

Supporting Municipal Success in Atlantic Canada



Municipalities in Atlantic Canada are calling for Federal Government action on urgent priorities that address ongoing, unresolved challenges. Solutions must reflect the unique circumstances of Atlantic communities, shaped by the experiences of those directly impacted.

The four municipal associations representing Atlantic Canada's provinces present the following priority concerns and recommendations. We look forward to working with the Federal Government to develop practical, region-specific solutions.

The Issues

Cellular Service A Lifeline, Not a Luxury



- Critical gaps in mobile service persist across rural, remote, Indigenous, and coastal communities in Atlantic Canada.
- Inadequate cell coverage threatens public safety, and limits economic development and equitable access to vital cellular networks.
- Existing federal funding (e.g., Universal Broadband Fund) was focused on internet, not cellular infrastructure.
- Telecommunications policy and infrastructure funding remain under federal jurisdiction, yet communities are being forced to act alone.

Climate Change and Coastal Resilience Funding Smart Adaptation



- Atlantic Canada faces accelerated wildfires, sea level rise, erosion, and storm surge due to land subsidence and climate change.
- Small municipalities lack capacity for climate adaptation planning and long-term monitoring.
- Vulnerable groups (e.g., Indigenous peoples, low-income residents older adults) may experience inequitable impacts.
- Current federal funding does not support maintenance, policy experimentation, or nature-based solutions.

Immigration Responding to Regional Labour Needs



- Federal reductions in immigration targets are disproportionately affecting Atlantic Canada.
- Regional economic sectors (construction, fish processing, healthcare, hospitality) depend on immigration for viability.
- Atlantic Immigration Program and Provincial Nominee Program are effective, but current caps limit regional flexibility.
- The cap on international students will worsen long-term workforce shortages.

Infrastructure Creating Sustainable, Right-Sized Systems



- Aging infrastructure (roads, water, wastewater) in small municipalities is increasingly unaffordable.
- Climate-related damage (e.g., Hurricane Fiona) is compounding infrastructure strain.
- Existing federal infrastructure programs are expiring or tied narrowly to housing development.
- Application-based funding processes disadvantage municipalities with limited staff or expertise.

Recommendations



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Recommendations

Cellular Service

A Lifeline, Not a Luxury



- Establish a dedicated federal funding program to expand rural and remote cellular infrastructure.
- Reframe mobile service as essential public infrastructure, not just a private-sector investment opportunity.
- Develop a national strategy for cellular equity, alongside broadband strategies.
- Incentivize and regulate private carriers to expand coverage in under-served areas.

Climate Change and Coastal Resilience

Funding Smart Adaptation



- Continue support for programs like CLIMAtlantic, FHIMP, and Climate-Resilient Coastal Communities, with focus on small and coastal municipalities.
- Create long-term, flexible funding streams for maintenance, monitoring, and adaptive management of climate adaptation projects.
- Invest in nature-based solutions, digital twins, and erosion/storm surge modelling tools.
- Fund collaborative research between municipalities and universities to enable policy experimentation in low-risk settings.
- Establish a non-competitive fund to support public dialogue and planning on managed retreat in coastal areas.

Infrastructure

Creating Sustainable, Right-Sized Systems



- Develop a 10- to 20-year infrastructure strategy focused on right-sized, innovative solutions suited to Atlantic Canada's geography and capacity.
- Create regional infrastructure funding models to support shared services and planning across small communities.
- Expand non-competitive and capacity-building funds to help small municipalities access and implement federal infrastructure programs.
- Allow stacking with provincial funds and avoid tying solely to housing.

Immigration

Responding to Regional Labour Needs



- Maintain or increase Atlantic immigration targets to reflect regional demographic needs.
- Expand and resource the Atlantic Immigration Program and Provincial Nominee Program.
- Allow more regional discretion in setting immigration priorities to address local labour force shortages.
- Reconsider the international student cap, particularly for smaller institutions and provinces that rely on newcomer students for community growth.