

Municipal bserver

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



WINTER 2024



NOVA SCOTIA FEDERATION OF MUNICIPALITIES

The Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities (NSFM) is a non-profit organization that is the official voice of all 49 municipalities in Nova Scotia. NSFM is committed to:

Advocacy

- bring our collective views to government
- conduct research and formulate policy
- develop meaningful recommendations and provide a policy voice
- engage member-driven advisory committees
- prioritize the areas of most concern



Collaboration

- collaborate with members, government, and stakeholders
- grant administration
- help our province grow and our communities succeed
- member programs

Education

- bring members together
- communicate on issues and opportunities
- organize conferences, events, and webinars
- share ideas and best practices



Get ready! Stay tuned for updates on our Spring Conference – where Nova Scotia’s municipalities come together for solutions, insights, and professional development!

Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities
1809 Barrington Street, Halifax, NS, Canada, B3J 3K8
Phone: (902) 423-8331 | Email: info@nsfm.ca | nsfm.ca

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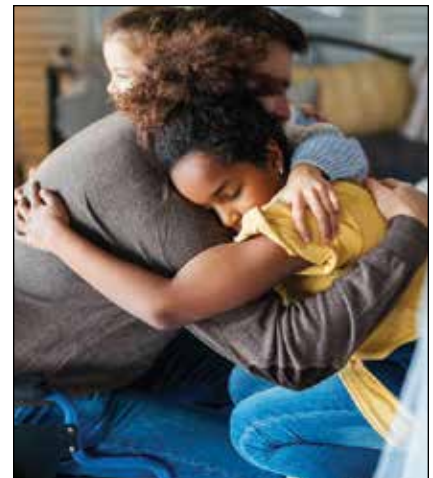
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Cheryl Kane Senior Vice President
Office: 902-474-3282
Mobile: 902-456-9633
cheryl.kane@hubinternational.com

Janine McInnis Associate Vice President
Office: 902-474-3293
Mobile: 902-789-3003
janine.mcinnis@hubinternational.com

Brad Wilson Consultant
Mobile: 902-233-7384
brad.wilson@hubinternational.com



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Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities

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The NSFM is a not-for-profit organization mandated by legislation to represent the interests of municipal governments across Nova Scotia. Membership consists of all 49 municipalities in Nova Scotia.

Contact NSFM at:
Ph: 902-423-8331
Suite 1304, 1809 Barrington St.,
Halifax, NS B3J 3K8
www.nsfm.ca
info@nsfm.ca



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info@nsfm.ca

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A New Chapter in Municipal Leadership

By President Pam Mood

As the newly elected President of the Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities, I am honoured to step into this role at such a pivotal time for our communities. The recent 2024 Municipal Elections have brought a wave of fresh ideas, new faces, and bold ambitions, marking the beginning of an exciting chapter for municipalities across Nova Scotia.

This edition of the Municipal Observer reflects the dual nature of this moment—celebrating the contributions of veteran municipal officials who have dedicated years to building our communities, while embracing the innovative spirit and energy that our newly elected leaders bring. These seasoned officials leave behind a legacy of commitment and progress, and their work will continue to inspire us as we move forward.

One of my key priorities as President is to encourage collaboration across all generations of municipal leaders. This includes supporting the growing involvement of youth in governance—a promising shift that is evident in initiatives from HRM, Amherst, and beyond. Youth councils and mentorship programs are paving the way for young people to actively contribute to their communities, ensuring that the voices of all citizens are

represented in the decisions that shape our future.

I am committed to fostering an environment where ideas can flourish, connections can be made, and solutions can be found.

The recent NSFAM Fall Conference provided essential guidance for navigating the road ahead, with discussions focused on emergency preparedness, ethical governance, and strengthening community resilience. These sessions underscored

the importance of equipping both new and returning officials with the resources and support needed to tackle the unique challenges facing our municipalities today.

As President, I am committed to fostering an environment where ideas can flourish, connections can be made, and solutions can be found. Together—with respect for our past, and a vision for our future—we will continue to build strong, vibrant municipalities that reflect the diversity, resilience, and shared aspirations of all Nova Scotians.

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Steering Through Change: Embracing Change and Fresh Perspectives

By CEO Juanita Spencer

As municipalities across Nova Scotia emerge from the 2024 Municipal and Provincial Elections, a renewed landscape of leadership and ideas is taking shape. This edition of the *Municipal Observer*

serves as both a tribute to the legacies of long-serving officials and an optimistic look forward, especially through the lens of youth engagement and the outcomes of the recent NSFM Fall Conference.

The election marked a pivotal moment for municipalities, as newly elected officials step into roles once held by veteran leaders who leave behind legacies of dedication and public service. Their contributions have helped shape the policies, infrastructure, and communities we see today. As we bid farewell to these leaders, we both celebrate their achievements and look ahead to the future they have helped to build.

A major focus for the Federation remains fostering a strong culture of municipal governance—one that ensures diverse voices are heard. The increasing involvement of youth in municipal governance, whether through youth councils, mentorship programs, or direct participation in local politics, signals a promising shift. Initiatives featured in this edition from HRM and Amherst demonstrate that when young

people engage, they bring fresh perspectives, energy, and innovative approaches to municipal challenges.

As municipalities steer through this post-election period, it is crucial for both new and returning officials to stay connected

A major focus for the Federation remains fostering a strong culture of municipal governance—one that ensures diverse voices are heard.

and informed. NSFM's role is to bring municipal leaders together through orientations, conferences, and training opportunities that provide the knowledge and tools to effectively serve their communities, navigate the complexities of governance, and foster collaboration as we chart a course for Nova Scotia's municipalities in the years ahead.

Together, with resilience, collaboration, and a shared commitment to our future, we will embrace the opportunities that lie ahead.



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Attendees @ Opening Session.

Leading with Integrity and Vision: NSFM Fall Conference 2024 a Resounding Success!

By Charlene Fekeshazy

The 2024 NSFM Fall Conference, themed Leading with Integrity and Vision, brought municipal leaders together from across the province for a transformative event. Held in Halifax, this year's conference inspired innovation, celebrated leadership, and addressed the pressing challenges facing Nova Scotia municipalities.

An Inspiring Keynote: Olympian Jon Montgomery

The conference kicked off with a captivating keynote address by Olympian Jon Montgomery, host of The Amazing Race Canada. Known for his passion and perseverance, Montgomery engaged attendees with

his session, Innovation and Realism. He emphasized the importance of embracing bold ideas while staying

Montgomery engaged attendees with his session, Innovation and Realism. He emphasized the importance of embracing bold ideas while staying grounded in practical realities.

grounded in practical realities. His message resonated with municipal leaders, challenging them to think creatively and act decisively as they navigate the complexities of local governance.

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New Leadership for NSFM

A highlight of the event was our AGM, where Mayor Pam Mood, the new President of NSFM was formally introduced. This significant moment marked the culmination of the Board of Directors election, affirming the trust and confidence placed in the incoming leader by the members to guide NSFM forward. The President addressed attendees with a message of unity and a renewed commitment to strengthening Nova Scotia's municipalities through education, collaboration, and advocacy.

Coastal Land Use Planning: A Timely Update

Another pivotal moment was the update provided by Gordon Smith, NSFM's Coastal Land Use Planning Coordinator. Smith shared progress on initiatives to enhance coastal resilience in Nova Scotia, focusing on strategies to mitigate the impacts of climate change and safeguard coastal communities. His presentation

emphasized the importance of proactive planning and collaboration between municipalities, stakeholders, and provincial partners. Attendees appreciated Smith's insights into balancing environmental stewardship with community growth, a pressing concern for many municipalities.

A Conference to Remember

In addition to these highlights, the conference featured engaging panel discussions, a conversation series, informative sessions, and valuable networking opportunities. Municipal officials left the event energized and equipped with actionable strategies to address the challenges ahead.

The 2024 Fall Conference served as a testament to NSFM's commitment to fostering leadership, innovation, and collaboration. With the election of a new President and a renewed focus on key priorities such as coastal planning, Nova Scotia's municipalities are well-positioned to lead with integrity and vision in the year ahead.



Jon Montgomery's Keynote Address - Innovation and Realism.

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Municipalities, First Nations, the Province of Nova Scotia, and regional business communities are all working together through the REN model, to strengthen regional economies

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Driving the Labour Market Forward with Youth in Mind

The Cumberland Business Connector (the Connector) is a business-led, not-for-profit organization whose focus is to foster a strong business environment that strengthens Cumberland County, Nova Scotia, by connecting businesses with the resources they need to be successful and by removing barriers to doing business.

We support local businesses in our community through various initiatives. These include Business Retention and Expansion visits, referrals to government and partner programs, enrollment in our comprehensive Business Accelerator Program, one-on-one coaching, and sector-specific support as needed.

One of our key priorities is Labour and Workforce Development. With Cumberland County's aging population, we anticipate a significant need for new workers over the next decade to sustain and grow our local economy.

Our Youth initiatives are one way we work to help fill this labour gap. We have two main Youth Initiatives: High School Career Fairs and our Youth Entrepreneurship Challenge.

High School Career Fairs

High School Career Fairs are a way to connect local youth with businesses in the region and inspire them on the varied and interesting career options that we have available right here at home.

We have collaborated closely with our local high schools and Nova Scotia Works School Liaison staff and have hosted a Career Fair in each of the seven

high schools in our region over the past two years. Our goal is to continue to host these events at each school going forward on a bi-annual basis.

Many students don't realize the diversity of careers within one business, or about the many career **opportunities that are available locally. For example, they are unaware that a food processing plant also employs Information Technology and digital design staff, or that a manufacturing business has a Human Resources Department.**

We've been fortunate to have strong support from the local business community, including businesses in manufacturing, mining, skilled trades, service sector employers, including two municipalities. They understand the importance of helping to encourage our local students to be the best they can be and to show them that there is ample opportunity in Cumberland, whether they want to work in the trades, or attend University and become an accountant, lawyer, or engineer.

"One student out of the day that realizes a local opportunity is a positive outcome. Positive for the community, the students, and the companies. It is important we do our part in each community we operate in," says Bruce Stover, President of Precise Design Engineering, Amherst.

The focus is on showcasing local career options, not on actually hiring summer students. However, we have also had success stories of organizations and

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businesses being able to hire local summer students from these events.

Youth Entrepreneurship Challenge

Another youth initiative of the Cumberland Business Connector is our highly successful Youth Entrepreneurship Challenge.

This program brings students through a training series to build a business plan. Students are coached on marketing, financial statements, and general business management. In 2024 we had over 60 students enrolled in the program!

After the training is complete the top 10 business plans are chosen, and the finalists attend our "Pitch Night" where they pitch their business ideas to a panel of local business people who act as judges. Participants are competing for their chance to win up to \$3,000 in cash prizes for their business idea.

This program aims to build a strong entrepreneurial spirit in our young population. Any youth in the region are encouraged to apply who are 18 years of age or younger. We have had participants as young as 10 years old as winners.

Some previous winners continue to run very successful businesses. Entrepreneurs play such a large role in communities, and we hope with this program to inspire young people to lead the next generation of businesses.

To learn more about these programs and other initiatives of the Cumberland Business Connector, visit: www.cumberlandbusinessconnector.ca



Profiles in Leadership: Veteran Municipal Officials and Their Legacy

By Charlene Fekeshazy

In the ever-evolving landscape of municipal governance, long-serving officials are the pillars upon which communities are built. Their leadership, vision, and ability to foster collaboration have left lasting legacies across Nova Scotia. In this feature, we highlight three former municipal leaders—Mayor Don Clarke of Berwick, Mayor Amanda McDougall-Merrill of Cape Breton Regional Municipality (CBRM), and Mayor Danny MacGillivray of Stellarton—who reflect on their tenures, accomplishments, and the future of municipal governance.

Mayor Don Clarke, Town of Berwick: A Legacy of Partnership and Sustainability

During his 12 years as Mayor of Berwick, Don Clarke championed collaboration through inter-municipal partnerships, shaping the town's future through projects that balanced environmental stewardship and economic growth. A key highlight of his leadership was the creation of the Ellershouse Wind Farm, a project spearheaded by Alternative Resource Energy Authority (AREA), a joint venture between the towns of Berwick, Antigonish, and Mahone Bay.

"This project, along with solar gardens and renewable energy initiatives, represents our commitment to reducing reliance on fossil fuels," Clarke shared. "It's not just about green energy; it's about working together to accomplish more than we could on our own."

Under Clarke's guidance, Berwick also led efforts to establish inter-municipal agreements for solid waste management and transit systems. His focus on partnerships extended to community development, with initiatives like the Kings Mutual Century Centre, a debt-free recreational facility run by volunteers. "We made great use of volunteers, ensuring that their contributions continue to support the town without overburdening our resources," Clarke said.

As he steps away from municipal leadership, Clarke hopes to be remembered as a leader who fostered collaboration and encouraged joint initiatives. Looking

forward, he sees the complex relationship between municipal, provincial, and federal governments as both a challenge and an opportunity. His advice to future leaders: "Work hard, read the material, and always remember that local issues—roads, policing, and recreation—must remain top of mind."

Mayor Amanda McDougall-Merrill, Cape Breton Regional Municipality: Leading with Compassion and Vision

In just four years, Amanda McDougall-Merrill's leadership has transformed the Cape Breton Regional Municipality. From modernizing CBRM's zoning and by-laws through the progressive CBRM Forward initiative to spearheading the municipality's first Strategic Vision, McDougall-Merrill has left a lasting mark on her community.

"I am incredibly proud of how our council and staff handled significant challenges like COVID-19, Hurricane Fiona, and the 2024 winter storm," she reflected. "During those difficult times, our CBRM team leapt into action to support our community when they needed us most."

A notable achievement of McDougall-Merrill's tenure was securing \$11 million from the federal Housing Accelerator Fund, an effort aimed at addressing the housing crisis in the region. Her commitment to involving young people in municipal governance is another point of pride. "Welcoming youth into City Hall and showing them how decisions are made is vital. If we want thoughtful decisions for the future, we need to involve those who will live it."

McDougall-Merrill hopes her legacy will be one of empathy and inclusion, leading a community that leaves no one behind. Looking ahead, she identifies infrastructure deficits paired with growing populations as the most pressing challenge for Nova Scotia's municipalities. Her advice for future leaders is clear: "Lead

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with compassion, kindness, and patience—qualities that have become scarce in public discourse.”

Mayor Danny MacGillivray, Town of Stellarton: Guiding a Diverse Team

Danny MacGillivray’s tenure as Mayor of Stellarton has been marked by his ability to lead a diverse team through complex decisions. Reflecting on his time in office, MacGillivray emphasized the importance of teamwork, even in the face of disagreement. “Leading a team of five strong-willed individuals who didn’t always agree was challenging, but we always came together to make the best decisions for Stellarton,” he noted.

MacGillivray’s leadership underscores the critical role municipal leaders play in navigating local challenges while fostering unity within their councils. His approach centered on encouraging open dialogue and respecting differing opinions, which allowed for more well-rounded decisions. “It’s not about everyone agreeing all the time; it’s about ensuring every voice is heard and respected,” he explained. This collaborative mindset helped the council address a range of complex issues, from infrastructure improvements to community development, with a shared commitment to the town’s long-term success. Under MacGillivray’s guidance, Stellarton has seen steady progress, a testament to the value of diverse perspectives in municipal governance.



Mayor Don Clarke, Town of Berwick



Mayor Amanda McDougall-Merrill,
Cape Breton Regional Municipality



Mayor Danny MacGillivray, Town of
Stellarton

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Federal Election in the Air: Time to Deliver Real Benefits for Nova Scotians via Municipal Finance Reform

By Rebecca Bligh, FCM President and City of Vancouver Councillor

Increasingly, it is likely that Nova Scotians will soon be voting federally, having just voted in municipal and provincial elections.

As municipal leaders, a federal election means a window of opportunity to advance local priorities before, during, and after the campaign. This is because whoever makes up the next federal government will need to engage with provincial, territorial, and municipal governments to accomplish their election promises.

This is the ideal moment for municipal leaders to take on the role of local champions. Together, in this new context, we can put a nationwide spotlight on the needs of Canadians.

Local leaders are closely attuned to our priorities. We are keenly aware that many Canadians struggle with the affordability crisis and the cost of living. People across this country are rightly concerned with the cost and availability of housing, the state of public infrastructure and transit, as well as homelessness and public safety.

As the government of proximity, our municipalities are closest to these problems. We also have the capacity to make the greatest impact on the lives of Canadians and to deliver effective on-the-ground solutions. But that will only happen if we have access to sufficient, permanent, and predictable resourcing.

The seriousness of the homelessness crisis as winter approaches is a key case in point. Municipalities are on the frontlines of that issue, but the funding to address homelessness and encampments from the last federal budget remain delayed, as temperatures plunge. Across the country, we are stuck looking to other orders of government who are knocking the ball back into each other's court.

In addition to this need, record population growth in Nova Scotia and across Canada is placing a major strain on municipal infrastructure. Municipal leaders are also seeing an increasing amount of duties and responsibilities downloaded by other orders of government.

There comes a tipping point with everything. Municipalities

are responsible for most of the infrastructure and services that Canadians rely on in their daily lives, but we struggle to fund these services under a 19th-century revenue framework that was never designed for the realities of today. We cannot continue to work miracles.

There is another way. For over a year, FCM has been making the case for a Municipal Growth Framework that makes better use of the existing tax dollars you pay. We can give struggling families the community services and assets they expect and deserve. We are not calling for anything beyond an adequate split of existing funding, so some of the problems Canadians are living with can be addressed.

Done right, this framework will support a stronger Canada and Nova Scotia. It would enable us to become self-sufficient, reducing the need for constant band-aid funding from federal and provincial governments, and provide municipalities with the power to make a difference. Ultimately it would support a future where Canadians would see more affordable housing, less congestion on the roads, and communities that are safe and more climate secure.

But that will only happen with your support. That is why I am urging all municipal leaders to join with FCM and contribute to our united municipal voice ahead of, during, and after this upcoming federal election. Together, over the coming months, we can put a spotlight on the real concerns in all our communities — and make a real difference.

About the Author

Rebecca Bligh is President of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) and City of Vancouver Councillor. FCM is the national voice for Canada's local governments, with more than 2,000 members representing more than 92 per cent of all Canadians.

Learn more:



Are you flood-ready? Preparing for flooding is a year-round concern, both at home and across our communities

By Joanna Eyquem, Managing Director, Climate-Resilient Infrastructure, Intact Centre on Climate Adaptation

It has been a very active summer for extreme weather events across Canada, with many residents and communities still recovering from resulting damages. And we may not have seen the last of it. Are you and your community prepared for the risks associated with intense rainfall, river, and coastal flooding?

Devastating flooding, wildfires, and hailstorms in Canada this summer caused an estimated \$7.7 billion in insured losses this year according to the [Insurance Bureau of Canada](#). A significant portion of this total was as a result of intense rainfall flooding in Toronto, Southern Ontario, and Quebec following Hurricanes Beryl and Debby. These figures make this year by far

the worse year on record in terms of insured losses (Figure 1), not counting the additional uninsured losses that are born by individuals or governments (typically estimated at 3-4 times insured losses), and the mental stress that these events place on people and their families.

Unfortunately, at the time of writing, hurricane season is not over yet. In Canada, the hurricane season officially runs from June through November and scientists are predicting a busy October and November so these figures may yet worsen.

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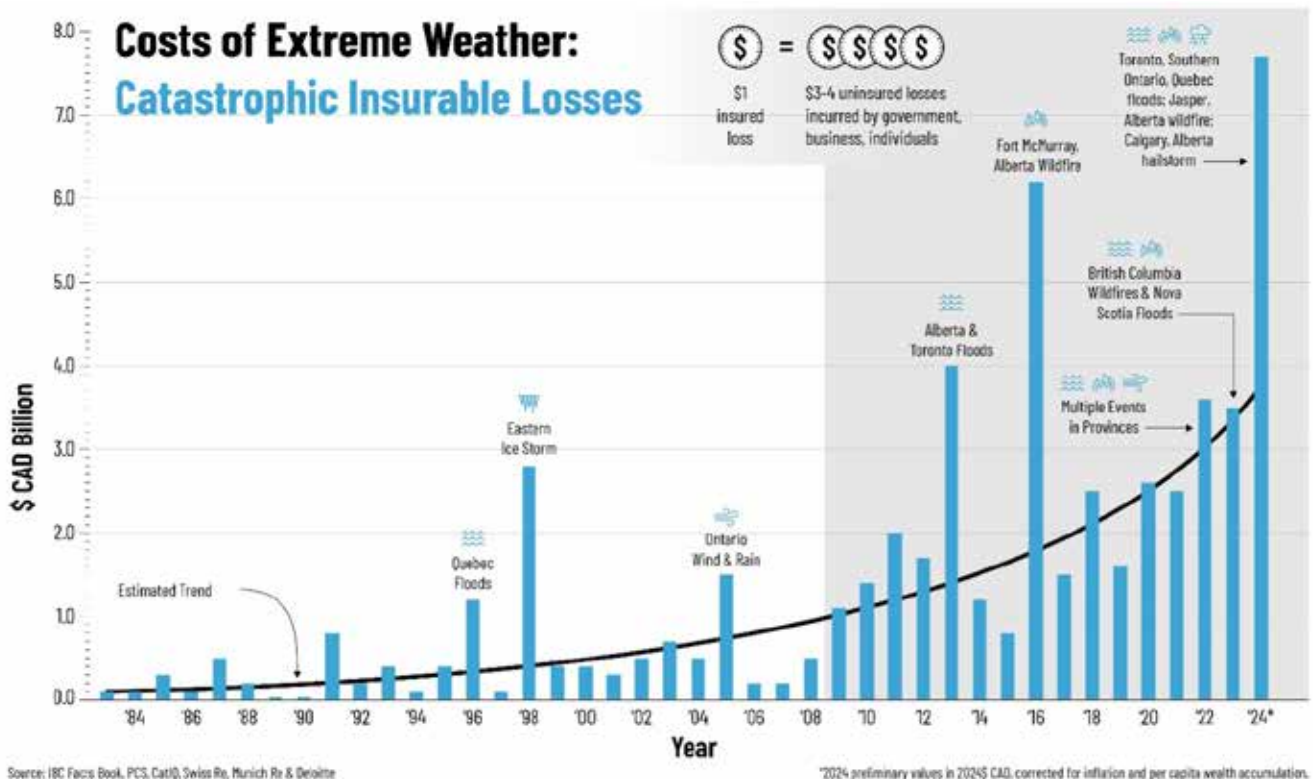


Figure 1: Catastrophic insured losses, Canada 1983 – 2024 (*estimated at time of writing).

Continued from page 15

The good news is that practical advice on actions that we can all take to help improve home flood resilience is already freely available.

The infographic "[Three Steps to Cost-Effective Home Flood Protection](#)", developed by the Intact Centre on Climate Adaptation at the University of Waterloo, showcases low cost, practical actions

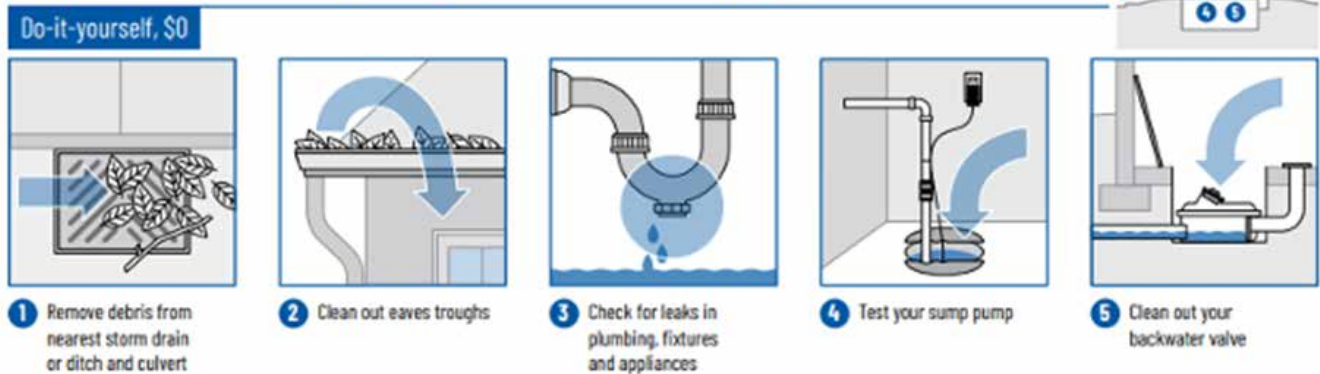
to help residents prevent basement flooding. This includes no-cost maintenance activities, low-cost actions that can be undertaken over a weekend, as well as more complex upgrades. The infographic is a featured tool in the [National Adaptation Strategy](#) and is already used by several municipalities, and other organizations like the Canadian Red Cross and BMO, to spread the word on how to limit flood risk.



THREE STEPS TO COST-EFFECTIVE HOME FLOOD PROTECTION

Step 1: Maintain what you've got at least twice per year

Do-it-yourself, \$0



- 1 Remove debris from nearest storm drain or ditch and culvert
- 2 Clean out eaves troughs
- 3 Check for leaks in plumbing, fixtures and appliances
- 4 Test your sump pump
- 5 Clean out your backwater valve

The even better news is that the Home Flood Protection infographic is part of a [suite of infographics](#) tackling flooding, wildfire, and extreme heat, that are all available free of charge to help support municipal staff in engaging their residents in climate resilience action. Municipalities can also reach out to the Intact Centre to brand or modify the infographics to make them their own, as the [Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities](#) has already done!

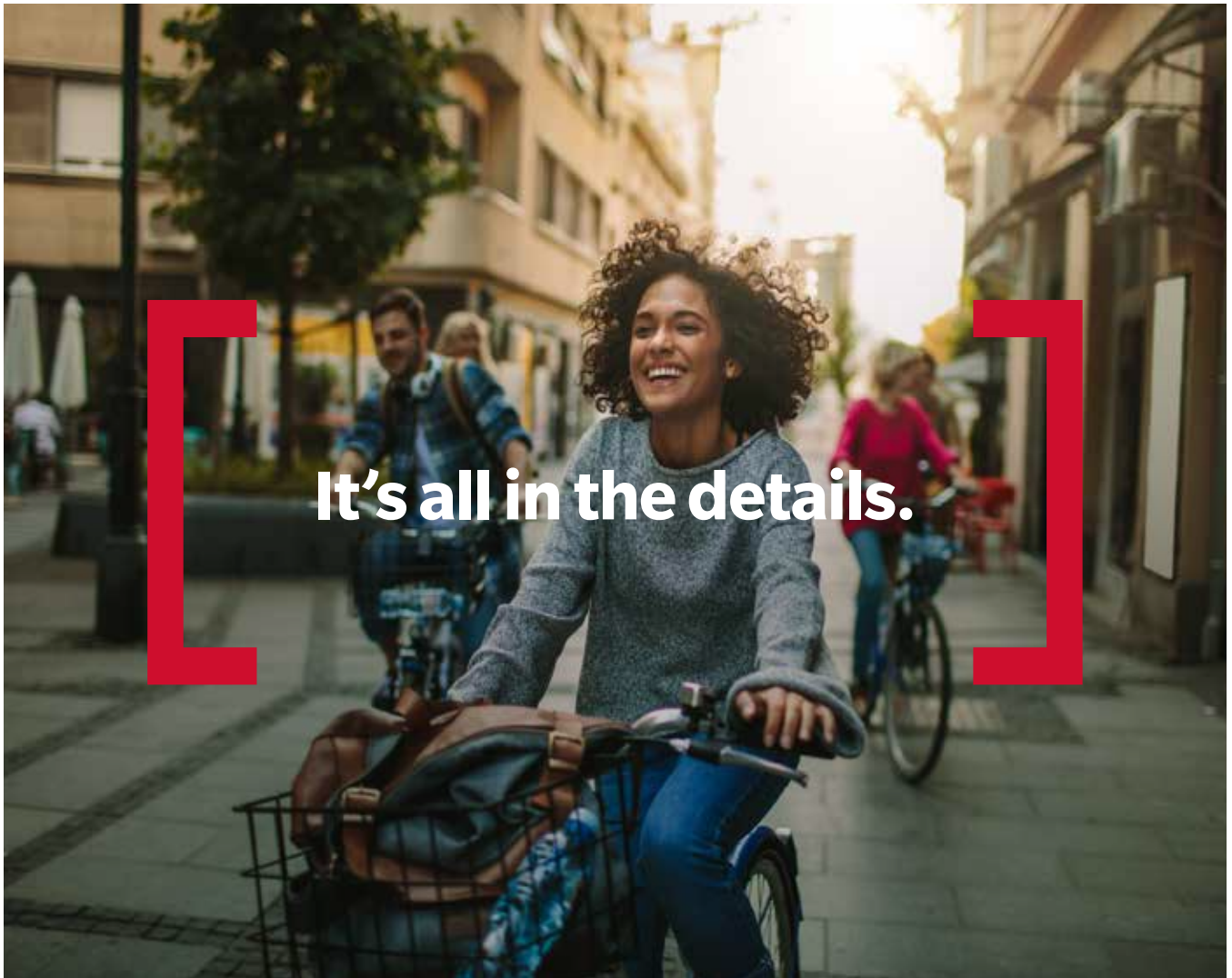
Building resilience from the home to the municipal scale

Engaging residents in flood resilient actions is just one of the best practices identified in the [Municipal Flood Risk Check-Up](#), launched earlier this year by the Intact Centre. All municipalities, large and small, can use the Check-Up to assess their overall flood exposure and flood preparedness. It is a straight-forward, self-assessment tool for identifying, analyzing, and

reducing flood risk, involving "High", "Medium" and "Low" responses to 50 questions. It is an excellent first step in the municipal flood risk management journey, as well as a tool for documenting annual progress for those who are already well on their way.

Using the Check-Up can also assist municipalities that wish to apply for Intact Financial Corporation's [Municipal Climate Resiliency Grants Program](#). Developing a municipal flood risk management strategy using the Check-Up is considered an eligible project at the community level. The Check-Up can also be used to justify the implementation of specific flood resilience measures that have been identified using the tool, for example relating to stormwater management or homeowner incentive programs. The deadline for applications is January 31, 2025.

For further information, reach out to Joanna Eyquem at the Intact Centre on Climate Adaptation (joanna.eyquem@uwaterloo.ca)



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Municipal Climate Resiliency Grants – Funding Practical Climate Adaptation Solutions

Intact Financial Corporation (Intact) is Canada's largest property & casualty insurer. **Intact Public Entities (IPE)** is a wholly owned Intact subsidiary focused on distributing insurance products customized to the needs of municipalities.

Extreme weather events are on the rise, with flooding being the most costly climate hazard in Canada. Driven by irreversible climate change, flood risk will continue to grow. Now is the time to implement measures for climate adaptation planning with flood hazard assessments, flood preparedness, and support actions to better prepare your municipality for heavy rainfall, river, and coastal flooding, and limit future flood risks.

All municipalities, large or small, must assess their overall flood exposure and implement actions, and continue to be at the forefront of flood risk management. Accelerate your municipality's climate adaptation efforts through Intact's Municipal Climate Resiliency Grants – a program dedicated to funding locally driven projects that can help mitigate the impacts of extreme weather events, like flooding.

In 2022, Intact and IPE invested in 10 impactful projects across Canada through the Municipal Climate Resiliency Grants program. Now, Intact is doubling down to support even more community-based projects that implement proven adaptation solutions. The grants program prioritizes initiatives that target communities and residents that are most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and have concrete indicators of success, with the potential to be scaled across other communities.

When considering your community's needs, look to these successful flood risk mitigation solutions supported by the grants program in 2022 in Atlantic Canada.

The Neighbourhood-Level Flood Risk Portal implemented by the City of Fredericton was developed to increase awareness and preparedness for different types of flooding within the community. Through in-house expertise and access to provincial data, the City was able to define four different types of flooding at the property level to incorporate into the portal.

In the City of Charlottetown, a Flood Action Rebate
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program was implemented for residents covering costs of eligible flood-related expenses with many properties receiving upgrades that homeowners might have otherwise passed on or delayed. In addition to the rebate program, the City hosted a series of panel discussions to increase awareness and preparedness, as well as talk about the City's strategy and action plan for improving flood resilience and what homeowners can do to protect their property.

Municipalities need to be at the forefront of building more climate resilient communities. The Municipal Climate Resiliency Grants program can help – apply now, the portal is open until January 31, 2025.

Why stop there! When it comes to reducing flood risk, actions speak louder than words. The key to a successful climate risk management strategy is understanding your environment and your exposure to existing or emerging flood risk factors. The Intact Centre on Climate Adaptation at the University of Waterloo is leading the way to support municipalities with the Municipal Flood Risk Check-Up – a self-assessment tool for identifying, analyzing and reducing flood risk. The Check-Up is an excellent first step in your municipality's flood risk management journey. The Intact Centre offers more insight and actionable steps on the Municipal Flood Risk Check-Up in their article in this issue.

We all play a pivotal role in building more climate resilient communities and we can not ignore the risks and significant impacts of extreme weather. Let's take charge together and tackle the growing risk of flooding.

Resources:

Municipal Climate Resiliency Grants: intactfc.com/in-the-community/municipal-climate

Municipal Flood Risk Check-Up: intactcentreclimateadaptation.ca/municipal-flood-risk-check-up/



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Uniting for Growth: Antigonish's Collaborative Approach to Housing

By Staff

The Municipality of the County of Antigonish and the Town of Antigonish were both successful with their applications to the federal Housing Accelerator Fund (HAF). The Town and County have since come together to tackle the housing crisis by creating an inter-municipal agreement outlining how the two HAF programs will be jointly managed. At the heart of this initiative is Denise Dunn, the Housing Accelerator Fund Coordinator for both municipalities. Her role is central to ensuring the municipalities meet their goal of creating over 90 additional housing units beyond what would normally be built over the next few years.

The HAF “empowered communities to choose initiatives that were both effective and suitable for their unique circumstances,” Dunn explains. The Municipality of the County of Antigonish is pursuing eight initiatives, including asset management for housing development, active transportation, and amendments to land use by-laws.

Meanwhile, the Town of Antigonish is focusing on five key areas such as doing a high-density zoning review.

The collaboration is evident in the way Antigonish's municipal leaders have aligned their HAF programs. Former CAOs, alongside Kate MacInnis, Director of Community Development, were instrumental in establishing joint initiatives such as grants for affordable housing and focusing on community transit. This coordinated effort ensures that the Town and County work hand-in-hand to achieve their housing development goals.

Since the acceptance of their HAF applications, the Town and County have made significant strides. Building on the momentum of the inter-municipal agreement and hiring a HAF Coordinator, partnerships with local organizations like the Eastern District Planning Commission were secured. Notably, a \$30,000 grant was provided to the Antigonish Affordable Housing Society, which has already broken ground on a 17-unit

project. In addition, both municipal units received funding to complete an active transportation trail with a connection to a new neighbourhood.

Dunn highlights the collaborative nature of the work, extending beyond the two municipalities. Municipalities across Nova Scotia that have received HAF funding have been working together. “Nova Scotians inherently grasp the concept that a rising tide lifts all boats,” she says. This mindset has led to knowledge-sharing efforts throughout the province, accelerating progress and productivity toward housing goals.

The Municipality of the County of Antigonish is pursuing eight initiatives, including asset management for housing development, active transportation, and amendments to land use by-laws.

Despite their progress, the Town and County have faced challenges. The suspended consolidation of the two municipalities, the appointment of new CAOs, and the impact of municipal elections have created delays. However, Dunn remains optimistic, noting that momentum, although slowed, has not stopped. The dedicated staff and senior leadership teams have “pressed

forward on all fronts, diligently working to push initiatives closer to their deadlines,” she says.

Looking ahead, the Town and County remain committed to expanding housing options and developing complete communities. “Housing encompasses more than just four walls and a roof,” says Dunn. Their next steps include modernizing the permitting process, protecting municipal water sources for long-term sustainability, and improving transportation connectivity to enhance overall community well-being. The HAF provides the foundation for municipalities to implement these lasting changes.

Dunn emphasizes that “no single level of government, home builder, nonprofit, or community can solve this issue alone.” It is hoped that Antigonish's spirit of collaboration and determination will serve as an inspiration for organizations of all types to work together when addressing the challenges of housing development.



Apple Seed Court Phase 2



Apple Seed Court Phase 1

Youth Engagement in Municipal Governance

By Charlene Fekeshazy

Youth Engagement in Municipal Governance: Inspiring Tomorrow's Leaders

In many municipalities across Nova Scotia, the voices of young people are being amplified, shaping the future of local governance. The Municipality of Amherst is an example, with a Youth Council that serves as an essential bridge between young residents and local government. Former Mayor David Kogan and Sharon Bristol, Director of Community Living, shared how Amherst is fostering youth involvement and offered valuable advice for other municipalities.

Empowering Youth: The Amherst Youth Council

The Amherst Youth Council plays a vital role in the town's governance and community activities. With 12 positions, it provides a platform for high school and junior high students to actively engage with municipal leaders. One of their most notable experiences, according to Mayor Kogan, was participating in the Atlantic Mayors Congress, where youth had the chance to interact directly with the Premier of Nova Scotia. "It was a great engagement session for them," Kogan remarked. "They are the leaders of tomorrow and these experiences allow them to learn firsthand how politics works at different levels."

Beyond formal engagements, the Youth Council is deeply involved in the community. Sharon Bristol highlighted their recent initiative tackling food insecurity, where council members met with local organizations and urged the town council to increase funding for food banks. "They bring fresh perspectives to complex issues," Bristol explained, "and their creativity and optimism are essential when addressing challenges like poverty."

The Importance of Youth Engagement

Mayor Kogan stressed that youth involvement in municipal governance benefits both the community and the young people themselves. "Engaging youth helps them develop a broader understanding of their community and prepares them for leadership roles," he said. "Their participation brings new ideas and solutions, while also creating more well-

rounded individuals."

From building confidence through public participation at local events like Canada Day celebrations to working on long-term initiatives, youth are gaining invaluable experiences. These opportunities not only enhance their résumés but also instill a sense of civic duty and social awareness that extends far beyond high school.

Challenges and Opportunities in Engaging Youth

Despite the successes, Mayor Kogan acknowledged the challenges of maintaining a fully active Youth Council. "We have 12 positions, but we don't always fill them," he admitted. Recruiting young people, particularly after they graduate from high school, remains a challenge, many move on to post-secondary education or the workforce. However, Kogan is optimistic that continued efforts to involve youth in both governance and community service will keep interest alive.

Bristol emphasized the importance of supporting and mentoring youth who step forward. "We strive to balance hard issues with fun, community-driven events," she said. "It is crucial to make youth feel like they are making a difference and having fun, which helps create a buzz that attracts more involvement."

Advice for Other Municipalities

For municipalities looking to establish or strengthen youth engagement programs, both Kogan and Bristol offered sound advice. Mayor Kogan emphasized the need for councils to view youth councils as a valuable tool, not only to nurture future leaders but also to gain insights into the issues affecting younger generations. "It is an obligation," Kogan stated. "Engage your youth, and you will be helping both them and your community."

Bristol added that working closely with local schools and providing ongoing mentorship is key. "Don't treat this as a side task—make a serious commitment," she advised. "When youth see that their contributions are

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valued, they will rise to the challenge.”

In Amherst, the results are clear: youth engagement is not just a future aspiration but a present reality. Their model of fostering youth leadership offers a valuable blueprint for municipalities across the province to inspire and empower the next generation of civic leaders.

Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM): Youth Engagement in Action

In Halifax, youth voices are heard loud and clear through the work of the Youth Advisory Committee (YAC). Created to ensure that young people have a seat at the table, the YAC advises Regional Council on municipal policies, programs, and services that affect youth. As a key part of local governance, the committee meets monthly to address issues impacting young residents and to strategize solutions based on their annual work plan.

“The YAC has been instrumental in bringing unheard voices to Council,” shares Laura Lewis from HRM’s Clerk’s Office. Among their successes is a motion aimed at improving building safety and security for first-time renters, a critical issue for young people navigating their first steps toward independence. Members of the YAC have gone on to make positive changes in their communities, receiving HRM Volunteer Awards and even becoming Municipal Youth Poet Laureates.

The Importance of Youth Engagement

For HRM, involving youth in local governance goes beyond participation— it is about instilling a sense of civic responsibility that lasts a lifetime. “Encouraging youth to understand their role in local government is vital for democracy,” says Lewis. Through active engagement, young people in HRM are learning that their voices matter, creating a foundation for future leadership. This early involvement, she explains, leads to a habit of continued participation, ensuring that youth remain connected to municipal issues as they grow older.

Overcoming Challenges and Maximizing Opportunities

HRM acknowledges that engaging youth is not without challenges. “Young people often feel disconnected from political processes,” says Lewis. Many feel their opinions are undervalued or fear being judged

due to a lack of experience. To combat these barriers, HRM has taken steps to foster stronger relationships between youth and council members. Inviting council members and senior administrators to YAC meetings has helped bridge the gap, promoting open communication and mutual understanding.

HRM has also emphasized the importance of meeting youth on their terms, both physically and digitally, to create meaningful engagement opportunities. By connecting with young people in spaces where they are most comfortable, whether online or in their communities, the municipality ensures that youth feel included and valued.

Advice for Other Municipalities

For municipalities looking to strengthen youth engagement, HRM offers critical advice: “Look at your processes and ensure that nothing is unintentionally restricting youth involvement.” Making opportunities accessible and diverse is essential, as is reaching out to youth in the spaces they already occupy. By doing so, municipalities can create more inclusive, welcoming environments that encourage young people to get involved.





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Saving Energy and Money on Your Power Bill

By Nova Scotia Power

As we head into the winter season, there are new ways to save energy and money on your power bill. With less daylight and cooler temperatures, many of us end up using more electricity as we spend more time at home using energy for things like lighting, cooking, and heating. But small changes in daily habits can help you save energy, and control how and when you use energy to help manage your power bills.

This fall (2024), we've been signing up Nova Scotia Power customers who are interested in our ***Time-of-Use and Critical Peak Pricing Rate Pilots***. These pilots are designed for customers who can change their habits around how and when they use electricity, to take advantage of lower rates during off-peak periods. The goal is to help shift the demand for energy away from peak times of the day/year and keep costs down for customers.

Pilot Rate Options

Customers enrolled in our ***Time-of-Use (TOU) Rate Pilot*** can save energy and money by shifting the energy they use on weekdays, to the weekends, during the winter months (November – March). This could mean doing laundry over the weekend, setting the dishwasher to run overnight, or turning down/programming your thermostat. They'll also be able to take advantage of a lower rate around the clock the rest of the year (April – October). No special equipment is required to take part in this rate option, other than a smart meter.

The other rate option is the ***Critical Peak Pricing (CPP) Rate Pilot***, which is designed for customers who can shift the energy they use within a day's notice. This happens when a "Critical Peak event" is called in the winter months (November-March). These events are called on colder days or when renewable generation is lower than forecasted and only last for four hours. During that four-hour window, prices are higher to reflect the higher cost of providing energy during that time. The rest of the time, your rate will always be lower. There can only be a maximum of 18 critical peak events called over the winter, and never on statutory

holidays. Like the Time-of-Use rate option, if you have a smart meter, you are eligible to take part in the CPP rate option. No special equipment is required.

Time-of-Day Rate Program

About 12,000 customers are in the ***Time-of-Day Rate Program*** which is available to customers with an Electric Thermal Storage (ETS) unit in their home. These heating systems include room units, furnaces, and in-floor heating. They can help you lower your heating costs by storing heat when electricity costs less and releasing the heat throughout the day. During the prime heating season (December to February), off-peak, mid-peak, and peak rates apply. For all other months (March to November), you'll only experience mid-peak and off-peak. By programming your ETS to match these hours, your home will always be comfortable and cost-efficient.

Equal Billing

This is a great option for anyone looking for a predictable energy bill each month. The cost of the electricity you use each year can be spread out over 12 equal monthly payments. This means you know exactly how much you'll pay each month and won't be surprised with a higher bill during the peak heating season in the winter months. You will never pay more than the energy you use.

MyEnergy Insights

This is an online tool that gives an estimate of the energy you are using in your home or business. It is broken down by appliance, giving you more information about the energy you're using, as well as more control over how you use it. To access MyEnergy Insights, you need to have a registered online Nova Scotia Power account, MyAccount. If you aren't registered for MyAccount, you can [Sign-up today](#). For the most accurate and up-to-date overview of the energy you use, fill out the short home survey found in your MyEnergy Insights portal.

SPONSORED CONTENT

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Energy Efficiency Tips

Along with the programs and tools offered, there are things we can all do to help save energy and money. Small changes at home can make a real difference in your power bill. Here are a few easy tips to keep in mind during the winter months:

- Turn the thermostat back to 16 degrees when you're travelling or away for an extended period of time. It will keep your pipes from freezing and save energy when you're not home.
- Using smart or programmable thermostats can also provide control and consistency.
- If you heat or cool your home with heat pumps, consistency is key. It's recommended you set the unit to a temperature you're comfortable with and leave it.
- Turn off lights and unplug electronics when you're not using them. These devices use standby power even when they're turned off. Use a power bar to turn them off completely and back on easily.

- Use cold water when doing laundry in the washing machine.
- Avoid turning your element to "high" when cooking and use lids when cooking to heat up food faster.

To access more energy efficiency tips and learn about rebates available, visit Efficiency Nova Scotia's website at www.energycyns.ca.

Low Income Supports

We also provide additional support for low-income households. The HEAT Fund helps eligible Nova Scotians with their energy bill by providing emergency assistance for all forms of home heating, including electric, propane, oil, wood, and natural gas. We encourage customers who are struggling to pay their power bill to call our Customer Care team (1-800-428-6230). We are here to help. There are programs and resources available, and we are here to listen and provide guidance and support.

For more information on rate options, programs, and other tools to help you save energy and money this winter, visit: www.nspower.ca/save.



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Stay tuned for more details on the third call for applications by joining our mailing list at nschallenge-fund.ca/contact.