

Resolution 3

CONNECTIVITY (PASSED)

WHEREAS Nova Scotia needs to attract and retain entrepreneurs and residents, and become more productive, innovative and competitive (as referenced in the “One Nova Scotia” Report of February 2014) especially in its rural areas; and

WHEREAS participation in the global digital economy requires access to robust and reliable Internet and cell phone service; and

WHEREAS in 2015, the UNSM passed a resolution urging the Nova Scotia Government to ensure the provision of an Internet service which provides a reliable high speed connection to all rurally-based businesses and households; and

WHEREAS the 2016-2017 provincial budget allocated \$6 million to improve high-speed Internet service; and

WHEREAS the Province commissioned a report from EY, a global leader in advisory services, to evaluate the current situation and offer guidance on the way forward; which concluded that to achieve faster speeds in rural areas of the province will require a mix of technologies and require significant investment and partnerships with community groups, the private sector and all levels of government; and

WHEREAS on October 18, the Province initiated a project with Brightstar Canada and its partners to develop a strategy by March 2017 that will lead to better high-speed Internet service in more rural Nova Scotia communities; and

WHEREAS many parts of rural Nova Scotia continue to have little or no cell phone service; and

WHEREAS in today’s world instant communication via cell phone and Internet connectivity is an essential service in terms of business development, tourism, education, and attracting residents to our communities; and

WHEREAS effective cellular service can also mean the difference between life and death in emergency situations; and

WHEREAS the Province is developing a strategy including financial resources to address rural broadband but has no similar strategy for cell phone connectivity;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the UNSM request that the Province:

- continue to work with the UNSM and municipalities to ensure high quality and affordable rural broadband across the province and to support innovative projects with municipalities and community groups;

- work with the UNSM and the Federal Government to develop a cell phone strategy, including providing adequate financial resources, to ensure increased cell phone coverage across the province; and
- work with the Federal Government to provide adequate funding to ensure connectivity success.

Response from:
Department of Municipal Affairs

RESPONSE:

Thank you for sharing the 2016 Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities (UNSM) Resolutions. I applaud the UNSM's work to improve the resolution process and focus on priority items.

The Partnership Framework between the UNSM and the Department of Municipal Affairs (signed December 1, 2016), provides our organizations with a formalized process to collaboratively address issues of common interest, including the UNSM Resolutions.

I have asked my staff to work with the UNSM Executive and Association of Municipal Administrators to identify the resolutions that can be incorporated into our joint strategic plan. As outlined in the Partnership Framework, we will be reporting annually on our progress towards addressing these priorities. We will provide responses to those that are not part of the framework discussions shortly.

I look forward to working together on developing and implementing our joint strategic plan.