



April 19, 2018

Privy Council Office
Attn: Impact and Innovation Unit
Room 1000
85 Sparks Street
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A3

Re: Support for Town of Bridgewater Smart Cities Challenge Grant Application

To the Smart Cities Challenge jury panel,

This is a letter confirming the full support and confidence of Public Health Services, Western Zone in the Town of Bridgewater to address energy poverty by pursuing the Smart Cities Challenge grant.

Public Health is a service of Nova Scotia Health Authority and is a key part of the health system. Public Health's work is focused on improving the health of the population by working with others to address the social determinants of health and health inequities which impact health. As an aspect of poverty, Public Health is familiar with the conditions which lead to and perpetuate all forms of poverty, including energy poverty.

Public Health Staff encounter energy poverty directly as they support families and individuals in the community, and as they work with community partners to improve access to healthy, safe and affordable housing options. More broadly, we work with a variety of community partners to understand and take action on barriers to the social determinants of health which are connect to poverty.

The most recent Census of Canada in 2016 helps paint a picture of the magnitude and experience of poverty in the Town of Bridgewater. Almost 1 in 3 of all households (27.9%) and nearly half (48.6%) of the tenant households in the town of Bridgewater were identified as living with core housing need. 26.1% of children in the town of reported to be living in poverty, and overall, 22.7% of the population of Bridgewater is living at or below the low income measure, after tax.

Furthermore, as housing and energy prices increase, low-and middle-income households are forced to make compromises in their efforts to feed themselves, stay warm, and pay for rent and heat. These factors combined – food insecurity, fuel poverty, poor housing conditions and housing unaffordability– have detrimental and long term effects on the health of individuals, and have an impact on the community. The costs of “doing nothing” to address poverty – as measured by increased health, justice, education and social services costs – far outweighs the cost of solutions.

Public Health and the Town of Bridgewater have partnered on a number of community initiatives throughout the years. We value and appreciate the Town's commitment to improve the health and well-being of the community and their efforts to engage the community. The Town has successfully engaged town residents, businesses and community stakeholders over the past few years to imagine Bridgewater differently, and, as a result, there has been real and tangible community change. In partnership with the community, they have revitalized the downtown core, with a focus on developing a walkable and livable community, implemented a public transit system, engaged the community to

develop an open spaces network plan, and have become a leader in energy sustainability planning through Energize Bridgewater. We are confident that they will continue to effectively partner and engage with community and provide strong leadership to address energy poverty through the proposed project.

Public Health welcomes this exciting opportunity to address an aspect of poverty which limits the opportunities for health in our community. We are prepared to support the Town to further develop and implement the project, as applicable.

On their own, the direct impacts of this project on housing conditions and affordability, active transportation, food security, and the overall health of the community are reason enough to support this project. The proposed project prioritizes access to improved energy savings for those who can benefit the most from them; those living with energy poverty. This is a bold and powerful statement about the commitment of the Town of Bridgewater to its' most vulnerable populations and demonstrates its commitment to the community's vision for the Town of Bridgewater as a diverse, thriving and healthy community. As other communities look to Bridgewater as an example of how to address the complex sustainability challenges, this project has potential to inspire others to also promote equity in their communities.

Public Health looks forward to hearing that the Town of Bridgewater has been successful in their bid to receive the Smart Cities Challenge grant!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Melanie Welch', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Melanie Welch
Manager, Healthy Communities
NSHA Public Health, Western Zone