



July 11, 2025

VIA EMAIL

Deputy Minister Sandra McKenzie
Department of Emergency Management
PO Box 2581
Halifax, NS B3J 3N5

RE: East Hants as an Independent Emergency Management Operation (EMO)

Dear Deputy Minister Sandra McKenzie,

I am writing to you today as the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) for the Municipality of East Hants.

We are seeking provincial input as to whether a standalone EMO model would be a satisfactory option for East Hants in relation to Bill 455 or any resulting regulations. If confirmed, this would be presented to East Hants Council as a viable option among others.

The Municipality of East Hants has independently maintained an Emergency Management Organization (EMO) that is structured, proactive, and deeply embedded in our municipal governance and community safety culture. Recent discussions at the Emergency Management Conference (EMC), and follow-up consultation with the Nova Scotia Department of Emergency Management (NSDEM), provided clarity on provincial expectations and draft standards for REMOs across Nova Scotia. Based on these conversations and our internal assessment, East Hants is confident that it meets and exceeds the draft standards required to continue operating as a stand-alone Municipal EMO.

East Hants Municipality is characterized by a vast and diverse geographic area, encompassing numerous individual urban and rural communities. This unique layout presents both opportunities and challenges in terms of emergency management, service delivery, infrastructure development, and community engagement. The dispersed nature of these communities requires tailored approaches to communication, transportation, and resource allocation to ensure equitable support and rapid response across the region.

Alignment with NSDEM draft Standards

East Hants meets the draft standards in the three key areas identified by Nova Scotia Department of Emergency Management (NSDEM)—Preparedness and Planning, Operations, and Structure.

Preparedness and Planning

East Hants has a proactive Emergency Management Program that prioritizes readiness through ongoing planning and stakeholder engagement.

- **Emergency Management Plan (EMP):** East Hants maintains a current, NSDEM-compliant EMP that is reviewed annually. It addresses hazards specific to the region and outlines roles, responsibilities, resources, and response procedures.
- **Hazard Risk Vulnerability Assessment (HRVA):** Regular updates to the HRVA ensure preparedness for evolving risks such as flooding, wildfires, or storms.
- **Training and Exercises:** Annual tabletop and functional exercises are conducted with municipal departments, first responders, and community partners to test and refine response plans.
- **Public Education and Awareness:** Ongoing campaigns and preparedness messaging are shared with residents via the municipal website, social media, and community events.

Operations

East Hants has demonstrated capacity to coordinate and respond effectively during emergency situations:

- **Emergency Coordination Centre (ECC):** A designated ECC is ready for activation with trained staff, alternates with access to real-time information systems.
- **EMC Coverage:** East Hants coordinates coverage for emergency management response to ensure initial response and coordination with provincial and emergency services at any hour.
- **Mutual Aid and Partner Agreements:** Active working relationships exist with neighboring municipalities, RCMP, GSAR, EHS, 13 fire services, HRM and provincial departments to ensure surge capacity and resource sharing.
- **Incident Command System (ICS):** ICS principles are embedded in operational procedures, ensuring coordinated and scalable response.

Structure

The current emergency management structure in East Hants is aligned with provincial standards and designed to ensure accountability and capability:

- **Municipal Emergency Management Coordinator (EMC):** A trained and dedicated EMC oversees program delivery and compliance with NSDEM guidance.
- **Emergency Management Committee (EMC):** Pursuant to Bylaw P-200 we have:
 1. Emergency Management Advisory Committee (Executive Committee of Municipality, i.e. Elected Officials)

2. Emergency Management Planning Committee - chaired by our EMC and consists of staff and agency representatives.
- **Departmental Integration:** All municipal departments have designated emergency roles and continuity plans that support rapid mobilization during incidents.
- **After-Action Reviews:** Each emergency event or exercise is followed by a formal review to identify lessons learned and improve future performance.

Rationale to Remain Independent

- **Local Knowledge and Response Capacity:** East Hants' personnel have extensive knowledge of local infrastructure, terrain, hazards, and community needs. Maintaining an independent Municipal EMO allows for nimble and contextually appropriate responses.
- **Strong Local Partnerships:** The municipality maintains well-established relationships with local fire departments, RCMP detachments, GSAR, health partners, and adjacent municipalities for mutual support, First Nations'.
- **Proven Operational Readiness:** East Hants has successfully managed emergency responses independently, including severe weather events, flooding, and infrastructure disruptions.
- **Community Confidence:** Residents and local responders value the localized approach to emergency planning and response. Maintaining our Municipal EMO sustains public trust and continuity of operations.

Conclusion

East Hants has demonstrated a robust, locally tailored, and provincially aligned EMO program. We are committed to continuous improvement, collaboration with NSDEM, and supporting regional emergency management goals. Based on our program's maturity and alignment with the draft provincial standards, East Hants could remain its own stand-alone Municipal EMO to best serve the safety and resilience of our communities.

To move this forward, we are seeking confirmation from NSDEM that East Hants' EMO could continue to operate independently. If this is an option for East Hants, we would present this as an option as we seek direction from Municipal Council.

We welcome the opportunity to meet with provincial staff to discuss this in more detail. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Kim Ramsay, Chief Administrative Officer
Municipality of East Hants