



November 18th, 2020

The Honourable Gordon Wilson
Minister of Environment
PO Box 442
Halifax, NS
B3J 2P8

Dear Minister Wilson,

The Municipality is seeking support from the Province to mitigate the significant sustained cost increases for all Nova Scotia municipalities related to the comprehensive provincial recycling programs.

Nova Scotians are proud of the efforts to reduce waste through more than 20 years of recycling programming. Additional efforts to reduce waste have been added over the years including curbside organics collection and various product stewardship programs. However, Nova Scotia has the highest cost per capita for waste management in Canada. The entire solid waste system comes in at \$140M annually (gross), however 88% (\$124M) comes from municipal taxes and tipping fees, while material sales is only \$10M-\$11M (8%) with a final \$5M in diversion credits and other small program supports.

While our overall programming costs are high, there is little control by municipalities to reduce costs or increase revenues. Our markets are highly reliant on out of province/country markets, and those markets have been significantly impacted by global supply/demand and now a world-wide pandemic. This spring a number of municipalities were forced to request landfill variances as stockpiling of materials across the Province reached unsafe levels while waiting in hopes of markets rebounding.

To ensure the continuation of the strong recycling programming throughout Nova Scotia the Province can take 2 specific actions, which will both mitigate the financial burden to taxpayers and build innovative ways to keep up our environmental stewardship. The first is a full implementation of an Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) program for printed paper and packaging. As you are aware the discussion on EPR has been ongoing since 2015. In October 2019 a presentation of *Preserving the Culture of Recycling: A proposal for Extended Producer Responsibility for Packaging and Printed Paper in Nova Scotia* was made to you and your senior staff by the municipal priorities group (sub-committee

to the Regional Chairs). EPR is already benefiting 80% of Canadians across the country, is being moved forward in our neighboring Province of New Brunswick, and is being paid into by Nova Scotians as we shop today. With this topic being on the table for more than 5 years it has left existing sorting facilities, that market Nova Scotians recyclables, at a standstill for investing in new technologies or efficiencies due to the unclear future of when and what changes the government may implement.

The second action the Province could undertake is adopting a modification of the solid waste regulations to allow a new waste management framework which would allow flexibility in management options based on market conditions. Under this framework materials banned from landfill would have a clear path for alternative end market options when commodity market rates drop below set pricing schedules. Modifying regulations is a reasonable approach that has already been taken by more advanced programming examples such as in Germany. With market options currently underperforming there is stockpiling and storage of materials happening here in Nova Scotia which is costly, reduces product quality, and increases risks (fire and/or pests). Hiding our problems in warehouses or storage yards that are out of sight is not a long-term solution for Nova Scotia recycling programs and is not what our residents want.

Nova Scotians have continued to show support for environmental sustainability, most recently with encouraging and then embracing the Province's single-use plastic bag ban. Residents daily place their blue bags curbside for recycling. Municipalities continue to spend millions annually to implement all components of the Solid Waste Regulations including providing curbside recycling programs as expected by our residents. The time for action by the Province is now before further financial losses occur for us all, or where losses in our environment stewardship grow once the public starts losing trust in what is put curbside in blue bags will actually end up being recycled.

The Municipality of East Hants wants to be part of the solution, and we need your leadership to get there. The time to act is now. The continued success of Nova Scotia's recycling programs will ultimately be determined by the willingness of all to make this a priority.

Sincerely,



Eleanor Roulston, Warden
Municipality of East Hants

CC: Deputy Minister of Environment
Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities