



Council, MLA and MP Round Table - November 16th, 2021

The Municipality of East Hants has a strong relationship with our provincial and federal counterparts in all departments in government. Through provincial, federal, and municipal cooperation we can all play a part in building a better East Hants, a well-planned East Hants, and a community where people feel connected, safe and at home. The Municipality prepared the [2021-2024 Strategic Plan](#) with four key strategies in mind. These, along with the provincial and federal touchpoints to them, are included below for your consideration and discussion.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

A strong, competitive economy encourages entrepreneurship, stimulates opportunity, creates jobs, and enhances the community's attractiveness. Through investment attraction, land inventory management and business support services, East Hants continuously improves the community's business environment and commercial tax base.

Our goal is to have vibrant commercial districts that support the current and future needs of our community. We will be working on several initiatives over the next few years including the further build-out of our business parks, development of a new Economic Development Strategy, workforce development initiatives, etc. Areas where Provincial and Federal support will be key include:

Priorities:

- Ensuring Department of Public Works work with East Hants to encourage and enable development on provincially owned roads;
- Support new transit systems with provincial and federal funding opportunities.

Issues where Provincial and Federal support is needed to improve our economic development include:

1. **Quality of Place and Placemaking - Elmsdale Highway #214 Mainstreet Concept Design:** Creating shared value for all our communities, this project has engaged with a number of partners including NS Public Works, who has been supportive as a key partner in working through this concept phase.

The Province finalizing their plans for Highway #214, using the concept design to help inform their future design, is critical to our success. The provincial timeline of implementation will be critical to advancing this project.

2. **Transit-** Provincial and Federal funding for new public transit will be key to Council successfully implementing a transit system that will support a workforce for our growing economy. Ensuring East Hants is at the table for regional transit discussions will also be key.



3. **Physician Recruitment** - In multiple areas of East Hants, Economic and Business Development staff have been working to support the NSH regional Recruiter. Council has also invested in marketing funds for video development and a website specifically for physician recruitment. **All provincial efforts to support physician and health care worker recruitment will benefit the residents and businesses in East Hants.**
4. **Tourism** - East Hants has traditionally worked closely with Tourism Nova Scotia and ACOA to develop and grow our tourism package. Continued provincial and federal funding will be essential to continue to grow this sector and aid in the revitalization of rural Nova Scotia. WE look forward to working with Minister Dunn and the Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage team.

SUSTAINABLE INFRASTRUCTURE

Infrastructure represents the foundation of any community. It includes roads, facilities, and systems that keep the community functional and people moving.

Our goal is to provide infrastructure that addresses the needs of our growing community. Key infrastructure for East Hants includes transportation, trails and active transportation, water and wastewater infrastructure and recreation assets.

Priorities:

- Ensuring provincial and federal consultation with municipalities, the level of government most impacted by regulation related to water, wastewater and the environment
- Provincial support in the Windsor Railway licencing/ownership issue
- Provincial acquisition of the DAR railway line and support to build out the trail system
- Extended Producer Responsibility for recycling materials

For all municipalities the key to building and maintaining infrastructure is:

- Stable infrastructure funding with easily understood programs and simplicity in administration.
- Federally (administered Provincially), the Canada Community-Building Fund (CCBF) (formerly Gas Tax) agreement expires in 2024. Continued predictable funding of this nature is a necessity for well planned asset management programs to operate. Finalizing a new agreement as soon as possible will aid in our long-term planning and is essential to our success.
- Legislation and regulation passed at the Federal and Provincial level must be consultative and must consider the impact such regulations will have on municipal expenditures, capital expenditures and our limited human resources.



- Support for non-profit and community groups who provide essential services to our community (social, recreational, health, etc.)

Issues where Provincial and Federal support is needed to improve the sustainability of our communities include:

- **Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR)**
 - Municipalities have been abiding by the Solid Waste Resource Management Regulations since 1995, having made significant investment in programming and infrastructure (over \$25 million annually for blue bag recycling alone), all funded by the tax payers of NS
 - Nova Scotia consumers are paying the national product prices that support Printed Paper and Packaging (PPP) programs in other provinces, but receive none of the benefits because Nova Scotia has no EPR program
 - The Province needs to develop legislation and regulations, in support of a full EPR for PPP model as proposed by the NSFM to government some time ago.
- **Water Security - prioritizing the protection and conservation of watersheds**
 - Add mandatory efficiency ratings on watercraft use (restrict engine sizes, promote/prioritize non emission watercraft use)
 - Reduction of plastic waste, and cleanup programs (Fresh Water focus)
 - Promote and support public drinking water systems and their expansion in supporting the needs of access to fresh drinking water (will become more and more critical as the extremes of climate change impact the country from coast to coast)
- **Wastewater Utility stewardship**
 - Banning “Flushable Wipes” - national education effort required on what not to flush
 - Increasing funding for advancements in technology
- **Green Energy/Program Support**
 - A specific funding program to support solar panel addition (or other green energy generation methods) for use on Water & Wastewater sites to offset energy use requirements for processing.
 - Funding for municipal units who are prepared to transition fleet vehicles to electric - requirements include charging infrastructure and vehicle acquisition.



- **Waste To Energy** - Municipalities need a national standard on what is acceptable for use, and enable those technologies to deal with both the transitional waste and waste that has been previously buried in our landfills.
- **Rails to Trails Mount Uniacke** - Provincial influence is required to enable the return on critical railbed that has been abandoned in Mount Uniacke, to a trail system for the community.
- **Active Transportation** - East Hants currently has an active application for active transportation trail throughout Elmsdale that will change the way people can move throughout the community. This project is contingent on receiving funding and will be key to development of our full AT network throughout the Corridor.
- **DAR Line** - The Municipality has discussed the long-term development of the DAR line through rural East Hants as a multimodal trail system. Is ownership of this land an objective of the provincial government? What support would be available to the municipality if East Hants worked with the NFP groups to build out the trail?

CORPORATE EXCELLENCE

Success of the municipality depends on public trust. This relationship with the public is achieved through open, transparent, and fair decision making, effective public policy, responsible financial management, exceptional service delivery, and effective communication.

Our goal is to provide greater value to the community by improving the way we do business. Although primarily internal initiatives, the areas of provincial and federal assistance include:

- **MGA Review** - East Hants is looking forward to the work that was done on the Municipal Government Act reform being actioned and put through the legislative process. Several changes were recommended to the Provincial government several years ago.
- **Provincial CAP Assessment Program:**
 - Phasing out the CAP assessment program so the taxation system can return to a fair and transparent method of taxation. The NSFM has proposed a model to phase out the CAP, an all-party committee was struck to review the CAP and the issue has gone silent for many months. Part of this recommendation was also to keep an application-based program in place so people who see sudden and dramatic increases in their homes will still have protection.
 - Phasing out the CAP is key to re-establishing fairness in taxation for new home buyers, seniors and those who live in lower valued homes. The impact of the CAP program on taxpayers (who is overpaying and paying less because of the program) can be seen at: https://nsfm.ca/cap_map.html#8.74/44.87102/-62.54756



STRONG COMMUNITY

A strong community is where people feel a sense of pride, are safe, connected and active. This is achieved through long-range community planning and by supporting those who live, work and visit in East Hants.

Our goal is to provide services, programs, and facilities, through direct service delivery and collaboration with others, that allow people and businesses to thrive.

Priorities:

- Ensuring municipalities maintain their autonomy in decision making - planning issues as an example.
- Cost controls in place for housing, education and RCMP services.
- Ensuring schools have sufficient capacity to meet the demands of our growing communities. Discussion of crowded elementary schools and the need for a new high school for Hants East are often topics of conversation in the community.
- A future recreation/community facility is needed for the Mount Uniacke area.

Issues where Provincial and Federal support is needed to improve the strength of our communities include:

- **Fire Service** - Having to secure a fire scene with site security until a fire inspector arrives is a burden to the volunteer fire service - this is required by the Fire Marshall's office. The Inspectors do not respond for hours (even days) and site security is a challenge both with volunteers and security contractors dependability.
- **Property tax and Deed Transfer Tax proposals** - recent proposals of the new PC government in Nova Scotia have indicated that they will be implementing a 5% Deed Transfer Tax program for those purchasing property from outside Nova Scotia and an additional \$2.00/\$100 of assessment on out-of-province owned properties. Consideration needs to be given around municipal involvement in these programs (avoid our involvement if possible) and the impact these policies will have on immigration and investment attraction to Nova Scotia.
- **Provincial Senior Property Tax Rebate** - East Hants was part of the pilot that seniors apply direct to the Province and the Province reaches out via Excel spreadsheet for the required financial information to municipalities. This change shifted the burden to the Province (which reduced the burden of this provincial program on municipal staff) however the program participants are experiencing significant delays in receiving their rebates.



- **RCMP Services**
 - East Hants is investing in our policing contract, hiring more officers over the next 2-3 years
 - East Hants needs the support of the Federal and Provincial governments to keep the cost of policing through the RCMP contract manageable and limit the financial impact of retroactive negotiations, that are beyond the control of municipalities, on the municipal taxpayer.
 - Municipalities are not permitted to budget for a deficit as other levels of government do. Unforeseen costs in policing have a significant impact on municipal tax rates from year to year.
- **Equalization and other exchange considerations**
 - East Hants MLAs should support rural municipalities when the Municipal Capacity Grant (formerly Equalization) is discussed. East Hants has not received any equalization funding for 20+ years.
 - East Hants needs to be recognized as a rural municipality with town and urban type expenditures and pressures on the tax burden (water, wastewater, roads, sidewalks, streetlights, etc.)
 - Housing is a provincial responsibility and should remain a key focus of the provincial and federal governments. East Hants will support housing initiatives through policy development and a housing strategy (2022-2023)
 - We need to support funding and exchange scenarios on roads that benefit rural municipalities
 - East Hants needs jurisdictional authority to make urban type decisions like crosswalk additions, without taking over the cost of maintaining main routes for N.S. Public Works
 - East Hants needs to be a part of any discussions on asset renewal of Provincial J Class roads and significant provincial infrastructure upgrades - the community has benefited from these working relationships in the past, with project collaboration and less disruption to the community.
 - Council has sent a letter to the Minister asking that the requirement to zone all areas of Nova Scotia be reconsidered. We would request the support of our local MLAs in this matter.