



 Safe & Affordable Housing in the Tri-Counties

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October 12, 2017

Dear Warden LeBlanc and Council

As you are aware, the Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities has circulated, for feedback, proposed issues for resolutions to be voted on by its members later this fall. Affordable Housing has been identified as one of these proposed issues to be presented to members.

We are writing to you today to request that council pass a motion in support of the proposed resolutions related to Affordable Housing at the UNSM conference later this fall.

**Federal Resolution:** The resolution would ask the federal government to support the need for federal investments in housing in Nova Scotia; the need to renew the Affordable Housing Agreements, and the need to recognize and address the lack of capacity in NS municipalities and the non-profit housing sector to deliver federal housing programs. The federal government should work with UNSM and the province to ensure federal programs are fully accessed in Nova Scotia.

**Provincial Resolution:** The resolution would ask the province to establish a joint provincial/municipal working group or steering committee to review the current housing strategy in light of current needs; to clarify the role and tools available to municipalities to address housing issues; and to develop guides for municipalities on the tools available to them to address these issues. The working group could also review the current Statement of Interest with respect to housing.

We are also seeking your support to advocate for the inclusion of additional resolutions, as described below, to the proposed resolutions. These additional requests are to be included as part of a larger advocacy strategy, to be distributed later this month, asking the provincial government to take action on affordable housing. The following was developed in response to challenges reported by municipal units across rural Nova Scotia at Moving Forward Together last November, a housing event focused on rural challenges.

**Legislation to allow municipalities to contribute resources (e.g., land banks) directly to the private and not-for-profit sector for the purpose of affordable housing development to include:**

- To sell or lease property and land at a price less than market value to the private sector for the purpose of affordable housing development

Currently municipalities are limited to selling or leasing property at less than market value to non-profit organizations. This recommendation would extend Section 51 of the Municipal Government Act to include selling or leasing property at a price less than market value to a private developer strictly for the purpose of affordable housing development. The

municipality shall enter into an agreement with the private developer to sell or lease land for an agreed-upon price contingent that the units being built (or renovated) are affordable housing units for a period of no less than 25 years. This recommendation would allow for more municipalities to divest unwanted property or lands to those private developers that have the resources necessary to build affordable housing in the community, thus increasing the affordable housing stock.

- Enter into an agreement with the private sector for phasing-in freeze of assessments before renovations (amend and apply Bill 177 to multi-unit residential developments) for the purpose of affordable housing development.

Currently municipalities are limited to the phasing-in freeze of assessments (the cancellation, reduction or refund of taxes) for commercial zones (Bill 177). This recommendation would extend Bill 177 of the Municipal Government Act to include multi-unit residential zones for the purpose of affordable housing development. The municipality shall enter into an agreement with the private residential developer to freeze the assessment value of the property before any renovations or improvements are made if the development is for the purpose of creating affordable housing units.

- To extend the definition whom municipal housing corporations are for to include all citizens of the municipality

Currently the Municipal Housing Corporations Act (Section 11) states that “the object of the corporation are to construct, hold and manage accommodation for the aged, mentally handicapped or physically disabled or others requiring nursing or custodial care.” This recommendation would allow municipalities to be able to create housing corporations for any community member, or group of members so long as the housing was deemed affordable. Many municipalities across Canada construct, hold and manage accommodation (create corporations) for their community members, including mixed-income housing. Amending Section 11 of the Nova Scotia Municipal Housing Corporations Act to include community members that do not fit in the prescribed definitions would allow municipalities to create corporations for the purpose of constructing, holding and managing accommodations for all citizens; creating more affordable housing units.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of this request. Please contact us if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

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