

NSFM Regional Meeting Minutes - Draft
Colchester, Cumberland, Pictou, and East Hants

Monday, April 15, 2019

1:00 - 4:00 p.m.

**The Glasgow Square Theatre, 155 Riverside Parkway, New Glasgow,
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In Attendance:

Town of Amherst: Councillor Darrel Jones, Councillor David Kogon, CAO Greg Herrett

Town of New Glasgow: Mayor Nancy Dicks, Deputy Mayor Clyde Fraser, Councillor John Guthro, CAO Lisa MacDonald

Town of Stewiacke: Mayor Wendy Robinson, CAO Dale Bogle

Town of Truro: Mayor Bill Mills, Councillor Tom Chisholm, Councillor Danny Joseph, Councillor Wayne Talbot

County of Colchester: Mayor Christine Blair, Councillor Eric Boutilier, Councillor Bill Masters, Deputy Mayor Geoff Stewart, Councillor Tom Taggart, CAO Robert Simonds

County of Cumberland: Warden Allison Gillis, Deputy Warden Don Fletcher

District of East Hants: Councillor Eldon Hebb

County of Pictou: Warden Robert Parker, Councillor Deborah Wadden,

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

1. Welcome from Host Unit

Mayor Nancy Dicks welcomed everyone to the meeting and the Town of New Glasgow.

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:

- It was suggested that NSFM could use more resources (staff) to pursue priorities and raise its profile. NSFM may need to consider raising its membership dues to increase staff, which could come as a suggestion from the Executive and be voted on at the Fall Conference in November.
- It is important to focus on the top 5 priorities: we need to learn to do less but do it really well.
- Climate change is a concern/threat to municipalities – both to service delivery and infrastructure.
- We should focus on existing priorities but be flexible to change them if more important issues arise.

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.

- Concern was raised that a smaller unit may not have the financial resources to participate on FCM's Board of Directors. Perhaps a cost-sharing formula for smaller units could be considered.

Other Issues Raised:

- Municipalities need support in leveraging a fair share of the revenues from the sale of cannabis.
- Concern was expressed that the Fire Services Committee has been stalled for some time. NSFM is in the process of reviewing its committees to make them more efficient and accountable.
- It was suggested that bios be provided in advance of the Towns Caucus elections.
- Municipalities need support in dealing with large/complex issues that may not be within their mandate, such as hydraulic fracturing, gold mining, Northern Pulp, cell towers, etc.. These issues can be divisive for a community, as they can provide jobs in communities, but sometimes have negative impacts on the environment. We need to seek solutions that will protect both jobs and the environment.
- A commuter rail would help mitigate the volume of traffic on our highways.

6. Evaluation and Adjournment

Following completion of evaluation forms, the meeting adjourned at 4:00 pm.