



June 27, 2022

The Honourable Tim Houston
Office of the Premier
7th Floor, One Government Place
1700 Granville Street
Halifax, NS
B3J 1X5

PREMIER@novascotia.ca

Dear Premier Houston,

RE: Provincial Non-Residential Deed Transfer Tax

Please accept the following letter on behalf of the council of the West Hants Regional Municipality with respect to the Provincial Non-Residential Deed Transfer Tax that was announced as part of the Province of Nova Scotia's 2022/23 budget.

The lack of housing, including affordable housing has been a long-standing issue within Nova Scotia that has been exacerbated by the recent COVID-19 pandemic. As the Council for our region, we struggle to understand how this tax initiative will directly address the current housing crisis.

The Municipality supports initiatives and problem-solving solutions that will make housing more affordable for our residents. The proposed solution however has too many unanswered questions and was undertaken without any consultation with municipalities. We fail to see how this initiative will be a positive step in addressing the housing needs within our community. We also have genuine concerns about the consequences that this tax initiative will have on non-residents that want to own property in our region.

Council wishes to identify that it sees this initiative as an infringement on municipal tax powers. Nova Scotia municipalities have very few tools at their disposal to call their own that generate revenue for their communities. Two of those tools are the deed transfer tax and property taxes. These revenue streams support the critical services and infrastructure provided to our residents. With this initiative, the Provincial Government is stepping into the municipal world and utilizing resources specific to municipalities in order to fund Provincial needs. The West Hants Regional Municipal Council cannot

support this tax initiative.

To formally express the current position of the Council who met on May 24, 2022, to discuss this matter the following motion was ratified. *"COUNCIL DIRECTS STAFF TO COMPOSE A LETTER WITH REGARDS TO THE PROVINCE'S ENTRY INTO THE DEED TRANSFER TAX ARENA DISCOURAGING THEM FROM CONTINUING WITH THAT INITIATIVE.*

AND FURTHER THAT THE LETTER BE FORWARDED TO ALL 48 MUNICIPAL UNITS, MLA MELISSA SHEEHY-RICHARD AND THE NOVA SCOTIA FEDERATION OF MUNICIPALITIES (NSFM).

Our Council represents more that 19,507 people within our region and this number grows each day. We need a permanent action plan that develops affordable housing options for those who cannot afford to buy or rent a home. If the overall goal is making housing more affordable for Nova Scotians through this taxation, West Hants Regional Municipality asks that you bring all the stakeholders to the table to discuss an approach and develop a plan that allows for a collaborative approach that will highlight a realistic, sustainable plan to address these concerns.

Please take the necessary time to listen, collaborate with municipalities and develop a solution to the housing crisis that all of Nova Scotia is experiencing. West Hants Regional Municipality thanks you for your attention to this matter and we look forward to hearing from you.

Respectfully,



Abraham Zebian, Mayor

ds/az

CC: Ms. Amanda McDougall, President, Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities
Melissa Sheehy-Richard, MLA Hants West
NSFM Municipalities
WHRM Council and Mark Philips, Chief Administrative Officer