

MUNICIPAL VOICE

The Magazine for the Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities

FALL/WINTER 2018

Unconscious Bias Impacting Our Workplace and Community

page 10

Getting Shovels in the Ground to Build Our Communities

page 8

Second Annual REN Conference Proves the Power of Regional Collaboration

page 34

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|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>6 President's Message
<i>Councillor Geoff Stewart, County of Colchester</i></p> <p>8 Getting Shovels in the Ground to Build Our Communities
<i>Contributed by: Vicki-May Hamm, FCM President</i></p> <p>10 Unconscious Bias - Impacting Our Workplace and Community
<i>Contributed by: Ann Divine and Barbara Miller Nix</i></p> <p>14 Inter-municipal Revenue Sharing
<i>Contributed by: David Atchison, Policy Analyst/Project Coordinator, Association of Municipal Administrators, Nova Scotia</i></p> <p>18 Caucus Updates</p> <p>22 Breaking Down Barriers to Accessibility - Rick Hansen Foundation
<i>Contributed by: Joshua Bates</i></p> <p>24 Nova Scotia Pilot Projects (Phase 1 & 2) & the Asset Registry Project
<i>Contributed by the Department of Municipal Affairs and NSFM</i></p> | <p>26 Import Replacement: A Leading-Edge Strategy for Economic Revitalization and Re-localization
<i>Contributed by: Robert Cervelli, Centre for Local Prosperity and Gregory Heming, Ph.D.,</i></p> <p>28 Opportunities Attract Contributors to Your Community, Not Jobs
<i>Contributed by: Matt Thomson, Co-Founder of Placemaking 4G</i></p> <p>30 One Road
<i>Contributed by: The Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture</i></p> <p>32 Nova Scotia Municipalities Host FCM
<i>Contributed by: Betty MacDonald, Executive Director, NSFM</i></p> <p>34 Second Annual REN Conference Proves the Power of Regional Collaboration
<i>Contributed by: Rachel Brighton, Economic Development Officer (Research Analyst), Valley Regional Enterprise Network</i></p> <p>38 Getting Set for Storm Season
<i>Contributed by: Nova Scotia Power</i></p> |
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The NSFM is a not-for-profit organization mandated to represent the interests of municipal governments across Nova Scotia. Total membership is 379 elected officials representing all 50 municipalities.

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President's Message

Councillor Geoff Stewart, County of Colchester

Well its been quite a year! A new Partnership Framework, a new name, website and newsletter; new staff! We are on a new path.

With the help of all our members, we are focussing on things that matter. We are building to become an organization that is known for its thoughtfulness, strategic thinking, and professionalism. We are strengthening our advocacy, collaboration and education efforts. We want to ensure our vision – effective local government and strong sustainable communities – is achieved.

Progress in convincing the province to act in support of our work is slower than we would like. It would be great if we could have a new, enabling *Municipal Government Act* and a secure financial model tomorrow. We need to generate a better understanding of municipal needs both in the minds and hearts of the public and the government in power. It will take time.

We have seen progress in the attention of the province to municipal matters. We have a new Partnership Framework focussed on most of our resolutions. At last count we have 13 joint committees with the province dealing with roads, physician

recruitment, fire services, aging, accessibility, short term rental accommodations, parental accommodations, cannabis, housing, policing, solid waste, active transportation and gas tax, all established in the last two years.

In this last year we have received a commitment from the province to formally consult with us on legislative changes, had legislation passed

on parental accommodations and expense policies, and signed an MOU on aging. We are establishing an ongoing forum for fire services, with all the key players at the table. We have held workshops on physician recruitment and Internet, with provincial folks sharing their strategies and receiving feedback from our members. The Accessibility Directorate has been working with us to develop tools that will assist mu-

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nicipalities in responding to the new accessibility legislation.

Working together, sharing concerns and ideas, and exploring win-win solutions is the starting point for achieving success. Hopefully success in terms of real initiatives and action will come sooner rather than later.

Our resolution process continues to evolve and is critical to ensuring we remain focussed on the top priorities of our members. This year we invited councils to discuss their priorities and provide us feedback so that we could ensure the top ones are being addressed. These were similar to the suggested topics for new resolutions that emerged from the regional meetings we held in the spring. We need your input. We need you to come to our events and to provide us timely feedback. Please help us help you.

As an organization, the Board has been working hard to improve our policies. In addition to engaging membership on priorities and resolutions, we have begun posting our expenses online, as well as passing a Harassment Policy and an Advocacy Policy. We signed an MOU with PVSC. We opened the door to building a better relationship with the Mi'kmaq.

This will be my last update for Municipal Voice Magazine. As I reflect back on the last year, I have had the opportunity to meet many of you, to hear about your challenges and your successes. Local government is so critical to the everyday lives of our citizens. I am impressed with your commitment, your passion, your willingness to serve! I wish the public could understand the importance of the work we do every day.

As my term as president nears its conclusion, I would like to take this time to thank the Board and staff for their generous support over the past year. They certainly made my job easier. I would particularly like to

extend a very big thank you to Judy Webber, who marked her 30th work anniversary with us. She is remarkable, and her financial expertise has kept this organization sustainable!

Between the new resolutions process, establishing a limited number of priorities, and the rebranding exercise, NSFM is undergoing significant change in the right direction. I want to thank the membership for helping guide our way through

these changes over the past year. None of this could have happened without your support.

I look forward to working with the board and membership in my future role as past president, as we strive to become more focussed in our priorities while increasing value for members.



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Getting Shovels in the Ground to Build Our Communities

Contributed by: Vicki-May Hamm, FCM President

Bridgewater is renewing its water treatment plant and Cape Breton is buying new buses. There will be new bus shelters in New Minas—with WiFi Internet on board. Chester is replacing its wastewater plant and Halifax is buying new ferries while piloting the use of electric buses. These are concrete examples of how local governments in Nova Scotia are using new federal infrastructure investment tools to build stronger communities. And this toolbox—the Investing in Canada Plan—has been significantly shaped by municipal governments, provincial associations like NSFM, and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities.

As the governments closest to daily life, our residents look to us for results they can see, from quality roads to clean water. We understand local needs and how to meet them in ways that foster more livable, competitive communities. Municipalities are responsible for 60 per cent of Canada's public infrastructure and an expanding suite of services. With access to just 10 cents of each Canadian tax dollar, we're exceptionally cost-efficient—because we have to be.

Critically, our local solutions also have national impact. When municipalities across Canada have the right tools, our local progress transforms our country's bottom lines.

Better roads and transit boost national productivity. Scaling up local green innovation helps meet Canada's greenhouse gas reduction goals. Building modern, accessible recreation facilities support the new talent our economy needs to grow—and much more. A well-built, LEED-certified community centre with geothermal heating and a green roof offers both social and environmental benefits—on top of the direct jobs and growth these infrastructure projects generate.

A transformative moment

The Investing in Canada Plan is an opportunity both to strengthen our communities and to show how, with the right tools, local governments can transform this country. To bring this plan to life, the federal government has been negotiating Integrated Bilateral Agreements (IBAs) with provincial and territorial governments across the country. This is what will allow communities to use new investment to get shovels in the ground. The agreement that Nova Scotia signed on April 10 will support infrastructure needs throughout the province into 2028.

Agreements like Nova Scotia's commit to funding a "fair balance" of municipal projects alongside provincial priorities—something FCM and municipalities worked hard to achieve. As the province develops its intake process for municipal projects, communities in Nova Scotia will be working to ensure that their priority projects are included in the province's initial three-year infrastructure plan.

Our municipal sector also worked hard to build full and fair cost-sharing into this plan. All IBAs signed to date have included a 40 per cent federal cost-share commitment, and a minimum 33 per cent provincial commitment. Seeing other orders of government cover nearly three-quarters of local project costs is a meaningful recognition that Cana-

da's future depends on moving local projects forward.

Another big achievement is how these agreements recognize the financial and administrative realities of rural and northern communities. As a direct result of FCM's advocacy work, the federal government boosted its cost-share to 50 per cent for projects in rural Canada—and to 60 per cent where populations fall below 5,000. The bilateral agreements also commit to streamlining processes for rural communities, from project selection to reporting. Steps like these will empower rural and remote communities to deliver better roads, broadband internet, wastewater treatment and more.

Let's get building

Alongside provincial associations like NSFAM, FCM has been an unrelenting advocate for local governments and the residents we all serve. While Canada's new infrastructure agreements are encouraging, much work remains to be done

to drive the outcomes Canadians deserve.

We have achieved better cost-sharing and the ground-breaking commitment to fund a "fair balance" of municipal and provincial projects. Questions do remain about how the federal government can ensure project selection transparently honours that commitment. On so many issues, local governments must continue to be engaged—not as outsiders looking in, but as real drivers of the nation-building process.

FCM will continue to advocate for municipalities to ensure you have the tools you need to grow and thrive. And we know you'll be ready to do what you do best: design and deliver projects to transform your communities and our country for generations to come.

Vicki-May Hamm is the mayor of Magog, Quebec and the President of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities.

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Unconscious Bias

Impacting Our Workplace and Community

Contributed by: Ann Divine and Barbara Miller Nix

As we go through daily life, especially in environments where we are most comfortable, we may do and say things without conscious thought. Sometimes we even find ourselves in situations where our words and actions are actually in contrast with our own conscious value system.

How does this happen?

We all hold unconscious biases, which develop from a very young age. As human beings we are consistently, routinely, and profoundly biased without knowing we are being biased. This biased behavior is used as a form of protection, and according to Howard J. Ross, renowned diversity consultant, workplace expert and author, “virtually every one of us is biased toward something, somebody, or some group.”

The term “unconscious bias”, or implicit bias, was first coined in 1995 by University of Washington Professor Tony Greenwald and Yale University Professor Mahzarin Banaji. Unconscious bias impacts our internal processes and effects how we make decisions. While this may not constitute overt discrimination, it can have the same impact, so we need to heighten our awareness of our own unconscious biases.

Howard Ross shares his own experience of unconscious bias by using himself and his family as an example. A self-described “Eastern European Jew” who lost dozens of family members in the Holocaust, Ross said he grew up listening to family members being concerned about anti-Semitism, BUT he also heard questionable and inappropriate comments from the same relatives about people from different races. He also heard African Americans complain about racism and then make homophobic comments, as well as gay and lesbian people make questionable comments about immigrants. In fact, we have all done the same thing about “the other”. In essence,

we all prefer to be with people who look, act or behave most like us.

“Each one of us has some groups with which we consciously feel uncomfortable, even as we castigate others for feeling uncomfortable with our own groups. These conscious patterns of discrimination are problematic, but, again, they pale in comparison to the unconscious patterns that impact us every day. Unconscious perceptions govern many of the most important decisions we make and have a profound effect on the lives of many people in many ways.”

- Cook Ross Inc., 2008

What is unconscious bias?

It is a set of powerful intrinsic beliefs that shape our daily lives and behaviours. Unconscious bias comes from social stereotypes, attitudes and opinions which we internalize, and which result in us forming stigmas about certain groups of people outside of our own conscious awareness.

Psychologist Joseph LeDoux has referred to bias as an unconscious “danger detector” that determines the safety of a person or a situation. It is important for us to realize that we have these biases for a reason - from a young age we are taught who are friends, and who are foes. However, Howard Ross points out that over time we learn to compartmentalize things and people to whom we are not exposed on a regular basis. So, we begin to make judgement on race, culture, gender, sexual orientation, religion, age and so on.

This behavior is manifested in certain groups and dominant cultures that are seen as different, “less than”, or as

in-groups and out-groups. For example, in the business culture, which remains male dominated, the importance of the gender influence is often not even considered, limiting women's access to situations and environments where key discussions are held and decisions are made.

One of the most well-known and extensively used tests to identify implicit or unconscious biases is the Implicit Association Test or IAT. The IAT was created and introduced in 1998 by Anthony Greenwald, Debbie McGhee and Jordan Schwartz. This test is normally administered by Harvard University; there is a Canadian version to be obtained at:
<https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/canada/>

Where does unconscious bias come from?

Our biases are based on our background, personal experiences and culture. We accept biases without conscious thought as we grow and develop. These biases are passed on to us through the values and beliefs of those we trust (parents, extended family, friends, teachers, community leaders), and these biases continue to be impacted throughout our lives by socioeconomic status, education, media, institutions, emotional intelligence and other influencers.

Why is it important to be aware of unconscious bias?

If we can understand how our unconscious bias shapes the automatic decisions we make, we can also begin to see the profound impact that such decisions have on ourselves and others. This is especially important when we are leaders whose decisions impact the professional and personal lives of others.

As Howard Ross points out, decisions are not necessarily made with the intent of someone being "out to get" someone else, but rather because all human beings have bias. Possessing bias is part of being human, and the more we think we are immune to it, the greater the likelihood that our own biases will be invisible or unconscious to us.

Per Crystal Staats (Kirwan Institute, 2015): "Awareness alone does not solve the problem. The next step is implementing personal behavioral changes to combat unconscious bias...Implicit biases are malleable; therefore, the implicit associations that we have formed can be gradually unlearned and replaced with new mental associations."

How do we address it?

To combat unconscious bias we must be willing to be uncertain and uncomfortable as we learn more about ourselves without being defensive.

- a) **Self** (at home, with other individuals)
It can be hard to spot our unconscious bias as it often comes out in subtle ways. It can impact the way we view others, especially those beliefs and values we hold about others which are not necessarily true. For example, some beliefs expressed by people across Nova Scotia include things like "Indigenous people drink a lot", "Immigrants take our jobs", "African Nova Scotians are lazy", "White people living in rural areas are not intelligent", "Persons with disabilities cannot positively contribute to our economy". It is of vital importance that we make every effort to break down such stereotypes within our homes, workplaces and communities.

Even as we realize that our social location, cultural beliefs and upbringing make it hard to change such stereotypic beliefs, it can be difficult to unpack why we hold such deep beliefs and begin to adjust our way of thinking about biases which might not be true.

- Hold yourself accountable for your behavior, thoughts and actions.
- Ask questions instead of making assumptions. Challenge yourself.
- Take risks by engaging with individuals outside of your cultural group.
- Speak out when you observe or hear others making disparaging comments or acting inappropriately.
- Ask others to give you feedback, especially those whom you trust.

- b) **Work** (employees, peers, supervisors)
Unconscious bias does not only impact the individual, it influences how people are treated in organizations. People who have the power to make decisions daily about interviewing, hiring, promoting and placing staff in certain positions within the organization may not always be aware of how

their unconscious bias impacts the outcomes they control.

For example, studies have shown that reference letters for women tend to be shorter and place less emphasis on significant aspects of their work, which can lead to women being scored lower in the interview or performance review processes.

Also, it is not enough to put together a group of diverse people just to reach established “targets” for workplace environments. Work must be done to provide staff members with guidance and support as they learn how to interact with each other in newly created diverse settings.

- Start with challenging yourself as a leader in your organization
- Engage in critical self-reflection about your own biases.
- Provide opportunities and support to employees as they begin to understand how to engage with those who are different.
- Spend quality time ensuring staff members can get to know each other and acknowledge that everyone has something to contribute to the workplace.

c) **Community** (CAOs, Counselors, volunteer leaders)

Unconscious biases are reflected in the way we relate to certain community members. Those with leadership roles in the community must become accustomed to interacting with community members from different cultures and learn their names. Successful social interactions are critical for building sustainable and diverse communities.

- Everybody has biases, so hold yourself and the individuals around you accountable for their behaviours, decision-making and stereotypes that impact the judgement of others.
- Get to know your community and appreciate the diversity which contributes to the vibrancy of our province.
- Engage in conversations which enable community members to get to know and

understand each other’s cultures, beliefs and values.

- Be willing to explore ways to make changes to restore confidence in our community members that diversity and inclusion matter

Summary

We all have unconscious biases, and they will not disappear overnight. It is a continuous challenge to become more aware of our biases and our subsequent (automatic) actions, and begin acknowledging the impact we have on others as our environments become more diverse. When we become aware of our daily behaviors, and observe their impact, we can adjust our actions to create truly inclusive communities.

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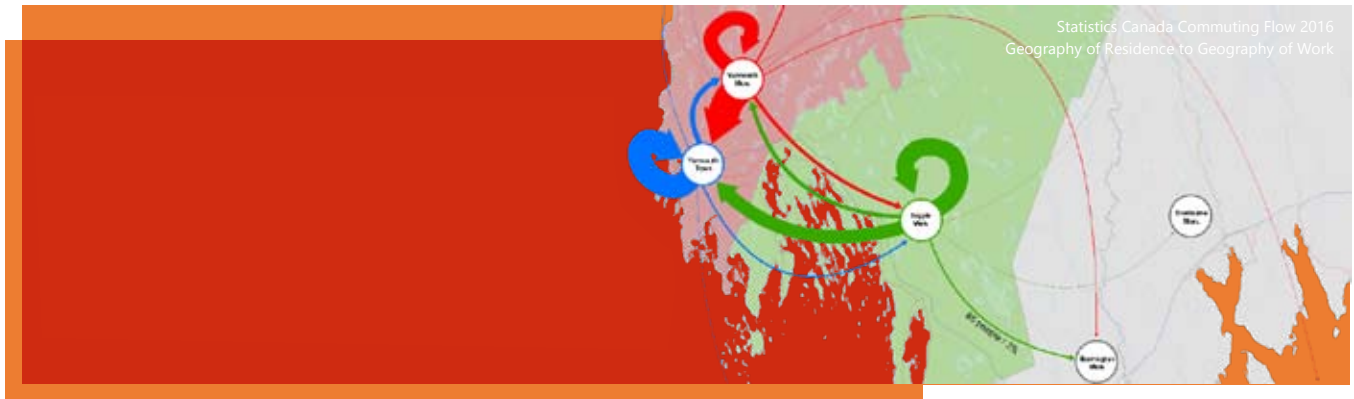


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Inter-municipal Revenue Sharing

Contributed by: David Atchison, Policy Analyst/Project Coordinator, Association of Municipal Administrators, Nova Scotia

National and global forces have coalesced into a new economic reality for many municipalities—one defined by declining demographics, reduced revenues, and increased operating costs—that, in many cases, individual municipal units cannot face successfully on their own.

This new reality mandates a refocused approach to spur economic growth and attract residents. The practices of the past—‘smokestack chasing’ and ‘big game hunting’—regularly resulted in municipalities offering major concessions on taxes and services, often at the expense of their assessment base and to the detriment of neighbouring units.

Municipalities have largely been competing as opposed to cooperating as entities. Municipalities that continue to embrace a parochial view of competition and focus finite resources on a low-cost formula that buys a competitive edge are likely to lose the economic development game in the future. Many municipalities are turning away from these harmful practices and find themselves searching for innovative solutions to spur economic growth and attract residents.

A flexible alternative

Inter-municipal revenue sharing provides a flexible alternative to tax exemptions, abatement, and land giveaways. Instead of joining the ‘race to the bottom’, neighbouring units enter into a voluntary agreement that provides benefits to all parties. Such agreements are an acknowledgement that neighbouring municipalities share more than just a boundary and that the strength of individual units is contingent upon the strength and competitiveness of the entire region.

Inter-municipal revenue sharing arrangements recognize that local development provides regional benefits and

that sometimes cooperation with neighbouring units is required to create a full-service environment conducive to growth.

Inter-municipal revenue sharing arrangements also recognize that the location-based distribution of tax revenue does not always reflect the regional contributions of individual units. New developments that increase the assessment base in one municipality can place added demands on municipal infrastructure and services in neighbouring units. Likewise, the benefits of one unit’s expenditures on infrastructure, roads and cultural amenities can spill over municipal boundaries and enhance the liveability of neighbouring units.

Inter-municipal revenue sharing agreements are a means of correcting fiscal disparities and compensating for spillover benefits. These agreements can be used when:

- an urban municipality extends utility services into a rural municipality to create a full-service environment;
- a business or industry locates in one municipality, but the labour force resides in a neighbouring unit;
- Regional units agree to regional land use development in a shared area;
- development occurs on the periphery of a neighbouring unit;
- a regional asset is built that will be used by residents of neighbouring units.



Inter-municipal Revenue Sharing in Practice: Pictou County Deed Transfer Tax Trust

In 2009, the Pictou County business community persuaded local leaders to construct a regional recreation facility that would enhance the liveability of the area and increase the region's competitiveness by making it easier to recruit and retain employees. At the same time, the Aberdeen Hospital emergency department and hospital pharmacy needed significant upgrades.

Both projects carried significant costs, so five of the six Pictou County units—the Municipality of Pictou County along with the towns of New Glasgow, Pictou, Stellarton and Trenton—came together to establish the Deed Transfer Tax Trust. Each partner levys a one percent deed transfer tax on home sales and pools this income in the trust. The trust is used to repay the debentures that financed municipal contributions to both projects.

The Deed Transfer Tax Trust is operating at a rate of 90 per cent, meaning it is taking in close to projected home sales. Home sales are lower than projected in some units, but this is balanced out by units that are exceeding projections. If debenture repayments are not fulfilled through the Deed Transfer Tax Trust there is a guarantee based on municipal population, assessment and proximity to the facility. As all funds are pooled in the trust it has been able to satisfy payments.

Pictou County residents, businesses, and the healthcare sector have all gained from the Aberdeen Hospital expansion. The Pictou County Wellness Centre—an ultramodern multi-purpose centre that supports the sport, health and wellness, business, educational and social needs of the residents of Pictou County area municipalities—is a regional asset that would not have been constructed if not for inter-municipal revenue sharing.

Inter-municipal revenue sharing involves each municipality designating some of its assessment base, property taxes, service fees or other revenues, for inclusion in a regional pool that is allocated to each of the participants on the basis of a sharing formula. These agreements can be tailored to ensure the achievement of the intended outcome or to reflect the individual contributions of municipal partners.

Making cooperation work

Inter-municipal revenue sharing promotes regional thinking, strengthens intermunicipal relationships, and cuts competition between neighbouring units for jobs, residents and investment. However, inter-municipal revenue sharing is not without risk.

Revenue sharing can: overcompensate junior partners; weaken local autonomy and independence; dilute the links between local taxes and services; and be subject to a shifting political environment. The risk of cooperation is that maintaining ongoing positive relationships can be a challenge, and effective communication is more important than ever before.

To overcome these obstacles and achieve sustained success partners must develop a long-term strategy that includes: a vision for the region; measures for the monitoring and evaluation of goals; and a strategy for communicating successes to policy makers and the public.

Historical data can be used to forecast the future, plan scenarios, simulate outcomes, and mitigate risk in advance of entering into actual arrangements. This preparatory work can also be used to assess a region's strengths and weakness, identify prospective partners and additional areas for potential cooperation.





Getting Started

Inter-municipal revenue sharing is already enabled by the *Municipal Government Act*. Municipalities that are interested in inter-municipal revenue sharing should begin by considering the following:

- Is there political will?
- Do potential partners already display a high-degree of cooperation and have a history of service sharing?
- Are the vision, objectives and strategies of partners aligned?
- Will the desired outcome make the region a more competitive place to do business and improve the quality of life of residents?
- What is the most equitable way to allocate revenue amongst participating municipalities?
- What objective cost criteria will be used to construct the agreement?
- How will risks be mitigated?

Reach out to your NSFM or AMANS representatives to assist in your desire to create this inclusive agreement.




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Inter-municipal Revenue Sharing in Practice: Rural Municipality and City of Portage la Prairie

In 2000, an agricultural producer was considering potential sites to construct a multi-million-dollar processing facility. The company's site selection criteria specified a greenfield, rural site, with urban infrastructure.

The Rural Municipality of Portage la Prairie had potential sites, but not the necessary infrastructure, while the City of Portage la Prairie had the urban infrastructure but no sites. The City and RM of Portage la Prairie quickly recognized that it would take the combined assets of both units to meet the company's site selection criteria.

To accommodate the facility, the City and RM of Portage la Prairie entered into an inter-municipal tax sharing agreement. Both units agreed to share the property taxes collected on the facility by the RM and the utility bills collected by the City on a 50/50 basis.

The success of this first agreement led the creation of a second inter-municipal revenue sharing agreement. In this agreement, the City and RM of Portage la Prairie agreed to share all tax revenue from new commercial and industrial developments on a 60/40 basis, with the unit hosting the development getting the larger portion of revenue.

Regional cooperation has flourished in the eighteen years since the first inter-municipal revenue sharing agreement was signed. The two municipalities are now cooperating in a number of areas including: recreation, planning, solid waste management and water/wastewater treatment. By working together, the two partners have secured over \$1 billion in industrial investment for the region in recent years.

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Rebecca Kolstee
Municipal Wellness Coordinator
E: rkolstee@amans.ca
T: (902)240-1857

While cost cutting is certainly helpful, it only makes up one part of the equation. Less quantifiable benefits such as “enhanced morale, higher employee job satisfaction and less absenteeism and presenteeism (at work but with a lack of focus or productivity)” are also important to consider



Caucus Updates

Municipal Voice Fall/Winter 2018

Regional Caucus Update

Councillor George MacDonald (Chair)

It's a busy fall for everyone, including NSF! As this is being written, we are in the midst of our Advocacy Days and our resolutions process.

For those of you who are not familiar with Advocacy Days, it is an initiative of the NSF Board to raise awareness on municipal issues with provincial MLAs. The intent is not to make specific, hard requests: it is intended to let the MLAs know we share common goals and issues with them, and that we are ready to work with them for the betterment of our communities and our province. This year, the Board is meeting with the three political-party caucuses and has extended personal invitations to the Premier and Ministers. We will be posting information on the initiative on the NSF website.

I know housing was an important issue for our Caucus last year. While it didn't become a resolution, it was sent to the province as a statement of municipal concern. As a result, the Minister expressed interest in working with us on the issue. NSF and provincial staff got together and developed terms of reference for a joint committee to explore homelessness, affordable housing and innovative housing options. The committee will share information on municipal tools and actions, and on housing funding programs. Senior housing will also be looked at.

Another resolution of particular interest to regional municipalities relates to arbitration. This issue relates to the way arbitrators consider and evaluate ability to pay. It appears they believe municipalities can simply raise taxes. They don't seem to consider that some homeowners are paying 6% and more of their income on property taxes. While the issue came up in relation to policing, other municipal services are also impacted.

I encourage you all to attend the NSF Fall Conference. It is a great opportunity to learn from your peers; there are lots of good sessions. Most important is the opportunity to contribute to the selection of our top resolutions and priorities. You will also have an opportunity to raise the issues your citizens are concerned about. This is part of your work, and we would like to help you with it.

Rural Caucus Update

Warden Jim Smith (Chair)

NSF has been working hard on behalf of some critical rural issues. I'd like to bring your attention to the work on physician recruitment and connectivity. I certainly recognize these issues are not resolved; however, we are finding tools that can assist.

The issue of physician recruitment has the attention of the province, who have been taking incremental steps to bring more doctors here. There is a lot more that needs to change, for sure. NSF is working with the Health Authority as are many of you. The workshop NSF held in June identified some opportunities for municipalities to assist. At the time I am writing this article, the Health Authority is reorganizing its recruitment division and adjusting its approach. We will continue to work to address this issue.

Develop Nova Scotia was recently created to lead the province's broadband strategy. The workshop being held by NSF in October will help municipalities understand the programs that are available and the various ways municipalities can assist. There is no doubt the federal and provincial governments need to provide more financial assistance. FCM is doing a lot on this issue in pursuing more federal funding.

Roads, of course, remain a huge concern. While we are working with TIR to address the issues, it will take time. The budget for J-Class roads has not changed for years. One of our proposed resolutions calls for increased funding beginning in the next provincial budget.

I would encourage you to read the FCM rural report. It can be found on the FCM website and speaks to the challenges and opportunities for rural communities. I welcome hearing any comments on how we can better assist rural municipalities.

Towns Caucus Update

Mayor Jeff Cantwell (Chair)

As we head into our Fall Conference, I am pleased to see the work that is being done on behalf of towns. The challenges we face took decades to build. The cumulative effect is becoming much more noticeable and hard-

er to ignore. We won't solve them all overnight but I am hopeful we will see some positive steps being taken.

I wanted to point out a few of the resolutions being put forward that respond to town concerns:

Cannabis is a big deal for towns as that is where one might expect more public concerns around public consumption and related retail operations. The NSFM municipal working group has been drawing on the work of FCM, Halifax, and the police chiefs to better understand the possible implications for municipalities; their work has been shared with you. The practicality of developing and then enforcing bylaws is a serious concern and deserves meaningful discussions. If towns pass bylaws, the public expects enforcement. The cost of enforcement appears to be growing as we learn more about the specific federal and provincial legis-

lation recently passed. We can anticipate numerous court challenges that will further define the processes that must be followed for effective prosecutions. Towns may justifiably decide not to do anything over and above the provincial legislation.

NSFM continues to ask for provincial funding in recognition of the additional work arising from the legalization of cannabis. FCM continues to push for federal funding to municipalities as well. As governments begin to deal with edibles, the challenges will only increase.

Policing is another issue. Costs are increasing for many reasons, and arbitration decisions have contributed. While we are not suggesting wage increases are unfair, we do want arbitrators to consider the cost to the homeowner. Town taxpayers already pay high taxes, and it is becoming harder and harder for people to be able to afford houses in our commu-

nities. The other aspect is to look for ways to deliver police services more efficiently. We need the joint police committees to begin to come up with initiatives to reduce costs.

The issue of roads is a longstanding concern. NSFM is working with TIR to deal with service-exchange issues from both the rural and town perspectives. All issues will be put on the table, and we need to better understand town issues and opportunities to discuss with TIR. In the meantime, the proposed resolution draws attention to the need for appropriate compensation to towns for the provincial roads running through them.

Please contact me with any concerns or questions – I appreciate hearing from you!





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Breaking Down Barriers to Accessibility

The Rick Hansen Foundation is training accessibility assessors in Nova Scotia. Already, the program is making a difference

Contributed by: Joshua Bates, Senior Policy Analyst, Nova Scotia Accessibility Directorate

At nearly 20% and growing, Nova Scotia has the highest disability rate in the country. With every challenge comes an opportunity, and Nova Scotia seized the opportunity to become a more equitable and barrier-free province when it became the third province in Canada to pass accessibility legislation. Nova Scotia's *Accessibility Act* sets an ambitious target of becoming an accessible province by 2030.

Making sure that Nova Scotians of all abilities can access buildings and outdoor spaces will be an important part meeting this target. While building codes do provide a minimum accessibility standard for new buildings and major renovations, they tend to vary widely by province, and even municipality. That is why the Rick Hansen Foundation (RHF) has established a consistent, global standard for improving and rating the built environment through the Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification™ (RHFAC) program.

Born in Canada, the RHFAC aims to become to universal design what LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certification is to green building. The team behind the RHFAC scoured the globe in search of the most effective accessibility standard for persons with dis-

abilities. The result is an ambitious program that has trained dozens of assessors, and is gaining momentum across the country.

Students who take the course are trained to analyze buildings and sites for overall accessibility – in particular for persons with mobility, vision, and hearing disabilities. They

“It’s wonderful to see both urban and rural Nova Scotia get on board with this program,” says Mr. Post.

learn the impact of physical barriers on people with disabilities and the principles of universal design. Students are also equipped to understand construction drawings, apply legislation, advocate the benefits of surpassing minimum code requirements and communicate their findings to clients. Following successful completion of the program, graduates complete an exam facilitated by the Canadian Standards Association (CSA) to be officially designated as RHFAC Professionals, which allows them to rate buildings or sites in accordance with RHFAC standards.

Depending on the results of a rating, sites can either receive a certification level of RHF Accessibility Certified Gold or RHF Accessibility Certified. Sites that fail to meet a minimum threshold do not receive RHF certification, but all rated sites receive a scorecard that includes key areas of success and areas for improvement, so they have a roadmap to move forward and may be certified in the future.

One sign of the program's growing momentum is that last spring, the Nova Scotia Community College (NSCC) teamed up with the RHF to become the first educational institution outside of British Columbia to offer the RHFAC Accessibility Assessor Training Course. Today, the first of 20 trained assessors are on the ground in the province. Soon, the NSCC will be delivering a second course, this time targeting municipal staff.

Already, the program is making a difference. The Town of Wolfville recently began piloting the development of an accessibility plan, so that other municipalities can learn from their experience. One of Wolfville's first acts was to enroll a community planner in the RHFAC training course. This RHFAC Professional is now leading an accessibility audit of Wolfville's built environment, which

will help identify priorities for the town's accessibility plan.

As well, Halifax Regional Council's Executive Committee will soon be considering a proposal from its Accessibility Advisory Committee for the Cogswell District Redevelopment Project—one of the largest building projects in the history of Halifax—to be designated a Rick Hansen Foundation Gold Zone. This would mean that all public and private lands within the Cogswell District would have to achieve the RHF Accessibility Certified Gold standard.

For Gerry Post, Executive Director of Nova Scotia's Accessibility Directorate, having both Wolfville and Halifax work closely with RHF Accessibility Certification will only lend momentum to the program. "It's wonderful to see both urban and rural Nova Scotia get on board with this program," says Mr. Post. "Small improvements in accessibility can make a big difference for a lot of people. And when these improvements are included in the building's design, the cost is minimal".

For municipalities, enrolling staff in the upcoming RHFAC Accessibility Assessor training course, and designating future developments to meet

RHFAC standards are only two of the ways they can support accessibility through this program. For example, municipalities could encourage developers or business owners to certify their buildings by deducting the cost of RHFAC from development fees, or fast-tracking applications through the development approval process. Existing buildings that wish to renovate with the intent of becoming RHF Accessibility Certified could also be fast tracked for approval, and/or have their development fee waived. Yet another idea would be to work toward having RHFAC be considered as a "public benefit" under the Density Bonus Program.

Through Nova Scotia's Accessibility Act, a committee of experts will soon be formed to recommend a new accessibility standard in the built environment. The RHFAC is one of many the committee will be considering. While this new standard is not yet developed, as Wolfville has shown, it's never too early to get a head start.

For Gerry Post, the upcoming RHFAC Accessibility Assessor Training Course is an opportunity for municipalities to follow Wolfville's lead and demonstrate a commitment to ac-

cessibility. "As is the case with so many issues, municipalities are where the rubber hits the road when it comes accessibility. This course provides the skills and knowledge to help municipalities become more inclusive for people with diverse abilities. This is good for our economy, but also just the right thing to do".

****For more information on the upcoming RHFAC Accessibility Assessor Training Course, please visit the Nova Scotia Community College at https://www.nssc.ca/learning_programs/schools/access/rhfac-assessor-training.asp. For more information on the RHFAC program visit rickhansen.com/RHFAC.***



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Update on the Nova Scotia Asset Management Program and an Overview of Upcoming Initiatives

Nova Scotia Pilot Projects (Phase 1 & 2) & the Asset Registry Project

Contributed by: the Department of Municipal Affairs and NSFM

Pilot Project (Phase 1)

The Nova Scotia Asset Management Program continues to make progress to support municipalities with their infrastructure planning efforts. The Program, developed in collaboration with the Nova Scotia Asset Management Working Group, aims to provide tools and resources that help lay a foundation for making informed, evidence-based decisions to manage municipal assets.

In the spring of 2017, the Province launched the first Nova Scotia Asset Management Pilot Project, which supported five municipalities (Mahone Bay, Port Hawkesbury, District of Argyle, Town of Shelburne and Lockeport) in collecting, assessing and maintaining relevant infrastructure information for linear assets (including water pipes, sewer lines, roads, sidewalks, and trails etc.). This project resulted in the development of data collection tools and resources (i.e. a linear data collection spreadsheet and an accompanying standard operating procedure guide with a preliminary condition assessment guide) intended to support Nova Scotia's municipalities with infrastructure planning by providing guidance for collecting asset data in a standardized way, which is the first key step towards effective asset management.

The tools and resources from Phase 1 were made available to all municipalities (upon request) in August 2018, including interim technical support.

Pilot Project (Phase 2)

The Province is in the process of launching a second Pilot Project, which is intended to continue to provide funding support for municipal (linear) data collection. Working with the Municipality of the County of Antigonish and the Town of Antigonish in this second phase provides the opportunity to test the existing data collection

tools and resources within a larger rural municipality as well as further explore potential regional collaboration benefits.

Asset Registry Project

The Province has also allocated funding to support the development of an asset registry, based on the tools and resources developed from the first Pilot Project. The goal of the asset registry project is to provide our municipalities with a "one stop shop" system to house, maintain and map asset information, and access preliminary state of infrastructure analytics (to further support informed, evidence-based decision making).

Similar to the Pilot Project, the Registry Project is also being developed with a phased design structure (incorporating existing Provincial IT/geomatics infrastructure and resources). The first phase of the registry project is currently expected to be rolled out to municipalities in late fall. This will provide "viewing" capabilities for municipalities that collect data using the Nova Scotia tools and resources. Subsequent phases of the registry are expected to include data editing, mobile data collection, data maintenance and analytics components. Please stay tuned for updates.

Ultimately, the outcomes the current Nova Scotia Asset Management Program initiatives (i.e. both the Pilot Projects and the Asset Registry) are intended to support the continued development of a standardized methodology for collecting data and assessing the condition of assets, incorporating lessons learned and industry best practices.

If you would like to receive the linear data collection package/associated instructions (including, additional program background information as well as contact details for interim technical support), please contact Jenni-

fer Duncan, Engineer, Department of Municipal Affairs at jennifer.duncan@novascotia.ca.

NSFM's Resources & Upcoming Training Opportunities & Resources

NSFM continues to support municipalities with asset management planning and recently completed two online resources, with funding received from FCM's Municipal Asset Management Program* (MAMP). The first resource is an on-line course on the basics of asset management for elected officials. The second is an online learning module on the tools and resources developed from the Province's Pilot Project. Both of these resources can be accessed from NSFM's website at www.nsfm.ca/nsfm-asset-management.html.

In June, NSFM received word that FCM approved its proposal to MAMP to deliver two workshops** to help municipalities incorporate climate risks into their asset management planning practices. NSFM is working with a local group – ClimateAction Services – to develop these workshops, which are taking place on November 26 in Halifax and November 28 in Middleton.

The workshops will aim to enhance local asset management practices by providing municipalities with tools and information to include climate considerations into their long-term infrastructure planning, so they can take necessary steps to proactively adapt their assets to climate risks.

For more information on these workshops, please contact Debbie Nielsen at NSFM by email (dn-nielsen@nsfm.ca) or telephone (902 423-8312).

*** The Municipal Asset Management Program is delivered by FCM and funded by the Government of Canada. For more information, visit: <http://www.fcm.ca/home/programs/municipal-asset-management-program/municipal-asset-management-program.htm>.**

**** NSFM's two climate change workshops are not a part of the Nova Scotia Asset Management Program.**

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ABSTRACT IN CONFERENCE AGENDA

Our local community economies have a very high rate of monetary leakage driven by globalized economic forces combined with local consumer and institutional spending patterns. Import replacement is a proven way to ‘plug the leaks’ in a local economy. It can redirect lost spending to circulate back into the local economy and be the quickest means for revitalization. Import replacement builds economic resilience when public institutions, businesses and residents purchase more of their needed goods and services from local sources rather than importing these goods and services from outside the region. Examples will be discussed from Annapolis County, the Town of Bridgewater and other communities.

Import Replacement: A Leading-edge Strategy for Economic Revitalization and Re-localization

*Contributed by: Robert Cervelli, Executive Director, Centre for Local Prosperity
Gregory Heming, Ph.D., Senior Advisor, Centre for Local Prosperity and
Municipal Councillor, Municipality of the County of Annapolis*

The notion of globalism as part of a working definition of trade around the globe is nothing new. Humans, as soon as they could walk upright, began to trade what they had for what they did not have. Some 50,000 years ago, when we learned to sail, trade goods began leaving one continent and arriving in another.

The fact that today nearly 80% of what we have and what we consume in Nova Scotia arrived from somewhere else is a mere extension

of that seemingly human proclivity to trade stuff. What is new, however, is that today globalization is wrapped in the deeply troubling notion that all civilization, politics, and social and environmental justice are going to be defined and managed by a globalized commerce underscored by the myth of a free market.

This form of globalization seems to have appeared on the scene fully formed in the early 1970's and spread like wildfire throughout the 80's and 90's. Economists of the day

brandished this as a fait accompli. This brand of globalization as unfettered and unlimited commerce has, according to some, now run its course.

Canadian political philosopher John Ralston Saul put it this way, "I've noticed that not many people even bother listening when the old assertions of global economic inevitability are made. Inside the small closed world of economists and officials and interest group associations and speciality writers, that sort of talk

goes on. Why not? But most of us are elsewhere. And so, therefore, is the world.”

Where though, we might ask, have most of us gone? An increasing number have gone back home to become full participants in revitalizing and re-localizing their economies. Much of what is taking place on the local level includes municipal efforts to design and implement policies that incentivize localism while at the same time adapting and mitigating the effects of changing climate. While these new economy solutions do not suggest a global export economy is not important, they do suggest that localism benefits from receiving the same level of financial and regulatory support from senior levels of government as do export based economies.

The Centre for Local Prosperity, with its mandate to work with local communities to find new economy solutions, recently completed its two-year study Import Replacement: Local Prosperity for Rural Atlantic Canada. Import replacement is a leading-edge local economic development strategy that seeks to produce locally those goods and services currently imported into a community as a way to keep money and wealth circulating within the community.

To understand the immediate benefits achieved through import replacement, it helps to realize the deleterious effects of an on-going negative trade balance. Nova Scotia as a whole has a significant trade deficit with 35% of every dollar generated in the economy leaking away somewhere else to purchase imported goods and services. With a modest 10% shift in spending to local sources, an additional 15,000 jobs could be created in the province.

Most local communities have an even more extreme case of economic leakage. It can manifest in many ways, such as residents exporting

their labour through long commutes to work or by living away and sending their pay cheque back home. An import replacement strategy literally begins to plug the leaks in the local economy, capturing those leaking dollars to circulate within local businesses and thereby creating local jobs. When import replacement is done well, it leads to net-exporting of goods and services into surrounding regions, tipping that local bal-

ance of trade in an even more positive direction.

One excellent example started as ‘guerrilla localism’ by a councillor in Preston, UK, illustrates the sheer power of an import replacement strategy. Between 2013 and 2017 this town of 114,000 people

...continued on page 33



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THE NEW GENERATION OF RECRUITING

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Opportunities Attract Contributors to Your Community, Not Jobs

(The Distinction Is More Important Than You May Think)

Contributed by: Matt Thomson, Co-Founder of Placemaking 4G

Strolling down Main Street in Tatamagouche, Nova Scotia, one can't help but feel the jolt of energy that has become part of the municipal fabric. With record-level startup and business growth in recent years, this community is all but the sleepy little town of years gone by. So what's the secret sauce? How can we replicate this success across the province? Well, we've been asking ourselves that very question and one (and admittedly somewhat frustratingly philosophical) answer is: by telling your story and presenting an opportunity. Okay, honestly that is a very simple way of summarizing a solution that is much more complex than that...but, it's also very true, so let's concentrate on it for the purposes of this article. Whether you're looking to attract employees, entrepreneurs or families, every municipi-

pality has a #WhyHere story to tell, and that story is an integral part of an opportunity.

"Similar to how employers appreciate job candidates who show goodwill through volunteer experience, discerning professionals appreciate when an organization demonstrates a commitment to community."

When we at Placemaking 4G have conversations with our clients across the region we find employers, particularly in rural communities, often have a very similar complaint: they speak to the difficulty of attracting

the talent they need to be successful and to bring their businesses to the next level. They know they need to hire, but they often either can't garner the interest they were hoping for or they can't retain the people they were able to attract. Why is this? Because they posted a job and hired a fit instead of crafting an opportunity and hiring a contributor. These may seem like semantics, but as someone who's in the talent attraction and retention business, I'll tell you those terms couldn't be more different.

So, what is the difference between a job posting and an opportunity brief, and what role can a municipality play in differentiating between the two? Firstly, a job posting summarizes the responsibilities, desired qualifications and scope of work of a

position. The problem with this is that times have changed and people don't move for jobs like they used to; it's the opportunities that move people. An opportunity brief contains two key elements in addition to a position description that combine to paint the full picture of an opportunity. The first element is a glimpse into an employer's culture, vision and values. It doesn't seem like rocket science, but this makes all the difference in the world because value alignment is immensely important when making an employment decision, and it also plays a huge role in retention rates. One of our favourite quotes these days is from Dr. Marie Bountrogianni, Dean of the Chang School of Continuing Education at Ryerson:

"Similar to how employers appreciate job candidates who show goodwill through volunteer experience, discerning professionals appreciate when an organization demonstrates a commitment to community."

Think about that for a second: a potential employee is now weighing an employer's commitment to community as part of their decision-making process for whether or not to accept a position. This is one of the reasons an opportunity brief is so important because it provides an employer a chance to outline their culture, vision and values and how it impacts their community. In other words, it provides them the opportunity to tell their comprehensive #WhyHere story.

The second key element of an opportunity brief is a summary of the culture, vision and values of the community in which the employer operates. (This is where you as a municipality come in). An individual wants to know what the municipality they'll be moving into is all about. This does not mean they want to see a Photoshopped version of the region, as this may lead to short-term success in attracting talent but will inevitably be fleeting and reten-

tion rates will drop. What the applicant wants to be told is the municipality's #WhyHere story. This will provide a summary of the community's culture, vision for the future and opportunities which enables them to make the decision as to whether their values align with the vision, and whether they would like to help contribute to the culture of the municipality.

A simple way to summarize the difference between a job posting and an opportunity brief is that the latter humanizes the opportunity for a candidate. There are numerous factors that weigh in on a decision to move to a new community and the be-all end-all isn't simply a job. People want to be part of a community, a community wants to attract contributors, and contributors want to help build their communities, municipalities and organizations. If we look at the dimensions involved in the decision-making process, we see that talent sees in 3D when selecting a career and community. This is why shifting from a simple job posting to an opportunity brief is so beneficial. The distinction plays an integral part in the success rate and attraction of talent for employers and communities, but it's also easy to see how it could serve the same purpose for a municipality in attracting entrepreneurs. As is the case in Tatamagouche, they've developed a strong startup and entrepreneurial culture, which has become part of their culture and vision and has contributed to a powerful #WhyHere story.

As an organization with the slogan "A new Generation of Recruiting", P4G is structured to not only work with employers and municipalities, but to change the way they attract talent. If you'd like to learn more about the benefits of a multidimensional talent attraction strategy, opportunities vs. jobs, #WhyHere or anything else reference in this article, visit www.P4G.ca and reach out.

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One Road

Contributed by: The Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture

More than \$580 Million of farmed goods travel along Nova Scotia's roadways each year. This remarkable amount of funds contributes greatly to the rural economy in Nova Scotia.

Safety is paramount when farm equipment and motorists share the road. Until they are slowed down while out for a scenic country drive, many Nova Scotians may not realize that the unique and often large equipment required to produce these agricultural goods use the same roadways as motorist. While a level of common sense needs to exist to ensure the safety of both equipment operators and motorists, the conditions of roads often trigger safety concerns. Between overgrown ditches being a sight obstruction for farm equipment turning on to roadways and shoulders giving away, there are safety elements that impact not only farm equipment operators, but also any driver using public roadways. The aforementioned issues aren't necessarily municipal jurisdiction, but there are actions that municipalities can take to improve the multi-use of public roadways in their communities.

Liaise with Provincial government

Municipalities can work with their local county or regional federation to prioritize which roads should be tended to first by Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal. Some considerations when determining higher priority areas may be frequently used roadways, regions where there is agri-tourism and roads that have more twists and turns where accidents may be more prone to

occur. Discuss priority areas with the TIR Area Manager for your municipality.

Get informed

Before jumping to judgements, read up on requirements for farm equipment travelling on road ways. There are resources available to remind anybody travelling on Nova Scotia's roadways, including municipal councillors and staff, to become better informed on road safety and that we all share the same road.

Signage

Agriculture is present in every county (it's likely safe to assume municipality, too) in Nova Scotia. While provincial legislation doesn't allow the use of temporary signage for farms accessing fields during cropping seasons, communities with farms can strongly encourage motorists to share the road with farm equipment and vice versa.

Since 1895, the Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture has represented the interests of Nova Scotia's agricultural community. With an organizational structure that includes representation from 13 county and regional federations and 28 recognized agricultural commodity groups, the Federation brings together over 2400 individual farm businesses representing all aspects of primary agriculture in the province.

Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture

The Voice of Nova Scotia Farmers

Representing more than 2,400 family farms across Nova Scotia, the Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture advocates on behalf of farmers on issues including:

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- Canadian Agricultural Partnership
- Labour
- Public Trust
- Regulatory Burden



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Nova Scotia Municipalities Host FCM

Contributed by: Betty MacDonald, Executive Director, NSFM

Two major FCM events recently took place in Nova Scotia and we are proud of their successes!

The FCM Annual Conference in Halifax this past June broke all the records. Over 3500 participants descended on Halifax, including delegates, exhibitors and companions. Halifax was a wonderful host, and offered 14 study tours which 1400 delegates participated in. The Conference Program provided valuable learning and networking opportunities. People enjoyed Nova Scotian hospitality, food and entertainment – and the feedback from delegates was overwhelmingly positive. Thank you to Halifax and the 160 volunteers who made a difference.

Congratulations to the Municipality of the County of Annapolis in their successful hosting of the September FCM board meeting. For those unfamiliar with the process, Annapolis

County submitted an application to FCM and proposed the board meet at the Annapolis Basin Conference Centre. Annapolis County is the first Nova Scotia municipality to host an FCM board meeting in several years. The meeting involves the 74 Board members, 30 Committee Members and Staff from FCM, along with the provincial municipal associations (such as the NSFM). Annapolis County was an excellent host, exposing municipal officials from across the country to rural Nova Scotia. Participants were impressed and those from Nova Scotians were reminded how lucky we are!

The FCM board includes Councillor Bill Karsten (Halifax), First Vice-President for FCM; Councillor Geoff Stewart (Colchester), NSFM President; Councillor Russell Walker, (Halifax Regional Municipality); Warden Timothy Habinski (County of Annapolis), Vice Chair Social-Eco-

nomics Development Standing Committee; and Councillor Tom Taggart (Colchester), Vice Chair, Rural Forum and Chair of the FCM Atlantic Caucus.



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...continued from page 27

rebooted a failed local economy by shifting £73 million of procurement from six of its public-sector anchor institutions to local businesses. This economic strategy, now hailed as the 'Preston Model,' continues to grow and is imitated by dozens of other communities.

There are many similar examples in Nova Scotia where re-localization initiatives are proving long-term sustainable economic benefit. Local food supply is one of the easiest forms of import replacement as seen by the local food movement. The economic impacts can be ramped significantly through distribution hubs, such as the Pan Cape Breton Food Hub, or through local institutional procurement of food.

Energy is another important sector with long-term localization benefits. Perhaps the best example in the province is Energize Bridgewater, a community-wide initiative transitioning the Town of Bridgewater to a local, efficient, renewable energy economy. The plan establishes both energy efficiency measures through deep retrofits and superior construction standards, as well as community-scale energy systems, district heating and other measures.

This initiative is also the Town of Bridgewater's economic development plan. Energy imports currently cost Bridgewater \$88 million per year (2012 data). The project is expected to replace imported energy to the tune of \$2 billion over the next 33 years, representing an enormous windfall to the local economy. Bridgewater's goal is to become a net-exporter of energy towards the end of the 32-year project and could achieve a positive trade balance for its economy based on energy alone. In addition it will reduce greenhouse-gas emissions by about 80%.

The forestry sector represents another import replacement opportunity, especially for smaller rural communities. We are all familiar with wood-stove domestic heating, which provides local sources of fuel as opposed to imported heating oil. Some communities are investigating expanding this idea further into heating of public buildings using waste wood and thinning from local forest operations. Both uses also create resilience against any potential fuel oil supply disruptions in the future. Finally, smaller local mills can provide lumber, millwork and fine woodcraft products to local markets. It is important to note that William Lahey's An Independent Review of Forest Practices in Nova Scotia, recently submitted to the province, lends an additional voice to this value-added forestry model.

In the fall of 2013 the Municipality of the County of Annapolis faced the same challenge most other municipalities in Nova Scotia were facing at the time: whether or not to join a Regional Enterprise Network. Annapolis County chose not to join. Annapolis County Economic Development Strategy 2050 took shape after an exhaustive and comprehensive community engagement process that pointed to five local community development targets.

In addition to its economic strategy, the county also released its Forestry Report 2018 outlining the creation of a re-localized, municipal forest strategy. The local community lens through which the county focused its strategy brings to light just how closely tied local community development is to local forestry practices. This strategy points to new and innovative opportunities in the areas of forest ecology, climate change, value-added industry, local job creation, recreation and education, and local energy and food production. Economic Development 2050 and Forestry Report 2018 both bring home a model of import re-

placement that builds local economic resilience in its public institutions and local businesses by incentivizing residents to purchase more of their goods and services from local sources.

The import replacement study conducted by the Centre for Local Prosperity lists numerous other examples from across Atlantic Canada and internationally of communities that have taken back control of their economies in innovative ways. The report lists first-steps that any community can undertake for an import replacement strategy, beginning with creating a dedicated multi-stakeholder volunteer group willing to sit down together and engage in conversations. Each community is different and the ideas, assets and potentials all manifest in different ways.

Recommendations for municipal governments include examining current procurement policies to optimise opportunities for local business and removing tax breaks or other incentives for non-local corporate attraction. Zoning and land use planning can favour home-based businesses, mixed-use developments and public gathering places, such as entrepreneurial hubs. The Centre for Local Prosperity is advising a number of municipalities in Atlantic Canada on strategies for import replacement and anchor institution procurement.

For more information about import replacement: info@centreforlocalprosperity.ca.

Import Replacement: Local Prosperity for Rural Atlantic Canada is available at: <http://centreforlocalprosperity.ca/studies/>



Photo credit: Western REN and Michael Carty Photography

Second Annual REN Conference Proves the Power of Regional Collaboration

Contributed by: Rachel Brighton, Economic Development Officer (Research Analyst), Valley Regional Enterprise Network

Deep discussions and wide-ranging viewpoints at the second annual Partners for Progress conference confirmed that collaboration and engagement are the “secret sauce” in the success of the Regional Enterprise Network (REN) model.

Nova Scotia has six organizations operating under the banner of RENs, with some variations. Their collective

purpose is to work collaboratively to build strong regional economies by focusing on business development.

The emphasis on collaboration was baked into the format of the REN conference, which drew 120 people from the public, private and community sectors – coming together with a common purpose.

... continued on page 36

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In Nova Scotia, Regional Enterprise Networks (REN) are leading a collaborative approach to economic development and supporting the growth of businesses in the province.

Municipalities, First Nations, the Province, and the business community are working together through the REN model to strengthen regional economies.

RENs are business-led and business-facing organizations. By using tailored shared tools and resources, each REN will build on the strengths and values of their region to better promote Nova Scotia for investment attraction and expansion.

Find your local REN contact



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The Nova Scotia Regional Enterprise Network website is now live!
Visit www.nsrens.ca for more information.

Held September 5-6 at Digby Pines Resort, the conference was hosted by the Western REN and facilitated with flair by Tuesday Ryan-Hart and Tim Merry from the consulting practice, The Outside. They challenged us to ask “What will I do differently tomorrow?” and to “think and act regionally” – across municipal boundaries and across regions.

Speakers representing provincial and municipal government, RENs, and the not-for-profit sector framed the “big picture” for the integral work RENs are doing to advance economic development in regions outside of Halifax.

Introductory remarks were made by Angélique LeBlanc, CEO of the Western REN; Kelliann Dean, Deputy Minister of Municipal Affairs; and Ben Cleveland, Mayor of the Town of Digby.

Emily Pond, Acting Director of Governance and Advisory Services with

Municipal Affairs, addressed challenges and opportunities as municipalities bring a regional perspective to planning and development.

Jennifer Angel, President and CEO of Develop Nova Scotia, explained the provincial focus on “place-making” and strategic economic infrastructure (e.g., broadband) – initiatives



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that offer fresh ways for RENs to engage with municipalities, communities, and the private sector to make rural Nova Scotia more attractive for residents and business.

Pam Mood, Yarmouth Mayor and Chair of the Liaison and Oversight Committee for the Western REN, warmed up the room as always, speaking with passion about the benefits that come from building trusting partnerships.

Todd Coombs, Director of Regional Business Development at Nova Scotia Business Inc., pinpointed the need for productivity improvements in industry.

AJ Bird, representing the Business Education Council, showcased successful ways for business to engage with youth and build connections with the future workforce.

Morgan Murray, keynote speaker and Cape Breton Partnership's Innovation Director, explained the connection between innovation and creativity that is driving the Creative Island concept.

Halfway through the day, participants switched from listening to

speaking, diving into break-out discussions to share their five-year vision for regional collaboration and pitching their best "big ideas". The outcomes touched on communication, role clarity, a firmer funding model, harmonization among RENs, breaking down silos, shared performance indicators to show the value of REN activities, and promoting the REN "brand."

Judging by the engaging conversations and speakers, it's safe to say

people left the conference feeling inspired and ready to do something different and better – individually and collectively.

The RENs would like to acknowledge the Department of Municipal Affairs for its financial support for the conference, along with McSweeney & Associates, which sponsored the opening reception.

Learn more by following the conference link at nsrens.ca



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Getting Set for Storm Season

Nova Scotia Power works every day to strengthen the grid

“Everybody says if you don’t like the weather in Nova Scotia, just wait 15 minutes,” said Adam King, Substation Supervisor at Nova Scotia Power. “Having spent the bulk of my career at Nova Scotia Power in the field, I can personally attest to this statement.”

Over the past few years we have observed more powerful storms accompanied by stronger, more sustained winds. The storm that occurred in early January 2018 was the most impactful storm since Hurricane Juan, with winds gusting upwards of 140 km/h. Nova Scotia Power’s equipment was not the only infrastructure to be affected by this storm, as there were mature trees uprooted, washed out roadways and roofs ripped off homes.

Nova Scotia Power invests over \$80 million each year to reduce the risk of power outages through strategic equipment maintenance and replacement, and system technology upgrades that take place every day.

Adam and his team are specifically responsible for maintenance of substation equipment located across the

province, which forms the backbone of the electrical system.

“We perform regular inspections and testing to ensure that the power grid is healthy and can provide a reliable service to our customers,” said King. “When we identify a potential problem through preventative maintenance before it can cause an outage, we’re really proud because outages on this type of transmission equipment could affect 2,000 to 20,000 customers depending on the issue. Those are really good days.”

In addition to preventative equipment maintenance, there is a year-round focus and investment in reducing the risk of tree contacts with power lines, in the amount of \$20 million. Tree contacts are the number one cause of outages during storms particularly with high winds and heavy wet snow. NS Power maintains over 27,000 kilometres of roadside distribution lines and another 5,300 kilometres of very high voltage transmission circuits. Aerial and foot patrols allow planners to identify areas where trees are likely to come into contact with our power lines so that tree trimming can prevent outages.

“We’re always mindful of balancing the provision of reliable service through the most cost effective and environmentally sensitive way possible,” said Trevor Beaton, Manager of T&D Shared Services. “In some cases tree cutting or trimming is unwanted by the property owner. We do our best to address areas of the highest safety and reliability risk, recognizing that trees are an important part of our ecosystem and the province’s picturesque landscape.”

Property owners can help support system reliability by cutting and trimming trees on their own property that are at risk of touching power lines. Find out how to obtain safe clearance to do this work and a list of certified tree trimmers in your community at nspower.ca/treetrimming.



(Photos: Greenwood substation, helicopter patrols)

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Storm Safety Tips

Here are a few tips to help you prepare for storm season:



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Have an emergency kit with flashlights, a battery operated radio and keep fresh water available.



Your safety is the number one priority. If you see a downed wire, please stay away and report it to us at 1-877-428-6004.



Keep our phone number close. Report outages and check the latest outage information at 1-877-428-6004.



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