

Resolution 4

MUNICIPAL MODERNIZATION (PASSED)

WHEREAS municipalities recognize opportunities to accomplish more together and are willing to find new ways of collaborating; and

WHEREAS individual municipalities are often limited in resources to appropriately pursue these opportunities; and

WHEREAS there may be numerous barriers that hinder collaboration; and

WHEREAS all municipalities will benefit from lessons learned in collaborative efforts;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Province provide human, material, and financial resources in the 2019 budget or before, to those municipalities willing to collaborate, based on the specific needs of those requesting assistance.

Issue Identification:

As community needs evolve, and technology advances, the opportunities for municipalities to collaborate and work together could lead to enhancements in the quality of life of their citizens. Efficiencies may be found and the ability to do more could be increased. Yet the *Municipal Government Act* supports competition between and amongst municipalities. New tools are needed for those municipalities who want to be more innovative in growing and supporting their communities.

Background:

The Partnership Framework identified the development of a municipal modernization strategy to support municipal cooperation and regional governance. Included in the concept were changes to the MGA/Halifax Charter; regional planning and minimum planning standards; municipal equalization and provincial grants; and the creation of economic development tools. While this was not a specific resolution in 2017, the Towns Task Force and the Fiscal Review both called for assistance in supporting greater collaboration.

The Province has recently passed legislation requiring minimum planning standards and this is a positive first step in encouraging municipalities to plan together. As well, the Province passed legislation supporting a new approach for Windsor and West Hants. This reflects a willingness to support the expressed desires of specific municipalities.

This work needs to continue. Municipalities need more help to explore new ways of working together. Many have identified opportunities and a willingness to work together, but need assistance in facilitating discussions, analyzing options, and developing necessary documents to establish new mechanisms. Staff time is often limited, requiring new positions or backfilling for existing staff. A flexible funding program that would provide targeted assistance, suited to each circumstance, to those

willing to develop new approaches would be of great assistance. Where efforts are being made to collaborate, support should also include evaluation of the efforts made and identification of lessons learned, to be shared with others in the future.

Impact on Municipalities

Many municipalities are struggling financially to meet the needs of their communities. Staff time is typically fully allocated to maintaining services. Freeing up resources to explore new innovative ways of working with neighbouring municipalities is a challenge and is often impossible.

Proposed Action

The Province should provide additional resources to the Department of Municipal Affairs in support of this initiative.

Response from:
Department of Municipal Affairs

RESPONSE: