



January 22, 2024

Dear Municipal Council Members,

We write to express serious concerns about coastal flooding within Yarmouth County during recent storms and our perspective about the responsibility of municipal councils with respect to preserving life, property, public infrastructure and coastal ecosystems.

January storms brought heavy rain, high winds, and storm surges to all three municipalities, resulting in localized flooding (e.g., Water Street in the Town of Yarmouth, Lower Eel Brook in the Municipality of the District of Argyle, and Cape Forchu in the Municipality of the District of Yarmouth). Personal experiences reported by and to YETT members have raised our level of concern. For example, one driver traveling to Cape Forchu reported suddenly feeling their car begin to lift and be carried away by the floodwaters. Fortunately, the driver escaped without harm, but the outcome could have been tragic.

It is important that people traveling on local roadways receive appropriate warnings of hazards, especially life-threatening conditions. The Alertable app is an important means of notifying people and we applaud its use by local municipalities. However, when hazards are potentially life-threatening, such as bridge and road washouts and swift-moving water on roadways, additional measures are necessary. We urge municipalities to employ emergency broadcast alerts that make use of cellular telephones to provide loud and unmistakable notifications. This system requires that municipalities request Nova Scotia's Emergency Management Office to issue a local alert.

Local storms, as well as flash flooding in other areas of the province last year, should serve as warnings that such events will likely become more frequent as climate change progresses. Taking steps to prevent or mitigate catastrophic flooding should be a high priority. We wonder what, if anything, local municipalities are doing to preserve natural coastal ecosystems and upgrade infrastructure, including roads, bridges, and causeways, to protect life and property. We urge our municipalities to take decisive action, report actions to community members, and engage the public in discussions about steps that everyone can and should take in order to reduce, as well as adapt to, the impacts of climate change.

[Note: The Yarmouth Environmental Think Tank (YETT) is a local non-profit interested in seeking solutions to environmental challenges, including those associated with climate change, and in promoting environmentally friendly practices. YETT comprises taxpayers residing in the Town of Yarmouth, Municipality of the District of Yarmouth and Municipality of the District of Argyle.]

Sincerely,

Virginia Smith
President

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