



NOTICE

MEETING: Committee of the Whole

DATE: Wednesday, February 4th, 2026

TIME: 5:00pm

PLACE: Council Chambers, 8296 Highway 7, Sherbrooke

Please Advise If Unable To Attend



Municipality of the District of St. Mary's

Committee of the Whole (COTW) Meeting
Wednesday, February 4th, 2026

We acknowledge that we are gathering in Mi'kmaqi the traditional unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq people.

1. Call to Order
2. Roll Call
3. Additions to the Agenda
4. Approval of the Agenda
5. Approval of Minutes of COTW held Wednesday January 21st, 2026
6. Business Arising from Minutes
 - a. Report on funding provided to Christmas at Sherbrooke Village
7. Correspondence
 - a. ECRL Letter Regarding Budgeting for 2026/27
8. Other Matters of Business
 - a. Staff Report – Low Income Property Tax Exemption for 2026/27
 - b. Staff Report – Climate Ready Plans and Processes Program Next Steps
9. In-Camera: Legal Advice

Adjournment



We acknowledge that we are gathering in Mi'kma'ki the traditional unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq people.

1. Meeting, Date & Time:

Warden Fuller called the COTW Meeting of the St. Mary's Municipal Council to order on Wednesday, January 21st, 2026, at 5:10pm in the Council Chambers, Sherbrooke, N.S.

2. Attending:

Warden James Fuller
Deputy Warden Beulah Malloy
Councillor Dana O'Connell
Councillor Scott Beaver
Councillor Emma Tibbo

Also Attending:

Lesley McFarlane, Chief Administrative Officer (CAO)
Jadzia Rudolph, Municipal Clerk
Keren Ruller, Director of Economic Development

3. Additions to the Agenda:

- Amendment – Remove Item #9. In-Camera: Contract Negotiations.

4. Approval of the Agenda:

On the motion of Councillor Tibbo and seconded by Deputy Warden Malloy, Council approved the agenda with the amendment.

Motion approved.

5. Approval of Minutes:

On the motion of Warden Fuller, hearing no errors or omission to the previous minutes, Council approved the minutes of the COTW Meeting held January 7th, 2026.

Motion approved.

6. Business Arising from the Minutes:

- a. Disposal of Real Property Policy
 - This policy was previously presented on January 7th, 2026, COTW meeting at which time Council requested additional time to review the proposed draft policy and bring back to the next Committee of the Whole meeting for discussion whether to repeal and follow the Municipal Government Act, or request amendments to the policy, or accept the draft policy as proposed.
 - CAO McFarlane provided a brief review of the need for the policy review and the matters that were considered in developing the proposed draft policy, such as clarity and transparency.
 - After further review, Council determined that the *Disposal of Real Property Policy* is needed to ensure transparency and provide a fair and consistent approach when dealing with surplus property, and that no changes are needed to the proposed draft policy.

On recommendation of Councillor O'Connell seconded by Councillor Beaver, Council repeal the Sale of Real Property Policy.

Recommendation adopted.

On recommendation of Councillor O'Connell seconded by Councillor Beaver, Council agree to approve the "Disposal of Real Property Policy" as presented at the COTW on Wednesday January 7th, 2026.

Recommendation adopted.

7. Correspondence:

- a. York Lethbridge, Executive Director of Sherbrooke Village and Martha MacDonald Chair of Historic Sherbrooke Development Society – Council Support for Christmas at Sherbrooke Village

On motion of Deputy Warden Malloy seconded by Councillor O'Connell, Council agreed to invite Executive Director Lethbridge to address Council and answer any questions regarding the correspondence.

Motion approved.

- Please see the Agenda/Package for the correspondence.
- Correspondence was received asking for council financial support with Christmas at Sherbrooke Village to help ensure that the event remains free to residents.
- York Lethbridge, Executive Director of Sherbrooke Village thanked Council for their financial, volunteer and governance support to the event in November 2025 which was a wonderful success.
- Mr. Lethbridge informed Council that Historic Sherbrooke Development Society has partnered with Sherbrooke Village Restoration to hopefully deliver the "Christmas at Sherbrooke Village" event again in 2026. Sherbrooke Village is contributing \$62,000 to make the event happen in 2026. Municipal funding support is required to unlock a federal grant through Canadian Heritage, with a submission deadline of January 31, 2026. The amount requested is \$5,000 as well as any in-kind support that Council would like to provide.
- The CAO advised that there are no funds allocated in the 2025/26 budget to support Christmas at Sherbrooke Village in December 2026, and that \$4000 was contributed by the municipality to the December 2025 event.
- Council directed the CAO to identify a source of funds for a funding contribution commensurate with last year's contribution, and to commit to the contribution by the deadline of January 31, 2026, and report back to Council on the status.
- In the upcoming budget deliberations, Council agreed to see if further support could be provided to the December 2026 event.

On recommendation of Councillor Beaver seconded by Councillor Tibbo, Council agreed to provide funding support to Sherbrooke Village and the Historic Sherbrooke Village Development Society in support of the 2026 "Christmas at Sherbrooke Village" event.

Recommendation adopted.

- b. Sean Cameron, Mayor of Town of Antigonish – Request for Support for Secondary Route to St. Martha's Hospital
- Please see the Agenda/Package for the correspondence.

- Correspondence was received addressing the sole access road to the Antigonish St. Martha's Hospital as residents use this hospital for urgent needs including surgeries, emergency treatments, and medical imaging.
- Council has been asked to sign the letter to the member of parliament and members of legislative assembly advocating for the immediate construction of a new secondary route to the hospital.

On recommendation of Councillor Beaver seconded by Deputy Warden Malloy, Council agreed to direct the Warden to send the letters provided by Sean Cameron, Mayor of Town of Antigonish in support of advocating to the Provincial and Federal government for an alternative entrance route to St. Martha's Hospital in Antigonish.

Recommendation adopted.

8. Other Matters of Business:

- a. Staff Information Item – Community Benefits Agreements
 - Please see the Agenda/Package for the staff presentation.
 - Staff provided Council with an overview on what and how Community Benefits Agreements (CBA's) can help the municipality highlighting the importance of early engagement in negotiation of these benefits being key to ensure maximum returns.
 - Separate from the CBA's, the presentation included an overview of the potential for municipal tax revenue from wind projects based on megawatts of power generated as per the provincial wind taxation act.
 - CBA's can benefit the community in a variety of ways including but not limited to: community vibrancy funds, bursary and scholarship funds, local jobs, worker training, proximity payments, royalties and more.. There are multiple stages for the implementation of CBA's with some being a onetime allocation and others being reoccurring benefits over the life of the project such as royalties.
 - CBA's are legally binding, with specific commitments to the community. They are negotiated by a combination of community stakeholders (often through a committee) in collaboration with municipal government. Examples of recently negotiated CBA's from municipalities within NS have been made public and can be found online.

Adjournment

On motion of Warden Fuller there being no further matters of business, Council adjourned at 5:34pm.

Motion approved.

Recorded By
Jadzia Rudolph, Municipal Clerk

Approved By
Warden Fuller

Funding to Christmas at Sherbrooke Village

SUMMARY

As directed by Council, grant funding commensurate with that provided for the 2025 event, has been provided for the 2026 event. Recommendations are provided regarding potential additional support.

BACKGROUND

Christmas at Sherbrooke Village, formerly called Old Fashioned Christmas, has been organized by volunteers at Sherbrooke Village for decades, with the support of the municipality. The event was not held in 2024 but was resumed in 2025, led by Sherbrooke Village with municipal in-kind and financial support as well as other local volunteer support and funding. Municipal grant funding in the amount of \$2,000 from the tourism component of the Economic Development budget was provided in recent years for the event. For the 2025 event, grant funding from the municipality's 2024/25 finances was provided in the amount of \$4,000.

Community concerns arose during the planning phase of the 2025 Christmas at Sherbrooke Village event over the possibility of charging local community members to attend the opening night ceremonies. The organizers announced that they had secured sufficient funding to extend free access to the community for the opening night. This was received positively by the community.

At the joint request of Sherbrooke Village and the Historic Sherbrooke Village Development Society, a correspondence item was added to the January 21st meeting of Committee of the Whole, requesting funding support from the municipality for the 2026 Christmas at Sherbrooke Village event. A municipal funding commitment is a mandatory requirement to access Canadian Heritage grant funding.

As part of the correspondence, Mr. Lethbridge indicated that they would like to maintain a free community event on opening night of the Christmas at Sherbrooke Village event. He further indicated that a report was being prepared that would show the community impact and event cost.

There was no funding included in the approved 2025/26 budget for the 2026 Christmas at Sherbrooke Village event.

CONSIDERATIONS

During the January 21st, 2026 meeting of Committee of the Whole, Council approved a motion for the Sherbrooke Village Executive Director, York Lethbridge, to address Council. Mr. Lethbridge thanked Council for the municipality's past support and advised that the 2025 event was a great success.

Staff Report



He clarified that having municipal funding is a prerequisite for an application to the Canadian Heritage grant funding for the 2026 event. Given the imminent grant application deadline, the CAO was directed to identify a source of funds, provide a commitment to fund the 2026 event in an amount commensurate with last year's grant funding, and report back to Council at a future meeting. Council approved a motion expressing support to the 2026 Christmas at Sherbrooke Village event.

Council also expressed interest in assessing if further support could be provided to the 2026 event.

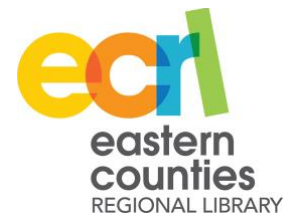
Municipal funding support has now been confirmed in writing to Sherbrooke Village, in the amount of \$4,000, sourced from the 2025/2026 Economic Development Budget.

In keeping with the municipality's General Government Grants Policy, Sherbrooke Village has been advised that before the funding can be provided, a copy of their organization's most recent annual financial statement, along with a copy of the motion where the statements were approved by their organization, and a copy of their current year to date income statement are required to be submitted to the municipality.

In addition, because the grant exceeds \$1,000, in accordance with the municipality's General Government Grants Policy, Sherbrooke Village has been advised that written confirmation that the event has taken place will be required, along with a brief summary of outcomes.

STAFF DIRECTION

In the event that Council would like to invite Sherbrooke Village and the Historic Sherbrooke Village Development Society to apply for additional funding, Council may wish to ask staff to inform them that the municipality is accepting applications for grants to organizations until February 17th at 4pm.



ECRL Regional Office
390 Murray Street,
PO Box 2500,
Mulgrave, N.S. B0E 2G0
(902) 747-2597
1-855-787-READ
ecrl.ca

January 26, 2026

Municipality of the District of St. Mary's
P.O. Box 296
Sherbrooke, NS B0J 3C0

Via email: cao@saint-marys.ca

Dear Deputy Warden Beulah Malloy and Council,

As you are no doubt aware, due to media coverage, all provincial libraries are experiencing financial difficulties due to a lack of funding increases for years by our regulatory authorities. As such, Eastern Counties Regional Library (ECRL) faces a complex and uncertain financial outlook for the 2026-2027 budget year. Until we receive reliable funding information from the province, we can't be confident that service levels will remain stable in 2026-2027. As a result of this uncertainty, the ECRL Board strives to prevent service reductions by advocating for stable and realistic library funding from the provincial government. We also work to be strategic in our use of our financial resources to prevent reductions in library hours as well as other critical aspects of our services.

However, we do know that one particularly vulnerable area is our collections budget. Our ability to buy books and other materials (both physical and digital) for your residents has been greatly reduced over the past couple of years. With the current 2025-2026 budget including a record low of \$36,400 for the purchasing of physical books.

We realize that you face financial challenges as well, our request is simple and focused. We would ask that you consider a one-time addition to your current library funding up to \$2,000 solely for the purchase of new materials. To give you a sense of how these funds would translate into books, \$2,000 divided by an average cost of \$35 per book would equal 57 new books for your community. This would go directly into the purchase of materials and not operational expenses.

This will be a direct benefit to your community. Of course, if you would consider additional funding in general for next fiscal year, we would certainly appreciate that also.

Thank you for considering this request and all that you do for public libraries.

Sincerely,



Warden James Fuller
ECRL Board Chair

2026-2027 Application for Residential Low Income Property Tax Exemption

SUMMARY

The Municipality of the District of St. Mary's provides assistance to low-income homeowners to help pay their residential property taxes. Qualified applicants will receive a credit which is applied directly to the tax account.

The following report is designed to provide Council with an overview of the application form, process and options for potential changes to the Municipal Residential Low Income Property Tax Exemption Program for the 2026-2027 fiscal year. The application form is attached with areas of change highlighted.

BACKGROUND

Each year prior to Council adopting the annual budget, Council reviews the qualification guidelines for the program including the amount for the annual income from all sources of all adults living in the household/assessment account for the previous calendar year and the dollar amount of the credit applied.

In 2025-2026 Municipal Council requested various income thresholds and tax exemptions amounts. Council was provided with four different options including increasing dollar values and a tiered income and tax exemption threshold process. Council agreed to proceed with increasing income levels and exemption amounts along with introducing a tiered system. This approach was well received, with 60 homeowners taking advantage of the program, this was up from 55 in 2024-2025 and 56 in 2023-2024.

The chart below shows actual figures from participants during the 2025-2026 application intake period.

2025-2026 Low Income Tax Exemption Breakdown			
<i>Total Income Range</i>	<i>Tax Exemption Amount</i>	<i>Number of Applicants</i>	<i>Total Expense</i>
\$25,001-\$29,000	\$ 200	16	3,200
\$20,001-\$25,000	\$ 250	26	6,500
\$15,001-\$20,000	\$ 300	4	1,200
\$0-\$15,000	\$ 350	14	4,900
Total		60	\$ 15,800

Low-income property owners can stack tax exemptions by applying to both the Municipal Low Income Tax Exemption and Provincial Property Tax Rebate Program. In 2025-2026 if a homeowner qualified for both programs with a household income of \$21,000 and a tax bill of \$750 they would receive the Municipal exemption of \$250, then receive 50% back of the remaining \$500 balance through the provincial grant. This would result in a total tax bill of \$250.

It is important to note that for both programs, the property must be their primary residence, other properties do not qualify under this program. The Provincial program administers their own qualification guidelines and thresholds, and Municipal staff assist residents with their applications and required documentation.

The program is advertised through the monthly municipal newsletter and on the municipal website and social media.

CONSIDERATIONS

Based on the success of the program and tiered rebate structure in 2025-2026, staff have prepared an option for Council's consideration using the same structure and applying a cost-of-living increase to the dollar amounts. Similar to past practice, the consumer price index for December 2024 to December 2025 Nova Scotia All Items of 3.1% has been used for Council's consideration. Please note the CAP rate for PVSC was set at 2.6% for 2026-2027 property assessments which is based on NS CPI for November 2024 to November 2025.

Proposed 2026-2027 Low Income Property Tax Exemption			
<i>Total Income Range</i>	<i>Tax Exemption Amount</i>	<i>Number of Applicants</i>	<i>Total Expense</i>
\$25,776-\$29,899	\$ 210	17	3,570
\$20,621-\$25,775	\$ 260	27	7,020
\$15,446-\$20,620	\$ 310	5	1,550
\$0-\$15,465	\$ 365	15	5,475
Total		64	\$ 17,615

The application form (attached) has been updated to reflect the above thresholds, and to clarify the original intent, which was that the total income includes all adults living at the property (assessment account).

For the purpose of budget considerations an increase in applicants has been applied to the increased tax exemption amounts and income thresholds. Based on these considerations the total expense is under the \$25,000 budgeted for 2025-2026, therefore no additional funds will be required to be budgeted for 2026-2027 and budget could be reduced by \$5,000.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommend that Council approve the 2026/2027 Application for Residential Low Income Property Tax Exemption with the annual household income range threshold and the tax exemption credit amount as laid out in the table below, and all other eligibility requirements to remain the same as outlined in the application.

Proposed 2026-2027 Low Income Property Tax Exemption			
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Total		64	\$ 17,615



Application for Residential Low Income Property Tax Exemption **2026/2027**

The Municipality of the District of St. Mary's provides assistance to homeowners to help pay their residential property taxes. Qualified applicants will receive a credit which is applied directly to the tax account.

To Qualify:

- You must be a **Canadian citizen and permanent resident** of St. Mary's Municipality, and
- Own the assessed property and occupy it as your primary residence, and
- Prior year's property taxes must be paid in full, and
- Annual income from all sources for the previous calendar year for yourself, spouse, **and other adults that reside in the same household/assessment account** must total to one of the ranges below (based on line 150 of the income tax *Notice of Assessment*), and

Exemption Value: The exemptions provided will be based on the following total income levels:

Total Income Range	Tax Exemption Amount
\$25,776-\$29,899	\$210
\$20,621-\$25,775	\$260
\$15,446-\$20,620	\$310
\$0-\$15,465	\$365

How to Apply:

- After you have filed your personal income tax return for **2025** and received your Notice of Assessment from Canada Revenue Agency, complete the Municipal Application for Residential Low Income Property Tax Exemption form
- Attached copies of the **2025** Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) Notice of Assessment for each adult residing in the home/assessment account
- Sample Notice of Assessment from Canada Revenue Agency (CRA)
- If you do not have your CRA Notice of Assessment for **2025** you can call 1-800-959-8281

Canada Revenue Agency		Agence du revenu du Canada		NOTICE OF ASSESSMENT		T451 E (08)
Date	Name	Social Insurance no.	Tax year	Tax centre		
May 5, 2007	Jane Doe	123 456 789	2007	Shawinigan QC G9N 7S6		
Summary						000000
Line						\$ Amount
150	Total Income.....					00,000
	Deductions from total income.....					000
236	Net Income.....					00,000
260	Taxable Income.....					00,000

- Applications must be received by the Municipality no later than December 31, **2026**
- Applicants must re-apply each year.



Application for Residential Low Income Property Tax Exemption **2026/2027**

Tax Account #	
Name of Property Owner(s)	
Complete Mailing Address	
Telephone #	
# of Adults (age 18 or over) residing in home/assessment account	

- (a) Applicant total income (line 150) \$ _____
 - (b) Spouse/Common-Law Partner (line 150) \$ _____
 - (c) Other individuals (**including tenants living on the AAN or others within the household**) (line 150) \$ _____
- TOTAL of all Income from above** \$ _____

***Proof of income must be provided (Copy of 2025 CRA Notice of Assessment for each adult living on the the property (AAN))**

I _____ of _____ in the Municipality of the District of St. Mary's, in the County of Guysborough and Province of Nova Scotia, hereby apply for the **RESIDENTIAL LOW INCOME PROPERTY EXEMPTION** on taxes.

I/we, residents of the Municipality of the District of St. Mary's, the owners and occupants (**including all rental tenants on property**) of the above property, certify that the information on the application is true and complete, and that the total income from all sources during 2025 was below the limit set out in this application. I/we understand the exemption for **2026/2027** is **based on total income range**. I/we understand that no application for an exemption will be received after December 31, 2026. I/we understand that no exemption will be granted to low-income applicants if prior year's taxes remain unpaid.

Signature(s) _____ Date: _____

To be signed by Councillor, Municipal Admin Staff or Commissioner of Oaths

Sworn to in the County of Guysborough and the Province of Nova Scotia this ____ day of _____ 20__

Signature: _____



Climate Ready Plans and Processes (CRPP) -Climate Risk Assessment and Climate Adaptation Planning Update and Proposed Approach

SUMMARY

This Staff Report provides an update on the Climate Ready Plans and Processes (CRPP) -Climate Risk Assessment and Climate Adaptation Planning program through the Green Municipal Fund (GMF) under the Clean Agreement. The report recommends a revised approach, leveraging existing arrangements with the Clean Foundation instead of committing additional funds to renew the municipality's current Climate Change Action Plan.

The intended goals of this program were to provide an overview on the Climate Risks for MODSM through a community-wide risk assessment which could then be used as a guiding document to create a new report for an action plan based on the findings. This program would have involved MODSM hiring a consultant, paid for through the Green Municipal Fund (GMF) for \$70,000 who would implement the program. The application indicated that the Municipality would be required to contribute \$7,000 from the 2025/26 budget in cash from Municipal funds and \$1,000 in staff time and resources as part of the agreement, and Clean Foundation would provide \$23,000.00 in-kind contribution.

BACKGROUND

The table shows: CRPP Activities & Deliverables along side existing Documentation & Action Plans:

CRPP Activity	CRPP Deliverable	Existing Plans, Programs, Resources and Guides
Conduct the Climate Risk Assessment	Climate Risk Assessment Report	2021 MODSM Climate Change Action Plan (includes Climate Risk Assessment Report and Action Plan) 2022 NS Climate Change Plan
Develop a Climate Adaptation Strategy	A Climate Adaptation Plan	2021 MODSM Climate Change Action Plan Guysborough County Climate Risk Summary with Adaptation Opportunities
Flood Mitigation Options Analysis	A Flood Mitigation Options Report	2021 MODSM Climate Change Action Plan Provincial Safeguarding Coastal Property Guide

Staff Report



Conduct Stakeholder Engagement	Detailed Meeting Minutes and Attendance Records	2021 MODSM Climate Change Action Plan included a committee of community members.
Conduct Public Engagement	A "What We Heard" Report	2021 MODSM Climate Change Action Plan included a committee of community members.

Proposed CRPP program outcomes:

1. Enhanced Climate Risk Understanding and Decision-Making Capacity
2. Increased Public Awareness
3. Strengthened Municipal Capacity - Workshops and training for municipal staff
4. Reconciliation- and Anti-Racism Equity and Inclusion (AREI) Informed Planning

MODSM’s Climate Change Action Plan, developed with the engagement of a community committee, includes:

Assess risk and vulnerability – Compilation of baseline information, recognizing climate change risk areas, inventorying municipally owned infrastructure and property, and identifying climate change hazard areas. The rating system considers action type, hazard level, cost, and ability for municipal impact.

Plan and prioritize – Using established vulnerabilities and highlighted problem areas, the committee prioritized issues, developed mitigation and/or adaptation plans, and provided an actionable priority list for Council to consider when planning projects, developing policy, and during budget deliberations.

Implement – The roll out of the plan is being completed through on-the-ground effort within the community, with direction from Council, driving climate change commitment by local business owners and residents.

Recovery actions – Includes responding to hazard events and conducting post-disaster assessments. These assessments will then be rolled back into the plan’s updates. This includes focusing on positive community action, plus integrating resiliency-based practices and policies into the municipal toolbox to ensure the long-term viability of the area.

Monitor, evaluate, and adapt plans – Continuous monitoring and re-assessment of actionable items, arising hazards, and commitment to climate change action. The plan should be reported on annually, updated regularly, and seen as a living document.

CONSIDERATIONS

The MODSM is committed to ensuring the long-term viability of the area through engaging in resilient community practices as pertains to implementation of the existing Climate Change Action Plan created in 2021. Currently municipal decisions are filtered through the lens of environmental impact, focusing on positive community action, plus integrating resiliency-based practices and policies into the municipal toolbox to ensure the long-term viability of the area.

The municipality's approach to Climate Change Action Planning is compliant with provincial and federal legislation and regulations. The municipality's Climate Change Action Plan contains nearly 100 action items and 12 recommendations, many of which remain outstanding and are in the process of being completed.

Directing Clean Foundation resources to assist the municipality to achieve the action items of highest priority and benefit within the municipality's Climate Change Action Plan leverages existing contracts to deliver on tangible commitments to benefit the local community. Pending substantive completion of the Climate Change Action Plan, the plan can be refreshed, with community input.

This approach will allow focus to remain on implementing actions impacting the community at this time, prior to updating the Climate Change Action Plan. The proposed approach would eliminate the expense for the \$7,000 municipal contribution in addition to \$1,000 of staff time and resources.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation is that Council direct staff to leverage the existing partnership with Clean Foundation Nova Scotia to deliver on the municipality's Climate Change Action Plan, and withdraw from the Local Leadership for Climate Adaptation (LLCA -24-0485) Climate Ready Plans and Processes program.