

2006 Resolutions Report

1-2006 - Fishery Related Issues

Carried

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Municipalities have time allotted on the agenda each year during the Convention to discuss fishery related issues.

Action Taken:

- As you will see on our 2007 Convention Agenda, we have added a Fisheries Forum on Friday afternoon. We will have a presentation from the Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture to discuss the potential of the aquaculture industry and other fisheries, and we will also have a municipal panel who will discuss the impacts of the fishery of today on municipalities. As well topics will be sought for a 2008 Provincial Fisheries Conference.

2-2006 - Cancer Study into Transmission Lines/Transformers

Carried

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Municipalities lobby our Provincial and Federal Governments to order and fund an independent study into this concern.

Action Taken:

- The Resolutions Committee and the President met with senior representatives from the Department of Health and Community Services in early February. The official response received from the Department is below for your information.
- An official response has been requested by Health Canada and the World Health Organization to this resolution, but no formal responses have been received.

Response from the Department of Health and Community Services:

"This letter is further to our meeting on February 1, 2007 in which we discussed the Federation's 2006 resolution to have a study carried out on the association between cancer and proximity to transmission lines and transformers, specifically electromagnetic fields (EMFs) generated by them.

As mentioned at the meeting, given the work being done nationally and internationally on the issue, the Department of Health and Community Services will not be carrying out a research study to look at the association between cancer and exposure to EMF's. The Department of Health and Community Services takes guidance from Health Canada on this issue.

At this time, Health Canada believes there is insufficient data to conclude that a casual relationship exists between EMFs and cancer. Health Canada does not consider guidelines for EMFs necessary because the scientific evidence is not strong enough to conclude that typical exposures cause health problems. The position of Health Canada is consistent with the opinions of others, including the World Health Organization and the Federal/Provincial/Territorial Radiation Protection Committee. The World Health Organization states that "despite extensive research to date there is no evidence to conclude that exposure to low level electromagnetic fields is harmful to human health".

Through the World Health Organization's International EMF Project there is a significant amount of research being conducted related to EMF exposure and health outcomes. The federal government, through Health Canada, is a partner in the EMF project. Conducting research such as this is beyond the scope of the Department of Health and Community Services and is best left to national and international research bodies. The Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Health and Community Services will continue to monitor national and international developments related to EMFs and will take appropriate action, in consultation with Health Canada, when it is deemed necessary."

3-2006 - NLFM Convention

Defeated

4-2006 - Marine Atlantic Essential Service

Carried

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Municipalities petition the Federal Government and Marine Atlantic to have labour strikes prohibited and the fees to be kept at its current or lower rate and that binding arbitration be used to settle labour disputes.

Action Taken:

- President Wayne Ruth met with Minister Cannon in Ottawa to discuss issues surrounding Marine Atlantic.
- Unanimous support was received from the Board of Directors of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) to act on our behalf on the issues and concerns around the Marine Atlantic ferry service. The Atlantic Regional Committee of the FCM established a Transportation Sub-Committee partially to deal with Marine Atlantic.
- President Ruth and Vice President Letto, through the Atlantic Mayors Congress, raised the issue with Minister Cannon again in February.

5-2006 - Absorb Cost of Registration for One Vehicle per Firefighter

Defeated

6-2006 - Upgrade Insurance Coverage to Volunteer Firefighters

Carried

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador engage an insurance consultant to ensure that the Province provides the appropriate insurance coverage for the volunteer firefighters.

Action Taken:

- Met with Minister Byrne on December 8th, discussed possible increase in the maximum coverage in future.

Response from Minister Byrne:

"This resolution requests that Government engage an insurance consultant to ensure that the Province provide the appropriate insurance coverage for volunteer firefighters.

In light of the concerns that have been expressed by volunteer firefighters regarding the Accidental Life and Dismemberment Insurance coverage provided to them, Government has recently concluded a review of the existing policy. As I announced at the Annual Convention of the Newfoundland and Labrador Association of Fire Services earlier this year, Government has increased the accidental death benefit coverage for volunteer firefighters from \$100,000 to \$200,000. While this is a significant step that I understand has been welcomed by firefighters, Government recognizes that it does not address all of the concerns that firefighters have with the current insurance coverage. Government is committed to continue working with the NLAFS on this and other issues that affect volunteer firefighters."

7-2006 - Implementation of an Accommodation Tax

Carried

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Municipalities lobby the Provincial Government to amend the Municipalities Act to allow municipalities to charge an accommodation tax if they so choose.

Action Taken:

- Met with Minister Byrne on December 8th, discussed this issue, with both parties agreeing that formal dialogue between all parties needs to be arranged to discuss the potential for the tax and the implications on the tourism industry.
- Our Board representatives clarified the intent is for the tax to be invested directly into local tourism initiatives.
- A meeting of all groups was held, with all groups agreeing to further study this issue and to send formal submissions to the Minister on the pros and cons of such a tax.

Response from Minister:

"This resolution requests Government to amend the Municipalities Act, 1999 to allow municipalities to impose an Accommodations Tax, if they so choose.

The issue of municipalities having the authority to impose an Accommodation Tax has been a point of interest for municipalities since the City of St. John's was afforded this authority in 1996. This form of municipal taxation has been controversial in most jurisdictions where it has been applied. While there was a general agreement from the accommodation and tourism industries for this tax in St. John's at the time of its inception, these sectors are now expressing considerable concern with its ongoing application.

In light of the known controversial nature of this tax and the level of concern expressed by the accommodation and tourism sectors to this resolution, I convened a meeting earlier this year of Government, municipal and industry stakeholders to provide me with written submissions of their respective positions on this issue. I will consult with MNL on next steps, once these summations are received."

8-2006 - Tier 2 Highway Systems

Carried

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Municipalities lobby the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to provide adequate signage and viable solutions to the issues of dust problems along Highway Routes 500 & 510.

Action Taken:

- Met with Minister Hickey on December 8th. The Department is working to improve signage and is presently reviewing statistics to determine requirements.
- No formal written response, as requested, has been received.

9-2006 - Improvements to Highway Route 520

Carried

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Municipalities lobby the Department of Transportation and Works to bring Route 520 up to Provincial Highway Standards.

Action Taken:

- Met with Minister Hickey on December 8th. Repairs to Northwest River Road to be completed and a portion to be resurfaced this year. Department is doing research on chipseal to ensure best surfacing option. TLH will get double-layer of chipseal.
- No formal written response, as requested, has been received.

10-2006 - Fee for Service

Carried

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Municipalities lobby the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to amend the Municipalities Act to provide towns with the authority to impose a fee for service on all persons owning property within the towns planning area to whom municipal services are made available.

Action Taken:

- Met with Minister Byrne, we were advised that municipalities currently have the authority to charge a fee for service under the current Act. We were unable to find such authority in the Act, and consulted the Department seeking clarification.
- Taxation within planning areas is one option that could be further discussed with the Department in the future.

Response from Minister Byrne:

"This resolution requests that the Municipalities Act, 1999 be amended to provide municipalities with the necessary statutory authority to impose and to collect fees for services that they provide beyond their municipal boundaries.

In recognition of the significance of this issue to many municipalities, I have asked my officials to include it as part of the general review of the Municipalities Act, 1999 which is currently being conducted. Any proposed changes to the legislation that this review process may identify will be discussed with MNL prior to any recommendations being made to Government for legislative changes."

11-2006 - School Bussing

Carried

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Municipalities lobby the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to eliminate the 1.6 kilometre restriction of school bussing and provide bus services to and from school for all our Province's children.

Action Taken:

- Met with Assistant Deputy Minister Rick Hayward, Department of Education, on December 8th. Officials stated that 80% of children are already bussed to school and that this is not a financial issue for the department as \$42 million is already invested in bus services. There are no plans to review the distance at this time.

The official response received from the Department is as follows for your information:

"Thank you for your correspondence dated March 8, 2007 concerning the resolution from the Town of Clarke's Beach on school bussing in the province.

The 1.6 kilometer walk-zone was established by government some 30 years ago. It is not the intention of the Department of Education to change this policy."

12-2006 - Literacy & Community Access Programs

Carried

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Municipalities lobby the Federal Government to immediately reinstate funding to ensure the continuation of these valuable programs.

Action Taken:

- Letter was written to the Federal Minister of Human Resources and Social Development. The official response received from the Department is as follows for your information:

"I am pleased to respond to your letter of November 9, 2006, regarding the Government's recent spending decision on adult learning and literacy programs within Human Resources and Social Development Canada (HRSDC). In your letter you also request a meeting to discuss how we can work together towards a satisfactory solution in this matter. Although I am unable to accept your invitation at this time, I am pleased to provide further details regarding the Government's recent spending decision.

Canada's new government is committed to improving literacy. Literacy programs and activities across Canada are supported by the federal, provincial and territorial governments, as well as by a variety of businesses and voluntary organizations. This government has taken important steps to better focus its investments in a number of areas, to maximize results and to ensure that tax dollars are well spent and meet the needs of Canadians. In this context, HRSDC will target investments totaling \$81 million through the Adult Learning, Literacy and Essential Skills Program over the next two years, in support of the projects that have a tangible and lasting impact on literacy.

The Government will honour all signed agreements and commitments with respect to the local-regional priorities agreed on with provinces and territories in 2006-2007. All project proposals submitted through the Calls for Proposals that concluded on or before September 15, 2006, will be reviewed and considered for funding, including those received for local and regional activities through the provincial-territorial stream.

We welcome the opportunity to work with partner organizations across the country to help Canadians improve their literacy skills and build better lives. We are looking to literacy group and community organizations to bring forward innovative results-oriented proposals that can make a difference in the lives of Canadians. Together we can establish a track record of success, setting the stage for future partnerships and investments to address the literacy challenges we face in our communities.

HRSDC supports literacy and essential skills development through other mechanisms such as the essential skills initiative and support for sector councils and apprenticeships. The federal government also delivers important investments in support of literacy and essential skills through other departments. For example, Citizenship and Immigration Canada provides support for literacy and language training for immigrants and newcomers, which is critically important to enabling them to better integrate into the Canadian work force."

13-2006 - Provincial Ferry Service Deemed Essential Carried

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Municipalities petition the Provincial Government to have our ferry related towns deemed as an essential service; fees to be determined at equivalent road rates; new vessels be built immediately to replace dilapidated vessels in this province.

Action Taken:

- Members of the Board met with Minister Hickey on December 8th. The Minister is meeting regularly with the Ferry Committee, and new designs are currently being prepared for the ferries. A decision on whether to replace the ferries on the Labrador Straits will be made in the next four years. Two ferries for the island are being built and three more will be built after an evaluation is done on what is needed provincially for the fleet. All ferries will be built in the province. Ferry terminals are being improved. Ferry services within Newfoundland and Labrador will not be deemed essential.

March 12 - reduced rates announced by Minister for ferry users.

No formal written response, as requested, has been received.

14-2006 - Funding for Firefighters Defeated