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



SUMMER 2025



NOVA SCOTIA FEDERATION
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The 2025 NSFM Fall Conference will be held November 5-7 at the
Westin Nova Scotian Hotel in Halifax.

STAY TUNED FOR UPDATES

Where Nova Scotia's municipalities come together for solutions,
insights, and professional development!

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Cover Photo – Woolen Mill, Barrington



NOVA SCOTIA
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Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities

**Better government.
Stronger communities.**

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.

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Rising to the Moment: The Power of Municipal Leadership

By President Pam Mood

Strong municipal leadership has always been about more than decision-making—it’s about stepping up when it matters most. As we look across Nova Scotia, municipal leaders are tackling complex challenges head-on, finding solutions that not only meet today’s needs but also lay the groundwork for a more resilient future.

This edition of *Municipal Observer* showcases how municipalities are responding to evolving demands with creativity and determination. Whether it’s newly elected mayors adjusting to the realities of governance, efforts to strengthen municipal capacity, or strategies to address climate risks, these stories highlight the leadership that drives local progress.

Advocacy remains a cornerstone of municipal leadership. At NSFM, we

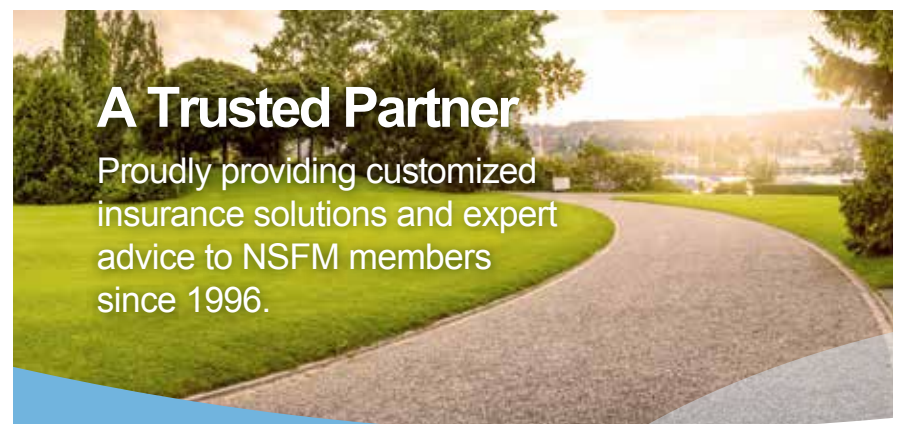
continue to push for the tools and policy changes that municipalities require, but the real power lies in a collective voice. When municipal

The work we do today will define the future of our province.

leaders engage their communities, educate residents about the challenges ahead, and work together to champion solutions, they create momentum that extends beyond council chambers

and into provincial and national discussions.

Leadership is about action, and municipal officials across Nova Scotia continue to prove that local government is where real change begins. Whether it’s forging partnerships, driving innovation, or ensuring our communities have the resources they need, the work we do today will define the future of our province. The challenges ahead may be complex, but with determination and collaboration, we will continue to deliver results where they matter most—at the local level.



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Navigating Uncertainty: Strengthening Municipal Resilience in a Shifting Landscape

By CEO Juanita Spencer

As we move through 2025, municipalities across Nova Scotia are navigating a rapidly evolving landscape—one shaped by economic pressures, climate change, and the increasing need for strategic collaboration. Despite these uncertainties, one thing remains clear: our collective resilience and commitment to building sustainable, thriving communities.

This edition of *Municipal Observer* highlights how municipal leaders are responding to today's challenges with foresight and innovation. From newly elected mayors reflecting on their first 100 days in office to groundbreaking initiatives in flood mitigation, capacity-building, and sustainability, these stories showcase the proactive steps municipalities are taking to safeguard their future. As Nova Scotia continues to play a vital role in Canada's success,

the strength of our municipalities is more important than ever.

We are committed to ensuring that Municipalities have the support they need.

At NSFAM, we recognize that navigating this complex landscape requires the right tools, strong partnerships, and forward-thinking leadership.

Whether through advocacy, knowledge-sharing, or fostering collaboration, we are committed to ensuring that municipalities have the support they need. This edition not only celebrates the resilience of our communities but also underscores the importance of preparedness—whether in tackling financial constraints, mitigating climate risks, or ensuring affordability for future generations.

Uncertainty presents challenges, but it also creates opportunities to adapt, innovate, and strengthen municipal governance. By working together and supporting one another, we can build communities that are not just prepared for the future—but ready to lead it.



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NSFM 2025 Spring Conference Recap: Navigating the Changing Landscape of Municipalities

By Charlene Fekeshazy

From April 30 to May 2, 2025, municipal leaders from across Nova Scotia convened at the Inn on Prince in Truro for NSFM's 2025 Spring Conference. With the theme 'Changing Landscape of Municipalities,' the event provided a dynamic platform for knowledge exchange, strategic discussions, and networking, equipping municipal leaders to navigate emerging challenges and leverage new opportunities.

Conference Highlights

Opening Session The conference commenced with a warm welcome from the NSFM President, who emphasized the importance of adaptability and innovation in municipal governance.

Engaging Sessions Throughout the conference, delegates were engaged by informative and thought-provoking presentations, covering:

- **Climate Change Adaptation and Sustainability:** Delegates explored successful local initiatives led by the Municipality of the District of Digby and the Town of Mahone Bay.
- **Community Engagement Strategies:** Best practices for public consultation, online engagement, and building inclusive communities were shared, emphasizing equity, diversity, and inclusion.
- **Innovative Infrastructure Development:** Participants learned about effective strategies for transforming dormant infrastructure into housing solutions.
- **Provincial Updates:** Representatives from Municipal Affairs, NS Guard and Emergency

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Management, and Environment and Climate Change provided insights on funding opportunities, emergency preparedness, and climate resilience.

- **Emerging Issues:** NSFM President Pam Mood and CEO Juanita Spencer briefed delegates on priority issues, including tariffs, transportation, and ongoing advocacy efforts.
- **NSFM Advisory Committee Updates:** Committee Chairs presented updates from the five Advisory Committees—Climate Change, Equity & Community Wellbeing, Infrastructure, Municipal Autonomy, and Public Safety.

Networking Events

The conference fostered valuable connections through a variety of networking opportunities. At the Networking Café, delegates engaged in discussions on topics ranging from municipal funding to public safety. Social events, including a welcome reception

and a lively evening at Truro’s Farmers Market—where delegates enjoyed line dancing—further enriched the experience, allowing participants to connect and share insights.

Site Tour

Delegates toured the newly revitalized TAAC Grounds in Truro, a project that demonstrated the impact of municipal leadership, government investment, and strong community support. They also visited Victoria Park, where they participated in an informative session on the Hemlock Woolly Adelgid and its impact on Eastern Hemlock.

Closing Remarks

The conference concluded with key takeaways highlighting the importance of proactive planning, collaborative leadership, and continuous learning—cornerstones of effective municipal governance.





Nova Scotia: An Essential Ingredient to a Successful Canada

By Rebecca Bligh, President of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities

Nova Scotians are feeling the impact of uncertainty caused by the threatened imposition of tariffs by the U.S. administration during this trade war. Bills are harder to pay, the cost of living continues to increase, and a lot of families are finding it difficult to put food on the table.

During the recent historical federal election campaign, Canadians contemplated how to face a new political reality tainted by chaos and unpredictability from the U.S. Administration.

Throughout the campaign, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) paid close attention to what the main federal parties proposed for local governments across the country, including communities in Nova Scotia who are engines of economic prosperity. This provided an opportunity to rethink how we fund and equip municipalities to maintain the vital infrastructure and essential services that underpin our nation.

FCM will also remain at the forefront of the existential battle facing our country with all orders of government. More than ever, we are united as Team Canada, and unanimous about our sovereignty.

Advocacy in Washington, D.C.

Since February, our organization has led missions to Washington, D.C., to meet face-to-face with American counterparts to defend jobs, industries, and communities on both sides of the border. Local leaders understand that tariffs are in no one's interest, and that continuous threats must come to an end.

Recently, along with NSFM President Mayor Pam Mood (Yarmouth), we participated in the National League of Cities Conference in Washington to engage directly with American elected officials. The discussions were positive and productive. Neighbouring communities in the United States

understood the urgency of the situation and that tariffs are also impacting their residents.

NSFM's CEO Juanita Spencer was also present with FCM's First Vice-President Tim Tierney and Dorval Mayor Marc Doret (Quebec) during this highly important conference.

Working with municipalities in Nova Scotia will be crucial going forward, as FCM will continue to defend Canadian municipalities during this trade war.

*Let's roll up our sleeves
and get to work.*

Nova Scotia's economy hit by tariffs

Communities across our nation drive Canada's economy, including in Nova Scotia. Tariffs and the threat of tariffs have direct consequences on our communities.

Notably, tariffs hurt Nova Scotia's fishing sector. Last year, Nova Scotia was Canada's number one seafood exporter, which contributed \$2.5 billion to the provincial economy. Nearly 60% of the province's lobster industry is exported to the U.S.

Across our nation, municipalities are standing up for Canada by bringing forward 'Buy Canada' procurement policies. Now is the time to invest in local strength - we are asking the federal government, provinces, and territories to gradually break down interprovincial trade barriers, to invest in business and trade enabling infrastructure, and to lower the prices of goods so that we can boost the Canadian economy. This will help Nova Scotians navigate these uncertain times.

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The President of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, Rebecca Bligh, joined a delegation of Canadian, Mexican, and U.S. mayors during a tri-national trade summit in Washington, D.C. from March 27-28. Credit: FCM Media Team

The need for a National Prosperity Partnership

This federal election represented a crucial opportunity to continue to put front and centre the fundamental need to modernize how all orders of government work together for the benefit of Canadians. A key component of partnering together for national prosperity must include modernizing the municipal fiscal framework and implementing a new way of funding municipalities, one that is more efficient and empowers local governments to support families and businesses in our communities.

Communities across Nova Scotia must deal with a great deal of pressing issues, from affordable housing to outdated infrastructure. Nova Scotians deserve better services. A National Prosperity Partnership will ensure governments work together to move

our nation forward. Modernizing the municipal fiscal framework would give municipalities the 21st century tools our communities need to thrive and shine. This modernized partnership has never been more important for the well-being of our country so that we can be stronger together by enabling economic resilience. We must work with all orders of government to strengthen our economy and improve Canadians' quality of life. Let's roll up our sleeves and get to work.

About the Author

Rebecca Bligh is President of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) and a municipal councillor for the City of Vancouver, in British Columbia. FCM is the national voice for Canada's local governments, with more than 2,100 members representing more than 92 percent of all Canadians.

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Be Ready, Nova Scotia: Prepare Your Home for Floods and Wildfires

By Dr. Anabela Bonada, Managing Director, Intact Centre on Climate Adaptation, University of Waterloo

Floods and wildfires are no longer rare in Nova Scotia—they are annual threats. Climate change is making storms more intense, rainfall heavier, and wildfire seasons longer. This is not a warning for the future. It is happening now.

In May and June 2023, wildfires in Barrington Lake and Tantallon burned over 25,000 hectares, destroyed more than 200 homes, and forced thousands to evacuate. The Shelburne County fire became the largest in the province's recorded history.

Just weeks later, on July 21, an atmospheric river dumped over 250 mm of rain in parts of the province—more than three months' worth in a single day. The resulting floods triggered a state of emergency, major damage, and tragic loss of life. Insured losses exceeded \$257 million. Less than a year later, post-tropical storm Beryl brought another deadly flash flood.

These events have disrupted lives, damaged property, and strained communities. With the increasing risk of flood and wildfire, the time to prepare is now—not after disaster strikes.

The Good News: We are Not Powerless Against Floods and Wildfires

Municipalities across Nova Scotia have a key role to play in helping residents prepare. While we cannot control the weather, we can reduce the impact it has on our communities. Preparation works—and it starts at home.

To help, the Intact Centre on Climate Adaptation has created two clear and practical infographics: one for **home flood protection** and one for **wildfire protection**. These are easy-to-follow checklists designed to guide residents through affordable, proven actions that reduce risk.

Flood Protection Starts at Home

Even outside of high-risk zones, heavy rain and snowmelt can overwhelm local drainage. The [Three Steps to Cost-Effective Home Flood Protection](#) infographic includes:

- Cleaning out eavestroughs and downspouts to help direct water away from the foundation
- Installing a sump pump with a battery backup to remove water in case of a flood
- Storing valuables in watertight containers to protect them from water damage

These simple, cost-effective steps can prevent thousands of dollars in damage.

Wildfire-Ready Homes

Wildfires are no longer limited to remote areas; ember showers are capable of igniting homes from a distance. The [Three Steps to a Cost-Effective FireSmart™ Home](#) infographic includes:

- Clearing flammable debris from roofs, gutters, and decks
- Moving firewood and propane tanks at least 10 m from structures
- Using non-combustible fencing within 1.5 m of the house

These measures give firefighters a better chance of defending homes—and can mean the difference between containment and loss.

What Municipalities Can Do

Municipal staff can share these infographics through local communication channels, such as newsletters, social media, emergency preparedness pages, and community centres. Consider including them in welcome packages, tax mail-outs, or at seasonal events.

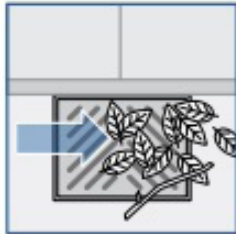
The call to action is simple: take 30 minutes to walk around your home using the infographics. Residents will likely find a few easy fixes they can make immediately, and others to plan for. Every action counts.

The Intact Centre for Climate Adaptation is an education partner of the NSFM Municipal Group Insurance Program.

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.



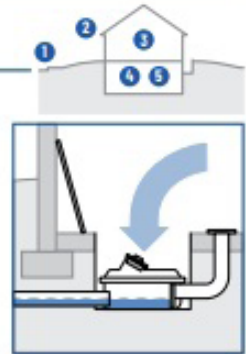
- 2 Clean out eaves troughs.



- 3 Check for leaks in plumbing, fixtures and appliances.



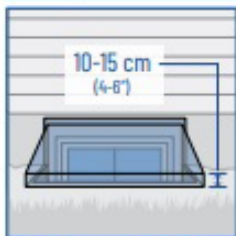
- 4 Test your sump pump.



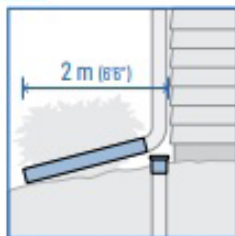
- 5 Clean out your backwater valve.

Step 2: Complete simple upgrades

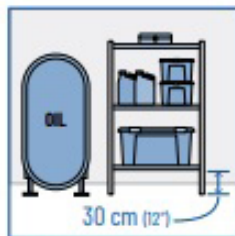
Do-it-yourself, for under \$250



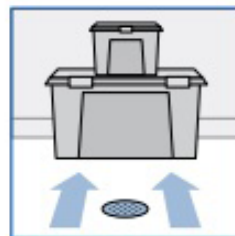
- 1 Install window wells that sit 10-15 cm above ground, and window well covers (where fire escape requirements permit).



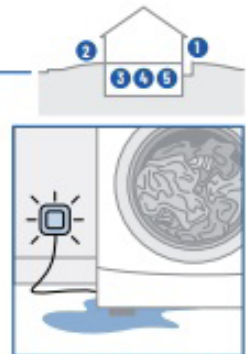
- 2 Disconnect downspouts, cap foundation drains and extend downspouts and sump discharge pipes to direct water at least 2 m from foundation.



- 3 Store valuables and hazardous materials in watertight containers and secure fuel tanks.



- 4 Remove obstructions to floor drain.



- 5 Install and maintain flood alarm.

Step 3: Complete more complex upgrades

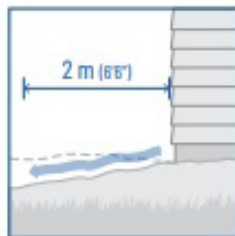
Work with a contractor, for over \$250



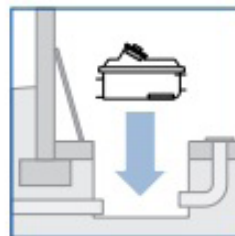
- 1 Install a rain garden to collect stormwater (at least 5 m from the foundation).



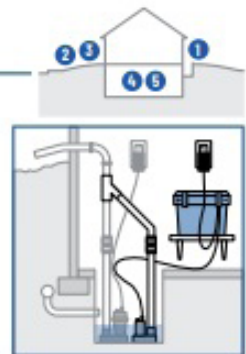
- 2 Convert paved areas to vegetation which absorbs more water and less heat.



- 3 Correct grading to direct water at least 2 m away from foundation.



- 4 Install backwater valve.



- 5 Install backup sump pump and battery.

INTACT CENTRE
ON CLIMATE ADAPTATION



Scan the code or click the link for additional resources at www.intactcentre.ca

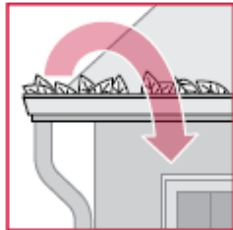


UNIVERSITY OF WATERLOO

THREE STEPS TO A COST-EFFECTIVE FIRESMART™ HOME

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

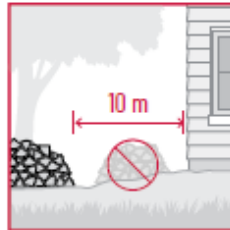
Do-it-yourself, \$0 - \$300



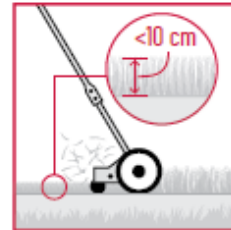
- 1 Remove needles, leaves and other debris from gutters, roof surfaces, decks and balconies. Regularly clean vents.



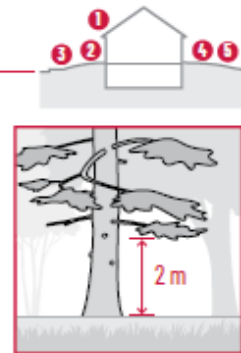
- 2 Remove all combustible ground cover (mulch and plants) within 1.5 m of the house perimeter.



- 3 Remove combustible materials (firewood and lumber) stored within 10 m of house perimeter and under decks.



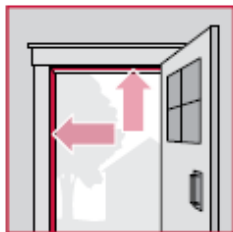
- 4 Mow the lawn to <10 cm and plant low-growing, well-spaced shrubs and other fire-resistant plants.



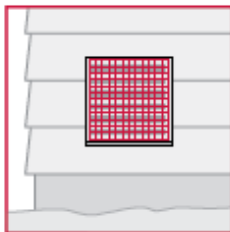
- 5 Prune trees to create a 2 m clearance from the ground to the lowest tree branches.

Step 2: Complete simple upgrades

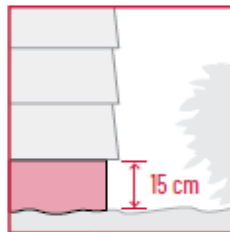
\$300 - \$3,000



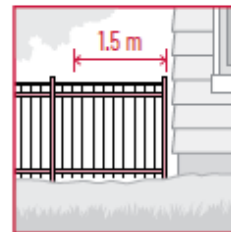
- 1 Replace worn or missing weather stripping on all doors including garage doors.



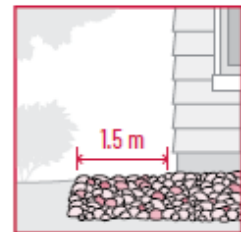
- 2 Add a non-combustible 3 mm screen to all external vents, except dryer vents.



- 3 Create a 15 cm ground-to-siding non-combustible clearance (e.g., install cement board or metal skirting).



- 4 Install non-combustible fencing within 1.5 m of the house (cement fiber, metal, chain link or stone).



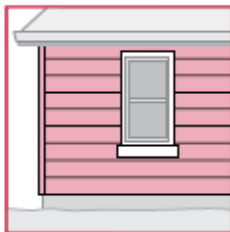
- 5 Install non-combustible ground surfaces within 1.5 m of the house (mineral soil, rock, concrete or stone).

Step 3: Complete more complex upgrades

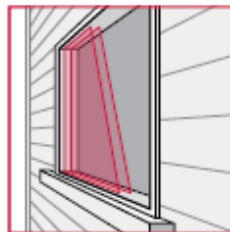
Work with a contractor, \$3,000 - \$30,000



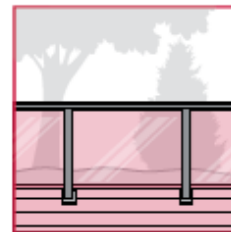
- 1 Install Class A fire-resistant roof covering (e.g., cement fibre, metal or asphalt shingles).



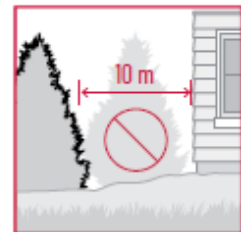
- 2 Install non-combustible siding (stucco, metal, stone, cement fibre board).



- 3 Install multi-pane or tempered glass windows and exterior fire rated doors.



- 4 Retrofit all deck components to be fire-rated, with a continuous surface.



- 5 Remove conifer trees that are within 10 m of the house.

Note: not all actions will be applicable to each home. Completing these steps does not eliminate the risk of home or structure ignition.

Building Capacity: How a Dedicated Role is Strengthening the Municipality of the County of Kings

By Staff

In June 2024, the Municipality of the County of Kings introduced a new role to help secure funding for key projects: the Funding Analyst. This position has been filled by Chris Ritchie, the municipality's first-ever Funding Analyst. The role is dedicated to identifying and securing grant opportunities to support infrastructure, operations, and strategic goals of the municipality.

"The role is dynamic," explains Ritchie. "I provide accounting support to all departments in the organization, with a focus on project funding and financing. I am regularly in contact with external funding agencies and searching for funding opportunities for projects supporting the municipality's day-to-day operations, core services, critical infrastructure, and



Chris Ritchie, the municipalities first-ever Funding Analyst.

strategic goals."

Previously, securing grants was an added responsibility for staff already managing full workloads.

"Municipalities often talk about the importance of finding alternate sources of revenue to fund important projects and reduce the reliance on tax rates. This is a Funding Analyst's specialty, and it frees up time for colleagues in other busy roles within the organization who used to have to do this important work off the side of their desks."

Having a full-time grant specialist has already improved the municipality's efficiency in securing funding. By attending grant information sessions, networking with funding agencies, and thoroughly reviewing application guidelines, Ritchie has streamlined the process. "When a funding opportunity is identified,

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The Municipality of the County of Kings.

I work with a subject matter expert within our organization to complete applications. They bring expert knowledge of the project, and I bring expert knowledge of the grant. This has helped us be more efficient and successful in obtaining grants."

In addition to securing funding, Ritchie is available to assist with monitoring project spending, submitting progress reports, and ensuring compliance with funding agreements. This oversight helps strengthen the municipality's reputation with fund agencies, increasing its chances of securing future grants.

Having Ritchie on staff has also allowed the municipality to receive funding from programs they previously did not consider. "For example, I applied for, and received, a

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grant from Clean Foundation to help pay for a summer intern specializing in environmental sciences," he shares. "They will assist with green energy projects and lake monitoring." Effective initiatives like this would not be possible without the research and

Having a full-time grant specialist has already improved the municipality's efficiency in securing funding.

dedication of the Funding Analyst.

As other municipalities look to strengthen their ability to secure large grants, Ritchie offers key advice: "My advice to other

municipalities is to get projects to a point of being 'shovel-ready' before you apply. In our case, this usually means completing feasibility studies and having engineering pre-design work done. The pre-design will determine the timeline, scope, and budget of the project. In my experience, projects with these components completed before applying have been much more successful in receiving grants."

The establishment of this dedicated role marks a significant step forward in the municipalities approach to grant funding. By proactively seeking external financial support and ensuring projects are well-prepared, the municipality is not only expanding its capacity but also setting an example for other communities looking to accomplish similar goals.

Building a More Resilient Amherst: Flood Risk Mitigation for a Changing Climate

By Staff

In February 2022, the Town of Amherst faced a crisis that underscored the urgent need for climate-ready infrastructure. A combination of heavy rainfall and rapid snowmelt led to significant flooding, affecting numerous areas across the town. The floods not only damaged homes but also cut off the main access to the hospital, impacting ambulance routes. Recognizing the need for action, the town turned to the Sustainable Communities Challenge Fund (SCCF) for support.

With \$349,300 in funding award-

ed through the Adaptation stream, the town launched its Flood Risk Mitigation Infrastructure Upgrades project. The initiative focused on enhancing Amherst's stormwater management system to better handle extreme weather events.

Engineering Solutions for a Climate-Ready Town

The project targeted two priority areas where infrastructure upgrades were essential to mitigate flood risks. To address these issues, the town implemented several strategic solutions:

- Hydraulic modeling to identify system bottlenecks
- Channel improvements and flow regulation for Dickey Brook
- Dry and wet weather flow monitoring to assess the relationship between storm and sanitary sewers

Now complete, the project has significantly improved Amherst's flood resilience. "The project involved the lining of 400 to 500 metres of sanitary sewer, com-

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pletely rehabilitating old pipes that had offset joints, cracks, and holes,” explained Aaron Bourgeois, Director of Operations. “They’re now watertight and good for another 50 to 75 years.”

Additionally, a new 36-inch diameter storm sewer was installed, increasing capacity by roughly 250%. These upgrades have reduced the volume of stormwater entering the sanitary sewer system, leading to cost savings for taxpayers and improved service reliability.

A Direct Impact on the Community

The benefits of the project extend beyond infrastructure improvements; they have directly improved the lives of Amherst residents. “The biggest direct benefit were the people that were impacted by the flooding,” said Bourgeois. “They claimed that this was the second or third time they

had experienced flooding in their homes and insurance premiums were going up.”

The project also reflects Amherst’s broader commitment to climate adaptation. “Ten to twelve years ago, I would probably call you out if you said we would experience flooding in the middle of February with plus 15-degree temperatures and a massive rainstorm,” Bourgeois added. “We have to adapt our infrastructure to ensure that we are prepared for that.”

A Model for Future Climate Adaptation Projects

Beyond addressing an immediate problem, the success of this project has encouraged Amherst to continue seeking climate adaptation solutions. The town is already preparing another SCCF funding application. “I have an application started now [for the third round of funding],” Bourgeois shared. “I

found the application process very straightforward. The information that was requested was reasonable. It wasn’t too much. It wasn’t too little. We were not burdened with excessive amounts of paperwork that we did not really have time to fill out.”

Amherst’s flood mitigation efforts serve as an example for other municipalities facing similar climate-related challenges. By securing funding and implementing proactive infrastructure improvements, the town has not only enhanced its resilience but also demonstrated how communities can take action to protect residents and critical services from the growing risks of climate change.

The SCCF is proud to support projects like this—initiatives that make a lasting impact while ensuring communities are prepared for the realities of a changing climate.





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Mayor Andy Fillmore,
Halifax Regional Municipality.



Mayor Elspeth McLean-Wile,
Municipality of the District
of Lunenburg.



Mayor Rob Small
Town of Amherst.

First 100 Days: Reflections from Nova Scotia's Newly Elected Mayors

By Charlene Fekeshazy, Communications Advisor, NSFM

The first 100 days in office are a pivotal period for any newly elected leader. It is a time of transition, learning, and laying the groundwork for the years ahead. For three of Nova Scotia's newly elected mayors, these early days have been both a challenge and an opportunity to implement their visions for their respective communities. Mayor Andy Fillmore of Halifax Regional Municipality, Mayor Elspeth McLean-Wile of the Municipality of the District of Lunenburg, and Mayor Rob Small of the Town of Amherst share their experiences, priorities, and insights gained in their first three months in office.

Mayor Andy Fillmore: Returning Home to Serve

For Andy Fillmore, assuming the mayoralty of Halifax Regional Municipality felt like a homecoming. With nearly a decade as Halifax's Member of Parliament and a prior career as an urban planner, Fillmore has always been deeply connected to the city. His decision to run for office was fueled by a desire to ad-
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dress Halifax's pressing challenges, including housing affordability, transit, and congestion.

"Municipal governance is the closest to people's daily lives," Fillmore states. "The decisions we make now are critical for future generations."

"It has been a period of significant transition, but also an opportunity to reshape how we work together"

Mayor Andy Fillmore
Halifax Regional Municipality

Navigating a council with seven new members has required strong relationship-building and adaptability. "It has been a period of significant transition, but also an opportunity to reshape how we work together," he explains. One of his biggest adjustments has been mastering municipal procedural nuances, despite years of experience in parliamentary committees.

Engagement has been a cornerstone of his early leadership. From traveling to Sheet Harbour with a local Councillor to engaging directly with residents through phone calls and emails, Fillmore is ensuring community voices are heard.

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Transparency is also a priority. "Public trust is built through openness. I always ask if an issue truly needs to be discussed in-camera, or if it can be addressed in a public forum."

As HRM develops its four-year strategic plan, Fillmore sees immense opportunities ahead. "Collaboration, innovation, and modernized service delivery will be key to ensuring we are housing-ready and economically prepared for growth."

Mayor Elspeth McLean-Wile: A Lifetime of Community Commitment

Mayor Elspeth McLean-Wile's journey into municipal politics was shaped by decades of hands-on community engagement. A longtime resident of the Municipality of the District of Lunenburg, she built strong relationships through her extensive business ventures, including a farm, greenhouse, market, bakery, and dairy farm. Encouraged by community members to run, she was drawn to municipal politics because of its non-partisan and grassroots nature.

Her key priorities have centered around managing growth, strengthening regional cooperation, and improving public engagement. The Municipality of the District of Lunenburg's prime location near HRM makes the municipality an attractive place to live and work. "Growth is happening, and we must plan for it wisely."

McLean-Wile has also emphasized the importance of communication. "There is often a gap in public understanding of municipal decisions. We need to engage residents in meaningful ways beyond social media to ensure they are informed and involved."

Stepping into the role, she found there was no es-

"We need to engage residents in meaningful ways beyond social media to ensure they are informed and involved"

Mayor Elspeth McLean-Wile
Municipality of the District of Lunenburg

established playbook. "This position allows flexibility in shaping the approach, which is both an opportunity and a challenge." Strategic planning has been a major focus, with an early session setting the council priorities for the next four years and a follow-up planned to ensure alignment.

"Municipal government has the power to make real change at the local level. But it takes work, and you have to put in the time," she reflects.

Mayor Rob Small: Building on Experience for Amherst's Future

For Mayor Rob Small, leading the Town of Amherst is a continuation of his lifelong dedication to public service. With previous experience as mayor, Small brings a wealth of knowledge and a deep understanding of municipal governance to the role.

His primary focus has been financial sustainability and economic development. "We need to make strategic

"Open communication and transparency will continue to be pillars of my leadership"

Mayor Rob Small, Town of Amherst

investments that will benefit residents today while securing Amherst's long-term financial health," he says. Housing, infrastructure, and attracting new businesses have been top priorities in his first 100 days.

One of Small's key initiatives has been strengthening collaboration with provincial and federal partners to secure funding for critical projects. "Building strong relationships is essential to moving our community forward. We've already made great strides in working with different levels of government to ensure Amherst's needs are heard and addressed."

He also emphasizes the importance of engaging with the community. "The best solutions come from listening to our residents. Open communication and transparency will continue to be pillars of my leadership."

Lessons from the First 100 Days

For these newly elected mayors, the first 100 days have been a time of both challenge and growth. Whether it is navigating council dynamics, engaging the public, or setting strategic priorities, each has embraced the opportunity to shape their municipalities in meaningful ways. Their experiences highlight the power of municipal government to directly impact communities, proving that local leadership is both demanding and deeply rewarding.

As they continue their terms, collaboration, innovation, and public trust will remain at the heart of their leadership. The foundation they lay now will shape the future of their municipalities for years to come.

Partnerships for a Sustainable, Affordable Future

By Sarah White, Manager, Communications & Public Policy, United Way Maritimes

The housing crisis has impacted every corner of our province, touching both rural and urban communities. In the Town of Amherst and the surrounding communities in Cumberland County, a new innovative housing project is creating much needed space in the missing middle of the housing continuum.

The Hillsdale Project is a partnership between United Way Maritimes, the River Philip Foundation, and the Shaw Group. Hillsdale is made up of compact, modular homes and offers both affordable rentals and homeownership for individuals and families earning a steady, average income. The Town of Amherst immediately jumped on board to make the project a reality, supporting zoning and infrastructure changes.

“Since our first discussion on this project, all partners have acted with integrity and delivered on all commitments,” says Jason MacDonald, CAO for the Town of Amherst. “We are extremely fortunate to have such a committed group of organizations and individuals

bringing this much needed project to fruition”.

The close relationship with the partners throughout the process meant the town was able to make connections and build trust early on. Interested renters and homeowners began reaching out to the town before the project was even officially announced, demonstrating the need.

“In Cumberland County, there are 1500 households in core housing need,” says Sarah Flemming, Rural Housing Advisor for United Way Maritimes. “We know the main concern for most of those households is affordability. Many are earning a regular paycheque, but the income required to hold a mortgage in the traditional housing market right now is simply out of reach.”

Like in many communities across Nova Scotia, buying a home is a luxury that many are unable to afford. Either the high cost of renting makes it challenging

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to save for a home, incomes are not sufficient, or the housing available to buy is at a higher price point than most can afford.

Hillsdale is designed to be affordable enough to help people get ahead, while living in a new, high-quality home. Ideally, people who could not traditionally access homeownership will have the opportunity to buy a home, build some equity, and, in time, move on to purchase a home in the traditional market. The home would remain affordable for the next buyer. Tenants with income increases over time may also become eligible to buy, making their affordable rental available to someone else.

Hillsdale has also seen interest from the local business community. “Local businesses in the region have

struggled to fill positions due to the lack of adequate housing for staff,” says Jonathan McClelland, CEO of Cumberland Business Connector. His work is focused on developing partnerships between like-minded businesses and organizations and this project has been a great fit. “That these housing units will support workers earning lower incomes, while working full-time in important roles, will be a game changer for the community.”

United Way Maritimes and its partners are looking forward to seeing the results of this housing project, hoping it can be replicated elsewhere. For more information visit the United Way Colchester Cumberland website www.unitedwaycolchester.ca or contact HillsdaleHousing@unitedwaymaritimes.ca.



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Power you can count on: Building a stronger, more resilient grid for Nova Scotians

By Nova Scotia Power

Every day, our team at Nova Scotia Power is working in the field and behind the scenes to ensure you have safe, reliable electricity when you need it most. We know how essential power is to your home, business, and community. That's why we're making major investments to strengthen our system and reduce outages.

Investing \$1.3 billion to strengthen power reliability

Our [Reliability Plan](#) represents a \$1.3 billion commitment over five years to modernize and harden the electricity grid across Nova Scotia. This investment is about more than just infrastructure—it's about building resilience to withstand the growing challenges of extreme weather and supporting the needs of our expanding communities.

We are investing over \$250 million annually in transmission and distribution system upgrades—an increase of \$60 million per year compared to recent years. This includes installing bigger, stronger poles designed to withstand wind gusts up to 110 km per hour and replacing aging equipment like transformers and protective devices that help isolate faults quickly. For example, new "reclosers" and "trip saver" devices are being installed on priority feeders to limit outages to smaller areas, so fewer customers are affected when problems happen.

To meet the growing energy demands of Nova Scotians, we're also building new distribution lines in neighbourhoods that are expanding across the province. In addition, we are also moving distribution lines that were historically built in wooded areas, out of the woods and along roads. This will reduce the risk of trees falling into the lines and enable our powerline technicians to restore power quicker for customers,

if outages do occur. Beyond local distribution, we're reinforcing transmission infrastructure—the backbone power lines that carries electricity over long distances—through projects like replacing steel towers and adding corrosion protection to ensure long-term reliability.

Tackling the biggest cause of outages: Trees near power lines

Trees and branches coming into contact with power lines remain the number one cause of outages, especially during storms. That's why we have nearly doubled our investment in vegetation management, committing \$45 million annually to trimming, clearing, and widening rights-of-way. In 2025 alone, our crews will complete about 315 kilometers of right-of-way widening and clear trees from approximately 3,200 spans (177 km) of power lines across the province. This focused effort helps reduce interruptions and keep power flowing safely to your home or business.

Using innovation and talent to serve you better

Innovation is key to our approach. We're integrating new smart grid technologies that monitor the system in real time, allowing us to detect and address issues faster than ever before. For example, AI technology is being piloted to scan distribution lines via satellite, providing a comprehensive view of tree proximity and helping prioritize vegetation management in critical areas.

We are also growing our skilled workforce to maintain and improve the system. Since 2023, we have recruited dozens of powerline technicians,

*We're integrating
new smart grid
technologies that monitor
the system in real time,
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ever before*

planners, and wiring inspectors, and greatly expanded our Powerline Technician Apprentices Program. This ensures our talented teams have the capacity they need to keep your power reliable and safe.

Listening and responding to community needs

Your feedback continues to guide our investment decisions. In 2024, our teams held 64 community engagement sessions across the province—four have already been held this year with more planned for the remainder of 2025. These conversations with customers and local community leaders help us prioritize reliability projects and ensure our efforts align with what matters most to you.

A positive trend in reliability and our ongoing commitment

While 2024 marked one of our best years for reliability in two decades—outperforming national five-year averages for outage length and frequency—we know

there is more to do. Severe weather events continue to test the grid, and we're facing new challenges each year when it comes to severe weather events and storms. That's why our Reliability Plan focuses

on storm hardening, targeted equipment upgrades, and advanced grid modernization.

Through these efforts, we expect to reduce outage durations by approximately 20 per cent over the next several years, resulting in fewer disruptions and faster restorations when outages do happen.

At Nova Scotia Power, our mission is clear: to provide you with reliable and safe electricity every day. Through thoughtful investments, innovative technology, and meaningful community partnerships, we're building a stronger, smarter grid that powers Nova Scotian homes and businesses today—and into the future.

To learn more about our plans to strengthen and improve the grid for Nova Scotians, visit nspower.ca/reliability.

We're facing new challenges each year when it comes to severe weather events and storms

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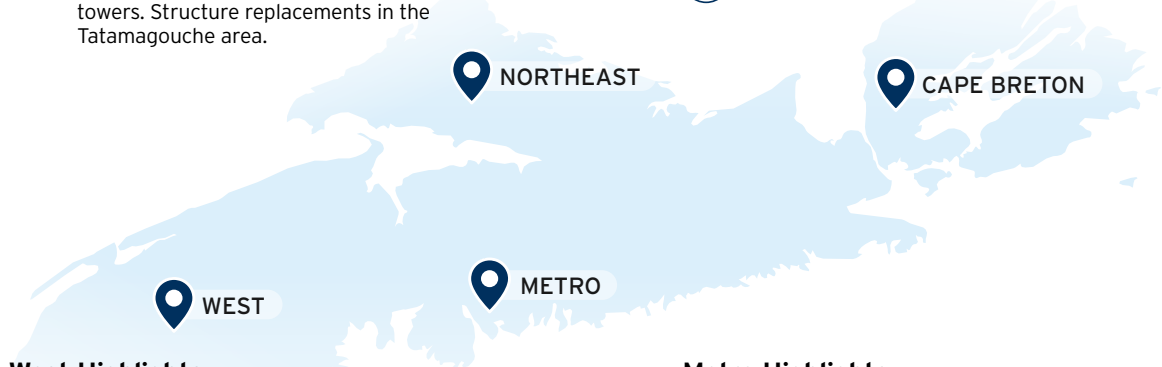
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Northeast Highlights




-  Durrell's Island voltage conversion (4kV to 25kV), including targeted pole replacements and build to roadside project.
-  ~19 km of Vegetation Management in Cape George, ~25 km in Harve Boucher.
-  Installation of sacrificial anodes from Truro to Port Hawkesbury to enhance the durability and safety of steel transmission towers. Structure replacements in the Tatamagouche area.

Cape Breton Highlights




-  Upgrading infrastructure utilizing storm hardening standards to improve resiliency. Targeting pole and insulator replacement in Glace Bay.
-  ~25km Vegetation Management in Albert Bridge, ~18km on Boularderie Island.
-  Structure replacement project from St. Peters to Sydney.






West Highlights

-  Pleasant River (New Elm Rd) voltage conversion (12kV to 25kV) including targeted transformer and pole replacements.
-  70+km Vegetation Management in Auburndale/ Cornwall Rd. (Largest feeder in the province)
-  Rebuild of transmission structures from Shelburne to Clyde River.

Metro Highlights

-  Additional service (feeder) to service Porter's Lake and community. Will increase capacity to support community load growth and reliability.
-  ~15km Vegetation Management in Porters Lake, ~20km in Upper Lawrencetown.
-  Structure replacements from Dartmouth East to Musquodoboit Harbour.

Legend

-  **Distribution Work**
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-  **Vegetation Management**
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-  **Transmission Work**
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