



NOVA SCOTIA FEDERATION
OF MUNICIPALITIES

A SUBMISSION TO THE
NOVA SCOTIA
LEGISLATURE LAW
AMENDMENTS
COMMITTEE

March 11, 2019

A Submission to the Nova Scotia Legislature Law Amendments Committee

A submission regarding Bill 92 as introduced in the 2nd session of the 63rd General Assembly of the Nova Scotia Legislature, titled:

An Act to Amend Chapter 18 of the Acts of 1998, the Municipal Government Act, and Chapter 39 of the Acts of 2008, the Halifax Regional Municipality Charter.

The Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities (NSFM) is the voice of the provinces 50 Municipal Units. We represent 379 members comprised of Mayors, Wardens and councillors. On behalf of our members, we are pleased to speak in support of Bill 92.

Bill 92 will provide Nova Scotia municipalities with a greater degree of autonomy in how they spend their money. Current legislation is very prescriptive and limits municipal capacity to address the needs of their citizens in a timely manner. Whenever municipalities wish to spend money, they must first confirm their purchase is permitted under a defined list of approved expenditures in the MGA or Halifax Charter. Anything outside this list requires legislative approval. This process takes time.

It is our position that there are already satisfactory checks and balances in place to maintain transparency and accountability to the public while allowing for greater flexibility in responding to the needs of their citizens with Bill 92.

NSFM does wish to flag one minor note of concern. The amendments as they now read propose allowing municipalities to make capital grants to a hospital to which the Hospitals Act applies. The Federation has not consulted with our members regarding this potential change in discretionary spending powers for hospitals, something that has been an entirely provincial responsibility since municipal reform in the 1990s. We ask this change be removed from Bill until such time as there has been a thorough consultation with NSFM and our members occurs.

NSFM would like to acknowledge that we, and our members, were consulted by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and his team last summer. We are always pleased when government consults with us and acts in the spirit of the Partnership Framework of 2016.

This Bill will make it easier for Municipalities to invest in things like broadband internet or green energy infrastructure, and to partner with private organizations. These are the kinds of initiatives that will help our communities to be strong and vibrant and help us have more sustainable local government. We want our municipalities to be ready to move at the speed of business to seize economic and social opportunities. We truly see this as an important part of a path to municipal modernization and we support this Bill.