



# VILLAGE OF PORT WILLIAMS

## SAVE OUR VILLAGE

In October 2014 the Provincial Municipal Fiscal Review report was released. The purpose of the report, which was developed by a working group of the Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities, was to find a way to evaluate the fiscal health of Nova Scotia towns and municipalities and make recommendations to improve their financial future. Forty one recommendations were made. Among these recommendations were the following:

**Recommendation 13 – No new villages will be created and no new powers will be given to villages beyond those that currently exist.**

**Recommendation 14 – All incorporated villages in Nova Scotia should be phased out. Existing villages should be given the opportunity to apply for town status, merge with an adjacent town, or dissolve into their encompassing rural municipality as they see fit.**

These two recommendations were developed without input from any Villages and are based on little data. They also have no relevance in regard to the purpose of the report. The Association of Nova Scotia Villages has stated their opposition to Recommendations 13 and 14 condemning the review as being flawed for lack of consultation and data. Kings County also stands with the Villages; on November 4 they passed a motion to not support Recommendations 13 and 14. A Village-County working group has been formed to provide united feedback. Individual villages have begun the process of informing their residents and expressing their opposition. December 15 is the deadline for written submissions before recommendations are passed on to the Province for legislation.

Copies of the full report as well as a condensed version can be found on the Village of Port Williams website. If you have any questions please contact one of the Village Commissioners or the Village Office at 902-542-4411 or [villageoffice@ns.aliantzinc.ca](mailto:villageoffice@ns.aliantzinc.ca).

## What does the Village of Port Williams mean to You?

If Recommendation 14 is adopted by the Province it would mean the end of the Village of Port Williams. How would this affect you? There are a number of services provided by the Village:

Port Williams owns and operates **wells, the water tank and distribution lines. Sewer collection and treatment** services are Village provided. Maintenance of **streetlights** in some subdivisions and some highway intersections as well as the construction, maintenance and snow clearing of the **sidewalks** are Village responsibilities. The Village is also responsible for building, repairing and maintaining our **Community Center** which houses the **Village Office, Library and Lions Club** and acts as an emergency comfort center complete with generators when needed. The **Port Williams Fire Department** is owned and operated by the Village. Our Public Works department services the **ball field, two soccer fields, tennis court, volleyball court, throw pitch, outdoor skating rink, Village Park with playground** as well as other Village green space and the **WINS Planter's Monument**. The Village has built and maintains **Veteran's Memorial Park** and the **viewing/information area** with parking by the bridge. The four **Port Williams signs** located at the various entrances to the Village were funded and are cared for by the Village. Other services include a **Dog Waste Removal Program**, the **Safe Cross Walk Flag Program** and a **Community Events Sign**. Everyone in our community benefits from our Village-funded, very active **Recreation Committee** and their programs.

If Recommendation 14 is passed into law then all these services will cease to be administered by the Village of Port Williams. This most certainly would lead to a decrease in the level of service we currently enjoy. Please add your voice to those that are telling the Provincial government that we value what we have built in our Villages.

Below is a copy of the letter that the Village has drafted as our response to this review.

## **Village of Port Williams**

### **Response to Provincial-Municipal Fiscal Review Report**

We are writing to express our concerns in regard to the recently released Provincial-Municipal Fiscal Review report. While we understand and even encourage the movement toward more transparent and fiscally responsible government, it needs to be made clear that some of the recommendations contained in this report will not help work towards those goals. In fact Recommendations 13 and 14 pertaining to Villages are counter-productive to such goals not to mention completely unsupported by fact.

There is the basis of a decent plan moving forward contained in the document. The recommendations regarding establishing a report card for all municipal units based on Financial Condition Indicators (FCIs) makes sense. Using those benchmarks to determine future courses of action and hopefully prevent some of the insolvent situations that have occurred recently in some Nova Scotian municipal units should be supported. But the biased and not researched recommendations that suggest dissolving Villages causes the entire paper to be viewed as flawed.

While large parts of the report appear to be based on a literature review analysis as well as financial data supplied by counties and towns, the same cannot be said in regards to recommendations made about Villages. Recommendations 13 and 14, which call for the elimination of existing Villages and suggest that no new Villages be formed, are based on limited data and completely unfounded in fact. The authors of the paper have stated clearly in the report as well as at the consultation session held at the Old Orchard Inn on October 31, 2014 that they had very little data from Villages and that the Recommendations are based on their "beliefs" not facts. It was also said that such data is unavailable; we can assure you that is untrue. We are required to submit complete and detailed annual financial reports to our citizens, the County of Kings, Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations as well as to the Nova Scotia Utility and Review Board. These reports are a matter of public record and are available to anyone who takes the time to look for them. We are certainly not the only Village in the Province who is required to submit detailed reports. At no time during the report's consultation process were any of the Villages in the Province contacted to supply any information. Recommendations 13 and 14, which call for broad sweeping changes in the very fabric of local government, are based on the opinions of a small, biased group of people who, by their own admission, made decisions without the benefit of true data. To act on these recommendations knowing that they are not researched and untrue flies in the face of responsible and transparent governing principals which are purported to be the goals of this report.

Villages deserve the opportunity to be considered in regards to fiscal health and compared to the same standards as all other municipal units. We invite you to take the time to look at the Village of Port Williams and you will see a vibrant, well managed, thriving community that has served generations. Hold us to the same standards being developed using FCIs for other municipal units and the large flaws in this report will immediately become obvious. But the value of our Village to our citizenry is more than just our financial health. We are able to supply services such as water, sewer, street lights and fire service to our residents.

Equally important is our ability to offer things which enhance the quality of daily life. The Village provides recreation facilities and programs for young and old including walking trails, sidewalks, soccer fields, ball fields and even a throw pitch for javelin and discus. We have built, maintained and renovated a large community center which is used not only by our Village residents but by many in the surrounding community. We were lacking a playground for the youngest members of our community. This was brought to a Village meeting and a committee was established. Due to the efforts of incredible community members coupled with the Village of Port Williams a fantastic community park was conceived, funded and built within a year. This is a shining example of functional local government in action and is only one of many which have happened in our community. Remove this level of government and you lose this ability to react efficiently to the needs of the people.

In summary, there are some key points to seriously consider. The recommendations to remove Villages are not based on any tangible data; the data exists and that no one took the time to find or analyze it is appalling. Recommendations based on incomplete or flawed data should never be considered to become law.

Villages should have the right to be scrutinized under the same standards as other municipal units. If a fiscal report card is going to become the yardstick by which municipal units are measured then all units should be subject to that analysis to determine their status.

Villages add value to the lives of their citizens through more than just their ability to supply services. They are a hub of civic pride and their contribution to quality of life should not be disregarded.

The Village of Port Williams fully supports the position of the Association of Nova Scotia Villages in regards to this matter. We hope it is clear that we would like to see Recommendations 13 and 14 removed from the Provincial-Municipal Fiscal Review report. As proud Nova Scotians it should be unthinkable to consider the elimination of a functional and citizen responsive level of government.

We cannot even begin to articulate the travesty it would be to have the very fabric of our democratic system ripped from us by the slash of some uninformed bureaucrat's pen. We invite you to come to the Village of Port Williams and see for yourself the value of Villages in this Province.

The Commission of the Village of Port Williams

## Village of Port Williams Petition

The Village of Port Williams is submitting a petition to the Province in opposition to Recommendations 13 and 14. Please add your voice to support your Village. The petition is available to be signed at the Village Office or by contacting any of the Village Commissioners.

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## WHAT CAN YOU DO?

To assist your Village Commission in our 'SAVE OUR VILLAGE' efforts we encourage each resident of the Village of Port Williams to sign the **petition** at the Village Office and contact in writing **before Monday, DECEMBER 15, 2014** and request that Recommendations 13 & 14 be eliminated from the Provincial-Municipal Fiscal Review:

**Hon. Stephen McNeil**

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