

## **INAUGURAL EASTERN REGION JOINT COUNCIL SUMMIT DEEMED AN ENORMOUS SUCCESS**

### **NEWS RELEASE**

From The Northeast Avalon Joint Council

St. John's, NL - Thursday, November 15, 2018 – On a blustery day yesterday in downtown St. John's, municipal and community leaders from across the Eastern Region convened a joint council summit at the St. John's Convention Centre. This combined meeting of joint councils, joint mayors' associations and regional committees from Pouch Cove to Clarenville and all points in between saw approximately 50 delegates gather to debate issues of regional significance and concern, including the future of municipal service delivery.

The summit, organized by the Northeast Avalon Joint Council, in cooperation with the Eastern Regional Service Board was the first of its kind in recent memory. The other groups involved included the Joint Council of Conception Bay North, the Southern Shore Joint Council, the Joint Mayors' Association of Trinity-Bay de Verde, the Killick Coast Regional Mayors Committee, and the newly formed Clarenville, Random Island and The Sounds Joint Council. This is the first time community leaders have come together to talk about common service issues at the combined joint council level.

Presentations were delivered on a variety of issues throughout the day as previously noted. Many of the sessions focused on municipal service delivery in the future, which delegates believed will need more regional cooperation and greater financial stability to succeed.

Delegates met with the new Minister of Municipal Affairs and Environment, The Honourable Graham Letto, MHA for Labrador West. Minister Letto delivered the keynote address at the summit's opening session.

The group also met the new Assistant Commissioner of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Ches W. Parsons, along with other representatives of the police force who gave updates on policing in the region and the implementation of the new cannabis laws. The RCMP are a key partner of all joint councils and regional groups and their attendance was greatly appreciated.

"Joint councils look at the big picture," said Mayor Joedy Wall, Chair of the Northeast Avalon Joint Council and Chair of the Joint Council Summit. "When you get this many community leaders in a room and share experiences, give insights, discuss cooperation and plan for the future, great things are bound to happen. Today was a testament to how we can all work in unison and advance common interests on a regional level."

Collectively, the joint councils and regional groups assembled yesterday represented over 50 per cent of the province's population. Approximately 35

individual communities were represented, including incorporated municipalities and Local Service Districts.

The Eastern Regional Service Board, the sponsor of the summit, began providing administrative coordination support for many of the joint councils and regional groups over the last 24 months. The Board's plan is to also support the establishment of three more such groups in 2019, effectively ensuring all areas of the region have a functional joint council, regional committee or joint mayors' association. Supporting the administration and coordination of these groups is mutually beneficial for all involved.

"Creating a strong, vibrant community is everyone's responsibility," said Ed Grant, Chair of the Eastern Regional Service Board. "Decisions about important things such as municipal services need as many voices and perspectives as possible. The Eastern Regional Service Board is here to help and is pleased to support the inaugural joint council summit. We see joint councils as being an important conduit for consultation on municipal service delivery now and into the future."

The priority issues discussed during the summit included land use management, with a focus on regional transportation. Participants would like to see the Provincial Government establish a new committee to tackle these issues with representatives from municipalities, local service districts, joint councils and service boards. The committee could potentially lead the development of a regional land use plan, a regional transportation plan and a regional municipal natural asset inventory.

Water and wastewater was also a common issue among delegates. All participants suggested more cooperation was needed on establishing regional water technicians for smaller and rural communities in particular. They suggested communities work together more frequently on water and wastewater system maintenance, too. In addition, participants said watershed management and sharing of service across boundaries will be essential to their overall success.

Economic development, including methods to enhance immigration and population growth in rural areas in particular, was also discussed in great detail. Participants suggested that communities need to define their role more clearly in regard economic development so to create the right environmental conditions needed for future success. This topic will be discussed in more detail at the individual joint council, regional committee and joint mayors' association meetings to come up with potential solution and action items to be discussed later.

Based on the success of the inaugural meeting, another joint council summit will be organized in 2019. More information about the next event will be communicated to communities in the eastern region in the coming months.

### **Summit Pictures, Presentations and Documentation**

Pictures, as well as copies of presentations and other documentation from the joint council summit can be found at <http://easternregionalserviceboard.com/subregions/annual-joint-council-summit/>.

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