

Rural Nova Scotia Health Crisis Working Group Report

March 20th, 2018

Attendees: Councilor Rick Davis (ToS), Mary Ayer, Bernadette MacDonald (Tri County Women's Centre), Councilor Penny Carver (ToMB), Councilor Kent Balish (ToL), Deputy Mayor Joann Swimm (ToL), Tony Elliot (Digby Area Health Coalition), Warden Leland Anthony (MoDY), Deputy Mayor Phil Mooney (ToY), CAO Ken Smith (MoDS), Warden Penny Smith (MoDS), Councilor Nolan Young (ToS), Councilor Roger Taylor (MoDS), Rob Stork, Mayor Karen Mattatall (ToS), CAO Dylan Heide (ToS)

Regrets: Mayor Carolyn Bolivar-Getson (MoDL), Chris Parsons (Nova Scotia Health Coalition)

Welcome & Introductions

Mayor Mattatall welcomed attendees to the first meeting of the Rural Nova Scotia Health Care Working Group. Attendees introduced themselves. It was noted that attendees included representatives of six municipal units, along with community organizations and individuals.

Recap from February 15th

Attendees recapped the February 15th, 2018, discussion, hosted by the Town of Shelburne, where the Rural Nova Scotia Health Crisis Working Group was established.

Mayor Mattatall initiated discussion of logistics for the working group moving forward:

- **Region** – It was agreed by attendees that while the working group was centered in Southern Nova Scotia, it would not define itself as regional until such a time as other regional working groups might be established.
- **Membership** – Attendees agreed that the working group's membership would remain voluntary and undefined but committed to appointing someone from their municipality or organization to attend future meetings. Decisions of the working group would be made by show of hands of those present; it was understood that attendees did not necessarily have the authority to bind their municipality or organization to the working group's decisions without confirmation by their Council/Board.
- **Meetings** – Attendees agreed the working group would aim to hold monthly meetings for the time being and that the April meeting would take place in Shelburne, following which meetings could rotate or remain in Shelburne, as determined by the meeting attendees.
- **Chair** – Attendees supported Mayor Mattatall chairing the working group for the time being.

Updates on the Crisis

Attendees reported that hospital emergency departments throughout rural Nova Scotia (Shelburne and Digby in particular) are still experiencing frequent closures, resulting in uncertainty among residents about their access to emergency care. Overcrowding of hospitals with patients awaiting transfer to long-term care was also discussed. Attendees discussed recent legislative efforts by both provincial opposition parties to increase transparency at the Nova Scotia Health Authority (NSHA) and to improve access to emergency care. Lack of transparency at the NSHA and the shortcomings of the NSHA's recent stakeholder engagement sessions were also discussed. It was reported that

researchers at Dalhousie University were engaged in mapping the extent of the current health care crisis in Nova Scotia and attendees supported reaching out to the researchers.

Working Group Initial Actions

Attendees discussed the contents of a draft press statement on the formation of the Rural Nova Scotia Health Care Working Group. It was agreed that the draft press statement would be distributed to attendees by email along with the report of the meeting, and pending any proposed revisions by email, distributed to all media sources in advance of the working group's April meeting.

Working Group Next Steps

The development of a resolution to the 2018 fall conference of the Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities (UNSM) was discussed. It was noted that the UNSM regional caucuses for the South Shore and Southwest Nova will be taking place in April and agreed that the development of a resolution to be introduced at these sessions would be an agenda item for the working group's April meeting. It was agreed by attendees that the resolution would concern the current health care crisis and would be much broader than previous resolutions concerning doctor recruitment.

The potential for a "day of action" at the provincial legislature in Halifax sometime in the coming year was discussed and it was agreed this would be an agenda item for the working group's April meeting. It was agreed that attendees would reach out to their local MLAs to encourage their participation in the "day of action" and that the "day of action" would also be referenced in the working group's initial press statement. Attendees highlighted the importance of working in public, with full transparency, and encouraging the public to take part in the process.

Attendees also discussed reaching out to local medical practitioners to support a discussion of potential solutions to the health crisis. It was agreed that representatives of Doctors Nova Scotia would be invited to participate in the working group's meetings. Reaching out to representatives of areas noted for the resiliency in the current crisis – the Municipality of the District of Clare and the Region of Queens in particular – was also discussed.

Next Meeting Date

The next meeting of the working group was set for Monday, April 16th, 2018. The meeting will take place at the Shelburne Community Centre (63 King Street, Shelburne).