



THE MUNICIPALITY OF
CHESTER

September 8, 2023

The Honourable John Lohr, Minister
Nova Scotia Municipal Affairs and Housing
PO Box 216
Halifax NS B3J 2M4

Office of the Warden
The Municipality of Chester
151 King St, PO Box 369
Chester, NS B0J 1J0

Phone: (902) 275-3554
Fax: (902) 275-4771
www.chester.ca

[/ChesterMunicipality](#)
[@chestermun](#)

Dear Minister Lohr:

RE: FEEDBACK ON MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING/SERVICE EXCHANGE

The Municipality of Chester would like to express its concerns and strong opposition to the current proposal for local roads, which was presented as part of the consultation sessions on the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Province and municipalities. The current proposal provides three 'options' for local roads in rural areas. These options, while presented as optional, are anything but. For local Councillors, this would create the public expectation that the Municipality should partner on paving projects and take ownership of a road without having the public's full understanding of tremendous financial impacts this would have on rural municipalities. Roads are a critical part of the infrastructure in rural communities, in areas that are both rural and more developed. In most cases, by requiring municipalities to take over the local roads and once we agree to partner in paving projects, the burden shifts from the Province to the municipality with no corresponding offset provided in the remainder of the MOU.

For years, municipalities have expressed concern that maintenance of the local roads is underfunded. Data is not provided to municipalities on the current condition of each of these roads, nor is an overall plan that outlines the Province's capital investment strategy or maintenance plan for each of these roads. The current condition of the roads remains unknown as does the schedule for repaving. If municipalities are not interested in maintaining the status quo at the current underfunded provincial standards, we will be forced to partner on the repair and then own the roads indefinitely. Road maintenance requires specialized knowledge and equipment.

NOVA SCOTIA'S TREASURE

Rural municipalities lack the necessary expertise to effectively carry out tasks, such as repairing major infrastructure, addressing complex drainage issues and managing large-scale road improvement projects. With this proposal, the Province will add to the already challenged labour availability affecting the construction industry in the Province due to municipal public works departments needing to be built out in addition to the already established provincial public works department. This would have a monumental impact on our municipal public works departments and, again, comes with no offset funding arrangement to accommodate these labour and rising construction costs. Presenting the current proposal as optional is misleading. The majority of our residents will surely not understand the full implications when their one road will be cost-shared and transferred to the municipality. This opens the floodgates to all other local roads and goes far beyond our role in a J-class road program.

We believe that a more fair and flexible arrangement is needed. Additional funding should be put into the current J-class road program. In a more fair and properly funded system, this program could potentially be expanded to include all local roads, but this would require the Province to also look at areas where such costs would be offset.

We believe that a collaborative approach, where the Province and municipalities work together to address road maintenance challenges, would be more effective in achieving our shared goal of safe and well-maintained road networks. We respectfully urge you to reconsider the proposed downloading of road maintenance responsibilities and instead focus on enhancing the J-Class program through increased cooperation, funding, and support.

The Municipality of Chester Council is committed to the wellbeing of our residents and the sustainable development of our community. We believe that by working together, we can ensure the continued safety and efficiency of our road infrastructure.

Thank you for considering our perspective. We look forward to the opportunity to engage in further discussions on this matter.

Sincerely,



Allen Webber
Warden



cc Paul LaFleche, Deputy Minister, Deputy Minister, NS Municipal Affairs and
Housing
Andrew Atherton, Executive Director, NS Municipal Affairs and Housing
Nova Scotia Mayors and Wardens
NSFM
MLA D. Barkhouse