



## The Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities

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August 27, 2015

The Honourable Zach Churchill, Minister  
The Honourable Mark Furey, Minister  
Department of Municipal Affairs & Service Nova Scotia  
P. O. Box 216  
Halifax, NS B3J 2M4

Dear Ministers Churchill and Furey:

I am writing on behalf of the Board of the Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities to request a meeting with you and the Property Valuation Services Corporation (PVSC) to discuss the government's interest in alternative service delivery for the provision of land registry services.

As you know, municipalities' primary source of revenue is the property tax. The information collected and compiled by Land Services is essential to the PVSC and to municipalities. Under the PVSC Act, the information required by the PVSC to perform its duties is provided to them without charge. Should your government choose an alternative service delivery option, our municipalities will expect the data to continue to be provided to PVSC free of charge. To do otherwise would constitute a new cost downloaded to municipalities.

Given the speed with which the government is moving forward since its announcement in July, we are concerned the tender documents for the expression of interest for the land registry may have been prepared without a clear understanding of the requirements from PVSC. If taxpayers are to be properly notified of their property taxes, the data transferred from the Land Registry to PVSC must be accurate and timely. This is critical for municipalities, and should you proceed to the Expression of Interest stage, the tender documents must reflect this.

The current land registry is not perfect, and we understand investment is required to improve it. The original intent when the Assessment Services was transferred to municipalities was that transfer of the land registry would also be explored. Despite requests from PVSC to the province to consider this, it has not been done. The Board feels the province should explore this with PVSC before it reaches out to the private sector to provide the service.

UNSM is soon to be in discussions with the province with the aim of developing a new partnership agreement between us. Your government has told us it sees municipalities as partners, developing joint solutions that will help the province

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achieve its goals. The press release indicates the province is seeking to make the registries more sustainable while providing more benefits to Nova Scotians. We are confident PVSC can achieve this, and exploring a joint solution to the land registry would be a strong indication of support to this new partnership arrangement.

PVSC has a proven track record in successfully transforming a provincial department (Assessment Services) to an independent corporation. Its human resource experience, rural and geographic presence, and experience in implementing enterprise wide technology systems have proven it can rise to the challenge. Most significantly, integrating the land registry with the PVSC operations offers an opportunity for managing property data through a single window, strengthening the assessment and taxation system. The UNSM Board is confident the PVSC can achieve new efficiencies and value added services while maintaining service delivery throughout the province.

We trust you will seriously consider our willingness to work with the province on this initiative, and we look forward to meeting with you.

Sincerely,

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

Warden Keith Hunter  
President, UNSM

KH/tv