

Resolution 5

ROADS (PASSED)

WHEREAS Towns are responsible for the cost of maintenance and capital improvements with respect to all roads within their municipal boundaries, including roads of joint benefit to the Province and towns, such as arterial and collector roads, for which the Province does not share costs; and

WHEREAS Rural municipalities make financial contributions to the Province for the maintenance of J-Class roads, and there is insufficient provincial funding to maintain these roads; and

WHEREAS a strong road network is essential to the Province and its residents for economic, social, educational, and health reasons, and increased investment in roads is required;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED the Province provide equitable funding to Towns and Municipalities containing former towns for shared arterial and collector roads in the 2019 Budget or before; and

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED the Province increase its transportation budget for J-Class roads in the 2019 Budget or before; and

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED the Joint Provincial-Municipal Committee on Roads develop a proposed new funding agreement and plan by the end of June 2019.

Issue Identification: The Service Exchange Agreement in the early 1990s raised issues around the responsibilities and funding for roads without resolving the them. Provincial roads in rural municipalities are deteriorating without appropriate maintenance and funding to rebuild. Roads in towns are funded wholly by them, despite the fact the arterial and collector roads within their boundaries are essential to the provincial road network. This creates a significant burden on town budgets. Provincial and municipal responsibilities are lacking in clarity and fairness and funding is insufficient.

Background:

The Partnership Framework committed the Province to work with municipalities to identify options for an appropriate road network throughout Nova Scotia, supporting safety, economic development, and continued viability of communities. To this end, a joint committee is being struck with the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal (TIR) and will begin work in October.

This committee will begin with a review of the current service exchange agreement as well as the agreements between individual municipalities and TIR. It is expected that the key outcome of reviewing these agreements will be a proposal for a new agreement.

This new proposed agreement will clarify the ambiguities identified in the old service exchange agreement during the 2017 resolution process and should lay out a plan for addressing road issues.

It is intended that the work of the committee will result in a long-term program that will address municipal issues regarding roads and transportation. It will assess the issues to determine which should be addressed in the short term and long term, and identify necessary actions and resources required to address the issues. It will develop recommendations based on research and consultation with municipalities. It is intended this committee will be an ongoing forum to discuss the many issues related to roads and transportation.

Impact on Municipalities

Rural municipalities hear numerous complaints about provincial roads in their communities. The interpretation of policies and funding seems inconsistent throughout the province, and it appears to many that cost-sharing is a requirement if a road is to be fixed. Even those who are willing to cost-share are frustrated as the amount of provincial funding available is insufficient to meet the demand. Many roads are deteriorating further.

For towns, the issue of funding for provincial arterial roads and collectors is a long-standing one and represents one of the biggest differences between rural and town municipalities. The province has been known to lift the snow plow blade up as the snowplow travels through the town. Roads are a significant cost for towns.

Proposed Action:

Immediate financial relief for roads is required in 2019 or before.

Response from:
Department of Municipal Affairs

RESPONSE: