



NOTICE

- MEETING:** Committee of the Whole
- DATE:** Wednesday, March 18th, 2026
- TIME:** Immediately Following Council Meeting
- 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, March 18th, 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 March 4th, 2026
6. Business Arising from Minutes
7. Correspondence
 - a. Letter of Support Coalition of End Poverty - Antigonish County Warden Nicholas MacInnis.
8. Other Matters of Business
 - a. Staff Report – Wastewater Treatment Plant Blower Replacement
 - b. Staff Report – 2026-2027 General Government Grants
 - c. Staff Report - Internal and External Committee Appointments

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, March 4th, 2026, at 5:55pm. 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)
Marian Fraser, Director of Finance/Treasurer
Mallory Tibbo, Director of Community Development and Recreation
Janelle Fleet, Interim Municipal Clerk

3. Additions to the Agenda:

The Warden asked if there were any changes to the agenda.

- Removal of In-Camera item as it was not required.
- Addition of a new agenda item 8.i. Staff direction for media release regarding the upcoming provincial budget cuts.

4. Approval of the Agenda:

On the motion of Councillor Beaver and seconded by Councillor O'Connell, Council approved the agenda as revised.

Motion approved.

5. Approval of Minutes:

Warden Fuller called for errors, omissions or amendments to the minutes of the Council meeting held February 18th, 2026. Hearing no errors or omissions to the minutes, the Warden declared the minutes were approved.

Motion approved.

6. Business Arising from the Minutes:

- There was no business arising from the minutes.

7. Correspondence:

- a. Correspondence dated February 24, 2026, from NSFM Communications re: Bill 186 – Support for Fire Protection Services Act
- b. Correspondence dated February 24, 2026, from NSFM re: NS Provincial Budget 2026-27

8. Other Matters of Business:

- a. Staff Report - Health Care Appreciation
 - Please see the agenda/package for the staff report.

On recommendation of Councillor Beaver seconded by Councillor Tibbo, Council approve the selection of the St. Mary's District Lion's Club to provide catering services for the provision of monthly snacks, at a maximum cost of \$9,072 for the term of March 2026 to February 2027, with funding to be provided from the Office of Health Care Professionals Recruitment Fund received by the Municipality.

Recommendation approved.

- b. Staff Report - 2026 2027 General Government Grants
 - Please see the agenda/package for the staff report.

Staff recommend that considering the provincial budget cuts, this item be deferred to a future meeting, at which updated recommendations regarding General Government Grants will be provided to Council.

- c. Staff Report – Declaring Municipal Land Surplus
 - Please see the agenda/package for the staff report.

On recommendation of Councillor Malloy seconded by Councillor Beaver, Council declare the property at 8164 Highway 7, PID 37501871, AAN 04147405, to be no longer required for the purposes of the municipality.

Recommendation approved.

- d. Staff Report – Fire Protection Services Act – Bill 186
 - Please see the agenda/package for the staff report.

On recommendation of Councillor Beaver seconded by Councillor Malloy, Council approve that due to excessive costs of installing dry hydrants combined with ineffective functionality, investment in dry hydrants be paused, and considered as part of the broader policy and governance review associated with implementing the Support for Fire Protection Services Act.

Recommendation approved.

- e. MODG Shared Services Verbal Update:
 - Waiting for a response for follow up by the municipality.

- f. Staff Report - Federation of Canadian Municipalities and Nova Scotia Federations of Municipalities Conferences
 - Please see the agenda/package for the staff report.

On recommendation of Councillor O'Connell seconded by Councillor Tibbo, Council approve that the Warden, Deputy Warden and CAO be approved to attend the Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities Spring Conference in Yarmouth, Nova Scotia from April 29 to May 1, 2026.

Recommendation approved.

On recommendation of Councillor Malloy seconded by Councillor Beaver, Council approve that all five (5) members of Council plus the CAO be approved to attend the Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities Fall Conference in November 2026, with attendance to be confirmed pending announcement of conference details.

Recommendation approved.

On recommendation of Councillor Tibbo seconded by Councillor O'Connell, Council confirms that no members of Council will attend the Federation of Canadian Municipalities Conference in Edmonton, Alberta from June 4 to June 7, 2026.

Recommendation approved.

- g. Setting Date for AGM
 - Please see the agenda/package for the staff report.

On recommendation of Councillor Malloy seconded by Councillor Tibbo approve the Annual General Meeting to be set for 5:30pm on Tuesday April 21st, 2026.

Recommendation approved.

- h. Staff Report – RFP Award for Design of Multi-Use Trail – Old Road Hill
 - Please see the agenda/package for the staff report.

On recommendation of Councillor O'Connell seconded by Councillor Malloy approve that Council award the Old Road Hill Multi-Use Trail Design contract to Strait Engineering Limited in the amount of \$25,145.00 (plus applicable taxes), with \$6,286.25 plus applicable taxes to be funded through the approved 2026 Capital Budget and \$18,858.75 plus applicable taxes from the Connect2 funding received from the Province of Nova Scotia.

Recommendation approved.

- i. Media Release for Upcoming Provincial Cuts:

Staff was directed to prepare a media release for the following day, encouraging the public to voice concerns to local MLA in a respectful, concise manner.

Adjournment

On motion of Warden Fuller there being no further matters of business, Council adjourned at 6:35pm.

Motion approved.

Recorded By
Janelle Fleet, Interim Municipal Clerk

Approved By
Warden Fuller

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ANTIGONISH

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February 12, 2026

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

Dear Premier Houston,

RE: Letter of support for Antigonish Coalition to End Poverty

On behalf of the Municipality of the County of Antigonish, I am writing to express our support for the concerns raised by the Antigonish Coalition to End Poverty (ACEP) regarding the need to increase social assistance and disability support rates in Nova Scotia.

Council recognizes the important work being done by ACEP and its member organizations in supporting individuals and families across Antigonish and Guysborough Counties. We are aware of the growing pressures facing residents as costs for housing, food, energy, and other essential needs continue to rise. Many individuals and families in our communities rely on social assistance and disability benefits to meet their basic daily needs.

While we acknowledge the announced 1.6% increase to social assistance and disability rates for 2026, Council shares the concern that this adjustment does not keep pace with inflation or the rising cost of living. As outlined in ACEP's letter, current benefit levels remain below established poverty thresholds, including the Market Basket Measure. Without more substantial increases, many individuals and families will continue to experience significant financial hardship.

The Municipality supports ACEP's call for a meaningful increase to social assistance and disability support rates, with the goal of ensuring that Nova Scotians are able to meet their basic needs and live with dignity. Addressing poverty strengthens not only individuals and families, but also the overall health and resilience of our communities.

We respectfully encourage your government to carefully consider these concerns and to engage in further discussion with community partners, including ACEP, to identify solutions that better support vulnerable Nova Scotians.

Sincerely,



Warden Nicholas MacInnis
Municipality of the County of Antigonish

CC: all Nova Scotia Municipalities

Wastewater Treatment Plant Blower Replacement

SUMMARY

Two air blowers at the Wastewater Treatment plant have failed and need to be replaced to resume the required redundant operations. Canada Community Building Funds (CCBF) of \$35,000 has been earmarked in the 2026/27 capital budget for this mandatory project. Subject to budget approval, it is recommended that Council award Maritime Blower Repair Inc. the contract to purchase and install two blowers at a cost of \$21,219.70 plus HST to maintain redundancy at the Wastewater Treatment plant.

BACKGROUND

The Wastewater Treatment plant relies on forced air for various processes. All systems require redundancy to maintain operations satisfactory with Department of Environment and Climate Change operating Regulations. A project was approved in the 2025/26 capital budget for one blower for the municipal Wastewater Treatment plant, at a cost of \$7,500, to be funded from CCBF.

Currently there is only one working blower for each of the equalization and aeration tanks. A redundant blower is now required for each tank. A tentative 2026/27 budget of \$35,000 of CCBF funding has been allocated for this project, subject to Council approval.

The planned approach for this project is to procure and install a new blower for each of the tanks, and send the existing blowers away to investigate cost-effectiveness of rebuilding them for spares.

CONSIDERATIONS

Quotes were requested from three providers. Maritime Blower Repair Inc. provided a quote for the two blowers required at the Wastewater Treatment Plant. The quoted prices for the blowers and installation is \$21,219.70 plus HST. The remainder of the tentatively budgeted \$35,000 CCBF funds will be retained to potentially rebuild the two existing blowers.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Subject to budget approval, Council recommend awarding Maritime Blower Repair Inc., the purchase and installation of two new blowers, at a cost of \$21,219.70 plus HST, to maintain redundancy at the Wastewater Treatment Plant.

2026-2027 General Government Grants

SUMMARY/BACKGROUND

Annually, as part of the Municipal Operating Budget deliberations, Council reviews applications submitted (due February 17th) for Grants to Organizations in accordance with the *General Government Grants Policy*.

The policy provides direction on three types of grants which Council can provide to eligible recipients.

1. District Grants
2. Grants to Organizations (GTO)
3. School Scholarships

All three grant categories are funded through the Municipal Operating Budget. In 2025 -2026 the total budget for General Government Grants was \$45,000 (District Grant \$22,000, GTO \$20,000, and Scholarships \$3,000).

As per the policy the total amount granted over all three categories cannot exceed 1.5% of the Municipal Operating Budget. Based on last year's operating budget the total grants from all three categories cannot exceed \$61,500.

This staff report was initially prepared for COTW on March 4th and has been updated for March 18th.

BUDGET PREPARATION AND CONSIDERATIONS

Work has been underway for the past several weeks to prepare the 2026/27 budget for Council's consideration. A draft balanced budget had been prepared before announcement of the provincial budget on February 23rd, 2026. The draft balanced budget maintained existing property tax rates with the 2026 property assessments. The high-level provincial budget announcement revealed significant cuts compared with prior years, however details have not yet been communicated. Preliminary analysis by the municipality indicates the direct municipal impact of the cuts will equate to nearly \$200,000 in annual average grant funding.

On March 10th, the provincial government reversed approximately \$53.6 million in cuts, primarily in the form of supports to disabilities programming, seniors programming and supports for African Nova Scotian and Indigenous students. The reversal does not reinstate any of the direct municipal impacts from the provincial budget, and the direct municipal impact remains estimated at nearly \$200,000.

Despite the reinstatement of the \$53.6 million, the reduced provincial budget is anticipated to impact four key areas within the municipality:

- Funding provided to the municipality for the delivery of community and recreation programming
- Capital grant funding to the municipality to maintain critical municipal infrastructure

- Funding provided directly from the province to Sherbrooke Village, including operating as well as funding which may be used for events such as Christmas at Sherbrooke Village
- Funding provided directly from the province to various Community Programs and Organizations

Council may wish to consider options within the municipal budget to partly offset the impacts of the provincial budget. As communicated at COTW on January 7th, a one cent increase in the tax rate would result in increased funding of \$26,885. The following options could be considered:

Tax Rate Increase	Change in Municipal Budget Available
\$0.01	\$26,885
\$0.02	\$53,770
\$0.03	\$80,655

For example, if a tax rate change of \$.02 is implemented, the increased funding could be allocated as follows:

Amount	Potential Allocation
\$16,500	Increase General Government Grants to maximum permitted by policy to support community-led events and/or programming
\$25,000	Partly offset loss of provincial grant funding for major capital repairs or transfers to capital
\$12,270	Partly offset loss of funding for municipally-hosted events and/or programming
\$53,770	TOTAL

DISTRICT GRANTS

In 2025-2026 each district was allotted \$4,400 (5 districts), totaling \$22,000.

Each Municipal Councillor will have an equal amount of funds per district to be allocated at their discretion in accordance with the policy throughout the fiscal year. In 2025-2026 each district was allotted \$4,400 (5 districts), totaling \$22,000.

Below are a range of options for the 2026-2027 district grant funding allotments.

Total District Grant Funding Options	Per District - 5
\$48,500	\$9,700 per district
\$40,000	\$8,000 per district
\$30,000	\$6,000 per district
\$27,000	\$5,400 per district
\$25,000	\$5,000 per district
\$23,500	\$4,700 per district
\$22,000	\$4,400 per district
\$20,000	\$3,800 per district
\$18,000	\$3,600 per district

Municipal District Grants must comply with section 6.1 of the policy as outlined below:

6.1 Municipal District Grants

6.1.1 A demonstrated need must be shown to exist and shall be the deciding factor for approval.

6.1.2 Grants are meant to be of a specific nature and shall not be construed as being annual operating funds.

6.1.3 Funds are not to be used for any personal gain or to benefit for any commercial or private enterprise.

6.1.4 Community Centers and Religious Organizations are not eligible unless for a specific event or purpose benefiting residents of the Municipality.

6.1.5 Municipal District Grants are awarded throughout the fiscal year at the discretion of the district’s municipal councillor while complying with this policy.

6.1.6 District grant eligibility components; Not for Profit Organizations/Community Groups must be within the Municipality or serve/benefit residents within the Municipality, examples include but are not limited to; Students (St. Mary’s Education Centre/Academy), sport groups, Provincial/National recognition, community groups, youth groups.

GRANTS TO ORGANIZATIONS

The following organizations have submitted applications for grants to organizations. Applications must comply with the municipal *General Government Grant Policy*.

Organization	Amount Requested	Reason for Grant Request
Sherbrooke Village	\$2,000	Funding is requested to support Sherbrooke Village’s Christmas Opening Ceremonies.
East River St Mary’s Vol Fire Dept	\$1,000	Funding is requested to fund lighting improvements, insulation upgrades and roof repairs to the Fire Department building.
St. Mary’s District Lions Club	\$3,000	Replace aging wood tables, need to purchase 25-30 plastic tables at a cost of \$6,000. Club is also in the process of replacing their 22-year-old asphalt shingled roof with galvanized steel.
St. Mary’s Trail Association	\$10,000	Completing sections of the trail as outlined in the application. Area includes “sons of Martha” monument, east to Denver, East Branch St. Mary’s River (Gunn’s Hole) Approximately 5kms.
St. Mary’s Arts Connection Council	\$1,500	Event #1 - 7 th Annual Fright Night event, keeping it accessible, free and inviting for all. Event #2 – Sherbrooke Pride; is a volunteer lead, multi day event promoting inclusion, diversity & belonging. Event features live entertainment, family friendly programming and a designated safe space area. Events would ensure an accessible event, and support event infrastructure and safety needs including accessibility measures, first aid, supplies, volunteer coordination materials & support, signage and waste management.
Goshen Community & Recreation Centre	\$2,500	Requesting funding to start a food pantry. The organization has been approached by residents asking if they could have a food bank in the centre. The organization are turning one of the rooms on site into a food pantry which would require some renovations such as removing a sink, adding shelving and installing a new lock. The funds would be used to purchase a new refrigerator, shelving units, new lock and food to start.
Total Requested	\$20,000	

Grants to Organizations must comply with section 6.2 of the policy as outlined below:

6.2 Grants to Organizations

6.2.1 A demonstrated need must be shown to exist and shall be the deciding factor for approval. Need shall be defined as a situation where applicant does not have sufficient resources to carry out a particular activity, task or service to the community.

6.2.2 Grants are meant to be of a specific nature and shall not be construed as being a regular or an annual occurrence.

6.2.3 Any one group or project cannot exceed funding of more than 50% of the total funds allocated in the Grants to Organizations category.

6.2.4 Funds are not to be used for any personal gain or commercial or private enterprise.

6.2.5 Grants to Organizations focus on capital projects. Program costs are eligible as long as they are not ordinary operating costs of an organization.

6.2.6 The Grants to Organizations category are awarded by motion of Council annually at the Annual General Meeting of Council.

6.2.7 Organizations must be active with registry of joint stocks - or – provide evidence of incorporation under the Societies Act of Nova Scotia. Applicants must identify how long the applicant organization has existed, or if co-sponsored similar proof from the co-sponsoring organization is required.

6.2.8 Organization must be located within the Municipality or serve/benefit residents of the Municipality.

6.2.9 There is a minimum total project of \$1,000 for the applicant with the potential to receive up to 50% funding from the Municipality.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR GENERAL GOVERNMENT GRANTS

Based on the current *General Government Grant Policy* all applications are eligible to receive a general government grant. It is at council's discretion the monetary amount they choose to award.

SCHOOL SCHOLARSHIPS

As per the *General Government Grant Policy* each year the Municipality provides a grant to the St Mary's Academy for scholarships to students who are residents of the Municipality graduating grade 12 and planning to further their post-secondary education. The annual grant amount is \$3,000; this amount has remained the same over the past number of years.

STAFF DIRECTION - TOTAL AMOUNT GRANTED FOR 2024/2025

At this point in the budget deliberations for 2026-2027 Municipal staff require direction to take the information from this COTW onto the AGM, where a formal motion will be made.

2026 Council Committee and Board Appointments

SUMMARY

Each year, Council appoints members to a number of internal committees and external boards and agencies that support the governance, operations, and regional partnerships of the Municipality of the District of St. Mary's. These appointments ensure Council representation on key bodies that contribute to municipal policy development, community initiatives, and intergovernmental collaboration.

In accordance with the Municipality's Procedural Policy, committee and board appointments are reviewed annually. This report outlines the policy governing these appointments and provides a summary of recent committee assignments to assist Council in preparing for the upcoming appointment cycle.

Council will be asked to review and provide recommendations for committee appointments, with final appointments confirmed at the Annual General Meeting of Council.

BACKGROUND

Section 14 of the Municipal Procedural Policy outlines the governance and appointment process for Council committees and external boards.

Key provisions include:

- Section 14.1 states that the rules governing the procedures of Council shall be observed in committee and board meetings.
- Section 14.2 states that internal and external committees and boards requiring Council appointments, nominations, or recommendations to the province must be approved by motion of Council and included on the Municipality's Approved Committees/Boards list.
- Section 14.3 establishes that councillors appointed to committees serve for a one-year term, with appointments reviewed annually. Council is responsible for reviewing and updating the Approved Committees/Boards list each year.
- Section 14.4 outlines the role of committees as receiving reports within their scope and making recommendations to Council on policy direction and the general governance of the municipality as required.
- Section 14.5 allows Council to establish special or additional committees by motion of Council, which are then reviewed annually at the Annual General Meeting of Council.

Staff Report



- Section 14.6 requires councillors serving on external boards and committees to provide updates to municipal staff using the Municipal Outside Committee Appointment Report template, with reports included in Council agendas and posted publicly on the municipal website.

Historically, Council reviews committee assignments annually and confirms appointments during the Annual General Meeting of Council.

A table of past committee appointments is provided below for historical context and to assist with determining appointments for the upcoming term. In many instances, committee membership has remained consistent from year to year, supporting continuity and familiarity with committee mandates, while allowing flexibility should Council wish to make adjustments.

CONSIDERATIONS

When determining committee appointments for the 2026–2027 term, Council may wish to consider the following:

- Continuity of representation where councillors have developed experience or familiarity with specific committee mandates.
- Balanced distribution of committee responsibilities among members of Council.
- Council members' interests or expertise related to committee mandates.
- Representation requirements for external boards and regional organizations.
- Any potential updates to the Approved Committees/Boards list.

It is recommended that Council review and revise or confirm appointments to the Municipality's internal and external committees listed on the table. Appointments will be approved at the Annual General Meeting (AGM). Pending discussion and agreement by Council, the motion below may be tabled.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Council move that the appointments discussed be recommended for approval at the Annual General Meeting.

Staff Report



Committee appointments:



The Municipality of the District of St. Mary's
 For the year April 2026 – March 2027
 Internal/External Committees of Council

INTERNAL COMMITTEES	2025-2026	2026-2027
Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, Anti-Hate & Accessibility Advisory Committee (IDEAA)	Warden Fuller Alternate: Councillor Tibbo	
Audit Committee	<i>Open to all <u>Councillors</u></i>	
Fences and Arbitration Committee	Warden Fuller Alternate: Councillor Tibbo	
Fire Services Advisory Committee	<i>Open to all <u>Councillors</u></i>	
Joint Occupational Health & Safety Committee	Warden Fuller Deputy Warden Malloy	
Source Water Protection Advisory Committee	Deputy Warden Malloy Alternate: Warden Fuller	
Source Water Protection Advisory Committee	Councillor O'Connell Alternate: Councillor Beaver	
EXTERNAL BOARDS/AGENCIES	2025-2026	2026-2027
Eastern Counties Regional Library Board	Warden Fuller Alternate: Councillor Tibbo	
Eastern Region Solid Waste Management	Deputy Warden Malloy Alternate: Councillor Tibbo	
Guysborough Adult Learning Association	Warden Fuller Alternate: Councillor Beaver	
Guysborough Community Health Board	Councillor Tibbo Alternate: Councillor Beaver	
Tourism Guysborough County Association	Councillor Beaver Alternate: Councillor O'Connell	
Guysborough County Home Support Agency	Councillor O'Connell Alternate: Councillor Tibbo	
Port Bickerton & Area Planning Association	Deputy Warden Malloy Alternate: Warden Fuller	
Sherbrooke Restoration Commission	Councillor O'Connell Alternate: Warden Fuller	
Community First: Guys. County Housing Assoc.	Warden Fuller Alternate: Councillor O'Connell	
Smart-Go Rural Transit Board	Warden Fuller Alternate: Councillor O'Connell	