

# MUNICIPAL VOICE

The Magazine for the Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities

SUMMER 2018



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NOVA SCOTIA  
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MUNICIPALITIES

## Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities

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The NSFM is a not-for-profit organization mandated to represent the provincial interests of municipal governments across Nova Scotia. Total membership is 379 elected officials representing all 50 municipalities.

**Contact NSFM at:**  
Ph: 902-423-8331;  
Suite 1304, 1809 Barrington St.,  
Halifax, NS B3J 3K8  
[www.nsfm.ca](http://www.nsfm.ca)  
[info@nsfm.ca](mailto:info@nsfm.ca)

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## NOVA SCOTIA FEDERATION OF MUNICIPALITIES

*Contributed by Will Brooke, NSFAM Policy Advisor*

This edition of *Municipal Voice* is the first to reflect our new identity as the Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities (NSFM). Our rebranding committee has worked diligently during the past year, engaging members in consultation, conducting research, and retaining the services of branding consultants. The results of this work include a new name, a beautiful new logo, and a new, fully-responsive website.

We are pleased with these results, and we think that our members will be too. But we are even more pleased that this rebranding exercise provided us with an opportunity to connect and collaborate with our members. Together, we considered the mission and vision of our organization.

In one sense, a branding exercise is descriptive: an organization's name and logo should accurately communicate who they are, and what they do. But branding should also be aspirational and forward-looking, and consider the mission and vision of an organization. We feel confident that our efforts deliver on both fronts.

Consultations at five regional meetings and thorough surveying of members told us that the mission of our organization should be to enable effective local government in Nova Scotia through strategic advocacy, education and collaboration. Our guiding vision is that of effective local governments and strong, sustainable communities.

Our organization was known as the Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities (UNSM) for more than a century. In our surveys and meetings, our members told us that the word "Union" conjured up too many thoughts about labour issues. They suggested that we should remove it from the UNSM name, and that "Federation" would be a more definite and accurate description of who we are, and of who we should be.

We think that our logo is an excellent visual representation of this idea. Designed by Halifax-based branding consultant and artist John Thomson, the logo is intended to be a visual display of the great strength gained by working together. It is meant to evoke the bringing together of autonomous entities for shared purposes.

In the past, the UNSM filled this role. Today, we at NSFM look forward to continuing in this role as the facilitators of municipal collaboration and education for all NSFM members. We also look forward to serving as your advocates: highly competent, driven, reliable, intelligent, active and professional. Most of all, we look forward to the achievement of effective local governments and strong, sustainable communities throughout Nova Scotia.



## President's Message

Councillor Geoff Stewart, County of Colchester

It was great to see many of you at our Spring Workshop in Yarmouth. THANK YOU to our hosts, the Town of Yarmouth and Municipality of Yarmouth. It was absolutely wonderful, and we launched our new name, logo and website!

We had some great discussions and presentations at the workshop. At our caucus meetings we learned how Housing Nova Scotia can assist with housing issues, and how the removal of the one-third tax exemption on compensation for elected officials will impact us. On the first day of our workshop we heard success stories in planning for asset management, how extended producer responsibility for printed paper and packaging is needed in this province, how the Department of Transportation is addressing roads, how energy and climate change projects are being undertaken to make municipal operations more efficient and resilient, and how the Nova Scotia Real Estate Association shares our concerns with the CAP program. A busy day! On Saturday we heard and discussed issues around the legalization of cannabis with the Dept. of Justice and the municipal working group. We also heard from Derek Mombourquette, Minister of Municipal Affairs, about his commitment to working with us to improve local government in this province.

I want to say a few words about the remaining piece of business that was done at the workshop. As you are aware, NSFAM has been meeting with the regions and caucuses to discuss possible areas of priority, and councils were asked to provide input as well. The results of all these discussions were presented to the members at the workshop, where the proposal was put forward to focus on 10 areas over the summer; this will be in addition to working on the resolutions from 2017.

The topics that gained the most support are as follows:

- ***Cannabis***
- ***Code of Conduct***
- ***Environmental sustainability/climate change***
- ***Housing***
- ***Immigration***
- ***Policing***
- ***Roles and responsibilities of local government***
- ***Solid waste/extended producer responsibility***
- ***Surplus schools***
- ***Libraries, depending on LBANS success***

The next steps are to research these topics to understand what the issues are, what's being done and what needs to be done. If you are interested in contributing to any of these topics, please let us know. An interim report on these, with recommendations, will be sent out to all members in late August/early September for feedback. Possible resolutions will be identified, and we will hold three meetings around the province to gain further feedback before they are presented to the membership at the Fall Conference.

In the meantime, NSFAM has been working hard to become more successful in getting support from the province to address our issues. Some of our issues, like Internet and doctor recruitment, are relatively new, but many have been around for a very long time.

We and you, our members, have worked hard to bring a focus to how we approach the province. We agreed to send no more than five resolutions to the province, and I know that means that some of the issues you may be passionate about may not have made the cut. I am pleased to tell you that we are seeing results, at least in getting the commitment of the province to work on our resolutions. The NSFM Executive has now had two RoundTable meetings with ministers to discuss the resolutions passed last November.

In early May, I signed a revised Partnership Framework agreement with Minister Mombourquette that commits both parties to working on 4 of the 5 resolutions: CAP, Roads, Internet, and to consult with you on the Financial Operating Grant. While the fifth resolution, Doctor Recruitment, is not in the framework, the Nova Scotia Health Authority is working with us on this issue. Some of the initiatives from the first Partnership Framework have been completed: the work on accountability and transparency, guidelines for consultation, and the financial condition index review. Multiple new ones have been added, including municipal modernization.

NSFM is also being approached by a number of provincial departments to work with them, including a number related to our Issues of Municipal Concern. We have signed an MOU with the Department of Seniors supporting age-friendly communities, including senior safety, community transit and seniors housing. We are also working with Housing Nova Scotia to address your housing concerns. We are working with the department of justice on the accessibility and cannabis files. Two more of our concerns, RENS and

planning, are being discussed under municipal modernization.

I want to take a few minutes to talk to you about municipal modernization. I know there are lots of questions and probably suspicion about what this project is; it is still evolving.

I am especially pleased and energized after attending a recent meeting on municipal modernization with a small group of interested and knowledgeable individuals. The purpose of the meeting was to explore some ideas on how to focus our work on modernizing local government, and there were lots of suggestions and cautions raised. There are many more conversations needed to determine the best way to proceed, and there will be more opportunities to explore the best ideas with you. I am excited by the energy of those working on this file, and am equally impressed with the openness of the discussions and the willingness to challenge and debate ideas on what can be done.

We need to find ways to strengthen local governments, as that is, I believe, the foundation to strengthening the province. As they say, if it was easy it would have been done by now. At the moment, we are working with the province and AMA on an approach going forward. The approach is one of exploring ideas, trying them out and learning from them. We don't have the answers, but we're willing to try to find them.

I believe we are making progress. I am hopeful we will finally see some real solutions.

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# Cannabis Legalization

## High Time for Municipal Regulation

Contributed by Kevin Latimer, Q.C., Cox & Palmer and Ashley Dickey, Summer Student



The weed vendors and enthusiasts will soon be on street corners, and we wonder if municipalities are ready.

The relevant federal act, the *Cannabis Act* (“the Act”), is now before the Senate and the provincial government’s *Cannabis Control Act* (“the CCA”) has already received royal assent. But, the question is whether municipalities are exercising their authority to manage the inevitable local challenges and opportunities.

The federal legislation regulates cannabis production, establishes 18 as the minimum age requirement, restricts home-grow cultivation to a maximum of four plants per dwelling and sets the rules and parameters around possession limits, trafficking and advertising. The federal government hopes to implement the Act by the end of this summer.

Nova Scotia’s legislation outlines several more restrictive provisions. These provisions prohibit cannabis use while in any vehicle (including boats), limit possession to 30g in public and raises the minimum age limit in Nova Scotia to 19 for cannabis use, purchase, cultivation and possession.

Within the CCA there are also transitional amendments meant to smooth the legalization process by reconciling any conflicting legislation. Most notably, the CCA includes amendments to strengthen

the *Smoke-free Places Act* with additional protections from second-hand smoke.

The CCA designates the Nova Scotia Liquor Corporation (“NSLC”) as the sole authorized cannabis seller within Nova Scotia and empowers the NSLC to wholesale, store, distribute and sell cannabis in a manner that complies with federal requirements. Recreational cannabis will be sold online, and, for the time being, in only 12 of NSLC’s retail locations.

Over the next few months, municipal governments will have to answer to concerned voters and hungry entrepreneurs questioning the impact of cannabis legalization on their local communities. Municipalities will need answers to questions about cannabis regulation, including where people are allowed to smoke cannabis and where cannabis-related businesses will be allowed to operate - next to schools, churches, hospitals?

Obviously, municipal governments are uniquely positioned to address these concerns as they can control the location and density of cannabis-related businesses, and can anticipate the tolerance for public use of cannabis in their communities.

Municipalities can regulate land use through zoning bylaws dealing with permitted uses of the land, the location of buildings and structures on a property, the type of

building, any lot size and parking requirements, building height and applicable setbacks from the abutting property. Setbacks will be of particular importance in managing personal cultivation in residential areas, should a municipality allow cannabis plants to be grown outdoors.

Federally licensed production facilities will raise land-use planning considerations. Currently there are only three licensed companies in Nova Scotia. The federal Act strictly regulates who can grow cannabis for commercial distribution. Municipal governments will need to work cooperatively with the federal government on applicable zoning and land-use planning for production facilities.

As the NSLC will be able to authorize alternate cannabis sellers, clear amendments to zoning bylaws to properly regulate where business operators are allowed to set up shop will be key in ensuring the appropriate regulation, in terms of location and density of cannabis-related businesses. These bylaws will enable municipal governments to better manage the impact of these businesses on local communities.

Amendments to the *Smoke-free Places Act* also raise zoning concerns by enabling municipalities to designate smoking or vaping areas. Municipal bylaws will require clear definitions outlining what constitutes an authorized seller

premises, a federally licensed production facility and a designated smoking or vaping area.

We can also assume that municipalities will be drawn into enforcement activities which may require significant resources, in order to manage local zoning and density bylaws, personal cultivation and possession, enforcement of impaired driving rules, smoking restrictions and public nuisance complaints.

Municipalities will need to develop protocols and parameters around issuing tickets related to cannabis consumption and new training for municipally delivered police, bylaw officers and public health education officials.

What about the odour? Municipalities will inevitably be drawn into the mediation of disputes between neighbours who are suddenly subjected to the unique aroma of cannabis. Regulating this will be challenging as it is difficult to accurately measure, assess and record odours in a fair and consistent manner.

The key concerns that local governments must address include land-use policies and zoning of both authorized cannabis sellers and federally licensed production facilities, the enforcement of new regulations, public health education and the inevitable concerns around the unique aroma associated with the production and use of cannabis.

Municipal leaders know from experience that when local problems develop from federal legislation, municipal leaders hear first from concerned, and sometimes angry, citizens.

Municipalities should act now to implement regulations designed to address the compliance challenges and cost issues resulting from can-

nabis legalization. Local governments should identify the specific issues in their municipalities and implement the required bylaws or amendments, ideally before cannabis is made legal.

This problem will not take care of itself. The federal government has kept its campaign promise and, whether they like it or not, municipalities must deal with the consequences.

*Kevin Latimer, Q.C., is a partner in the Halifax office of Cox & Palmer.*

*He practices in the areas of municipal and planning law, administrative law, and public law litigation and can be reached at 902-491-4212 or e-mail at [klatimer@coxandpalmer.com](mailto:klatimer@coxandpalmer.com).*

*Ashley Dickey is a summer student with Cox & Palmer.*



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# One-Third Tax Exemption

*Contributed by Will Brooke, NSFM Policy Advisor*

A 70-year-old federal tax exemption benefiting municipal councillors will be removed on January 1st, 2019. This change is a direct result of the 2017 federal budget, and will affect every municipal council across the country. Unless countermeasures are taken, this change could result in an abrupt change in after-tax compensation for elected municipal officials.

The tax exemption being removed in 2019 was first introduced in the federal budget of 1946 by Finance Minister James L. Ilesley, MP for Digby-Annapolis-Kings. The federal government of the 1940s wanted to recognize the great value of the work of elected officials, and granted the exemption on the basis that these persons incurred many expenses while holding office. Initially, the exemption only applied to MLAs. It was extended to municipal elected officials in 1953, and made retroactive to 1946.

Federal advocacy attempting to reverse the proposed changes to the one-third exemption has not been successful. Although the FCM and municipal associations across Canada have made resolutions expressing opposition to the new tax laws, the federal government has shown no indication of changing course. Accordingly, municipalities across Nova Scotia are being advised to prepare for change.

Municipalities can take several different approaches in preparing for the forthcoming change. Doing nothing is an option; in this case, maintaining status quo would entail a decrease in after-tax compensation for elected officials. This approach has drawbacks, however: lower levels of compensation dissuade some persons from running for office, and serve as barriers to those who might otherwise wish to serve. This is likely to be felt more strongly in smaller municipalities, where rates of pay may already be barriers to involvement.

Another approach is to increase compensation to negate the effect of the new tax laws. Municipalities could adjust their pre-tax levels of 2019 compensation for elected officials to maintain the same post-tax levels of compensation they received in 2018, after accounting for the application of the new tax laws.

This approach has already been taken in some municipalities in Ontario, and is being considered elsewhere.

It should be noted that adjusting compensation to negate the effect of the new tax laws could be costly. For example, the City of Toronto made a voluntary transition away from this tax exemption back in 2002, and maintaining the same after-tax levels of compensation required councillor salaries to be increased from \$67,807.50 to \$82,097.64; the mayor's salary was increased from \$107,40.12 to \$139,197.90.

The forthcoming tax laws leave municipalities in a dilemma. On one hand, there are excellent reasons to consider increasing levels of compensation for elected officials. The demands on municipal elected officials continue to expand, and after accounting for hours spent, many councillors in small Nova Scotian towns and rural areas make less than minimum wage. It can also be argued that increased levels of compensation make it easier for municipalities to attract good candidates to serve on councils.

On the other hand, the mere act of discussing pay raises for municipal elected officials can be extremely difficult. The topic is often politically touchy, and can draw ire and outright dissent from citizens. Municipal budgets are tighter than ever, and it may not be feasible to increase councillor salaries, even if the political will to do so is present. Each new year brings increases in the cost of municipal services, and it is not clear that all Nova Scotian municipalities could afford to cover the differences in compensation that may result from the new tax laws.

Striking the right balance between these competing considerations may mean that municipalities are only able to partially negate the effects of the new tax laws. Another alternative may be looking at making changes to expense policies. Municipalities could reduce the effect of the federal government's one-third tax exemption removal by expanding expense policies, and seeking ways to more comprehensively reimburse elected officials for expenses.

# Changing Workplace Cultures to Promote Better Health

Contributed by Rebecca Kolstee, AMANS/NSFM Workplace Wellness Coordinator

## Municipality receives national recognition for workplace wellness

The Municipality of the County of Cumberland has been recognized as a national leader in workplace wellness. The municipality has made it a priority to build a strong workplace culture, and provide programs to its employees that support their ongoing physical and mental health. The municipality's dedication to employees' work-life health has earned it the worthy recognition of being one of the top places to work in Canada. The Municipality of the County of Cumberland was one of 11 organizations selected across Canada, in 2018, to receive the Employee Recommended Workplace Award.

The AMANS/NSFM Wellness program would like to congratulate the Municipality of the County of Cumberland on its award. It has been a pleasure to work with everyone there, and watch them exhibit a strong

commitment to improving the health of their employees. The municipality has taken many steps to make a healthy and productive workplace a priority, and I look forward to seeing them continue their efforts. Job well done!

If your municipality is interested in applying, the 2019 Employee Recommended Workplace Award is open now. Organizations with as few as 25 employees are eligible to participate. Contact Rebecca Kolstee, Workplace Wellness Coordinator for more details.



## Municipalities receive workplace wellness grants

AMANS and the NSFM have awarded 10 Workplace Wellness Grants to municipalities across the province. The AMANS/NSFM Wellness program recognizes the importance of promoting healthy lifestyles. The wellness grants are part of the Wellness program strategic plan. They are intended to enhance existing resources, help establish new initiatives that positively influence health outcomes, and make healthy choices easier for those working in our municipalities.

"Municipalities play an important role in the health of employees and these grants will help them address priority areas, including supporting physical and men-

tal wellbeing" said Rebecca Kolstee, AMANS/NSFM Workplace Wellness Coordinator.

The grant applications focused on healthy foods, physical activity, mental wellbeing and financial health. This year, the grant recipients include: Municipality of the District of Barrington; Town of Westville; Town of Pictou; Municipality of East Hants; Region of Queens Municipality; Town of Annapolis Royal; Municipality of the District of Chester; Town of Wolfville; Town of Truro; and Municipality of the County of Richmond.



Information: Rebecca Kolstee (902) 240-1857 [rkolstee@amans.ca](mailto:rkolstee@amans.ca)



# Connectivity More than Just a Pain Point for Municipal Assessment and Economic Growth

Contributed by John Beaton, CEO Eastern Strait Regional Enterprise Network

Certainly not a new and emerging challenge, sub-par communications infrastructure continues to dampen best efforts to retain and attract businesses in our rural Nova Scotia communities. The bottleneck in broadband connectivity is one that has continued to oppose rural Nova Scotia communities since the 90s, and by 2007 the provincial government was promising that 100% of Nova Scotians would have high-speed internet within two years. Of course we know that this didn't come to fruition; granted, we've discovered that the solution isn't as easy as simply applying a cookie-cutter approach to building better tools for business. Nova Scotia is a significant geographical area to cover and Internet Service Providers (ISPs) build their business justifications on a business case – not enough potential customers, weak business case for a significant investment. We don't blame them for that. We do have to, however, look at the other businesses in our province with the same lens.

From the point of view of the Eastern Strait Regional Enterprise Network (ESREN), we know first-hand through visits with small business and larger industry that opportunities for business retention and growth are being stalled by either lack of connectivity or very slow service speeds. We encourage business leaders to consider exporting and e-commerce with an on-line digital strategy, while at the same time reassuring that we will continue to work in our best capacity to push the connectivity agenda with our other REN partners in the province. With mobility, basic access is required rurally, and for broadband the need here goes beyond a basic connection, but at upload and download speeds that keep up with the speed of business in 2018.

Referring to the document *Review of Alternatives for High Speed Internet*, produced last year by the Nova Scotia Department of Business based on consultation across the province, connectivity impacts economic indicators directly, including increasing costs to live in rural NS.

## NS Dept of Business Findings

- Businesses in Nova Scotia are experiencing loss of staff and facing challenges in attracting staff due to quality of life issues.
- The lack of high-speed internet options for tourists is considered detrimental to attracting and retaining tourists in rural regions.
- Inability to develop land purchased due to lack of broadband internet services.
- Additional costs incurred to send staff to internet-connected areas to complete business tasks (e.g. mandatory *internet based* work training).
- Additional costs incurred for hard copy (printed documents, creating and mailing DVDs) because download speed and reliability were inconsistent.
- Impediment to starting home businesses due to the inability to participate in on-line ecommerce supply chain activities.

If placing true value on economic growth, you should find the work by Chinese equipment manufacturer Huawei interesting. They introduced the Global Connectivity Index (GCI) which suggests a direct link between connectivity and GDP. This is supported by the findings that a GCI percentage point increase (in other words, the level at which good quality broadband is available), means the GDP for the geographic area in question increases by 1.4-1.9%. Adequate communication technologies are simply essential to grow our rural economies, and we have to begin discussing and addressing the problem this way so that appropriate attention and resources are put into it.

I believe that the Nova Scotia Dept. of Business has done some great work to move the broadband train forward in the province, and the current government is assigning \$120M in resources to the Internet Trust Fund to bring high-speed internet to 95% of Nova Scotia households. We beg to ask the question of where the 5% of remaining households will be, but understand that answers will come. We are looking at a complex issue where even a handsome \$120M is still \$380M short of the 100% solution we heard about over a decade ago.

I talk about communications and not just broadband simply because the business connectivity bottleneck in rural Nova Scotia goes deeper than that. Business owners have been using basic phones or smartphones for decades to stay connected to customers and suppliers; however, the infrastructure still lags behind the need. There are handfuls of Nova Scotia communities without cell coverage, a stopping point for business growth and population retention. There is no silver bullet, but a strategy to connect rural Nova Scotia businesses to markets and new opportunity should include mobility access as the other main consideration for business retention and attraction, as well as quality of life for those who choose to call rural NS home.

Putting this into some real context of economic impact, in demonstrating that broadband is vital for rural municipalities, the iValley initiative shows how connectivity is directly related to economic development through a “push and pull” approach. The negative forces at work here include job losses and perceived value in the community. On the other hand, when adequate connectivity is in place, economic gain in our regions is heavily influenced in a positive direction, regions become more globally competitive and service offerings in our rural communities simply become better. The opportunities are endless: broadband networks allow rural regions to become “virtual urban areas”.

## Rural Broadband Forces at Work

### The Push:

- Accounts for 25-50% of rural job loss.
- Value of connectivity is 2<sup>nd</sup> only to safe streets in picking a place to live (1<sup>st</sup> for MDUs)

### The Pull:

- Connectivity represents 75% of economic gain and 90% of income growth
- Desired ahead of alcohol, chocolate, sex or cars
- Regions can be global competitors only if they have competitive broadband
- The CRTC says it is essential for rural Canada - education, healthcare, commerce, society

*Source: Barry Gander, i-Valley, 2018*

Nova Scotia municipalities are well aware of the impact that inadequate broadband and mobility connectivity has on their wheelhouse. Commercial assessment is one indicator of growth yes, but generally speaking, assuming improved connectivity leads a specific municipality to some gains in repopulation (recent grads, boomerangers, immigrants) or increasing numbers of home-based businesses and online presence of a community, it also builds the vitality of that municipality, further positioning it for additional investment. New bodies in the community also become ambassadors for growth and attraction. Connectivity isn't just about Netflix or calling friends...it's about the critically important economic growth, the heartbeat of every municipality in Nova Scotia.

Adequate broadband connectivity and mobility coverage are the implements to give our rural enterprises confidence and abilities to start up and grow markets, and afford our regions the capability to have a fair shake at attracting new business. By leveraging connectivity to streamline business processes, reduce costs and improve efficiency, enterprises will push on as the true drivers of innovation. Nova Scotia's Regional Enterprise Networks will be there every step of the way.

## Asset Management Required in Recreation Facilities

# RFANS Introduces RFAM to Nova Scotia

Contributed by Paul MacDonald, President of RFANS

The Recreation Facility Association of Nova Scotia (RFANS) through its partnership with the Ontario Recreation Facilities Association (ORFA) is now offering a free asset management tool to all of its members. The Recreation Facility Asset Management Program (RFAM) is a facility-based asset management tool targeted specifically at facility operators.

In April of 2016, ORFA, in collaboration with the Ontario Good Roads Association (OGRA) and Marmak Consulting, released RFAM to ORFA members. The user-friendly software application developed by Marmak is very similar to the successful Municipal Data-Works asset repository program deployed by OGRA. The RFAM design used input gathered from members of ORFA's technical advisory committees and various municipal pilot sites throughout Ontario. Ross Rankin, ORFA President, describes RFAM as a software tool that greatly assists recreation facility professionals in the collection and management of recreation facility assets data and is available as a benefit of membership.

Brittany Hunter, Executive Director of RFANS, echoed Rankin's statement when it comes to why RFANS saw the need for its members. "Our members were asking if there was something out there that they could use to help deal

with the issue of asset management. Because of our partnership with ORFA we were able to provide the RFAM program as a benefit to members of RFANS."

Asset Management is defined as, "the process of making the best possible decisions regarding the financial, building, operating, maintaining, renewing, replacing and disposing of infrastructure assets". Sounds logical and straight forward, however how is it going

*"RFAM is slowly and steadily gaining a foothold as a recreation facility asset management tool."*

to get done and with what tools? Initially in Ontario the primary focus was on roads, bridges, sewers, water mains, and social housing, but the need to have a tool for the recreation facility sector became evident to ORFA.

"The ORFA was delighted to partner with both ORGA, who have a very long and strong history of advocating for sustainable infrastructure on behalf of its municipal membership, as well as Marmak, who provides a citizen engagement portal as apart of a broad range of cost



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effective municipal web-based solutions and services” John Milton, Executive Director of ORFA said. “Without their jumpstart on the RFAM product it would have taken ORFA many years and significant financial and human resources to build a tool in support of recreation facility industry needs”.

Milton added that RFAM is slowly and steadily gaining a foothold as a recreation facility asset management tool. It takes a willingness to embrace the need for asset management due to the flexibility of the program, it can be implemented when the user wishes without huge financial risk or investment.

***The RFAM platform has a number of different modules that have the ability to:***

- Manage Open Spaces
- Manage Recreation Facilities
- Manage Warehouse Inventory
- Collect Asset Data
- Collect Condition and Life Expectancy
- Create Custom Routine Inspections
- Create Service Requests
- Create Work Orders
- Generate Output Reports

In addition, RFAM can be customized to meet the needs of a specific facility or municipality. It has a wide range of applications for arenas, fields, recreation facilities such as gymnasiums, playgrounds, etc. and for cemeteries.

With all levels of government facing budgetary challenges, asset management is becoming more important in deciding where and when money should or needs to be spent. Utilizing the RFAM program properly will prove beneficial in both the short- and long-term planning for recreation facilities.

RFANS is advocating that governments follow Ontario’s lead by making asset management a mandatory requirement when applying for funding in the future. How that funding is dispersed will be based on the goals, objectives and financial plans of each local asset management plan.



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<https://novascotia.ca/nse/water/wellcontractors.asp>

# Immigration That Builds Communities: The Atlantic Immigration Pilot

*Contributed by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada*

Atlantic Canada is renowned for its natural, picturesque landscapes, friendly people and welcoming communities. The region also boasts an enviable quality of life and low cost of living. However, municipalities across the province are facing some very real challenges.

Research shows that an ageing workforce, low birth rates and high levels of residents leaving the Atlantic region have resulted in low or declining population growth. One way to address these challenges and boost economic growth is through immigration. Thanks to the Atlantic Immigration Pilot (AIP), Atlantic Canada is uniquely positioned to take advantage of the benefits of immigration.

The Atlantic Immigration Pilot is a new tool in Canada's suite of immigration programs designed specifically to address these challenges and build on Atlantic Canada's competitive advantages.

## What Is the Atlantic Immigration Pilot?

The Atlantic Immigration Pilot is an innovative partnership between the federal and provincial governments, aimed at attracting and retaining skilled immigrants and recent Atlantic international graduates to meet the unique workforce needs of the Atlantic region. It is a key initiative under the Skilled Workforce/Immigration pillar of the Atlantic Growth



Strategy. Announced in 2016, the Atlantic Growth Strategy is a pan-Atlantic initiative comprised of 6 pillars that aim to drive long-term economic growth in the Atlantic region.

Immigration is a key driver for increasing our skilled workforce, strengthening the cultural diversity of our communities and growing our economy. With that in mind, the goal of this pilot is to ensure the long-term retention and integration of newcomers in communities across Atlantic Canada to help drive economic growth.



## Attracting Skilled Labour - Employer Driven

The Atlantic Immigration Pilot starts with the employer. The pilot is designed to help employers in Atlantic Canada recruit and retain skilled workers to grow their businesses and communities. In fact, it provides Atlantic employers significant flexibility to find the right candidates to meet their specific workforce needs. Participating employers have access to a Dedicated Service Channel through Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) that supports them through the process of hiring skilled immigrants.

Employers first have to apply, in the province in which they operate, to become designated under the pilot – at no cost. Once they have been designated, they can offer jobs to skilled foreign workers and recent

Atlantic international graduates. The pilot is aimed at filling labour market needs, not taking jobs away from local residents. As such, for each job offer, the employer must show they haven't been able to fill that job with local talent.

In just over a year since its implementation, the pilot has helped connect over 1400 skilled immigrants with employers across Atlantic Canada to fill local labour market needs.

## Retention and Community Integration – Focus on Settlement

While the pilot helps attract new immigrants, it takes the support of the entire community to make them



*Ivonne and Richard Rand are co-owners of Foxhill Cheese House, a designated employer that has already hired five skilled immigrants; two of those new employees brought their families with them.*

feel at home. In fact, one of the innovative components of this program is that employers work closely with Settlement Service Provider Organizations to provide every newcomer with a settlement plan that addresses their needs. A settlement plan, along with support from the neighbours, are key to their successful integration into communities across Nova Scotia.

Local governments, alongside community organizations and businesses, are key to helping newcomers thrive. The pilot has already started to make a difference for individuals and employers in the region, with pilot volumes steadily growing in each of the four provinces.

- Over 700 temporary work permit applications received, more than 530 approved.
- Over 470 permanent residence applications received, representing over 1000 people including family members; there are over 210 approved applications, representing nearly 435 people.

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada continues to receive very positive feedback from employers, service provider organizations and provincial partners over the past year. Efforts continue to remain focused on increasing awareness of the pilot, and ensuring that employers have the necessary tools to navigate the immigration system.

*“A number of our employees do come through an immigration process. The AIP has been a benefit in a number of ways for us. Having the support of the provincial and the federal level for permanent residency has been great. Diversity is something that we value here. We seek out opportunities to look at things differently, to approach things in a different way and the diversity really allows us to do that so it is definitely something that we’ve benefited from here.”* **Marcia Snow, Citco (Halifax)**



## A Look Back: Year One

In Nova Scotia, the Atlantic Immigration Pilot offers employers and communities their own advantage to recruiting and retaining new immigrants, and it’s already starting to make a difference.

In Atlantic Canada, since the pilot launch in 2017, momentum has steadily increased. As of March 31, 2018:

- Over 994 Atlantic employers provincially designated to participate in the pilot.
- More than 1400 graduates and skilled immigrants provincially endorsed to participate in pilot.
- 2110 settlement plans completed for principal applicants and accompanying family members.

## Municipal Impact

- AIP aims to increase immigration to the region by enabling employers to directly recruit potential immigrants for job openings they couldn’t fill with local talent.
- IRCC launched the Dedicated Service Channel to support designated employers in navigating the process of hiring immigrant workers under the AIP.
- Settlement Service Provider Organizations provide immigrants and their families with a settlement plan so they can integrate, stay and succeed in their communities.

- Increased attraction and retention of immigrants through the pilot will also help address the specific demographic and labour market challenges in the region.

## Getting Involved

Once an employer receives a designation, they can recruit immigrants and recent international graduates under the Atlantic Intermediate-Skilled Program, the Atlantic High-Skilled Program and the Atlantic International Graduate Program to fill job vacancies.

These programs give employers significant flexibility in finding the right candidates to meet their specific workforce needs – from forestry software designers under the Atlantic High-Skilled Program, to long-haul truckers and hospitality workers under the Atlantic Intermediate-Skilled Program, to recent graduates in medicine, nursing and architecture under the Atlantic International Graduate Program.

Skilled immigrants and Atlantic international graduates can apply for permanent residence once they've:

- received a job offer from a designated employer;
- developed a settlement plan with a designated Atlantic service provider organization; and
- become endorsed by an Atlantic provincial government.

Learn more about the Atlantic Immigration Pilot

at [Canada.ca/Atlantic-immigration](http://Canada.ca/Atlantic-immigration)



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# REALTORS® are Your Partners in Making Nova Scotia Home

*Contributed by Paige Hoveling, Government Relations Coordinator, Nova Scotia Realtors*

The Nova Scotia Association of REALTORS® (NSAR) represents approximately 1,500 real estate brokers and salespeople across the province. Its mission is to enhance REALTORS®' success by providing services and representation to enable them to best serve the public in real estate transactions. NSAR also acts as the voice of real estate in Nova Scotia.

REALTORS® are dedicated to improving the lives of everyone in our province. Recognizing that the purchase or sale of a home is one of the biggest decisions that Nova Scotians will make, REALTORS® are committed to being a trusted guide and providing professional advice to thousands of residents navigating through the intricate real estate process each year. In 2016 alone, transactions through the NSAR MLS® System contributed an estimated \$429 million in spin-off benefits to the Nova Scotian economy. These same transactions created an estimated 3,810 direct and indirect jobs in our communities.

Beyond selling properties, REALTORS® remain active in our communities and regularly engage with MLAs, municipal leaders, and other stakeholders to make Nova Scotia a more desirable place to live, work and

grow. We persistently advocate for improving quality of life and making homeownership more affordable through proposals like:

- ***Deed Transfer Tax reforms***
- ***Expanding the Down Payment Assistance Program***
- ***Improving the Residential Tenancies Act***
- ***Advising provincial leaders on the impact cannabis could have on homeowners***
- ***Reviewing the Capped Assessment Program***

NSAR partners with all levels of government to improve the quality of life in our communities. The real estate industry impacts our province economically, environmentally and socially, so REALTORS® have a responsibility to recognize this in all aspects of what we do. REALTORS® not only build communities, but build partnerships.

REALTORS® are particularly proud of the partnership we have built with the Nova Scotia Federation of Mu-

municipalities (NSFM) and other industry stakeholders, including the Canadian Mortgage Brokers Atlantic (CMBA), Real Estate Lawyers Association of Nova Scotia (RELANS) and the Real Estate Appraisers Association of Nova Scotia (REAANS) regarding the Capped Assessment Program (CAP).

The current CAP system was implemented in order to protect homeowners from spikes in property values, but it has created inequalities for homeowners across the province. Homeowners of adjacent properties with similar value can be paying dramatically different property taxes for identical services, depending on their purchase date. Homeowners who have purchased since the CAP has been put in place can pay thousands of dollars more in taxes than neighbours who purchased prior to 2005.

Additionally, when a home is sold the CAP is lifted, impacting first-time homebuyers (a catalyst in our growing housing market) as well as young families (often buying larger homes to accommodate growing families). Our senior population is gravely impacted as they begin downsizing their homes, as well. Upon downsizing, seniors often discover their new property taxes are higher than previous taxes, even in smaller dwellings.



*The CAP is not impacting homeowners in the way it was imagined: it helps some, but mostly redistributes the burden to other owners. For every dollar one homeowner saves, another family pays an extra. Any savings experienced are generally not impactful. Not only does the CAP create inequality in our system, it makes a home more expensive to purchase and can be a deterrent to local housing markets.*

NSAR believes that working with stakeholders like NSFM and industry professionals magnifies our collective position. In order to implement a solution that is equitable and successful for all homeowners, we must bring together a working group on the CAP. A request has been made to the provincial government to create this group and discuss solutions to address the inequality in our current property taxation system.

REALTORS® believe in lifelong learning, and that education is essential to understanding and solving any problem. We have prepared presentations on the CAP

for municipal stakeholders, as well as local citizens, to ensure this issue is understood by everyone. We welcome all members of NSFM to reach out to schedule a presentation in your community. Our local experts look forward to working with you on the CAP and any other issues important to your region. Let us know how we can help you!

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# NSFM Launches an Online Asset Management Course for Elected Officials

Contributed by Debbie Nielsen, Infrastructure & Sustainability Officer, NSFM

The sole reason municipalities exist is to provide services to residents, such as clean drinking water, safe roads, opportunities for sports and recreation, and countless other benefits that support quality of life. However, much of our infrastructure needs renewal or replacement, which will increase future costs to municipal budgets. That's why it's important for municipalities to develop asset management plans so

they can make effective and informed decisions, and plan financially for the renewal and replacement of their infrastructure.

Asset management planning helps municipalities oversee municipal infrastructure to deliver quality and fiscally responsible services. Focusing on each asset's life cycle, asset management considers the main-

The screenshot shows a video player interface for the course 'Introduction to Asset Management'. On the left is a dark teal menu with 'Introduction' selected. The top right of the player area displays the course title and a welcome message. A dark red progress bar shows the video is at 11/15 minutes. The main content area contains text about the course's purpose and a list of five course outline items. To the right of the text is a photograph of a classical building with columns and a dome. At the bottom of the player is a white progress bar.

Menu Closed Captioning

Introduction  
Course Title  
Course Title

NOVA SCOTIA  
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MUNICIPALITIES

Course Overview / Introduction to Asset Management  
Welcome to NSFM's Course on Asset Management

11/15

Who is this course for and what's its purpose?

- To provide elected officials with fundamental information about asset management and how it can be used to support municipal operations
- Asset management can be a long-term and iterative process that requires a commitment to continuous improvement

Course outline:

1. Define and understand asset management
2. Council's and staff's role in asset management planning
3. Basic components of asset management planning
4. Case study
5. Steps for getting started and factors for building success



tenance, rehabilitation and replacement of all municipal assets to provide sustainable service delivery, while managing risks and minimizing costs. A robust asset management process helps municipalities make informed, proactive infrastructure and budget decisions based on priorities and needs. Also, it ensures that municipal resources are wisely invested long-term and “institutional memory” is established: knowledge is not lost with staff turnover.

Municipalities are already practicing components of asset management in their daily operations, but having an asset management process in place helps them plan long-term so that residents have the services they need and have come to enjoy. Smart planning ensures that infrastructure investments are beneficial now and in the future.

Since councils have an integral role to play in asset management planning through their strategic leadership and oversight, NSFM has designed an online course to give elected officials basic information about using asset management to improve municipal operations and inform decision making.

The Basics of Asset Management for Elected Officials was recently launched on NSFM’s website; topics covered in the course include:

- Defining and understanding asset management: Learn what asset management is and why it is important for providing a business plan for municipal services;
- The role of council and staff in asset management planning: Elected officials and municipal staff have important but distinct roles in facilitating asset management planning. Discover what steps councils can take to support responsible stewardship of municipal assets;
- Steps in asset management planning: Learn how to begin the process and improve your infrastructure planning practices through ten key steps;
- Local case studies: Find out how four Nova Scotia municipalities - the towns of Yarmouth, Lockeport and Shelburne, and the County of Kings - have implemented sound asset management practices. These case studies also offer insight into lessons these municipalities have learned along the way; and

- Steps for getting started and ways to build success: Understand how to move forward with asset management planning, one step at a time, to ensure a successful asset management planning journey.

NSFM recognizes that infrastructure decisions elected officials make during their term will have long-range impacts on the vitality and sustainability of their communities. To support them in their asset management efforts, the online course is steeped in local content and designed to provide councils with a solid foundation in the basics of infrastructure planning.

Learning online about asset management has many benefits, and NSFM’s course provides a flexible option for elected officials to learn at their own pace. They can watch it at their leisure, pause it, pick up where they left off and review parts already covered. This makes it easy to fit learning into a busy schedule from the comfort of home or a local coffee shop. Learning about asset management is as simple as opening a computer or tablet: there is no dress code, it requires no driving, and there is no final exam - just a few questions throughout to enhance learning.

NSFM hopes the online course will support elected officials in understanding and implementing sound asset management practices, and will help position their municipality for success today and long into the future! To find out how to register for the online asset management course, contact NSFM today (by telephone: 902-423-8312 or email: [dnielsen@nsmf.ca](mailto:dnielsen@nsmf.ca)).

For additional assistance with your asset management planning efforts, check out FCM’s Municipal Asset Management Program for funding, training and knowledge-sharing support, which includes a recently-released guide on how to develop an asset management policy strategy and governance framework ([fcm.ca/home/programs/municipal-asset-management-program/municipal-asset-management-program.htm](http://fcm.ca/home/programs/municipal-asset-management-program/municipal-asset-management-program.htm)).

Support to develop the online course was provided through the Municipal Asset Management Program, which is delivered by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and funded by the Government of Canada.

# Attractive Communities Entice Visitors & Spending

*Contributed by Darlene MacDonald, Director, Sector Development, Tourism Nova Scotia*

Tourism presents a tremendous opportunity to enhance the vibrancy and sustainability of communities across Nova Scotia. Communities that prioritize tourism development are more likely to attract visitors and benefit from increased travel spending.

Tourism Nova Scotia is focused on attracting non-resident overnight visitors to the province and increasing tourism revenues through experience and sector development, marketing and visitor servicing. We have an export-focused strategy that aims to entice first-time pleasure visitors from high-yield markets.

While we are drawing visitors' attention to the province through the promotion of uniquely Nova Scotian experiences that have the ability to motivate travel, it's up to communities to ensure visitors have a positive experience while they are here, and to develop compelling destinations that visitors will want to explore.

Municipalities can enable tourism growth by considering policies that will improve the operating environment for tourism businesses. By understanding and considering tourism trends, consumer behaviour and visitor expectations when making decisions about policies and investments, you can create a visitor-friendly community that will encourage travellers to stay longer in your area.

Tourism Nova Scotia's research team can provide insights into tourism trends – who's coming to Nova Scotia, why they're coming and what they're doing while they're here.

A good place to start when seeking to expand into the tourism market is to establish a community tourism plan. You can learn more about tourism planning on our website, [tourismns.ca/development/destinationdevelopment](https://tourismns.ca/development/destinationdevelopment).

Your plan should consider how to make your community attractive to visitors; how to deliver on visitor needs, such as wayfinding, parking and washrooms;

and how to provide information to visitors that will motivate them to extend their stay in your area.

Quality customer service and experiences will help drive repeat visitation and generate positive word-of-mouth promotion for your community. Tourism operators must invest in their businesses to stay current and provide exceptional service and experiences. Communities can work with industry to develop attractions and events that will attract more visitors.

Through the World-class Experience EXCELLerator Program, Tourism Nova Scotia works with businesses and tourism-related organizations to develop unique, authentic travel experiences that will inspire people to book a trip to Nova Scotia.

A number of other partners play a role in supporting vibrant communities:

The Department of Communities, Culture and Heritage offers a variety of funding programs to support festivals and events and community infrastructure. For more information, visit <https://cch.novascotia.ca/investing-in-our-future>.

The Department of Canadian Heritage has funding programs for cultural spaces, heritage programs and sport hosting. Take a look at the list of funding programs at [www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage.html](http://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage.html).

The Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency also provides support for community economic development initiatives through the Innovative Communities Fund. For details, visit [www.acoa-apeca.gc.ca](http://www.acoa-apeca.gc.ca).

Communities and local tourism associations also have a role to play in marketing their region to travellers. For example, some municipalities produce visitor guides or include a section on their website for visitors. Tourism Nova Scotia offers advertising opportunities in the Doers & Dreamers travel guide.

Think about what your community's unique selling point is, and how you will work with tourism-related businesses to share information with visitors about your top attractions, restaurants and shops.

Tourism Nova Scotia has co-investment programs that can help enhance your marketing campaigns and extend your marketing reach. The Digital Marketing Program can help you develop and implement a unique digital marketing campaign. The Inspiring Content Program helps create high-quality images and videos that can be used in your marketing campaigns, as well as in Tourism Nova Scotia's marketing materials. Participants in the 2018 Inspiring Content Program will be included in a social advertising program executed by Tourism Nova Scotia.

Communities have the ability to create a first impression to visitors, and certainly leave a lasting impression. Let that lasting impression be so memorable and moving that visitors will share their impressions with family and friends, telling the world your community is a must-see.

Tourism Nova Scotia is working strategically and collaboratively to help increase Nova Scotia's competitiveness in the global tourism market. Learn more about Tour-

ism Nova Scotia's programs and services at [www.tourismns.ca](http://www.tourismns.ca). For useful news and information, check out the news and events section to subscribe to our InTouch blog.



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Corner Brook-based HiTech serves Atlantic Canada through offices in Mount Pearl, Dartmouth and New Glasgow beyond its headquarters. Beginning as a two-way radio dealer, the company grew substantially to become a major player in telecom services across Newfoundland and Labrador. Furthering its growth, offices in Nova Scotia followed; they include HiTech's acquisition of New Glasgow-based True North Communications, now known as TNC Wireless.

Although its products and services have grown beyond two-way radios, that initial offering is still HiTech's bread and butter. Whether for a vehicle on land, a vessel out at sea, an airplane, the family home or simply some amateur fun, as an authorized dealer of Kenwood, Icom and other brands, HiTech has radios to suit your specific needs.

If your needs go beyond two-way radios, HiTech has you covered. The company also offers vehicle and asset tracking, as well as paging and security systems among several other things. Rural connectivity is also of special consideration: whether it's needing Internet service at the cottage or not having a call dropped on the way there,

HiTech will ensure you're as plugged in outside the city as you would be in it.

The need for high-speed internet is essential in 2018, and that's regardless of where you live. With its previous acquisition of True North Communications, HiTech further cemented itself as a player in that service. The rebranded TNC Wireless covers more than

500 sq. km across Northern and Central Nova Scotia, and has expanded into Eastern PEI. You can learn more about TNC's offerings at [www.tncwireless.ca](http://www.tncwireless.ca).

No matter the type of service, Hi-Tech Communications can help you stay in touch with everyone you need to. Companies in the government, construction, mining,

oil and gas, transportation and other sectors have turned to Hi-Tech. Manage your time, money, people and security with 24/7 on-call support; do so knowing an industry leader is with you every step of the way. Learn more and get in touch via [www.hitechcom.ca](http://www.hitechcom.ca) for local service with world-class solutions.

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# Play Safe This Summer Season

*Contributed by Nova Scotia Power*

Summer is the perfect time of year to explore all that Nova Scotia has to offer – beautiful beaches, quaint fishing villages, scenic trails, and historic landmarks. The summer season can also present unsafe situations that are not readily apparent until it's too late. Swimming, boating and tubing along Nova Scotia's many lakes and rivers is a great summertime activity, but many people are unaware of the potential risks involved when swimming near dams and hydroelectric stations.

Nova Scotia Power operates 33 hydroelectric facilities along 17 river systems across the province, generating clean, renewable energy for customers. Nova Scotia Power Director of Safety, Sean Brennan, wants to help ensure everyone goes home safe every day. He recommends four simple steps for safe summer play. (...cont'd on page 29)

## Stay Prepared

“It’s important to keep our awareness, even when relaxing in the great weather,” said Brennan. “Complacency can set in when the sun is shining bright and we’re enjoying time with family and friends. If you are planning to swim in lakes and rivers this summer, we strongly encourage you to avoid areas directly upstream and downstream of our dams. You should also be prepared for sudden changes in water levels and water flows that might occur if we are generating electricity. And always, always, wear a life jacket if you are not a skilled swimmer.”

(...cont’d on page 30)



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## ***Stay Calm***

If you encounter an unsafe situation, stay as calm as possible so you can focus on the task at hand and think clearly about how to minimize the risk of injuries. Your demeanour will also be a calming presence to others in a risky situation.

“If you begin to see fluctuating water levels or flows, safely bring everyone to shore and continue to monitor conditions,” recommends Brennan. “Being aware of your surroundings and having a plan in place to keep yourself and others safe will keep you calm in an emergency. Respect warning signs, booms, buoys and barriers. They are there for your protection.”

This is particularly important to think about after a heavy rainfall as hydro system operators may need to suddenly release water from head ponds above our dams to manage water levels. A buddy system is always recommended when swimming or enjoying water

based activities, such as boating, to keep everyone safe.

## ***Stay a Safe Distance***

Nova Scotia is home to scenic trails and outdoor destinations that appeal to people of all ages. Hikers and trail users frequently walk or bike along our transmission line corridors during their travels, as they create handy pathways across many rural areas of our province.

Brennan emphasizes the importance of keeping a safe distance from electrical equipment.

“The most powerful electricity voltages flow along our tall transmission towers. Stay safe by staying at least 6 metres away from our equipment.”

## ***Stay Informed***

Although we tend to have fewer severe storms during the summer season, Nova Scotia weather can be unpredictable and we must always be prepared. When a storm

hits, it’s possible that power outages may occur from lightning or trees falling on power lines due to strong winds.

Nova Scotia Power regularly monitors weather forecasts and predicts the likelihood of power outages across the province, deploying resources where the biggest impact is expected to occur. This way we can restore power to customers as quickly as it’s safe to do so. Customers can also be prepared and stay informed before, during and after a storm by checking our Outage Centre on our website, following or social media channels or calling our Customer Care Centre.

“We may not be able to control the weather but being prepared for storms, even with uncertain outcomes, can help you stay calm, informed, and safe while enjoying our picturesque province this summer,” said Brennan.



# Explore the wonders of Nova Scotia safely this summer.



*Photo: The Wreck Cove Hydro System generates clean, renewable energy for Nova Scotians in the Cape Breton Highlands*

Learn more about how to be safe around dams and hydroelectric equipment at [nspower.ca/hydrosafety](https://nspower.ca/hydrosafety)

## Stay informed:

[nspower.ca](https://nspower.ca)

[Facebook.com/NovaScotiaPower](https://Facebook.com/NovaScotiaPower)

@NSPowerInc on Twitter and Instagram

Customer Care Centre: 1-877-428-6230





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## SATELLITE PHONES



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