

Municipality of the District of Argyle

Briefing Note – Western Regional Enterprise Network Intermunicipal Agreement

To: Municipal Councils of the Town of Yarmouth, Town of Digby, and the Municipalities of the Districts of Argyle, Barrington, Clare, Digby, and Yarmouth

From: CAO's: Jeff Gushue; Tom Ossinger; Alain Muise; Chris Frotten; Stéphane Cyr; Tyler Pulley; Victoria Brooks

Date: October XX, 2025

Subject: Approval of the 2025–2030 Western Regional Enterprise Network (WREN) Inter-Municipal Agreement

Attachment: Draft 2025–2030 Western REN Inter-Municipal Agreement

Purpose

To recommend approval of the updated *Western Regional Enterprise Network (WREN) Inter-Municipal Agreement* for the 2025–2030 term.

Background

The Western Regional Enterprise Network (WREN) is a long-standing partnership among participating municipalities and the Province of Nova Scotia that supports regional economic development, business growth, and investment attraction.

The current Inter-Municipal Agreement expired August 31, 2025. The attached draft updates and renews the agreement for a further five-year term, **September 1, 2025 to August 31, 2030**.

The revisions modernize language, clarify governance roles, and strengthen financial and administrative accountability while maintaining the successful structure of the WREN.

A recommendation was received by the Liaison and Oversight Committee (LOC) from the Board regarding:

1. Moving to a Review Engagement on the annual financial statements rather than a more expensive Audit.
2. Modifying the Recruitment and Nominating Committee to increase Board participation. The proposed agreement does not fully implement the Board proposed model of: (1) member from the LOC appointed by the Province ; (1) member of the LOC who is an elected official of the Municipality (or a designate); (2) members from the Board. Rather, it strikes a balance of Board situational

awareness and Municipal Governance & Oversight by adding two (2) seats on the Recruitment and Nominating Committee who are appointed by the Board. See Section 10 (a) iii for details.

While not specifically addressed in the updated IMA, the CAO's did discuss the need to improve formal communication between the WREN and funding Councils. There is an assumption that the elected representatives on the Liaison and Oversight Committee will brief their respective Councils. While that is appropriate, it should be acknowledged that the L&O does not meet frequently. In addition, the WREN Board meets only quarterly. There have been attempts to file the CEO report with Councils once it is accepted by the WREN Board at their meetings. This approach should be supported and implemented on a consistent basis. Finally, there is value in the CEO foster more frequent contact with municipal CAO's to support the flow of information between the WREN and its funding municipal units.

Summary of Key Changes

- **Section 1(d):** Clarifies that the *Auditor* will perform a **Review Engagement** (rather than a full audit) in accordance with the Municipal Government Act.
- **Section 5(e):** Continues the municipal funding contributions will increase annually in line with the **Nova Scotia Consumer Price Index (CPI)**, but places a cap up to a **maximum of 3.25% per year**.
- **Section 6-** updated the in-kind access for meetings and work to reflect the actual practice; the previous agreement **required** the WREN to place employees across the region – this is not necessary as long as the WREN staff have a presence and a place from which to work.
- **Section 10(a)iii:** modifies the *Recruitment and Nominating Committee* to include two (2) seats for members of the Board of Directors.
- **Section 11(b)ii:** Updates the *Audit Committee's* responsibilities to reflect the shift from a full audit to a **Review Engagement**, aligning this section with the revised definition in 1(d).

Recommendation

That Council approve the attached *2025–2030 Western Regional Enterprise Network Inter-Municipal Agreement* as presented.

Rationale

The updated agreement strengthens governance, accountability, and financial oversight while continuing the collaborative regional approach that has successfully guided economic development efforts since the WREN's formation in 2014.

Suggested Council Motion

MOVED that Council approve and authorize the Warden and Chief Administrative Officer to execute the *2025–2030 Western Regional Enterprise Network Inter-Municipal Agreement* on behalf of the Municipality.
