

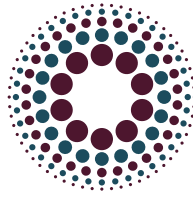
Municipal bserver

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

**Let's Build the Housing Nova
Scotians Deserve**

**Local focus, Lasting Impact:
NSFM Fall Conference 2025
a Great Success!**

WINTER 2025



NOVA SCOTIA FEDERATION
OF MUNICIPALITIES

WHO WE ARE

NSFM is a non-profit organization that helps municipalities tackle issues that are pressing for their communities.

NSFM helps all municipalities in the province through:

Advocacy – bringing municipalities together and working on solutions to their shared issues

Collaboration – facilitating collaboration amongst municipalities, connecting them with other organizations, other levels of government, and other provincial associations

Education – sharing best practices, finding creative solutions, and introducing municipalities to new opportunities

Sustainability – helping municipalities prepare for the future so they can rise to all challenges, not only environmental but also organizational

OUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- 1.** We commit to focused advocacy, passionately championing the causes and issues that align with our vision and mission.
- 2.** We commit to continuity rooted in the belief that financial stability is essential to achieving our mission and making a lasting impact.
- 3.** We commit to honesty, transparency, and ethical behaviour in all our interactions and decisions.
- 4.** We commit to being responsive in all our interactions and operations.
- 5.** We believe that collaboration is essential for achieving our best outcomes.

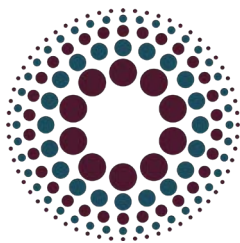
Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities

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Cover Photo – Town of Oxford



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HUB International Atlantic proudly supports and advises the **Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities Benefit Program** and its participating municipalities.

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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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Strength in Unity: Municipal Leadership for a Stronger Nova Scotia

By David Mitchell NSF President (2025-2026)

As we near the end of 2025, I am reminded of the strength, resilience, and ingenuity that define Nova Scotia's municipalities. Every day, across towns, rural communities, and regional governments, local leaders are working to create places where people can thrive—whether by addressing housing needs, building climate resilience, or fostering vibrant, inclusive workplaces.

This year has shown us the value of working together. Municipal challenges are complex, but they are not insurmountable when we stand united. Through partner-

ships with one another, with the Province, with national organizations like Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM), and with our many allies in the community and private sector, we are advancing solutions that make a tangible difference for Nova Scotians.

The stories in this edition of the *Municipal Observer* highlight what is possible when innovation meets collaboration. They remind us that progress is not achieved

in isolation—it is built collectively, through shared vision and determination.

As we look toward 2026, I encourage all of us to continue building bridges, seeking common ground, and keeping our focus on what matters most: ensuring our municipalities are strong, sustainable, and prepared to embrace the opportunities of the future. Together, we will keep moving Nova Scotia forward. ■

"This year has shown us the value of working together"

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Building Momentum: Advancing Municipal Priorities Through Partnership and Innovation

By CEO Juanita Spencer

As 2025 draws to a close, municipalities across Nova Scotia continue to demonstrate the power of collaboration, innovation, and local leadership. Each initiative and partnership shows us that when we work together—across communities, sectors, and levels of government—we build momentum that strengthens not only our municipalities, but the province as a whole.

***Together, we can ensure
Nova Scotia's municipalities
remain resilient, sustainable,
and prepared to seize
the opportunities of a
changing world.***

This edition of the *Municipal Observer* highlights that momentum in action. From the development of NSFM's Funding Portal—driven by member feedback—to the Federation of Canadian Municipalities' call to build the housing Nova Scotians deserve, we see how municipalities are shaping solutions to some of today's most pressing challenges. The Sustainable Communities Challenge Fund success story in Cape Breton illustrates how climate-smart planning is raising the bar for emergency preparedness, while insights from the Intact Centre underscore the urgency of protecting our communities from rising flood and wildfire risks.

Equally important are the investments we make in people. HR Covered's article reminds us that respect and dignity in the workplace are foundational to building strong municipal organizations. And Engage Nova Scotia's piece, "High Participation in the Nova Scotia Quality of Life Survey Promises to be a Gamechanger for Municipalities," highlights how data-driven insights can help communities better understand resident well-being and guide more responsive local decision-making.

At NSFM, our role is to champion municipal voices, foster knowledge exchange, and ensure members have the tools and partnerships they need to lead with confidence. The stories in this edition reinforce that while financial, social, and environmental challenges remain, the solutions are within reach when we leverage our collective expertise and determination.

***"High Participation in the Nova
Scotia Quality of Life Survey
Promises to be a Gamechanger
for Municipalities."***

As we look ahead to 2026, let us continue building on this momentum. Together, we can ensure Nova Scotia's municipalities remain resilient, sustainable, and prepared to seize the opportunities of a changing world. ■



Let's Build the Housing Nova Scotians Deserve

By Rebecca Bligh, President, Federation of Canadian Municipalities

In Nova Scotia, housing is becoming harder to find and harder to afford. Families are being priced out of the communities they have always called home. Seniors are struggling to stay close to care and support. Young people are putting off milestones because they cannot find a place to live.

These are not isolated stories; they are signs of a system under pressure. And why municipalities are stepping up to lead.

Canada has established a bold target: 500,000 new homes built annually. Meeting that goal will take more than ambition. Coordination, long-term planning, and empowered local leadership are necessary. To tackle the housing crisis, collaboration across all orders of government is a non-negotiable.

Across Nova Scotia, municipalities are already laying the foundation by managing zoning and assessing the housing needs. Thanks to cross-government collaboration, a new innovative project, Ozanam Place, is about to see the light of day in Halifax, which will provide much-needed affordable housing to dozens of people experiencing homelessness.

The Build Canada Homes initiative offers a chance to align federal tools with the momentum already underway in communities across the province.

More than 65 percent of Nova Scotians faced a housing challenge last year, according to Statistics Canada. Halifax saw a 4.3 percent increase in new housing prices from January to May, second only to Quebec City. These numbers reflect a growing gap between supply and demand, but also underscore the readiness of local governments to respond.

All 49 municipalities in Nova Scotia were included in a province-wide housing needs assessment, launched by the Nova Scotia Affordable Housing Commission, in 2022. The assessment provided a clearer picture of local housing needs and priorities.

The Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM), is working with local leaders to ensure federal programs are designed to meet this moment. FCM is calling for an increase to the Canada Community-Building Fund, indexed to GDP growth, to give communities the predictability they need. Streamlined, flexible programs, such as the Rapid Housing Initiative, are needed.

Infrastructure, from water systems to transit, is not just support but also the foundation of sustainable growth. Unlocking public lands, investing in non-profit and social housing, and tackling homelessness head-on are all part of the solution. These are not side issues but are central to unlocking new housing supply.

"Keep building together."

Homelessness is also an evolving and growing issue. Nearly 60,000 people were experiencing homelessness on a single night across Canada, according to the federal government's 2024 Point-in-Time Count. While those experiencing homelessness in Atlantic Canada are low in comparison to other parts of the country, it is still on the rise. These trends underscore the urgency of investing in non-profit and supportive housing and ensuring that federal programs are designed to meet the realities municipalities are already confronting.

Working with Nova Scotia elected officials, FCM is going to continue to find bold new solutions to tackle the housing concerns of residents. Together, all orders of governments can turn concern into confidence. Local leaders are ready and the groundwork is laid. With the right tools, partnerships, and political will, a future where every Nova Scotian has a place to call home awaits.

Keep building together. ■



Local Focus, Lasting Impact: NSFM Fall Conference 2025 a Great Success!

By Charlene Fekeshazy

The 2025 NSFM Fall Conference brought together municipal leaders, senior staff, partners, and provincial officials from across Nova Scotia under the unifying theme “Local Focus, Lasting Impact.” Over four days of spirited discussion, collaboration, and innovation, delegates explored how strong municipal foundations drive positive and sustainable outcomes across Nova Scotia’s communities.

A Conference Built on Local Action

From frontline elected officials in small towns to senior leaders of larger municipalities, the conference underscored that the priorities and challenges faced

at the local level offer critical opportunities—and responsibilities—for lasting change. Plenary sessions, panels, and fireside chats delved into themes of infrastructure resilience, service delivery, community engagement, climate readiness, and collaboration across all levels of government.

Speakers and facilitators emphasized that municipalities are not merely implementers of broader policy—they are architects of community well-being. It is at the local level where public trust is built, where services touch citizens’ lives directly, and where innovation can be both bold and immediate.

Highlights and Insight

- Keynote Speaker: Tareq Hadhad, CEO and President of Peace by Chocolate, set the tone by sharing his family’s compelling story—highlighting the positive impact of newcomers and the spirit of resiliency, entrepreneurship, and giving back.
- Breakout Sessions: Delegates chose from a wide array of topics—from asset management and green infrastructure to housing, public safety, broadband access, and intermunicipal service sharing. This diverse agenda encouraged meaningful dialogue suited to both rural and urban contexts.
- Peer Exchange and Networking: Numerous informal conversations in hallways and over refreshment breaks proved invaluable. These exchanges often plant the seeds for joint initiatives, policy experiments, and shared service models.
- Partnerships and Provincial Alignment: Officials from provincial departments and agencies attended key sessions, enabling better alignment, collaborative problem-solving, and a stronger shared understanding of local priorities and opportunities.

Shared Takeaways for Lasting Impact

Several recurring lessons emerged throughout the week:

1. Local relevance matters.

One size does not fit all. Tailoring solutions to municipal context—geography, population, and economy—is essential. Provincially designed programs must be flexible enough to support locally driven models.

2. Sustainability is foundational.

Whether in infrastructure, financial planning, or service delivery, sustainability must be threaded through all municipal decisions. Long-term viability requires foresight, smart maintenance strategies, and realistic revenue planning.

3. Collaboration unlocks scale.

Municipal clustering, joint procurement, regional partnerships, and shared services were recurring themes. Collaborating horizontally (among municipalities) and vertically (with the province) magnifies municipal capacity.

4. Community engagement is essential.

Municipal change is only meaningful when communities are part of the process—not passive recipients. Strong public engagement builds legitimacy and fosters creative, locally grounded solutions.

5. Capacity and innovation go hand in hand.

Investing in staff training, digital tools, data systems, and continuous learning enables municipalities—large and small—to adapt to emerging challenges such as climate change, housing pressures, and demographic shifts.

What Comes Next: From Conversations to Commitments

The conference’s success lies not only in its discussions, but in what follows. Some next steps include:

- Sharing key session highlights, toolkits, and best-practice summaries with members.
- Encouraging municipalities to pilot joint or regional initiatives inspired by conference discussions.
- Fostering working groups on priority themes such as resilient infrastructure, broadband, and shared services to translate dialogue into action.
- Strengthening the feedback loop between municipalities and the province to co-design responsive policies and funding programs.

The Lasting Impact

“Local Focus, Lasting Impact” was more than a theme—it was a guiding principle through every session, every conversation, and every connection. NSFM’s 2025 Fall Conference reaffirmed that when municipalities anchor their decision-making in local realities—and when provincial partners support, rather than prescribe—our communities grow stronger, more resilient, and more vibrant.

To all attendees, presenters, sponsors, and partners: thank you for your energy, your ideas, and your commitment. The real test now begins—turning inspiration into implementation and ensuring that the impact of these conversations endures in every Nova Scotian community. ■

Building Resilience: CBRM's Disaster Debris Management Plan Sets a New Standard for Emergency Preparedness

By Staff

In recent years, the Cape Breton Regional Municipality (CBRM) has faced a growing number of severe weather events, including Hurricane Fiona in 2022 and record-setting rainfall. These events have underscored the strain that disaster-related debris places on municipal services, public safety, and community recovery. In response, CBRM developed a Disaster Debris Management (DDM) Plan—an initiative supported by the Sustainable Communities Challenge Fund, a provincial grant program administered by the Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities that helps communities across the province take local action on climate change.

“Hurricane Fiona was a turning point for CBRM,” Roschell Clarke, CBRM Solid Waste Education Coordinator shared. “The volume of debris and the challenges of coordinating contractors, identifying temporary debris sites, and communicating with residents highlighted areas where our preparedness could be strengthened.”

The DDM Plan directly addresses those areas. It offers a structured framework for managing debris during emergencies, ensuring that recovery is faster, safer, and more cost-effective. Developed in collaboration with Dillon Consulting Limited, the plan incorporates best practices and input from key municipal departments, including Public Works, Planning, Legal, Finance, and Communications.

Key objectives of the plan include:

- Strengthening preparedness for debris-generating disasters
- Improving response and recovery times
- Ensuring compliance with disaster assistance funding criteria

- Protecting public health, worker safety, and the environment
- Supporting efficient and sustainable debris management practices

One of the plan's standout features is its emphasis on efficiency and environmental stewardship. By pre-identifying temporary debris sites, contractors, and clearance priorities, CBRM can now reduce delays and avoid costly duplication of effort. The plan also prioritizes recycling and safe handling of materials, helping to minimize environmental impact and disposal costs.

For residents, the benefits are immediate and practical. In the event of a localized flood, for example, CBRM can quickly establish a temporary debris drop-off site within the affected neighbourhood, reducing travel time and accelerating cleanup. “Residents will benefit from faster debris clearance, clearer communication about collection points and procedures, and safer handling of hazardous or bulky waste,” Roschell Clarke explained.

Now finalized, the DDM Plan will be integrated into CBRM's broader emergency management framework.

This project demonstrates what is possible when local governments prioritize climate adaptation. With support from the Sustainable Communities Challenge Fund, CBRM has not only created a plan but laid the groundwork for a safer, more resilient future.

As climate challenges continue to evolve, CBRM's Disaster Debris Management Plan stands as a model for other communities across Nova Scotia. It's a story of learning, leadership, and local action—proof that preparedness today can mean protection tomorrow. ■



Scenes like this from Hurricane Fiona shaped CBRM's innovative Disaster Debris Management Plan, designed to make future recovery faster, safer, and more sustainable



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Rising Risks, Urgent Action: Preparing Communities for Floods and Wildfires

By Kathryn Bakos, Managing Director, Finance and Resilience, Intact Centre on Climate Adaptation, University of Waterloo

Nova Scotia stands on the front line of extreme weather. Once rare, floods and wildfires are now striking with growing force. Climate change drives heavier downpours, with more water falling over shorter periods, overwhelming communities. Prolonged drought adds another layer of risk, leaving soil hardened and vulnerable to flash flooding when rain returns. Hotter, drier seasons are also fueling wildfires that burn longer and with greater intensity. These are not one-off events; they are the new reality and will intensify.

Recent years highlight this growing risk. Hurricane Beryl in 2024 brought record rainfall, damaging roads and bridges and claiming a young life in Wolfville. The remnants of Tropical Storm Debby followed, triggering more flooding. In summer 2025, drought gripped the province, straining agriculture and power systems, while raising fears that heavy rain on hardened soil could flood out and devastate communities, infrastructure, and people.

Wildfire risk has also surged. While 2024 and 2025 saw fewer wildfires overall compared to 2023 (the worst wildfire season in Nova Scotia's history), the Long Lake wildfire highlighted the complexities and dangers communities face. Containing it required a massive firefighting response, including water barriers, emergency crews, and extensive community support. This underscores the reality that even in quieter wildfire years, one major blaze can threaten entire regions. With hotter, drier summers becoming the norm, wildfires are expected to ignite more easily, spread faster, and prove harder to contain in coming years.

Across Canada, 2024 was the costliest year of extreme weather on record, with over \$9 billion in insured damages - driven mostly by floods and wildfires. While Nova Scotia had a quieter year, the risks remain high. Power outages, evacuations, economic losses, and threats to safety will escalate unless communities act now.

The good news: communities are not powerless.

Tools exist to reduce the risks of floods and wildfires before disaster strikes. With input from the Insurance

Bureau of Canada, Standards Council of Canada, and Canadian Red Cross, the Intact Centre on Climate Adaptation has developed straightforward resources for municipalities. [The Three Levels of a Flood Ready Community](#) and [Three Features of a Wildfire-Ready Community](#) infographics distill extensive research into practical, actionable steps that any community, large or small, can use to strengthen resilience.

Municipalities should focus on actions such as:

Flood-Ready Community:

- update and publish flood risk maps
- share flood protection resources ([residential](#) and [commercial](#))
- subsidize protective measures

Wildfire-Ready Community:

- share wildfire protection [resources](#) with residents
- promote wildfire-resistant landscaping within 10m of homes
- strengthen emergency planning, water supply, and evacuation routes

Municipalities are on the front lines of extreme weather, and as fiduciaries, they must act in the best interests of constituents. In Nova Scotia, it's time to "turn the tide" on flood and wildfire risk. By taking proactive steps through risk assessment and planning, public education, strategic investments, and collaboration with neighbouring communities, municipalities can reduce hazards, protect lives and property, and build lasting resilience before the next disaster strikes.

Nova Scotia has the tools to make this happen, but action must start now.

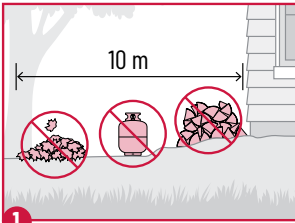
Every measure put in place today increases a community's ability to withstand and recover from extreme weather tomorrow.

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

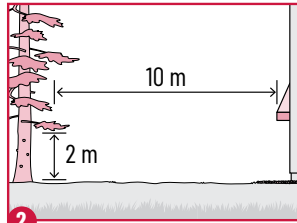
THREE FEATURES OF A WILDFIRE-READY COMMUNITY

Communities can integrate wildfire-ready features into their risk management plans to limit damage and disruption due to wildfire events and strengthen emergency preparedness. By working with Provincial/Territorial wildfire agencies, communities can access available tools, training, and resources to help them assess their unique risks, and create customized action plans.

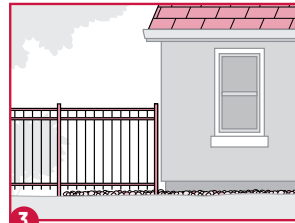
Feature 1: Wildfire-Ready Structures & Infrastructure



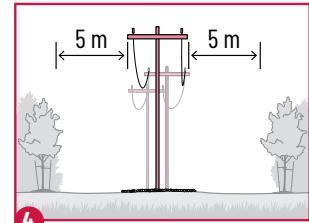
1 Complete regular maintenance of structures, infrastructure, and landscaping within 10 m to limit accumulation of flammable materials (e.g., leaves, brush piles, stored items, fuel tanks).



2 Install/replace landscaping with fire resistant materials within 10 m of structures and infrastructure.

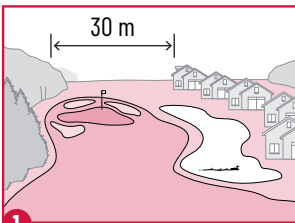


3 Build/update structures and infrastructure using fire resistant building materials (e.g., Class A roofing/metal roofs, non-combustible siding, metal, or concrete hydro poles).

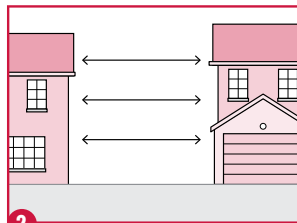


4 Design/update structures and infrastructure to be ignition resistant (e.g., 5 m distance between vegetation and power lines, power supply lines below ground where feasible).

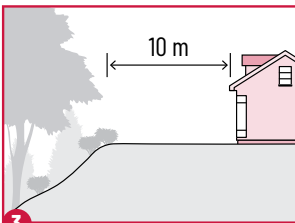
Feature 2: Wildfire-Ready Community Design



1 Integrate minimum 30 m wide zones (fire breaks) featuring ignition resistant materials (e.g., mowed grasses, ponds, roads) into community design to limit the spread of fire. Increase minimum to 50 m on steep slopes.



2 Provide greater spatial separation between structures in hazard areas to limit the spread of fire from one structure to another.



3 Require minimum 10 m setback from the crest of a hill to limit spread of fire to structures.

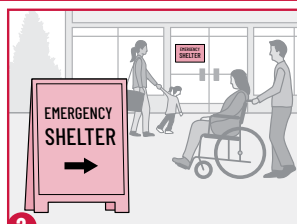


4 Restrict development in hazard areas where mitigation measures cannot meet minimum standards for health, safety, and environmental protection.

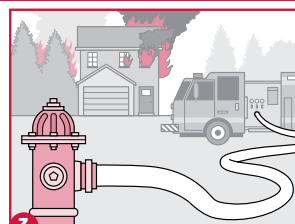
Feature 3: Wildfire-Ready Emergency Response



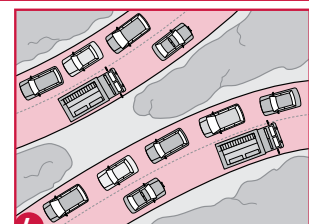
1 Complete annual emergency planning and cross-training exercises that include multiple agencies (e.g., wildland and structural firefighters).



2 Designate at least one emergency shelter per community.



3 Ensure minimum water supply for firefighting.



4 Provide two or more access and egress routes.

Note: The guidance in this document is voluntary. Completion of actions should not conflict with applicable building and fire codes. Wildfire-ready communities can reduce but not eliminate risk.



Centre on Climate Adaptation



NOVA SCOTIA FEDERATION OF MUNICIPALITIES

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



THREE LEVELS OF A FLOOD-READY COMMUNITY

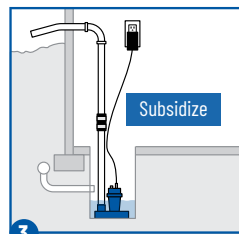
Level 1: Residential and Commercial Buildings



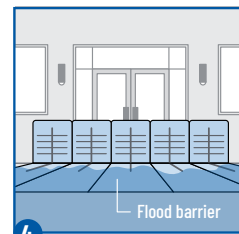
1 Provide user-friendly flood risk maps and scores to help homeowners and renters understand risk.



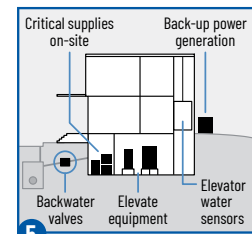
2 Provide **infographics** to help homeowners and renters reduce their flood risk.



3 Subsidize home flood protection measures (e.g., backwater valves, sump pumps, downspout disconnections).

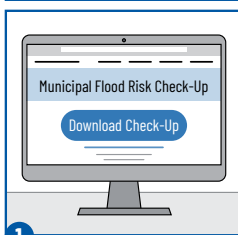


4 Engage commercial real-estate property owners in **flood resilience**.

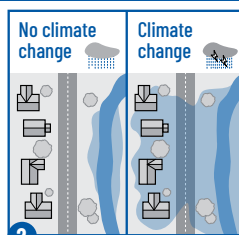


5 Mandate flood resilience measures for **new homes, apartments and condos**.

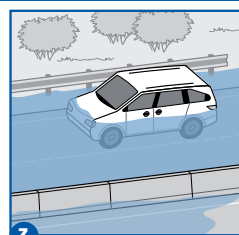
Level 2: Community-Based Flood Risk Management



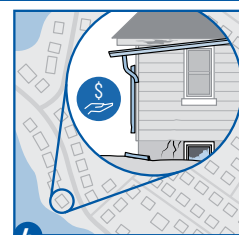
1 Conduct an annual **flood risk check-up** to assess and prepare for heavy rainfall, river, and coastal flooding.



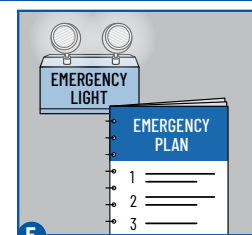
2 Assess how climate change is impacting intense rainfall, river and coastal flood hazards.



3 Identify critical infrastructure vulnerabilities (e.g., for water, transport, electricity supply) and implement risk reduction actions.

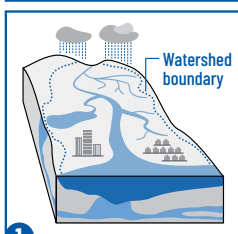


4 Determine where socio-economically vulnerable people may require additional adaptation support (e.g., financial assistance).



5 Implement and regularly update flood warning and communication systems, and emergency response plans (e.g., engage practice drills).

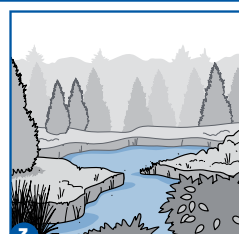
Level 3: Watershed and Shoreline Management



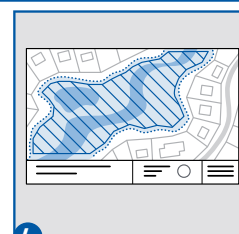
1 Assess wider influences on river and coastal flood risk to identify solutions that may be located outside of the community.



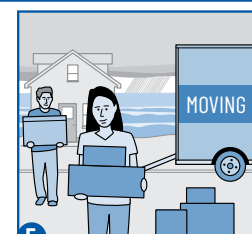
2 Engage with other communities and watershed planning organizations to develop strategic flood solutions.



3 Manage or restore existing natural assets to provide flood risk protection.



4 Do not develop on current and future river and coastal floodplains.



5 Work with property owners and encourage them to consider moving away from high-risk areas.

For more detailed guidance download the [Municipal Flood Risk Check-Up](#) and complete it once a year to identify progress and priorities.



Centre on Climate Adaptation



NOVA SCOTIA FEDERATION OF MUNICIPALITIES

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





It's all in the details.

Not all policies are created equal. At Intact Public Entities, we maximize risk mitigation to build a safer, more resilient community.

Let's talk about how we can support your community.

Connect with Paul Jewett, Regional Manager, Atlantic Canada

1 800 265 4000 | 506 866 1846 | paul.jewett@intactpublicentities.ca

**To learn more visit us at
intactpublicentities.ca**



Creating Safer Housing Together: A Risk-Informed Approach to Homelessness and Affordability

By Aran Myers - National Manager, Municipal & Public Administration

Across Nova Scotia, municipalities are facing unprecedented challenges in housing affordability and homelessness. In Halifax, homelessness nearly doubled between 2022 and 2024 from 586 to 1,132 individuals. As communities grow and evolve, municipalities are being called upon to provide not only shelter but safety, dignity, and stability. At Intact Public Entities, we believe that addressing these issues requires compassion and a risk-informed approach. But how can municipalities be proactive to mitigate these risks?

Emergency shelters and transitional housing are vital lifelines for individuals experiencing homelessness, domestic violence, or other crises. Municipalities need to ensure that housing environments are secure, compliant, and equipped to support vulnerable populations while also protecting staff, volunteers, and public assets.

A proactive strategy begins with resident safety. Secure sleeping areas, lockable personal storage, and controlled access systems help reduce conflict and unauthorized entry. Surveillance in common areas, paired with trauma-informed support services, can foster a sense of stability while respecting privacy.

Health and harm reduction measures are equally critical. First aid supplies, overdose prevention kits, and clear protocols for incident reporting ensure that municipalities are prepared to respond to medical emergencies and maintain public health standards. Clean, accessible facilities with proper sanitation and dietary accommodation are not just best practices, they're essential.

Supporting residents also means investing in staff training and oversight. De-escalation techniques, mental health first aid, and conflict resolution skills empower frontline workers to manage complex situations with confidence. Maintaining appropriate staffing ratios and supervision helps prevent burnout and ensures consistent care.

Municipalities must also consider legal and operational safeguards. From building code compliance and fire safety to vendor insurance and informed consent protocols, every detail matters. Infrastructure resilience against vandalism, extreme weather, or utility failures is key to continuity and community trust.

These strategies are most effective when implemented through collaboration. By bringing together planners, public health officials, social workers, emergency responders, and legal advisors, municipalities can create integrated housing responses that reflect the full spectrum of their community's needs. This collaboration fosters education and teamwork, encouraging shared learning and coordinated action.

Together, we can move beyond temporary solutions and toward lasting change.

At Intact Public Entities, we are proud to support municipalities in building safer, more resilient communities. We understand the risks and challenges associated with transitional and emergency housing. Our goal is to help municipalities navigate complexity with confidence, compassion, and clarity.

Together, we can move beyond temporary solutions and toward lasting change. Because when municipalities lead with collaboration and care, they don't just provide shelter they build hope.

To learn more about how we can support your community by visiting [intactpublicentities.ca](https://www.intactpublicentities.ca) or contact your local Regional Manager Atlantic Canada, Paul Jewett at paul.jewett@intactpublicentities.ca. ■

Karsten Greene, "Halifax's homeless population nearly doubled in 2 years, new data shows," CBC News, Aug. 12, 2025, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/homelessness-halifax-data-doubled-1.7606692>

Respect and Dignity in the Municipal Workplace

Municipal employers have a greater obligation to create a workplace founded in respect and dignity than their private sector counterparts. Not only are municipal employers subject to greater scrutiny and transparency, but their employees are also responsible for the delivery of essential public services, political expectations and tension, and potentially negative interactions with the public. Simply put, government employers are held to a higher standard.

A workplace founded in respect and dignity is one where all parties work together to create a safe workplace, for both the body and the mind. It is an environment that is characterized by inclusion, positivity, support, and the promotion of the employees' well-being.

What can you do to ensure you have a workplace founded in respect and dignity?

Recognize: Open your eyes and ears! Literally, talk to your employees, ask them how they feel about their workplace, and if they feel that they have access to others and the support they need to succeed.

Empathy: The ability to experience and relate to the thoughts, emotions, and experiences of others. It seems natural that people would be more secure if they felt their peers understood them.

Offer and encourage mutual support: It is important for employees to feel that there is support for issues or concerns they bring forward. Employers should ensure

that there is an 'open door' philosophy in place. If an employee comes to you, be sure that you recognize and reward the employee's trust in you by listening.

Empower: If employees are invested in their job and the goals and vision of the company, they will be invested in each other. The power to be an influencer over your own path and that of your co-workers is a shared responsibility that can result in trusted teams and a terrific workplace.

Responsibility: Equip your employees who deal with the public with the education and tools to educate others. Review and adapt municipal policies and programs to ensure they reflect a positive and healthy workplace, as well as the community. Take pride and responsibility so that you can have a direct impact on your workplace and community every day. Your employees should feel as though it is an honour to serve their community.

Work-Life balance: Even in the best work environments, the

demands and responsibilities of workers can be stressful. Employers need to recognize that it is not only the body that needs an appropriate balance, but also the mind.

Promote respect in the workplace: All employees have the right to work in an environment that respects the dignity, self-worth, and basic human rights of every individual. No individual should be expected to accept harassment, bullying, or conduct that is anything less than professional and respectful in the workplace.

For municipal employers, a workplace founded in respect and dignity is an opportunity. It brings a productive workplace, community connection, and trust, and employees who value their co-workers, purpose, and the community that they serve.

HR Covered is a [program partner](#) of NSF. Contact partnerships@hrcovered.com to ask about their free HR service offerings that are available to municipal units in NS. ■



Through programs like HR Covered, municipalities can cultivate workplaces grounded in respect, empathy, and shared responsibility.

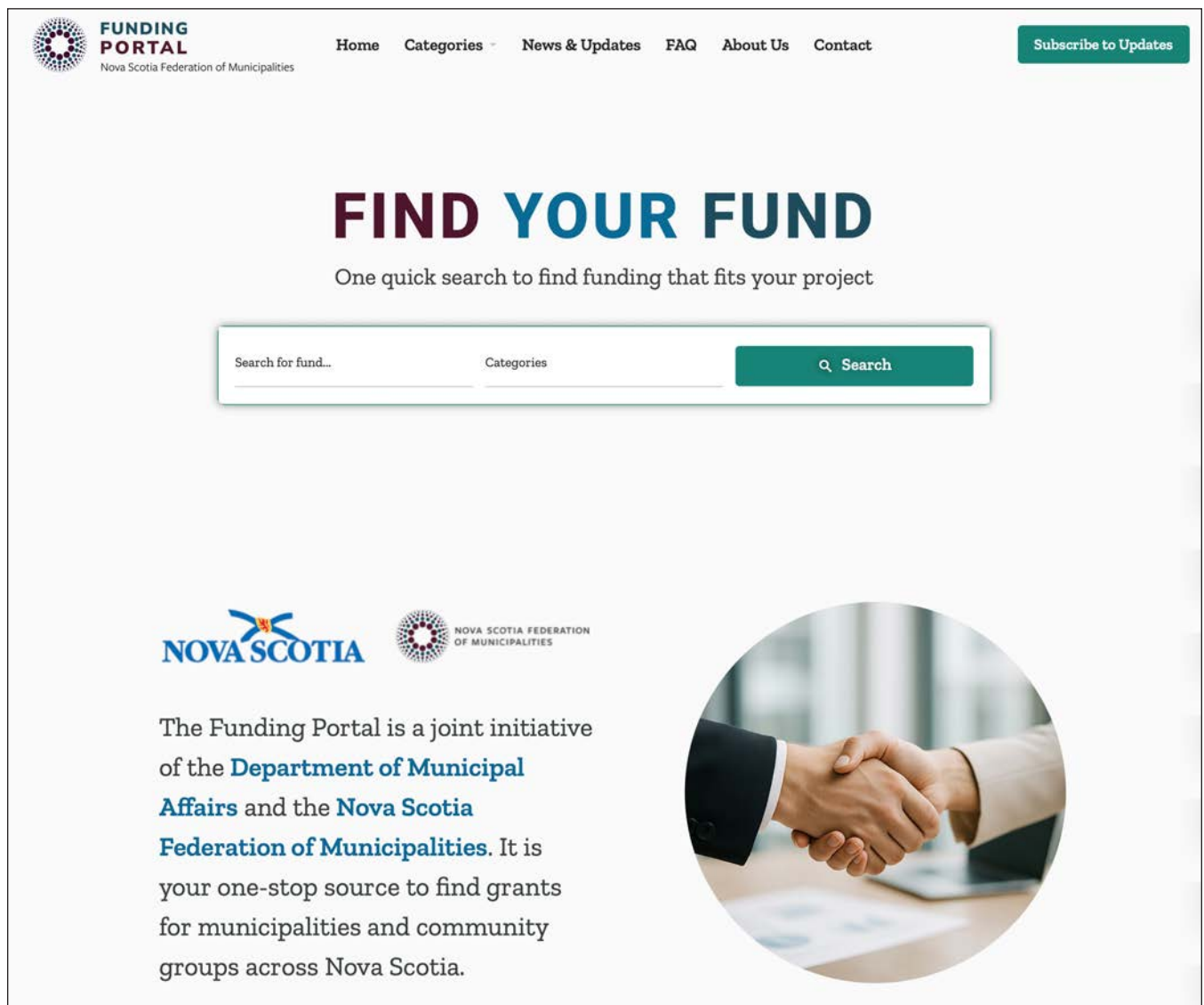
From Spreadsheet to Funding Portal: How Simple Feedback Changed Everything

By Staff

Prior to 2023, Nova Scotia municipalities were missing funding opportunities, not because the money was not available, but because access to information was scattered across dozens of websites with impossible-to-track deadlines. For example, an important infrastructure grant might be buried on a website, while a climate program was posted on a hard-to-find portal, and application deadlines appeared and

disappeared without warning.

Recognizing this gap, NSFM and the Department of Municipal Affairs collaboratively established the Fund Navigator position in July 2023. The first solution seemed obvious: organize everything in a basic Excel spreadsheet. The second realization followed quickly – a spreadsheet was not going to be enough.



The screenshot shows the top of the Funding Portal website. On the left is the logo for the Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities, featuring a circular pattern of dots and the text "FUNDING PORTAL" and "Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities". To the right of the logo is a navigation menu with links for "Home", "Categories", "News & Updates", "FAQ", "About Us", and "Contact". Further right is a green button that says "Subscribe to Updates".

In the center, the main heading reads "FIND YOUR FUND" in large, bold letters, with "FIND" in dark red and "YOUR FUND" in blue. Below this is the subtext "One quick search to find funding that fits your project".

Below the subtext is a search bar with a white background and a green border. It contains a search input field with the placeholder text "Search for fund...", a "Categories" dropdown menu, and a green "Search" button with a magnifying glass icon.

At the bottom of the page, there are two logos: the "NOVA SCOTIA" logo with a stylized blue and orange bird-like symbol, and the "NOVA SCOTIA FEDERATION OF MUNICIPALITIES" logo with the circular dot pattern. To the left of these logos is a paragraph of text: "The Funding Portal is a joint initiative of the **Department of Municipal Affairs** and the **Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities**. It is your one-stop source to find grants for municipalities and community groups across Nova Scotia."

To the right of the text is a circular image showing two hands shaking in a firm grip, symbolizing agreement or partnership. The background of the image is blurred, showing what appears to be a desk with a laptop and some papers.

NSFM's Funding Portal: simplifying how municipalities search, filter, and apply for funding opportunities

What started as a simple organizational challenge evolved into something much more ambitious: a three-stage evolution that hardly anybody saw coming.

Stage One: The Foundation

The spreadsheet quickly grew into something more substantial; a comprehensive Municipal Funding Database launched on NSFM's website in October 2023. With over 100 programs listed, the page became one of the most visited sections of the site, drawing thousands of views and garnering positive feedback. The content was comprehensive, updated regularly, and organized by categories.

But great content, it turned out, was not enough.

Stage Two: The Wake-Up Call

In April 2025, NSFM conducted its annual survey of users of the database. The questionnaire included a seemingly routine question about database improvements. Most responses were positive, but two comments stood out: "I would like to see a better search function" and "limited ability to filter by deadline, provider, or eligible applicants."

Two pieces of feedback. That was it. The seed was planted.

A fundamental problem soon emerged. Trying to build a comprehensive one-stop hub for municipalities has its challenges. The database's strength, extensive content covering hundreds of programs, had become its weakness. With so many grants listed and no search or filtering capabilities, finding relevant funding can be difficult. This may mean valuable time spent searching and scrolling through 12 categories.

Stage Three: The Vision

The turning point came from an unexpected source: ambition. Looking at funding platforms from big governments and large organizations, we asked ourselves: "If they can afford to have these kinds of platforms, can we do the same?"

Such platforms offer keyword searches, filtering by category, provider, or deadline, and results received in seconds. Platforms today need to be fast, smart, clean, logical, and minimalistic – exactly what busy municipal staff need.

So, the answer was not to fix the search function. The answer was to build something entirely new.

The Portal Takes Shape

What emerged is a modern funding portal that transforms how municipalities find and access funding. Users can now go from the homepage to the correct grant in 2-3 clicks and seconds. Advanced filtering by keywords, deadline, category, eligibility, and provider means no more endless scrolling. Search Engine Optimization (SEO) ensures that anyone searching for grants in Nova Scotia will find our portal at the top of their Google navigation results.

New opportunity emerges with new functionality. Each grant now has its own dedicated page with all necessary details, such as fulsome descriptions, funding specifics, guidelines, application processes, and examples of successful projects. The information available will enable municipal officials and others working in conjunction with the sector to be able to make informed decisions about whether to apply for funding while viewing the portal. The need to visit funding websites will only be necessary for confirmation details.

The real transformation goes beyond functionality. The new portal positions NSFM as a true sector leader. Plans are underway to expand and create a unified resource for Nova Scotia's funding ecosystem that can be accessed by all municipal stakeholders.

The Bigger Picture

Feedback from our municipal units is important and it can lead to change and opportunity. Two municipalities took time to tell NSFM what needed improvement. The result will not only be a better search function, but the creation of what may become Nova Scotia's definitive funding resource.

The portal has launched and demonstrates that with vision and persistence, an organization with the size and scope of NSFM can build tools that rival what exists elsewhere. More importantly, it shows what happens when we listen, act, and respond with solutions that meet and exceed expectations.

What started as a simple spreadsheet has become something much more ambitious: proof that the best way forward is not always to catch up, but to leap ahead. ■



Engaging with Staff and Council from Town of Yarmouth to bring insights into how the survey data can bring a treasure trove of data to municipalities and create impact.

High Participation in the Nova Scotia Quality of Life Survey Promises to be a Gamechanger for Municipalities

By Danny Graham, Engage Nova Scotia CEO

In early 2026 Nova Scotians, from one end of the province to the other, will be invited to participate in the Nova Scotia Quality of Life Survey, the largest undertaking of its kind in Canada.

The survey is led by [Engage Nova Scotia](#), in collaboration with the Canadian Index of Wellbeing, with the support from the provincial and federal governments, as well as the Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities (NSFM).

Results of the survey will give Nova Scotia municipalities previously unavailable understandings about the lives of their residents.

The survey asks over 200 questions which are of importance to municipal planning and budgeting. They include:

- sense of community
- recycling behaviour

- feelings of safety
- confidence in police
- access to public facilities
- trust in government
- housing concerns

Our Ask

We are asking municipal staff and elected officials to promote survey participation through their communication channels. Residents will receive an invitation card in the mail to share their stories by completing the survey.

Our goal is to increase participation that allows you to understand differences across neighbourhoods within your municipalities. Increased response rates will ensure analysis beyond the population average and show who is struggling the most. For municipalities with high participation levels, findings will be broken

down by income, age, education levels, parenthood status, and more.

What We Can Give You to Promote

An easy-to-use promotional guide of digital communication assets is available for promoting the survey by [clicking here](#) or emailing us at info@engagenovascotia.ca.

Our Commitment to Analysis for Municipalities

We are committed to providing individual municipalities from one end of the province to the other with a synopsis of results, with the potential for deeper dives to follow. Our publicly available [Wellbeing Mapping Tool](#) will be updated to reflect the survey results and show how things have changed at local levels since our first survey in 2019.

The Potential for Big Change

Since 2019, and throughout the pandemic, we have worked with municipalities across the province. We

hope to work with many more after the next survey. We want everyone's experience to be as positive as the Town of Yarmouth, as shared by CAO, Jeff Gushue, who said:

“The Team at Engage have created a treasure trove of data that tells the story about how Nova Scotians experience life in our communities. The impact of seeing the data presented through their analysis tools is jaw-dropping.”

We have been through a lot in recent years. Political polarization has been turbocharged and life satisfaction in Canada is falling dramatically. All of this is confusing and difficult – but we believe that we can rise to these challenges and build a more vibrant and inclusive Nova Scotia, one community at a time.

This begins with promoting participation in the survey – and when you receive your invitation in the mail, please **SHARE YOUR STORY, TAKE THE SURVEY, AND SEED OUR FUTURE.** ■



Finding pathways to participation by engaging with both community and government to collaborate, listen and help advance the Nova Scotia Quality of Life Survey.

How to Help Protect Municipal Fleet Vehicles from Theft

Municipalities rely on fleet vehicles to deliver essential services - from public works and utilities to emergency response and community outreach. Unfortunately, these vehicles can be major targets for theft due to their visibility, accessibility, and sometimes valuable equipment. Protecting municipal fleets is not just about safeguarding assets, it's about ensuring uninterrupted service to the community.

BrokerLink has put together practical tips to help safeguard municipal vehicles against theft.

Store Vehicles in a safe place

- Designated secure lots: Use fenced, gated, and well-lit areas with surveillance cameras.
- Controlled access. Limit entry to authorized personnel using key cards or PIN codes.
- Indoor storage. Whenever possible, store high-value or sensitive vehicles indoors.

Use vehicle immobilizers and tracking devices

- GPS tracking systems. Enable real-time location monitoring and recovery in case of theft.
- Immobilizers. Prevent unauthorized engine starts.
- Telematics. Monitor vehicle usage and detect unusual activity.

Lock and secure equipment

- Lockboxes and cages. Secure tools and equipment stored in or on vehicles.
- Alarm systems. Install motion-sensitive alarms for both vehicles and attached gear.
- Remove keys. Never leave keys in unattended vehicles, even in secure lots.

SAFE. SUSTAINABLE, AND READY: RECREATION FACILITIES MATTER

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of our facilities
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Do you have a lifecycle plan in place for aging infrastructure?

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rfans@sportnovascotia.ca
902-870-7634 (mobile)

Train staff on theft prevention

- Awareness training. Educate drivers and staff on best practices for securing vehicles.
- Incident reporting. Encourage prompt reporting of suspicious activity or security breaches.
- Accountability. Assign responsibility for vehicle security during and after use.

Conduct regular risk assessments

- Audit fleet security. Review parking, access, and equipment protocols regularly.
- Update policies. Adjust procedures based on new threats or incidents.
- Collaborate with law enforcement. Share information and coordinate on prevention strategies.

Ensure your fleet insurance policy includes theft

protection and covers vehicle replacement, equipment loss, and business interruption. Work with your broker and insurance provider to tailor coverage to your municipality's needs.

BrokerLink is proud to offer exclusive discounts on personal home and auto insurance to members of the Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities (NSFM) through its [Personal Home and Auto Insurance Program](#)

Rest Assured, BrokerLink Has You Covered*

For expert advice and customized insurance solutions, contact BrokerLink.

Call 1.833.998.3798, or visit [BrokerLink.ca/municipalities-NS](https://www.BrokerLink.ca/municipalities-NS)

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Securing municipal fleets means safeguarding the services that keep communities moving.

Change is hard.

BUT SOME MUNICIPALITIES KNOW HOW.



Kevin Latimer, K.C., helps municipalities change so they can better serve their citizens. That's why he received the **2024 Canadian Bar Association Municipal Law Award of Excellence**, a national award recognizing his work on behalf of municipalities.

Kevin turns ideas into action.

You can reach him at
klatimer@coxandpalmer.com

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SUPPORTING FOCUS

Supporting projects that benefit communities

ELIGIBLE PROJECTS

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**SUSTAINABLE
COMMUNITIES
CHALLENGE FUND**

Improving Power Service for Customers with Satellite and AI Technology

By Nova Scotia Power

We are committed to providing power you can count on. Our dedicated Reliability Team works to identify the best ways to strengthen and invest in our system, ensuring dependable service for our customers.

We are also exploring new, innovative technologies to keep your power safe and reliable. One of the programs we are testing uses satellite imagery and artificial intelligence (AI) to support our vegetation management – or tree trimming work.

We are taking big steps to enhance grid reliability and strengthen our infrastructure with an innovative approach that puts our customers first.

A First for Atlantic Canada

The technology scans all 28,000 kilometres of distribution power lines across Nova Scotia, giving us a complete view of the lines and how close trees and vegetation are to them. This helps us identify areas most at risk of branches or trees coming into contact with power lines — one of the leading causes of power outages.

With this program, we can focus in on individual feeders (main lines that supply power) within specific communities. Each segment of the power line is colour-coded based on its condition, rated on a scale from zero to five depending on how close vegetation is to the lines.

Traditionally, collecting this kind of information has been very manual and time-consuming, with crews patrolling power lines on the ground. Now, with this technology, we can collect accurate data much faster. It also helps us identify areas that may not be obvious

through traditional inspections.

This information can be used to support or inform the work we do and make sure we are targeting the areas that need it the most. This will allow us to use our time, resources, and budget more efficiently while improving reliability for customers.

We are taking big steps to enhance grid reliability and strengthen our infrastructure with an innovative approach that puts our customers first. We are only the third utility in Canada—and the first in Atlantic Canada—to adopt this new technology. It is an exciting step forward and just one part of our broader plan to make Nova Scotia's power system stronger and more reliable.

Our 5-Year-Reliability Plan

Through our 5-year reliability plan, we are focused on modernizing the grid and making it more resilient to the increasing impacts of extreme weather. Over the five years, Nova Scotia Power is investing \$1.3 billion to strengthen the system—an average of \$250 million in projects across the province each year. This includes tree trimming, upgrading lines, replacing poles and transformers, and installing new protective devices to help prevent outages.

Nova Scotia Power is investing \$1.3 billion to strengthen the system—an average of \$250 million in projects across the province each year.

It is all part of our ongoing commitment to ensuring Nova Scotians have power they can depend on. To learn more about our reliability work visit: www.nspower.ca/reliability. ■



Improving Power Service Using Satellites and AI Technology

Nova Scotia Power: Atlantic Canada's first utility to test technology

Customer Benefits:

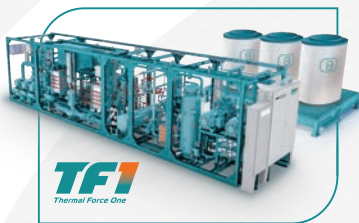
- Provides accurate picture of vegetation around power lines at a speed not possible with traditional methods.
- Information gathered can be used to support and inform work plans, ensuring crews are targeting priority tree trimming areas.
- Creates efficiencies with work, resources and budget, improving reliability of service for customers.



← Scan here for a brief video on
how the AI Technology works!



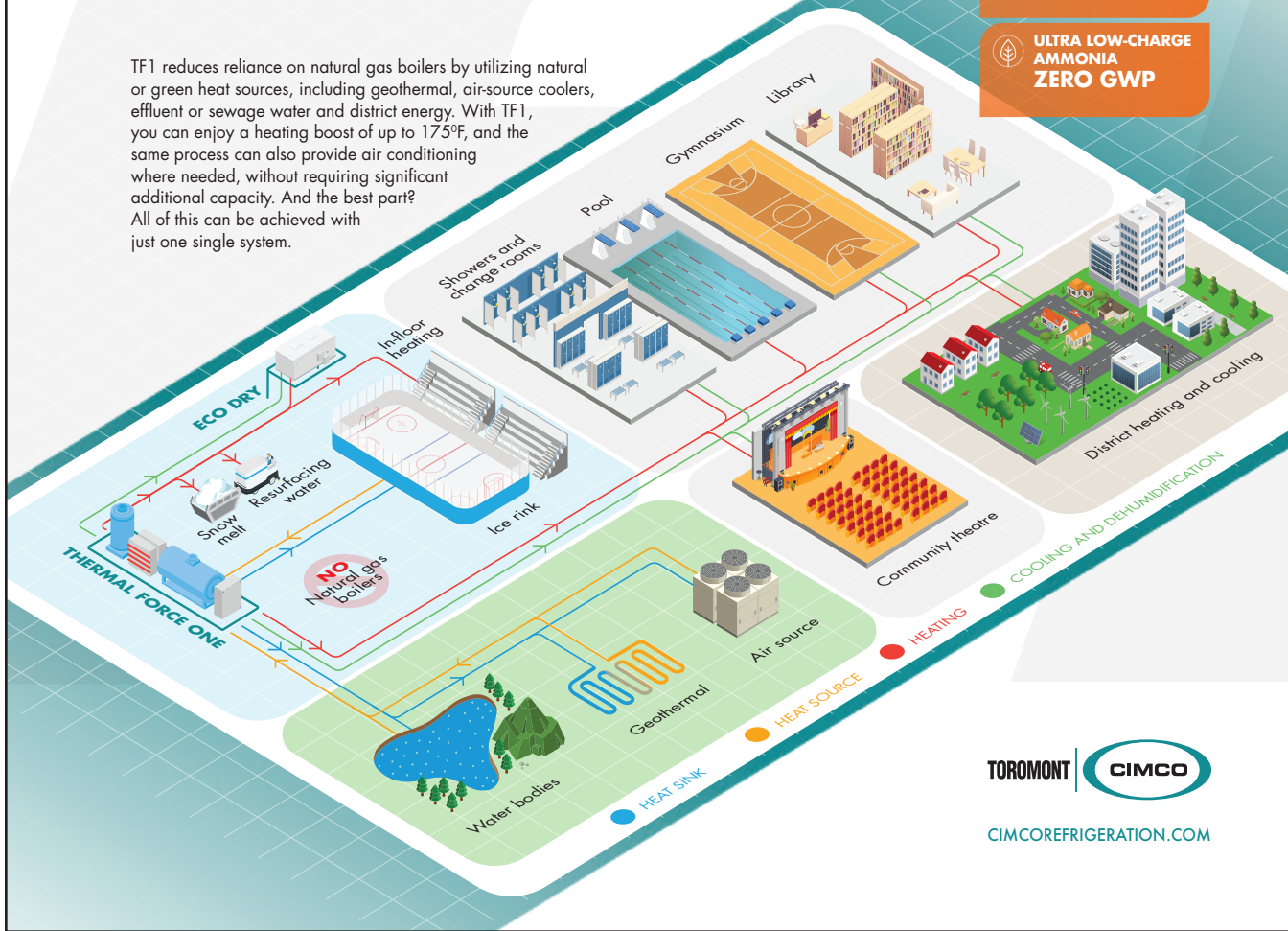
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TF1 reduces reliance on natural gas boilers by utilizing natural or green heat sources, including geothermal, air-source coolers, effluent or sewage water and district energy. With TF1, you can enjoy a heating boost of up to 175°F, and the same process can also provide air conditioning where needed, without requiring significant additional capacity. And the best part? All of this can be achieved with just one single system.

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-  ICE BATTERIES STORE EXCESS HEAT AND COLD
-  AUTOMATIC LEAK RESPONSE
-  AIR QUALITY CONTROL
-  ULTRA LOW-CHARGE AMMONIA ZERO GWP



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