energy to tackle shared challenges and chart a new course for the island. Cape Bretoners are recognizing that being welcoming leads to prosperity. We understand that communities are happier, stronger, and more productive when everyone can take part in economic, civic and social life.

But there is work to be done. Our newcomer retention rate in Cape Breton is significantly lower than the provincial average, which is already low when compared on a national level. We know that a broad range of factors influence the decision to stay in a community – or leave it. Is there meaningful employment for me here? Can I find suitable housing? Are local attitudes towards immigrants positive? Are there educational opportunities? Is public transit available and accessible? The list goes on.

Municipalities play a critical role in ensuring welcoming and inclusive environments for newcomers, and thereby increasing retention rates. In New Zealand, the out-comes-based Welcoming Communities Standard identifies eight key areas, providing municipal councils with a benchmark for what welcoming communities look like: inclusive leadership, welcoming communications, equitable access, connected and inclusive communities, economic development business and employment, civic engagement and participation, welcoming public spaces, and culture and identity.

Municipalities in Cape Breton are coming together through initiatives like the Cape Breton Local Immigration Partnership, administered by the Cape Breton Partnership, to explore areas such as those listed above and to understand how we can best work together to support newcomers' full participation in the social, civic, and economic fabric of Cape Breton.

The Cape Breton Partnership is proud to play a role in our island's immigration future. We are emboldened by the emerging opportunities and vast potential of the Cape Breton economy. We are inspired by the many individuals, businesses and organizations who are leading efforts to make their communities more vibrant places for all. We want to encourage people from all walks of life to call Cape Breton home, and to ensure that our island will always be a welcoming place for newcomers to live, learn, work and play.

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Municipalities Mark Their X For E-Voting

By Amy Pugsley Fraser

Kevin Arjoon practically wrote the book on e-voting.

Now, his expertise could help municipalities across Nova Scotia as they prepare for the 2020 municipal elections.

When he was the deputy clerk in Kingston, ON, he authored a paper on electronic voting, which reviewed and analyzed Halifax's first experience with e-voting in 2009.

Now that he's Halifax's municipal clerk, Arjoon is expanding e-voting's reach by making plans for other municipalities to piggyback on HRM's bulk purchasing.

"We're going to allow other municipalities to take advantage of the pricing, and we did that in 2016."

The move will provide efficiencies, cost savings, consistency in approach and opportunities for smaller municipal units to get on board.

In the last election in 2016, councils in 23 Nova Scotia municipalities authorized the use of electronic voting in municipal and schoolboard elections.

Collectively, the municipalities represented about 65% of the about 748,000 eligible voters in the province, or about 485,224 people. Several of them – including Berwick, Digby, Middleton, Truro and Yarmouth – used only e-voting.

That uptake bolsters the argument that any municipality – no matter the size – can use it too.

"When you look at that, it's easy to say, you've got to try it!"

Providing only e-voting services streamlines the costs and effort for a municipality. But Arjoon cautions: It's a lot of work if you're going to offer paper along with electronic ballots, like Internet, phone and kiosk voting.

"It's like you're running two elections at the same time."

Running a hybrid election offers options for voters, he says.

"It's all about the elector. We do this for them. Providing options ensures we're offering them a great voting experience."

E-voting is fast becoming the most convenient and accessible way for voters to mark an X.

When Nova Scotian voters were offered the option of an electronic or paper ballot during 2016 municipal and schoolboard elections, the electronic option was the choice of 72.6% of voters.

"People really like the convenience of being able to vote at home," he said.

"People think it's going to be youth and millennials, but it is predominantly baby boomers and older adults who vote online."

Those in rural areas, where the Internet coverage might not be as consistent, are also tapping into phone voting.

Surveys of non-voters illustrated that they didn't exercise their right to vote because they were too busy, out of town, ill or disabled. E-voting in the privacy of their own homes lifts those barriers to voting.

HRM heard from its accessibility committee that they like being able to cast their vote independently without assistance, and maintain the secrecy of the ballot.

E-voting also reduces, or eliminates, the need for proxy voting. In 2016, there were none cast that way in Halifax.

That's one of the major draws for an administrator and a big boon if you're a returning office, he says, noting the time saving when clerks don't have to prepare transfer certificates or other documentation.

The biggest challenge for municipalities who want to get on board with e-voting is often their IT systems.

"They don't have the infrastructure."

For others, there's also a fear of the unknown.

Arjoon says he's keen to step up.

"If I can do anything to help de-mystify e-voting, I'll do it. It's just part of providing the most options to the elector."

Kevin Arjoon will be leading a session on de-mystifying e-voting at the 2019 fall conference in Halifax. His presentation will be held at 9 a.m. on Friday, Nov. 8.



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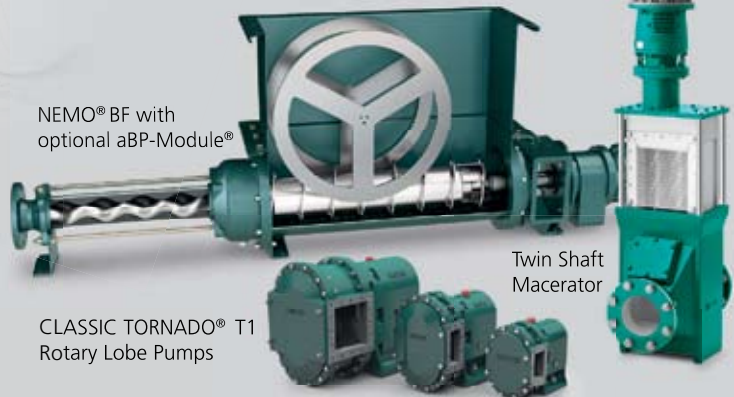
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Protecting Agricultural Land Protects the Future of Farming

“A true conservationist is a man who knows that the world is not given by his fathers, but borrowed from his children.”

— John James Audubon

Agricultural land is land that is managed for farm use. These uses include pasture, crop, horticultural, maple groves, Christmas trees, orchards and other maintained land. Ensuring availability of agricultural land allows for future generations to farm.

Land-use oversight in Nova Scotia is cross-jurisdictional.

Planning and land-use by-laws are developed at the municipal level while the province dictates what must be considered during the planning process. Adding more depth to the governance, in Nova Scotia there are 50 municipal governments – each having their own plan (if a plan exists for that municipality) and own set of by-laws.

According to the 2016 Farmland Values report released by Farm Credit Canada, farmland values continue to rise across Nova Scotia. There are varying explanations for the increas-

es including expanding farm growth and development. The development value is significantly greater than the agriculture value of the land. When farmland is located in prime development areas landowners often have to consider the choice that makes the most financial sense for their business and personal needs when they go to sell.

According to the “*Preservation of Agricultural Land*” report by the Agriculture Land Review Committee, Nova Scotia has a little over 29% (1.57 million hectares) of its land



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classed as Agriculture. Of these 1.57 million hectares, less than .01% was being farmed in 2006. The report indicated that agriculture land abandonment, urban sprawl/development, soil fertility and impact of rising water on dykeland are all issues of concern that must be addressed. Loss of land to rising water levels and to development is land that will never be returned to agriculture. Statistics are unavailable on how much of the agriculture-classed soils are now unavailable to future generations for farming due to development and rising water levels.

There have been attempts made to address the loss of agricultural land. Land bank programs, programs for the development of agricultural land, and an attempt at protecting a specified amount of agricultural land through an EGSPA goal have all proven to have their challenges. Since the *Community Easements Act* came into place in Nova Scotia, the Annapolis Valley Farmland Trust has been an approved body to place easements on agricultural land. Doing so removes the development rights from the land. There are two holdbacks: a) the legal costs to place an easement are significant (~\$15,000-\$20,000) and b) there isn't an incentive for the farmer to remove developments from their land.

Removing development rights from land is, understandably, difficult for municipalities. However, one thing to consider is the beneficial economic impacts that the agriculture industry will have for your rural community. Reports and initiatives like the recommendations made by the federal government's Advisory Council on Economic Growth and the Food Policy for Canada demonstrate the value in growing the agriculture industry. In order to do this, available agricultural land is imperative.

Municipal governments can play a role in growing the agriculture industry right here in Nova Scotia. Protecting land suitable for agriculture will ensure longevity of the industry throughout generations. This can be achieved through supporting a strong, comprehensive land plan for the entire province. Working together, we can ensure a vibrant future for farmers in the generations to come!

Since 1895, the Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture has represented the interests of Nova Scotia's agricultural community. With an organizational structure that includes representation from 13 county and regional federations and 27 recognized agricultural commodity groups, the federation brings together over 2400 individual farm businesses representing all aspects of primary agriculture in the province.

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Doubling the Gas Tax Fund Builds Better Lives

By Bill Karsten, President,
Federation of Canadian Municipalities

In the midst of a high-stakes federal election, we see the parties campaigning around commitments to improve Canadians' quality of life. At the same time, local governments in communities of all sizes are sending them a clear message: If you want to build better lives for Canadians, you'll need to empower their local leaders.

Among governments, municipalities are closest to people's daily challenges. Municipal councillors and staff members are on the front lines, driving solutions that make people's lives better. That means supporting reliable Internet connections, building community centres, investing in mass transit, fostering local economic growth and protecting people from new weather extremes.

Communities in Nova Scotia are essential to Canada's economy and quality of life. You support vital industries — from agriculture to manufacturing to natural resources — and provide vital services that families and workers need to thrive. Your communities also face unique challenges that can't be solved with cookie-cutter approaches.

Municipal leaders are making the most of outdated tools. They support industry and entrepreneurs, provide key services and renew core infrastructure — all while driving nearly one-third of Canada's economy.

But nobody's building tomorrow's communities with property taxes alone. Recent federal investments in local communities are making a real difference, but to get more done for Canadians, we'll need to modernize how governments work together. That includes modernizing the municipal toolbox itself.

This election, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities is calling on all federal parties to commit to robust, permanent funding tools that empower local governments to get more done. One key benchmark to meet or exceed: **double the federal Gas Tax Fund (GTF) transfer to municipalities, and boost its annual growth rate to better reflect economic growth.**

It's been years since the Gas Tax Fund had anything to do with gas taxes. This is a straightforward annual transfer that empowers municipalities to renew local infra-

structure. Last year, it flowed some \$2.2 billion to fund thousands of local projects to repair and renew everything from local roads and bridges to water, waste and community centres.

This is the core infrastructure that supports Nova Scotia's economy and quality of life (as well as the rest of Canada). With municipalities responsible for nearly 60% of it, the GTF is direct, reliable funding. That's important. When local leaders know what funds are coming, we can plan smart and long-term. When funds flow to us directly, it recognizes that we're best placed to identify local needs and cost-effective solutions.

The GTF is building communities right here in Nova Scotia. The Municipality of West Hants repurposed a historic wharf, creating a pedestrian boardwalk in Avondale; this has been a boon to local tourism. Meanwhile, Pictou County says the doubling of this year's Gas Tax Fund allocation will go a long way to improve Internet and cellular service.

Still, the Gas Tax Fund's current challenge is its scale: nationally, it amounts to just two percent of municipal revenues. The federal government itself just recognized this: Budget 2019 took the game-changing step of doubling this year's GTF transfer for one year, to move more projects forward for Canadians.

This next election should build on what's working, and all parties agree this tool is working. FCM engaged governments of various stripes to launch the GTF (2005), make it permanent (2011), and index it for 2% annual growth (2014). If doubling the GTF transfer makes sense for this year — as it so clearly does — then it makes sense for next year and beyond. Long-term predictability drives results. And boosting the fund's annual growth index will ensure it keeps pace with modern construction costs and economic growth.

Importantly, Canadians strongly agree. In a recent Abacus Data poll, a clear majority said that when it comes to assessing local needs and solutions, they trust their local leaders the most. And a whopping 84% said the federal government should empower municipalities with permanent new funding tools to get the job done.

Canada's federal-municipal partnership has made tremendous progress in recent years. We have seen transformational expansions of transit, green, social and rural infrastructure. Growing the GTF is the next step — both complementary and vital. This is the most straightforward, cost-effective step the next federal government can take to build better lives.

Communities in Nova Scotia and nationwide have projects ready to go, and we're ready to partner with the next federal government — with modern tools, and a modern partnership — to build better lives for Canadians.

Bill Karsten is a councillor from Halifax Regional Municipality, NS, and President of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities.

OUR WORK IN YOUR COMMUNITY



Hurricane Dorian Hit Hard, and Nova Scotia Fought Back

It was a storm of historic proportion.

And it was met with a historic response.

On Saturday, Sept. 7, Hurricane Dorian slammed into Nova Scotia, uprooting trees, tearing off roofs and yanking down power lines, leaving most of the province's residents without power. The cyclone affected all parts of the province; no community was spared damage.

But the province's emergency response effort was ready. That same day, response teams from Yarmouth to Wreck Cove went into high gear, making sure the public was safe. Nova Scotia Power began restoration work on the mainland even before the tail end of Dorian and its high wind speeds had retreated from Cape Breton.

"I can't say enough about the support of our public safety and emergency response partners," said Karen Hutt, President and CEO of Nova Scotia Power. "So many Nova Scotians pulled together to get through this. The coordination and cooperation of the Emergency Management Office, Province of Nova Scotia, municipalities and regional emergency management offices, the Canadian Armed Forces, the Canadian Red Cross and policing agencies was like no other, and allowed us to collectively and safely respond to the needs of Nova Scotians."

Nova Scotia Power mobilized its largest response effort ever, with more than 1,300 power line technicians, forestry technicians and damage assessors supported behind the scenes by hundreds of personnel working on planning, engineering, logistics, customer care, information technology, safety and communications.

"Dorian's destruction was unprecedented, and so was our response," said Hutt.

At its peak, Dorian knocked out power to 411,000 customers. Over the ensuing week, more than 50,000 additional outages occurred, most caused by weakened trees.

Nova Scotia Power triaged repairs, starting with the substations and main power lines that bring electricity from power plants to towns and cities. Then, the focus shifted to critical services like hospitals, police, fire, water utilities and communications.

"Everyone on the front lines and behind the scenes – including our crews, contractors, traffic control teams and emergency response partners – was focused on the safety of Nova Scotians and those responding to Dorian," said Hutt.

As a thank-you for the support of customers, local business owners and its emergency response partners, Nova Scotia Power and its parent company Emera donated \$50,000 to Feed Nova Scotia on behalf of its employees and contractors. The Province of Nova Scotia also donated \$50,000 to the charity.

"Feed Nova Scotia is able to assist those most in need, and this donation will help in that work," Hutt said. "We want to express our gratitude to our customers in communities throughout Nova Scotia, as well as the many, many business owners who went above and beyond to provide food, accommodations, and supplies over the past week. They were essential to our recovery from Dorian."





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