

NSFM's Regional Meeting Minutes - Draft
Cape Breton – Strait Area Region
Monday, April 8, 2019
The Gaelic College, Englishtown

In Attendance:

Town of Port Hawkesbury: Mayor Brenda Chisholm-Beaton

County of Antigonish: Warden Owen McCarron and CAO Glenn Horne

CBRM: Deputy Mayor Eldon MacDonald

County of Inverness: Warden Betty-Ann MacQuarrie and CAO Keith MacDonald

County of Victoria: Warden Bruce Morrison, Councillor Perla MacLeod, Councillor Norman MacDonald, Councillor Paul MacNeil, Councillor Fraser Patterson and CAO Leanne MacEachen

NSFM: Councillor Waye Mason (President) Juanita Spencer (Chief Executive Officer), Will Brooke (Policy Advisor) and Debbie Nielsen (Infrastructure & Sustainability Officer)

1. Welcome from Host Unit

Warden Bruce Morrison welcomed everyone to the Cape Breton – Strait Area Regional meeting and to Victoria County.

2. Greetings from NSFM

NSFM President, Councillor Waye Mason, provided greetings on behalf of NSFM.

3. Priorities & Resolutions Process

Chief Executive Officer, Juanita Spencer, gave an overview of NSFM's revised resolutions process, which was introduced a few years ago. She noted that the process will continue to evolve as NSFM looks for opportunities to improve it. She also noted that NSFM is taking on a more active, advocacy approach to addressing important municipal issues.

NSFM staff provided the following updates on the five resolutions submitted to the Province in 2018:

1. **CAP:** Since the November Conference, NSFM, AMA, PVSC and members have formed a steering committee to strategically work towards a solution. Meetings have been held with the Minister of Municipal Affairs and his staff on several occasions, stakeholders, and preparations are in place to meet with the three provincial political caucuses.
2. **EPR:** After the November Conference the Province asked NSFM staff to consult Nova Scotian businesses on our EPR proposal. The consultation is now complete, and the production of the final proposal is anticipated in a few months' time.
3. **Municipal Funding:** The Province recently announced a new name for the Equalization Grant – Municipal Financial Capacity Grant. NSFM has made a submission in support of the change to legislation at Law Amendments. NSFM took the opportunity of coverage in the media to note that while this change in name provides clarity, our request for an increase in funding to the Municipal Financial Capacity Grant (of \$20M over three years) remains unaddressed.
4. **Municipal Modernization:** At the November Conference our members voted to request that the Province help facilitate municipal cooperation. \$578,000 has since been set aside in the 2019 provincial budget for a Municipal Innovation Program to support municipalities. While this is not an immense amount of money, we are taking this as a signal that the Province has heard us and understand that this is an issue for municipalities. There are no details on how this funding is to be used, but we are waiting on a meeting with DMA to see what they are thinking. The funds may be used to support pilot programs, or to document the Windsor/West Hants consolidation.
5. **Roads:** At the November conference it was hoped that a new funding agreement for roads would be in place by June 2019. A joint municipal-provincial roads committee is now underway. The committee has nearly finalized its work plan, and although a new funding agreement is part of that work plan, it is not anticipated that an agreement will be complete by this June. More updates will be provided on this as they become available.

NSFM staff also provided an update on the following Statements of Concern:

- Municipal Responsibilities
- Policing
- Surplus Schools
- Sustainability and Infrastructure Funding

4. NSFM Updates

The agenda package included updates on NSFM initiatives, including the Gas Tax Fund and asset management planning in Nova Scotia.

5. Round Table Discussion & Regional Issues

President Mason led a roundtable discussion on regional issues. Members in the room seemed to agree that the best course of action would be to keep working at the same five resolutions chosen in 2018 until they have been resolved. Comments from this discussion included:

- If we stay the course with the current 5 resolutions, it sends a strong message to the Province.
- It is important to identify and prioritize other key resolutions, which could be bumped up to the top five as current ones are resolved.
- Concerns were expressed about the efficiency and accuracy of PVSC's customer service. It was suggested that the presidents of AMA and NSFM should meet with PVSC's Board and members of the Nova Scotia Land Registry to discuss concerns.

President Mason also spoke about NSFM's 1-year presidency term. The option of extending it to 2 years has been discussed in the past. However, at the time, there were concerns expressed that a 2-year term was not a viable option for 2 main reasons: 1) as the position is demanding, those acting as NSFM's president who also have other full-time commitments/jobs might need to take a significant amount of time off in order to fulfill the role of president, and 2) it would require a minimum commitment of 6 years on the NSFM's Board of Directors (2 years as caucus representative/chair, 2 years as VP and 2 years as president). President Mason suggested the option of changing one of the two member-at-large positions on FCM's Board of Directors to a NSFM VP position (currently there are four Nova Scotia representatives on FCM's Board: 2 members-at-large, 1 representative from Halifax and NSFM's president). Having the VP act as a table officer at FCM before taking over as NSFM's president would give them more time to learn about the workings of FCM's Board. This idea would have to be ratified by NSFM's members at its fall conference, as it would require a change in our bylaws. If successfully passed, it would then require a change in FCM's bylaws.

6. Evaluation and Adjournment

Following completion of evaluation forms, the meeting adjourned at 4:06 pm.