

Resolutions

2023

The Resolutions Session is a forum to address and support the concerns of member councils.

RESOLUTIONS 2023

Category: A

1-2023

First Lien

Town of Harbour Grace

BE IT RESOLVED that Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador shall lobby the Provincial Government to enact legislation such that when towns are forced to remove dilapidated buildings, debris, waste etc. from property they would recover the expenses related to such removal by having the right of first lien on the sale of that property.

Staff Comments:

This is an ongoing issue with respect to first lien and is directly connected to the need for an updated Municipalities Act. Implications and intersections with the three Cities' Acts to also be explored as part of the process.

Previous staff comments related to similar resolution – 3-2020 (Town of Carbonear):

The current Section 134 Lien provision in the Municipal-

ities Act designates municipal taxes on real property and associated interest charges as priority lien-eligible expenses. Sections 134-147 cover the due process steps needed to secure this means of recovering amounts owed. Section 154 further provides for a limited secondary category of lien available for the recovery of local improvement assessments or service levies. This resolution suggests these elements of the Act be expanded to explicitly include the recovery of Council costs related to carrying out of a variety of orders under Part XIV of the Act. This is a well-recognized issue, particularly with respect to dilapidated properties or similar circumstances where councils must act in the interest of community health and safety. The additional burdens associated with the civil debt recovery legalities they require are a serious barrier, causing many councils to abandon their efforts to recover these significant unbudgeted expenses. Additional legal support would provide more information and clarity on this issue.



RESOLUTIONS 2023

2-2023

Amend the Utilities and Cable Television Companies Act to allow municipalities to gain tax revenue from the provision of Internet/Data

Town of Peterview

WHEREAS the Statements of Gross Revenue from some utility companies have significantly decreased over the past few years;

WHEREAS Section 2(h) of the Utilities and Cable Television Companies Act does not recognize Internet/Data as a utility and municipalities are not able to obtain Statements of Gross Revenue from utility companies for the provision of Internet/Data;

WHEREAS some utility companies are providing more of their services through the internet, i.e. Television and home telephone, municipalities are seeing a big decrease in the amount of utility tax they are able to charge and collect; and,

WHEREAS the provision of Internet/Data services is where most of these utility companies generate most of their revenue,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador lobby the Department of Finance to amend Section 2(h) of the Utilities and Cable Television Companies Act to include Internet/Data under the definition of the words Utility so that municipalities of this province are able to tax this utility and gain much needed tax revenue.

Staff Comments:

This is an ongoing concern for municipalities. A similar resolution was put forward in 2014 by Little Bay Islands (1-2014). At that time, utility tax revenue was identified as part of the suite of alternative revenue sources necessary for a renewed municipal fiscal framework.



RESOLUTIONS 2023

3-2023

Tax for Vacant or Underutilized Properties Town of Gander

WHEREAS the province-wide increase in commercial property construction costs has become a concerning issue; and

WHEREAS in many municipalities in Newfoundland and Labrador existing commercial properties are not being productively utilized to maximize economic development; and

WHEREAS a shortage of available commercial properties for rent or sale further compounds the problem, resulting in many of these properties falling into a state of disrepair and dereliction; and

WHEREAS the implementation of a tax has demonstrated its effectiveness in deterring speculation and promoting the productive use of properties in other jurisdictions;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador lobby the provincial government to introduce legislative amendments that empower municipalities to impose a vacant or underutilized property tax specifically applicable to commercial properties.

Staff Comments:

Section 114 of the Municipalities Act outlines that council may, by resolution, establish different minimum annual real property taxes for residential and commercial property, as well as vacant land, and land that has a structure upon it that is not used for residential purposes.

The legislation does not speak specifically to underutilized commercial properties and is therefore silent on this matter.



RESOLUTIONS 2023

4-2023

Municipal Accommodations Tax

Town of Gander

WHEREAS there is a recognized need to foster tourism-related economic development in Newfoundland and Labrador; and

WHEREAS there has been a notable increase in tourism activity; and

WHEREAS to maximize these opportunities, municipalities, tourism operators, and trade associations such as Hospitality NL would benefit from a co-operative approach to tourism development; and

WHEREAS there is an opportunity to enhance the financial capacity of municipalities to invest in vital infrastructure, marketing, and essential services that will further bolster the growth of the tourism sector;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador advocate to the Government NL for the establishment of a comprehensive accommodations tax framework by granting the necessary authority under the Municipalities Act, 1999.

Staff Comments:

A similar resolution was put forward by the MNL Board of Directors in 2014 (2-2014) and carried by membership.

Updates at the time suggested a favourable response from the provincial government pending a joint proposal by HNL and MNL. (The latest Accommodations Act-related work as part of the ongoing HNL-MNL engagement on these themes has begun to advance at least the identification and registration of the potentially taxable STR units).



RESOLUTIONS 2023

5-2023

Adequate Compensation for Volunteer Fire Departments

Town of New-Wes-Valley

WHEREAS Municipal Fire Departments have been regularly going above and beyond traditional firefighters' duties such as responding to medical calls, RCMP duties etc.;

Whereas other agencies such as ambulance services and RCMP have seen a reduction in their abilities to provide adequate coverage resulting in increased recalls for response;

WHEREAS the Newfoundland & Labrador Association of Fire Services have already made a similar resolution and would be an excellent advocacy partner;

WHEREAS The Town of New-Wes-Valley has received multiple letters of support from Fire Departments across the Province of Newfoundland & Labrador expressing the same concerns.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the MNL lobby the appropriate Government agencies to provide adequate compensation to volunteer Fire Departments when they are responding to non-traditional firefighting roles.

Staff Comments:

It is well-recognized that Newfoundland and Labrador's traditional municipal fire departments have become increasingly diverse and sophisticated emergency response and public safety service providers. While time after time they still rise to the challenge at hand, these predominantly volunteer, municipal entities have very real limits, and it is clear they have reached a dangerously strained condition. In a recent web meeting convened by MNL and NLAFS to discuss the latest additional workload concerns associated with the STR inspections called for under the implementing Regulations to the new Accommodations Act, the full scope of their accumulated non-traditional roles was elaborated; some were stop-gaps, some were downloads, some were entirely new tasks. And none had occurred in a considered fashion or with the input of the sector.



RESOLUTIONS 2023

6-2023

Increased Stipend for Responding to Highway Motor Vehicle Accidents

Town of Gander

WHEREAS municipal fire departments play a crucial role in promptly and effectively responding to highway motor vehicle accidents, and ensure the safety and well-being of residents and visitors alike;

WHEREAS the cost of responding to highway traffic accidents has been steadily increasing;

WHEREAS the taxpayers of municipalities bear the financial burden of these escalating costs; and

WHEREAS the reimbursement rate from the provincial government for responding to highway motor vehicle accidents has remained stagnant for an extended period;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador will lobby the Department of Justice and Public Safety to consider the financial realities faced by municipalities, and subsequently, to increase the stipend provided to municipalities for their services in responding to highway motor vehicle accidents.

Staff Comments:

Municipal fire departments experiencing increased pressure on their resources for new highway emergency response services must be properly resourced. Assuming new roles generates surprises - new risks and liabilities; higher exposure of responders to serious incident trauma and burnout; and spillover onto other levels of service that were not anticipated or approved by Council and thereby not provided for in the municipality's budget and operations. A compensation framework and wraparound services are called for.



RESOLUTIONS 2023

7-2023

Fee for Service Model for Volunteer Fire Department Response to Medical Calls

Town of Harbour Main-Chapel's Cove-Lakeview

WHEREAS volunteer Fire Departments are seeing increased calls for support or first response to medical calls at the cost to the Municipalities. (i.e.: First Aid supplies, respirator masks, oxygen and general cost of fuel for responding to the call) non-fire related.

WHEREAS the Ambulance Service Company invoices the individual for the cost of the Ambulance Service.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that where a volunteer fire department is requested to provide an initial response for an ambulance call or where the fire department is requested to provide additional support in the execution of a medical call that a fee for service be provided to the responding volunteer fire department for services rendered.

Staff Comments:

As other emergency service providers experience challenges, municipal fire departments are increasingly filling a gap to respond to emergencies, and without compensation.

As is the case for 6-2023 above, municipal fire departments experiencing increased pressure on their resources for stop-gap emergency medical support services must be properly resourced. Once again, these roles carry additional risks and liabilities; higher exposure of responders to serious incident trauma and burnout; and spillover onto other levels of service that were not anticipated or approved by Council and thereby not provided for in the municipality's budget and operations. A well-considered compensation framework and wraparound services are called for here, recognizing that certain areas for response also should not be downloaded to local fire departments. A cautioned approach is also necessary.



RESOLUTIONS 2023

8-2023

Regionalization

Town of Harbour Main-Chapel's Cove-Lakeview

WHEREAS The Premier has provided the Minister of Municipal and Provincial Affairs a mandate that states "As Minister of Municipal and Provincial Affairs, you will also work with stakeholders, including MNL, and PMA, to explore regionalization and shared services. Where opportunities for regional collaboration exist, you will explore incentivizing cooperation with a goal of reducing costs and improving outcomes in a manner that engages communities and ensures a local voice for all residents."

WHEREAS regional governance discussions have been ongoing since 1950 and a tremendous amount of consultation, task forces and taxpayers' money have been spent on looking at a path forward. That a Regionalization Report was provided to the provincial government in February 2020.

WHEREAS smaller municipalities cannot continue to do the same thing and expect different results to ensure the sustainability of their communities. Regionalization is just another tool in our toolboxes but must have a framework endorsed and supported by the Provincial Government.

WHEREAS communities that have shown opportunities for Regional Collaboration such as the Harbour Main-Chapel's Cove-Lakeview, Avondale, Conception Harbour, and Colliers Regionalization Project for the past 3 years have seen NO incentivizing to reduce costs and improve outcomes.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Joint Working Group on Regionalization Report and Recommendations issued to the Government in February 2020 be considered in whole or part in the development of a Regionalization Framework. That an incentivization program be developed as per the Minister of Municipal and Provincial Affairs Mandate and in consultation with MNL and its membership to support those willing to begin Regional Collaboration.

Staff Comments:

A regional approach is recognized by MNL membership as beneficial. MNL continues to participate in significant advocacy to support regional collaboration because a regional governance structure will not be implemented. Any activities around establishing a regional framework and/or promoting regional collaboration should be done with MNL at the table, and with input from MNL members.



RESOLUTIONS 2023

9-2023

Resolution Requesting an Increase in Maximum Municipal Capital Works Funding Town of Cow Head

WHEREAS municipalities face a growing need to address larger and more pressing issues in our communities; and

WHEREAS the current maximum amount of funding available for Municipal Capital Works Projects is insufficient to cover the rising project costs; and

WHEREAS the prices of materials, labor, and services have increased significantly, making it challenging to execute essential projects with limited funding; and

WHEREAS the needs of our communities, such as infrastructure improvements, remain consistent and must be met to ensure the well-being of our residents; and

WHEREAS legislative requirements mandate compliance with certain standards and infrastructure upgrades, necessitating increased funding for Municipal Capital Works Projects; and

WHEREAS there is concrete evidence of the funding gap, as demonstrated by our recent experience of having to decline project approvals due to unaffordable tenders and unattainable council contributions;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador advocate for municipalities across the Province to lobby for an increase in the maximum amount of funding allowed for Municipal Capital Works Projects.

FURTHER RESOLVED that MNL shall actively engage with relevant government authorities and funding bodies to highlight the challenges municipalities face in executing critical projects with limited funding.

FURTHER RESOLVED that MNL shall present evidence, including examples like our own experience, to demonstrate the urgent need for an increase in the maximum funding limit.

FURTHER RESOLVED that MNL shall emphasize that these increases are essential to enable municipalities to fulfill their obligations and responsibilities to their communities, as mandated by legislation.

FURTHER RESOLVED that MNL shall collaborate with municipalities across the province to collectively advocate for this necessary change to ensure that all communities can address their pressing infrastructure and development needs.

Staff Comments:

Municipalities are experiencing extreme infrastructure challenges on an ongoing basis. MNL's research in this area confirms that smaller municipalities in particular are challenged by administrative and funding application processes, as well as their ability to cost-share projects. The cost of delivering infrastructure, as this resolution outlines and as our research confirms, is also steadily increasing because of inflation. Available funding for municipal infrastructure will need to increase to meet the demand.



RESOLUTIONS 2023

10-2023

Resolution Requesting Increased Funding for Training Purposes

Town of Cow Head

WHEREAS the training and development of both councillors and staff are essential for effective governance and service delivery; and

WHEREAS there is a growing emphasis on volunteer councillors to partake in training programs to enhance their capabilities; and

WHEREAS legislative requirements demand a higher standard of training for councillors and staff in our jurisdiction; and

WHEREAS the costs associated with training, including travel expenses, accommodations, and meals, have increased, placing a financial burden on municipalities; and

WHEREAS this issue was prominently highlighted during the recent mandatory code of conduct training for all councillors and staff, underscoring the need for increased training funding; and

WHEREAS further realization of this need occurred during our northern/western regional meeting, where the challenges and importance of training were discussed;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador (MNL) shall actively lobby for additional funding dedicated to training purposes.

FURTHER RESOLVED that MNL shall engage with relevant governmental bodies, funding sources, and

stakeholders to advocate for increased financial support to address the rising costs of training, including travel, accommodation, and meal expenses.

FURTHER RESOLVED that MNL shall work in collaboration with municipalities across the region to collect and present data demonstrating the increased demand for training and the associated financial burden.

FURTHER RESOLVED that MNL shall stress the importance of well-trained councillors and staff in delivering effective governance and maintaining compliance with legislative requirements.

FURTHER RESOLVED that MNL shall continue to support and encourage municipalities to facilitate training opportunities for volunteer councillors, ensuring their continued growth and commitment to public service.

Staff Comments:

Research conducted by MNL during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic showed that training and professional development budgets were the first to experience cuts to balance budgets. The cost of travel is increasing as a result of inflation and while virtual training is advantageous, it does not take the place of in-person offerings. Training and PD for municipal council and staff, offered in person and with peers, is necessary. Training costs do prohibit attendance for those who need and/or want it most. Available funding under the matched training fund for municipalities has not increased in some time.



RESOLUTIONS 2023

11-2023

Municipal Accounting

Town of St. Georges

BE IT RESOLVED that MNL endorse, petition, and correspond with the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador for support and alternatives to manage municipal bookkeeping/auditing challenges.

Staff Comments:

MNL has heard from members and from the larger community sector that auditing/bookkeeping costs are steadily increasing. Further to this, labour shortages in accounting and bookkeeping do limit the number of professionals available to do this work. MNL is working with CSC on a partnered regional bookkeeping project to address this issue.



RESOLUTIONS 2023

Category: C

12-2023

Municipal support for Universal Basic Income City of St. John's

WHEREAS: the growing social crisis and impacts of poverty have downstream effects on our municipality, putting unsustainable pressure on our limited resources to deliver necessary public services and social supports as we struggle to keep up with downloaded responsibilities.

WHEREAS: Basic Income addresses key social determinants of health, such as income and housing, it can alleviate pressures on municipalities to address poverty and fill gaps in social supports, such as shelter, housing, food security and mental health. Research and pilots show that when people have a sufficient and secure income their mental and physical health improves; they have the capacity to secure more affordable, suitable, and safe housing, childcare, healthy food, and transportation; and poverty rates decrease.

WHEREAS: the provision of a guaranteed livable basic income would benefit individuals, families and communities and protect the most vulnerable in society, it would also support community resilience by facilitating the transition to a local economy that responds to the climate crisis and other major challenges. Evidence shows that a federally funded basic income that improves people's financial stability is possible, as successful income transfer programs already exist in Canada for seniors (Old Age Security and the Guaranteed Income Supplement) and for parents (Canada Child Benefit (CCB).

And WHEREAS: a private members motion was tabled in the House of Assembly on November 3, 2021 and unanimously adopted urging the government to

establish an all-party Committee on basic income, with a mandate to review and make recommendations on: eligibility and minimum income amounts, interaction with existing income supports, additional poverty reduction initiatives, cost-benefit analysis, potential models for such a program and a timeline for implementation: and further resolving to urge the government to ensure that the Committee has the resources it needs to conduct its work and engage Federal Members of Parliament from Newfoundland & Labrador to participate.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador write a letter to the Prime Minister of Canada, Newfoundland & Labrador Members of Parliament, Newfoundland & Labrador Senators and the Premier of Newfoundland & Labrador, confirming MNL's support for the concept of Guaranteed Livable Basic Income. Furthermore, we call upon the Province to establish the all-party committee, as approved in November, November 2021 to thoroughly review the concept of Guaranteed Livable Basic Income.

Staff Comments:

The case for universal basic income (UIB) is clearwell researched in the literature. Municipalities across the country are increasingly involved in discussions in and advocacy to support UIB in these advocacy efforts, because they recognize that poverty reduction improves lives – and it improves life in community. Coalition Canada, along with partners, has published the case for basic income and municipalities.

