



THE MUNICIPALITY  
OF THE COUNTY OF

LA MUNICIPALITÉ  
DU COMTÉ DE

**RICHMOND**

Fire services are important for all Nova Scotians. Municipalities, fire services, and the province must work together to address challenges and seize opportunities to strengthen this important emergency service.

The Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities and the Association of Municipal Administrators of Nova Scotia, with the financial support of the Province of Nova Scotia, engaged a consultant to facilitate a frank and open discussion on fire services.

The consultant was asked to meet with representative stakeholders to ascertain and prioritize key issues at the local level, to consider opportunities to address these issues, and to facilitate the sharing of best practices, lessons learned and possible areas for collaboration.

The work of the consultant was overseen by a Project Steering Committee comprised of representatives from UNSM, AMANS, the Fire Services Association and the Fire Marshal's Office.

The Project Steering Committee recommended the following categories be reviewed:

- o Funding model
- o Fire service standards
- o Organizational structure
- o Milestones and timelines
- o Short and long-term goals
- o Clarification and education of roles and responsibilities (provincial legislation)
- o Identify areas for collaboration (i.e. fire service coordinators)

When the consulting team presented the draft report to the UNSM and AMANS steering committee, the greatest discussion centred around the committee's impression that the consultants were placing the bulk of responsibility for the current fire services circumstances squarely on municipalities. That isn't the case.

Even though the consultant clearly stated that existing legislation provides municipalities with the authority they need to determine their own destiny when it comes to establishing and operating fire services, alone or with others as the legislation states, the consultant acknowledged the practicality of taking action within that authority.

The responsibility for the existing state of fire services in Nova Scotia falls to three parties:

- 1. the province, which should provide greater support to municipalities in the form of regulation, expertise, and monitoring;**
- 2. the fire services, some of which we heard are possibly over resourced and politically motivated to protect their interests while others are lacking for apparatus and equipment; and**
- 3. the municipalities.**

Even though provincial legislation places the authority for the level and type of fire services with municipalities, it was evident the financial and political considerations often complicates exercising that prerogative.

Essentially, the Municipal Government Act places authority for fire services with municipalities. Most municipalities work within a framework of cooperation with the province, municipalities, and fire services.