



October 11, 2023

Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities
Suite 1304, 1809 Barrington Street
Halifax, NS B3J 3K8

Attention: Mayor Brenda Chisholm-Beaton, President, Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities (NSFM)
Email: bchisholmbeaton@townofph.ca

Subject: Urgent Need for Advocacy to Improve Rural Cell Phone Coverage for Emergency Preparedness

Dear Mayor Chisholm-Beaton,

I am writing to you with an urgent and critical concern that necessitates immediate action; the lack of reliable cell phone coverage in rural parts of Nova Scotia. Recent events, such as wildfires, floods, and hurricanes, have emphasized the imperative need for robust communication networks in these areas.

While natural disasters have always posed a risk, the increasing frequency and severity of these events make it even more essential for our rural communities to have dependable cell phone coverage. In times of emergencies, many residents do not receive timely alerts or information due to the inadequate or non-existent cell phone signal, endangering lives, and properties. Communication is a vital lifeline that can make all the difference in these perilous situations.

The recent initiative in Toronto, where all subway riders will have cellphone service from October 3rd, underscores the vital importance of connectivity for public safety and economic prosperity. Spearheaded by the Federal Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, François-Philippe Champagne, this move responds to concerns over restricted connectivity, ensuring that riders can promptly access emergency services and maintain consistent communication for both personal and business needs. If such measures can be executed in urban centers like Toronto, it becomes imperative for the government to address similar concerns in rural communities, such as the Municipality of Shelburne. In emergencies like the recent fires, several residents couldn't receive crucial evacuation alerts due to absent cell coverage. Just as Toronto's subway riders are safe guarded with mandated service provisions, residents of rural communities deserve the same commitment to their safety and well-being.

As you are aware, reliable cell phone coverage is not merely a matter of convenience but a critical infrastructure need that impacts the well-being and safety of our residents. Not only does this affect individual households, but it also hampers the efforts of emergency responders who rely on clear lines of communication to coordinate rescue and relief activities.

I urge you, in your capacity as the President of the Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities, to prioritize and intensify your advocacy towards both the Provincial and Federal Governments through your Public Safety Advisory Committee or possibly creating a dedicated committee on the issue. While it is understood that there are multiple challenges and budget constraints to be managed, the well-being and safety of the citizens should always be paramount.

Moreover, improved cellular infrastructure would not only enhance safety but also contribute to the economic and social development of these rural areas. This long-term investment would benefit our communities in multiple ways, making it a “win-win” situation for all stakeholders involved.

Thank you for your attention to this vital issue. Together, we can forge a stronger and safer Nova Scotia for everyone.

Sincerely,

Warden Penny Smith
Municipality of Shelburne



Warden Eddie Nickerson
Municipality of Barrington



Mayor Rex Stoddard
Town of Clark's Harbour



Mayor Cory Nickerson
Town of Lockeport



Mayor Harald Locke
Town of Shelburne



Tim Houston, Premier
Rick Perkins, MP – South Shore – St. Margarets
Nolan Young, MLA – Shelburne
Juanita Spencer, NSFM - Chief Executive Officer
Ellen Desmond, CRTC – Commissioner Atlantic Region & Nunavut
Paul Mason, NSEMO – Executive Director
All Nova Scotia Municipalities