

August 24, 2015

The Honourable Diana Whalen  
Minister of Justice  
1690 Hollis Street  
PO Box 7  
Halifax, NS B3J 2L6

Minister Whalen:

I am writing you on behalf of UNSM requesting details of the business case for closing seven of the twelve satellite courthouses in rural Nova Scotia. This would include the estimated increase cost of policing and the impact on policing services within municipalities.

Municipalities have raised concerns over these closures with respect to long term costs for policing services. Adding a two hour or more drive for police officers to attend court means additional costs for policing, as well as the potential lack of police staff in the community while fulfilling court duties. It is unlikely the RCMP will add additional officers to backfill these positions while attending court, resulting in less service. If these positions were backfilled, it would likely result in additional costs to municipalities.

Municipalities have also raised concerns over the inconvenience to residents in having to travel greater distances—for some the lack of transportation adds to the burden.

While the Province outlined their rationale for closing satellite courthouses based on number of sittings per month, it did not provide information on the number of cases being heard or the numbers of people impacted. It is also unclear how cost savings were calculated including whether municipal costs were included.

If you could provide a more detailed business case clearly outlining the justification for the closures including potential municipal impacts it would be greatly appreciated.

I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K. Hunter', written in a cursive style.

Warden Keith Hunter  
UNSM President

cc: UNSM Board of Directors  
The Honourable Zach Churchill, Municipal Affairs Minister