



WEST HANTS REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY REPORT

Information ☐	Recommendation ☒	Decision Request ☐	Councillor Activity ☐
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To: Mayor Zebian and members of Council

Submitted by: Deanna Snair, Municipal Clerk

Date: June 24, 2025 Council Meeting

Subject: Code of Conduct - Appointment of Investigator Recommendation Report

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

RECOMMENDATION or DECISION REQUEST

Council recommends that Bardsley Investigative Solutions be appointed as the primary investigator and that the CAO be authorized to enter into a contract on behalf of the West Hants Regional Municipality.

BACKGROUND

In December 2024, Council approved the provincially mandated Elected Officials Code of Conduct.

This code sets out clear expectations for elected members of council by promoting transparency, professionalism, ethical conduct and it reinforces good governance.

The adoption of this code brings long-term benefits to municipalities and villages province-wide, reflecting our shared commitment to serve with excellence.

In March 2025, the Honourable John Lohr, Minister of Municipal Affairs, issued correspondence advising of upcoming amendments to the code regulations, effective April 1, 2025. The key updates are as follows:

1. *Mandatory Online Training for Municipal Elected Officials*

- All municipal elected officials are now required to complete mandatory online training.

- This training is delivered under the direction of the Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities (NSFM).
- The training has been rolled out province-wide and must be completed within 30 days of the April 1 implementation date.

2. *Appointment of Code Investigators*

- The Association of Municipal Administrators of Nova Scotia (AMANS) has developed a list of qualified individuals who may serve as Code Investigators.
- These individuals were selected through a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) process overseen by the AMANS Procurement Committee.
- Municipalities and villages are encouraged to appoint investigators from this list to ensure compliance with the updated regulations.

In February 2025, the Association of Municipal Administrators of Nova Scotia (AMANS) successfully completed a Request for Quotations (RFQ) process to establish a list of qualified investigators. This initiative supports municipal units and villages across Nova Scotia in fulfilling their obligations under the provincially mandated Code of Conduct for Municipal Elected Officials and associated Regulations enacted under Section 520 of the Municipal Government Act.

Each municipal unit is required to select and contract directly with a qualified investigator from the approved list to conduct investigations related to Code of Conduct complaints. The RFQ process ensures that municipalities have access to a vetted pool of professionals with the necessary qualifications and experience to carry out these responsibilities effectively.

Property ☐	Public Opinion ☒	Environment ☐	Social ☐	Economic ☐	Councillor ☒ Activity
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DISCUSSION

The Code of Conduct for Municipal Elected Officials Regulations made under Section 520 of the Municipal Government Act requires the Municipality to appoint an investigator to investigate reported breaches of the code.

Complaint and Investigation Process

Appointment of Investigator by Municipality

6 (1) An investigator must have experience conducting investigations and applying the principles of natural justice and procedural fairness.

(2) A municipality must include an investigator's contact information on its publicly accessible website.

(3) A municipality must ensure that no conflict of interest exists between the investigator and the parties involved in a complaint.

Internally staff have reviewed the qualified investigators provided as a result of the Request for Quotations (RFQ) process completed by Association of Municipal Administrators of Nova Scotia (AMANS). AMANS worked with their internal Procurement Committee to evaluate all submissions received. Committee members evaluated each proposal and then met to form a consensus on each proponent. The ten listed organizations were qualified.

Unless otherwise indicated, all investigators met the Procurement Committee's evaluation thresholds for criteria related to investigations including corporate/financial, legal/adjudication, and human resources (HR). Each investigator has indicated capacity to administer potential complaints. Should a municipal unit choose to use this list, they will need to verify with the potential investigator if there may be capacity limits with client onboarding.

<https://www.amans.ca/amans-qualified-list-of-investigators-municipal-code-of-conduct.html>

As a result of the review process, staff are recommending Bardsley Investigative Solutions be appointed as the primary investigator for any matters related to Code of Conduct complaints/investigations.

<i>Proponent/Vendor</i>	<i>Investigation Hourly Rate</i>	<i>Report Writing Hourly Rate</i>
Bardsley Investigative Solutions	\$200/hr	\$200/hr
BDO Canada	\$350/hr	\$350/hr
Burchell MacDougall LLP	\$275/hr	\$275/hr
Burchell Wickwire Bryson LLP	\$200-395/hr	\$200-395/hr
MC Advisory and McInnis Cooper	\$250-\$370/hr	\$250-\$370/hr
Mobile Resource Group	\$175-225/hr	\$175-225/hr
Nijhawan McMillan & Conlon Barristers	\$325.00+/hr	\$325.00+/hr
Power Up Leadership	\$300/hr	\$175/hr
Stewart McKelvey	\$335-525/hr	\$335-525/hr
TMC Law	\$200/hr	\$200/hr

NEXT STEPS

If the recommendation is approved, the CAO will enter into an agreement with Bardsley Investigative Solutions.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Costs dependent on investigations, as needed. Within the approved 2025/26 Operating Budget funding was identified to support this initiative.

ALTERNATIVES

Council may not approve the motion.

Council may choose a different course of action.

ATTACHMENTS

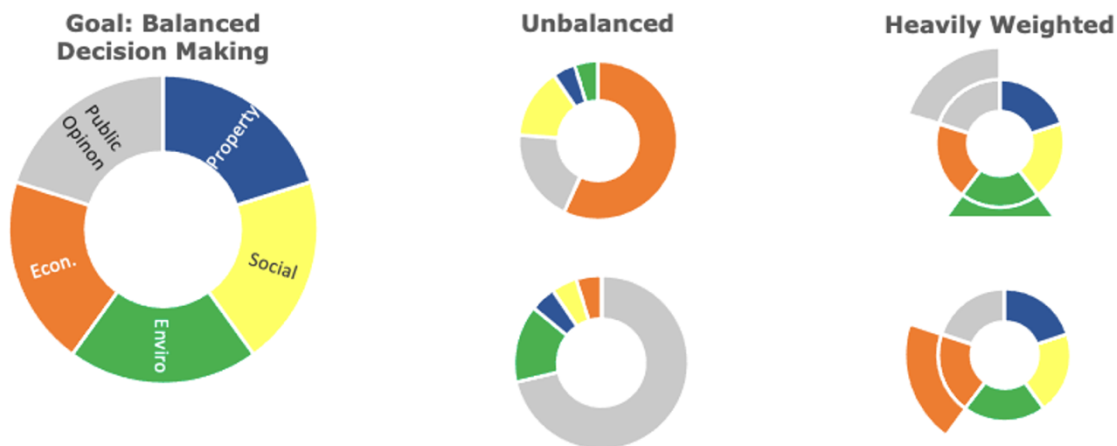
2024-12-30 Congratulatory letter for municipalities on adopting the code of conduct

2025-03-19 DMA Letter to Mayors and Wardens Code of Conduct Mandatory On-Line Training

CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER REVIEW

I support the recommendation.

Council has been provided with a reference taken from the Meeting and Committee Procedural Policy , Appendix C "Decision Making by Council and Committee of the Whole" as a reminder of the principles highlighted for good decision making.



Report Prepared by: _____

Deanna Snair, Municipal Clerk

Report Approved by: _____

Mark Phillips, Chief Administrative Officer



Municipal Affairs Office of the Minister

PO Box 216, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada B3J 2M4 • Telephone 902 424-5550 Fax 902 424-0581 • novascotia.ca

December 30, 2024

Dear Mayors, Wardens and Councillors:

I am writing today to commend all municipalities for successfully adopting the legislated Code of Conduct within the required timeline. Province wide adoption of this essential framework reflects a shared commitment to fostering respectful and constructive dialogue at the Council table.

The development of the Code of Conduct framework illustrates the significant collaboration between municipal governments and the Government of Nova Scotia. I would like to express my appreciation to the members of the Code of Conduct Working Group for their commitment and hard work over the past three years in developing and recommending a model that will effectively serve all 49 municipalities and 21 villages.

I would like to highlight that the Working Group recommended reviewing the Code three years after its implementation. This thoughtful approach underscores the importance of continuous evaluation and improvement to ensure that the Code continues to effectively support respectful and constructive conduct at the Council table.

Thank you, once again, for your commitment to the new municipal Code of Conduct. I am confident that this new standard will create a more positive work environment for municipal elected officials across Nova Scotia.

I look forward to our ongoing collaboration in the New Year as we engage in projects that will have meaningful impact on our communities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'John Lohr'.

Honourable John A. Lohr
Minister of Municipal Affairs

c: Chief Administrative Officers



Municipal Affairs Office of the Minister

PO Box 216, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada B3J 2M4 • Telephone 902 424-5550 Fax 902 424-0581 • novascotia.ca

March 19, 2025

Dear Mayors, Wardens and Chairs:

I am writing to update you about the progress related to the mandatory Code of Conduct (Code) training for all local elected officials in Nova Scotia.

As you are aware, in December, all municipalities and villages adopted the provincial Code of Conduct. I would be remiss in not recognizing the hard work and commitment from councils and commissions that have been put forth in this effort.

The Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities (NSFM) is leading the design, development and delivery of the training. To support elected officials in understanding the requirements under the Code, the NSFM organized in-person training sessions across the province and created an online training module that must be completed by all elected officials. For more information about the online training module please visit the NSFM website at <https://nsfm.ca/municipal-code-of-conduct-in-person-training-sessions.html>

The Code regulations will be amended on April 1, 2025, to make this online training mandatory. Following the recommendation from the Code of Conduct Working Group, this online training must be completed within 30 days. The regulations will also require that any newly elected official must complete this training within 30 days of being elected. A failure to complete the training within this timeframe will be considered a breach of the Code.

The Code framework and training module are based on the recommendations put forth by the Working Group. As with any new framework, time and experience will be instrumental in its evaluation.

I would also like to mention that the Association of Municipal Administrators of Nova Scotia (AMANS) has developed a list of qualified individuals whom municipalities and villages may appoint as Code investigators. The list can be found on their website at <https://amans.ca/amans-qualified-list-of-investigators-municipal-code-of-conduct.html>.

In closing, I would like to extend my appreciation to both the NSFM and AMANS for their collaborative efforts and leadership in the implementation of the Code. This initiative is an example of how we can collectively foster a positive environment and enhance accountability around council tables.

Sincerely,



Honourable John Lohr
Minister of Municipal Affairs

c: Chief Administrative Officers
Village Clerk Treasurers
Juanita Spencer, Chief Executive Officer, NSFM
David Campbell, Executive Director, AMANS