

Climate Change Advisory Committee Report

Acknowledgement of Committee Members:

- Councillor Kacy DeLong, Municipality of the District of Lunenburg, Chair
- Councillor Dawn Peters, Town of New Glasgow
- Councillor Jennifer Houghtaling, Cumberland County
- Councillor Loren Cushing, Municipality of Yarmouth
- Councillor Courtney Wentzell, Region of Queens

Background:

1. The Committee met four times over the past year to discuss environment and climate issues impacting Nova Scotia Municipalities.
2. Issues raised included: Impacts of uranium exploration, available resources for residents to assess erosion and flooding risk on their properties, and regional approaches to coastal land use planning.
3. Presentations were received from NSFM's Coastal Land Use Planner as well as from a staff lawyer at East Coast Environmental Law.
4. One delegated request was received from the County of Kings on the ariel spraying of glyphosate.

Advocacy Actions:

The Committee put forward the following motion to the NSFM Board of Directors regarding aerial herbicide spraying:

That the NSFM Board of Directors approves a letter to Health Canada requesting an update on their stance on glyphosate and its potential health harms.

Correspondence was sent to Health Canada at the end of July, and committee is waiting for a response.

Recruitment:

If you're interested in climate and environmental issues affecting municipalities, please speak with me or NSFM staff for opportunities to participate on this committee.

Respectfully submitted (on behalf of Chair DeLong) by,

Jennifer Houghtaling, Committee Member
Councillor, County of Cumberland

Equity & Community Wellbeing Committee

Report to Annual General Meeting

November 6, 2025

Meetings

Since the last report to the Annual General Meeting (AGM) on November 26, 2024, the Committee has held four meetings. All meetings have been held virtually. Furthermore, meetings have been well attended, and the Committee has been engaged in its work.

Committee Members

- Alison Graham, Councillor, Town of Truro (Chair)
- Cathy Deagle-Gammon, Councillor, Halifax Regional Municipality (Vice Chair)
- Cynthia Bazinet, Municipality of Barrington
- Mike Butler, Councillor, Town of Wolfville
- Norval Mitchell, Councillor, Municipality of East Hants

Activities

The following are the primary activities conducted by the Committee since last report to the AGM:

- Discussion with Natasha Jackson, Executive Advisor, Inclusive Communities & Systems, Department of Municipal Affairs, to inform consideration of recommendations around Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Accessibility Education
- Presentation from Rebecca Todd, Cape Breton University and Jenna MacQueen, NS Health Authority regarding Nova Scotia Mental Wellness Survey
- Review of advocacy request re: Basic Income Guarantee and recommendation made to the NSFM Board of Directors
- Review of assignment from Board re: Library Funding
- Review of assignment to Committee from Board and ongoing discussion re: EDIA Education

Summary

To date, three advocacy requests have been forwarded to the Committee:

- Basic Income Guarantee
- EDI Education
- Library Funding

The Committee discussed and evaluated the Basic Income Guarantee advocacy request received by the NSFM Board of Directors. The Committee was directed as follows: review the matter of a basic income guarantee, specifically that NSFM advocate that the Nova Scotia legislature establish an all-party committee to examine a basic income guarantee program for Nova Scotia. The Committee affirmed this as a recommendation on January 16.

This recommendation was accepted by the Board of Directors and correspondence issued to the province in Spring. A response from the province was received on July 31, thanking NSFM for input on this issue.

The Committee has been directed by the Board to discuss and develop recommendations for the Board to consider on ways to enhance further education on EDIA for members. This matter is currently under discussion.

The Committee has been directed by the Board to analyze a request from three member units that the issue of adequate and sustainable funding for public libraries in Nova Scotia be brought forth to the NSFM Board for consideration as an advocacy priority. NSFM has previously corresponded with the Province on this issue, and discussions will continue via the Committee.

Advisory Committee Report

Public Safety

Chair: Fraser Patterson

The NSFM Public Safety Advisory Committee has met four times over the past year. Our last update was provided at the annual Spring Conference.

The Advocacy Priorities recommended by this committee are: 1) the creation of Voluntary Vulnerable Persons Registries (VVPR) across Nova Scotia, and 2) Rural Cellular Coverage for Emergency Preparedness.

As updates on these priorities:

- Over the past year, the new Department of Emergency Management has convened a committee of CAOs to advise on steps forward with VVPRs in Nova Scotia. Our committee has asked NSFM staff to arrange a meeting with the Department so that we can get the latest updates on this discussion.
- On our recommendation, NSFM has sent formal correspondence on February 10th and October 15th calling on the Honourable Kim Masland to proclaim amendments to the Emergency Management Act that would designate telecommunications companies as critical service providers and require them to develop emergency preparedness plans. In these letters, NSFM also commends the investment to fill cellular coverage gaps with Build Nova Scotia's Cellular for Nova Scotia Program. But we want to ensure that emergency preparedness and service continuity are part of this plan.

We have developed Action Plans for both of these priorities and are working toward success.

We are interested in continuing to meet with subject matter experts on these developments and continue to advise NSFM on where opportunities lie for the issues and questions delegated to this Committee.

Members of this Committee include Fraser Patterson (Chair), Andy Thompson (Vice Chair), David Mitchell, Victoria Brooks, James Fuller, and Christine Blair. Our staff support is Wesley Petie. Come have a chat with any of us if you have ideas on public safety.

Advisory Committee Report

Municipal Autonomy

Chair: Lennie White

The NSFM Municipal Autonomy Committee has been meeting to discuss the importance of municipal recognition and empowerment over the past year.

The Advocacy Priority recommended by this committee is a longstanding priority by Resolution of NSFM, municipal modernization.

As an update on this priority:

- We have used the new NSFM Action Plan template to develop an action plan.
- Just like the concept of municipal capacity, municipal modernization is a broad concept that can be approached in many ways. We have a basic definition of what NSFM expects from municipal modernization in past partnership frameworks with the province that highlight the importance of intermunicipal collaboration, equipping municipalities with the same levels of discretion that have become a norm in Canada, and revisiting the fiscal framework in order to ensure municipalities have sufficient resources to handle modern challenges and new responsibilities.
- Rather than a demand in itself, this Committee has recommended supporting any changes that move Nova Scotian municipalities toward modernization.
- In all committee meetings, members have reviewed how recent decisions by the Province relate to or impact municipal modernization. While there are some new capabilities (i.e.: setting speed limits, making public notices online) and financial resources being granted (i.e.: marketing levy, and new grants), there is also a trend of limitations on willful intermunicipal collaboration and legislation creating new ministerial powers to order municipalities and quash municipal by-laws.
- The fall sitting of the legislature featured the Municipal Modernization Act, which amended six pieces of legislation and created a new Act. While NSFM does not take issue with any of these amendments made by this Act, it does not offer much in the way of the modernization called for by our advocacy priority.

Members of this Committee include Lennie White (Chair), Wayne Talbot (Vice Chair), Sean Cameron, Shawn Cleary. Our staff support is Wesley Petie. We have a new vacancy on this Committee, so let us know if you are interested in joining.

Municipal Infrastructure Advisory Committee Report

Acknowledgement of Committee Members:

- Deputy Warden Trevor Cunningham, Municipality of the District of Yarmouth, Chair
- Councillor Elizabeth Aker, Town of Shelburne
- Councillor Walter Tingley, Municipality of East Hants
- Jason MacDonald, CAO, Town of Amherst

Background:

1. The Committee met three times over the past year and discussed two issues brought forward from members: Road infrastructure, and homes destroyed by natural disaster.

Issue 1: Roads

- The Committee reviewed correspondence to the NSFM from several municipalities related to road infrastructure.
- In the Spring, the Committee asked CAOs from three different areas of the province for their perspective on road infrastructure, considering previous work done through a joint provincial-municipal Roads Committee and the Service Exchange Agreement completed last year.
- The NSFM Board of Directors has indicated that road infrastructure will be a priority issue when the Service Exchange review process begins again. NSFM is working with the province to establish a time frame for discussions.
- The Committee has shared feedback related to issues like ensuring transparency of road conditions, refining standards for road conditions, and increasing funding for J class road maintenance.

Issue 2: Property taxes on homes destroyed by natural disaster

- This summer we received a request from the County of Richmond regarding changes to provincial legislation that would extend the property assessment cap to all Nova Scotians who lose their homes to natural disaster.
- The province made such a change - via the Residential and Resource Property Taxation Assessment Regulations - to address homes destroyed in the 2023 wildfires.
- However, this Fall the provincial government made changes to the MGA and HRM Charter that would allow municipalities to adjust property tax rates for homes impacted by natural disaster, rather than extending the property assessment cap.
- This approach was taken without consultation with either NSFM or the Property Valuation Services Corporation (PVSC).
- The Infrastructure Committee made a recommendation to the NSFM Board of Directors that we advocate for an amendment to the Property Taxation Assessment Regulations to extend property assessments caps to Nova Scotians who lose their homes due to natural disaster, rather than have municipalities adjust property tax rates.
- The NSFM Board of Directors has indicated they will be corresponding with the province to see further clarification of the rationale for the current legislative change.