



The Union
of Nova Scotia
Municipalities

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January 13, 2014

The Honourable Denis Lebel, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Infrastructure, Communities and Intergovernmental Affairs
Privy Council Office
66 Slater Street, 8th Floor
Ottawa, ON K1A 1M8

Minister Lebel:

I am writing you on behalf of the Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities (UNSM) in response to your correspondence of December 20, 2013.

On behalf of the UNSM, I want to thank you for the Federal Government's commitment to municipalities through the New Building Canada Plan and the Gas Tax Fund. We are particularly pleased with the expanded list of eligible categories within the Gas Tax Fund. This will provide municipalities with greater flexibility with respect to project priorities.

I wanted to inform you that the UNSM is currently negotiating with the Province to take over administration of the Gas Tax Fund similar to municipal associations in Ontario and British Columbia, beginning no later than April 1, 2015.

The UNSM is uniquely positioned and motivated to efficiently administer the funds in a manner that benefits all municipalities as well as the federal government. Every municipality in the province is a member of our organization. This direct connection with all municipal elected officials and administrative staff puts us in a prime position to maximize the value of the gas tax funding. The UNSM can provide additional capacity building to municipalities across the province in the areas of economic development, sustainability, asset management and infrastructure. Our mandate is to strengthen municipal government, a mandate we share with the objectives outlined in the Gas Tax Fund.

We have proven experience in enhancing the value of federal gas tax monies. Since 2007, interest from the Gas Tax Fund enabled the UNSM to fund our Municipal Sustainability Office which has been instrumental in working with municipalities on a variety of sustainability issues linked to climate change and energy conservation. Examples of projects completed by the Municipal Sustainability Office include ICSP Implementation Guide, Model Climate Change Action Plan Guide, Wind Energy Planning Primer, Model Wind Bylaws, and Energy & Emissions Toolkits.



Municipalities have drawn on the support of the Municipal Sustainability Office to guide gas tax projects and to better plan their infrastructure. UNSM can build on this experience to assist with the broader mandate of the new gas tax agreement, including more strategic communications around the funds.

Many of Nova Scotia's municipalities are small, with limited capacity to undertake best practice research or develop their own systems for long term infrastructure planning. The UNSM can play a significant role in bringing municipalities together, facilitating the sharing of information and best practices, and providing advice and support. I would encourage your department to consider this role, and to ensure that projects led by municipal associations, with the support of their provincial government, be eligible to receive gas tax funds without the required approval of every municipal council in the province.

Once again, I want to thank you for your efforts in working with the provinces and FCM to develop programs which will benefit municipalities across the country.

I look forward to updating you on our progress towards assuming control of the administration of the Gas Tax Fund.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read 'David Corkum'. The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a professional style.

Mayor David Corkum
UNSM President

cc: UNSM Board of Directors