

Resolution 9A

REQUEST TO AMEND THE NOVA SCOTIA TRADE UNION ACT (PASSED)

⇒ Town of Bridgewater

WHEREAS Town police services provide a commendable service to their communities; and

WHEREAS police services make up over 20% of their respective town budgets; and

WHEREAS police service salaries have increased to over 80% of the total police service budget; and

WHEREAS Towns are under financial pressure to maintain a range of services primarily through property tax; and

WHEREAS police salaries have increased significantly more over the past ten years than in other occupational groups within municipal government as a result of arbitrated decisions; and

WHEREAS the majority of arbitrated decisions do not take into account "the ability to pay"; and

WHEREAS the sustainability of town police services as an option of policing under the *Municipal Government Act* is at financial risk;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities request the Provincial Government amend the *Nova Scotia Trade Union Act* to require the arbitration process to examine the ability to pay.

Forwarded to:

Minister of the Department of Labour and Advanced Education

RESPONSE:

Thank you for your letter of October 4, 2012, regarding two Resolutions passed at the recent UNSM Conference related to Labour and Advanced Education.

With respect to Resolution # 9A: Amending the Trade Union Act to require arbitrators to examine the ability of a municipality to pay wage increases, I would acknowledge that this is a key concern of many employers. While arbitrators carefully review the wages paid elsewhere, the comparative

occupations, and general economic factors, they are not required to consider the ability of an employer to pay unless specifically requested to do so in an appointment, or through legislation. I would note in the appointment of an arbitrator in recent cases, there have been maximum and minimum wage thresholds agreed to by the parties, which have set the parameters for the arbitrator to work within. This method could be explored by municipalities when they are agreeing to the appointment of an arbitrator.

The Government has been able to keep wages within the mandate it has set for collective bargaining, and has no intention at this time of making changes to the Trade Union Act.

*The Honourable Marilyn More
Minister
December 18, 2012*