A Meeting of Victoria County Municipal Council was held in Council Chambers at Baddeck on October 20, 2025, at 10:00am with Warden Organ in the Chair.

COUNCILLORS PRESENT

District #1 - Donna Matheson-Lefort

District #2 - Perla MacLeod, Deputy Warden

District #3 - Jess Kerr

District #4 - Rosella Born

District #5 - Fraser Patterson

District #6 – Tim Donovan

District #7 - Jackie Organ, Warden

District #8 – Wanda Hennick

STAFF PRESENT

Leanne MacEachen, CAO

Steff MacLeod, Municipal Clerk and Executive Assistant, Recorder

Alix Redden, CFO

Jessica Klein, Digital Communications Administrator

CALL TO ORDER

Warden Organ called the meeting to order and presented the agenda for approval.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Warden Organ added in an In Camera for legal.

On Motion of Deputy Warden MacLeod seconded by Councillor Donovan to approve the Agenda for October 20, 2025, with the noted change.

Motion Carried.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The Minutes of the September 22, 2025, Meeting of Council of Victoria County Municipal Council were presented for approval.

On Motion of Councillor Hennick seconded by Deputy Warden MacLeod to approve the Regular Council Minutes of September 22, 2025.

Motion Carried.

PRESENTATIONS

PROVINCIAL APPRENTICE PROGRAM PRESENTATION – CHARLENE BLACKIE

Ms. Blackie gave a presentation from the Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency, and some highlights include:

- Apprenticeship is a post-secondary career path that will lead to certification in a skilled trade.
- Apprentices complete a combination of on the job and technical training.
- Apprentices work with certified journeypersons who pass on knowledge and skills.
- Apprenticeship model is based on most of what you need to learn and will be learned on the job.
- Applies to someone who has worked many years in the trade.
- Normally requires between 8,100 and 10,800 hours of employment working with a Red Seal Journeyperson depending on the trade.
- Client does not need to complete an apprenticeship.
- Challenge the Red Seal Exam by completing application and writing exam.
- Fees have been significantly reduced from almost $800 dollars to $350 and are waived until 2026 in the construction trades.

INVERNESS COUNTY ASYLUM COMMEMORATION PROJECT PRESENTATION – INVERNESS COUNTY CAO KEITH MACDONALD

CAO MacDonald gave an historical overview of the Inverness County Asylum and its impact on the area and discussed the project, and the following were some highlights:

- A commemoration of the former Inverness County Asylum and cemetery and the people who lived and are buried there.
- A multi-year initiative led by the Municipality of Inverness County, in collaboration with neighbouring municipalities, the province, families, historians, and disability advocates.
- Focused on acknowledgment, education, and creating lasting public memorials.
- Project Goal: Restore dignity, preserve memory, and ensure long-term stewardship of the site.
- Seven interconnected components based upon research:

  - Truth-Telling & Acknowledgment: formal statements and apologies.
  - Family, Community & Government Engagement: inclusive consultation process.
  - Public Memorialization: permanent markers and monuments.
  - Education & Storytelling: signage, exhibits, and learning materials.
  - Ceremony & Ritual: unveiling and remembrance events.
  - Funding & Stewardship: sustainable, long-term care of the site.
  - Municipal Legacies: embedding lessons into DEIA plans and efforts.
- The Asylum site is a visible reminder of the institutional model the Remedy seeks to end.
- This commemoration offers public acknowledgment and memorial justice that complements policy reform.
- Together, reform and remembrance form a full response to historic and ongoing injustice.

CAO MacDonald's request of Council:

- Sign joint request for provincial support.
- Pass a formal resolution of acknowledgment of the Asylum's history and your municipality's role in it.
- Join in delivering a joint statement of responsibility with partners at a memorial ceremony and monument unveiling in 2026.
- Commit resources:
  - $1 per current resident toward project costs (one-time).
  - Designate a staff lead to join project team (1-3 hours per month).

Council will take this request under advisement.

TAX INTEREST WRITE-OFF REQUEST – YOLANDA DE FILIPPIS

Ms. De Filippis, a local resident, approached Council to request that the interest of $896.84 on her tax bill be waived, as it was incurred while awaiting the outcome of an assessment appeal with Property Valuation Services Corporation (PVSC). CFO Redden prepared an Information Report and it was included in the October 20, 2025 Council Package.

On Motion of Deputy Warden MacLeod seconded by Councillor Born to go with option 2 from the report, to waive the $645.24 interest on the commercial account only.

Motion Carried.

Councillor Hennick and Warden Organ voted against.

COUNCIL DISCUSSIONS

- SCHOOL SAFETY RESOURCE OFFICER (SSRO) TO STREET CRIME ENFORCEMENT UNIT (SCEU)

Councillor Patterson questioned the purpose of the RCMP reaching out regarding this and believes the rationale was just a courtesy to inform Council and CAO MacEachen confirmed that it was and specified that it was funded through the Province so is not included with Victoria County's regular, yearly, contribution to the RCMP.

Warden Organ thanked District Commander Weise for sending along the information, and wished them good luck.

DISTRICT HIGHLIGHTS

DISTRICT 1

- On Wednesday, I had the opportunity to participate in a Kairos Blanket Exercise at We'koqma'q First Nation, joined by the CAO, warden, and fellow councillors. This powerful and interactive learning experience explored the history of colonization in Canada from an Indigenous perspective. Blankets laid out on the floor represented the land, and as the exercise unfolded, we moved through a timeline that illustrated the profound impacts of colonization, including the loss of land, culture, and rights experienced by Indigenous peoples. Facilitated by Indigenous leaders, the session used storytelling, role-play, and reflection to bring historical and contemporary realities to life. It was an emotional and eye-opening experience that deepened our collective understanding of Indigenous history and underscored the importance of truth, reconciliation, and relationship-building in our work as municipal leaders.
- On Thursday, I attended a symposium hosted by Àros na Mara at St. Columba Parish Hall. The event featured a series of engaging and thought-provoking presentations focused on Indigenous knowledge, marine environments, and sustainable development. Key sessions included:
    - Culture, Science-Based, and Eco-Tourism – exploring opportunities to grow tourism in ways that honour cultural values and environmental sustainability.
    - The Mi'kmaq Relationship to the Bras d'Or and the Living Lab Concept – highlighting the role of traditional ecological knowledge in collaborative environmental stewardship of the Bras d'Or Lake Biosphere.
    - Language, Stories, and Song of the Seas and Coast – celebrating the living cultural heritage of our area through storytelling, music, and language connected to the sea.
- After the sessions, we gathered at the Port of Iona, where we enjoyed live music and a remote-controlled Seadoo demonstration, offering a glimpse into innovative marine technologies.
- The day concluded with a significant milestone: the official signing of a twinning agreement between the Àros na Mara Discovery Centre in Nova Scotia and the SAMS

Ocean Explorer Centre in Oban, Scotland. This international partnership reflects a shared vision for ocean research, education, and cultural exchange.

- On Friday evening, I attended a moving performance of the Celtic Mass for the Sea at St. Columba Church. This deeply spiritual and musical tribute to the ocean wove together voices, instrumentation, and liturgical elements to express reverence for the sea as both a life-giving force and a cultural touchstone. The performance left a lasting emotional impression and was a beautiful reflection of the interconnectedness between people, nature, and place.
- Throughout the weekend, I had the joy of assisting at the Wagmatcook First Nation Powwow, serving coffee and tea to attendees alongside Yvette and Colleen. The powwow was a vibrant and welcoming celebration of Mi'kmaq culture, filled with traditional dance, drumming, singing, regalia, and community spirit. It was an honour to contribute to such a meaningful gathering and witness the strength and beauty of cultural traditions being shared across generations.

DISTRICT 2

- Celtic Colours was a success.
- Provincial Department of Public Works issues were reported.
- Requested the Communications Department to please post Halloween hours 5pm-8pm.

DISTRICT 3

- Work is continuing on the Boardwalk.
- Baddeck Volunteer Fire Department held an Appreciation BBQ for the community; it was a great event.
- Attended a 65th Wedding Anniversary for Douglas and Chrisine Urquhart, a great couple.
- Celtic Colours numbers were high and well attended.
- Thank Steve MacDonald with the Provincial Department of Public Works for getting some patching work done.

DISTRICT 4

- Over the past several weeks, I've received calls from residents whose wells have gone dry. This is part of a wider trend we're seeing across Victoria County and the province due to prolonged drought conditions. In some cases, residents are left with no choice but to drill a new well, a major financial burden, especially for those on fixed incomes.
- Currently, the Municipality offers the **Water Supply Upgrade Lending Program** to help with this, but there is an application fee in place.

Today, I'm bringing forward the following motion:

On Motion of Councillor Born seconded by Councillor Donovan that Council remove the water application fee for one (1) year for the Water Supply Upgrade Lending Program to make the program more accessible, particularly in light of the ongoing drought conditions and increasing water challenges across the region. This would remove a barrier for residents already facing difficult circumstances and make the program more responsive to the current climate reality.

Motion Carried.

- **Fire Department Visit – September 30** I had the opportunity to meet with the North Shore & District Volunteer Fire Department — Chief Davidson, Deputy Chief MacDonald, and EMO Lyle Donovan. We discussed: Firefighter training requirements and future needs, Department logistics and equipment, Volunteer recruitment and retention and Emergency planning in rural areas
- I also learned more about the importance of portable dry hydrants in rural fire response. A huge thank-you to our volunteer firefighters, your work is critical to our communities' safety.
- **Trail Work Updates** Thank you to the St. Anns Bay Recreation Trail Society, and the St. Anns Bay Development Association (SABDA) led by Mary Ann Wilson for the excellent trail work underway on Lewis Mountain Road and the Rear Barachois Trail system. This is fantastic progress for local recreation and tourism.
- **Road Work Updates** Several road projects have been completed, including Englishtown, Murray Road, and Meadow Road in Tarbot. Thanks to Public Works for following through on these items.
- **Englishtown Community Hall** there is a Trivia Night - Wednesday evening, October 22 at the and the kitchen will be open.
- **North Shore Fire Dept. Open House – October 25 & 26** The department is hosting an open house both days from 11 AM to 6 PM. There'll be a food truck and the Haunted Bay — a fun and spooky way to meet your local volunteers and learn more about their work.
- **St. Anns Bay Turkey Dinner – November 1** St. Anns Bay United Church is holding a turkey dinner on November 1. Details are available on the "St. Anns Bay: Follow Our Story" Facebook page. A great community gathering.

DISTRICT 5

- A resident expressed a concern about wire lobster traps, and they were charged a fee for this and the concern is that if people are being charged for that, it could lead some to just cut the traps and let them go into the water, creating an environmental concern.
- Confirmed information regarding the road name change to Crystal Lane request from the September 22, 2025 meeting of Council.
- Councillor Patterson did some research on the Distracted Driving Legislation, and it is a provincial issue.

On Motion of Councillor Patterson seconded by Councillor Matheson-LeFort to take $5,000.00 from District 5 Budget for Friends of the Big Bras d'Or Hall for a new well.

Motion Carried.

- Prevention Academy, information page sent to Council. Participated in some online sessions. There is a global summit in December, funding provided by the Federal Government and I have been invited to go.

DISTRICT 6

- Huckle Buckle Festival was great and well attended and encouraged people to make sure they go next year. Great job to the volunteers.
- Highland Links is closed for the season.
- Celtic Colours concert at St. Peter's Church in Ingonish Beach was fantastic.
- Beach Crossing Road is in the application process to get new signage there.
- The colours are amazing, despite the drought this year.

DISTRICT 7

On Motion of Warden Organ seconded by Councillor Hennick to take $1,000.00 from District 7 Budget for the Neil's Harbour/New Haven Fire Department.

Motion Carried.

On Motion of On Motion of Warden Organ seconded by Councillor Hennick to take $1,000.00 from District 7 Budget for the North Bay Ingonish Fire Department.

Motion Carried.

On Motion of On Motion of Warden Organ seconded by Councillor Hennick to take $1,000.00 from District 7 Budget for St. Andrew's Anglican Church in Neil's Harbour.

Motion Carried.

On Motion of On Motion of Warden Organ seconded by Councillor Donovan to take $1,000.00 from District 7 Budget for St. John's Anglican Church in North Ingonish.

Motion Carried.

On Motion of On Motion of Warden Organ seconded by Councillor Hennick to take $1,000.00 from District 7 Budget for the United Church in North Ingonish.

Motion Carried.

- Had the privilege of attending a Blanket Exercise and the Waters Flowing Together session, these two events were very informative.
- The Huckle Buckle Festival event was held this past Saturday
- Streetlight repair request at 424 Shore Road South Harbour.
- Pinkalicous Auction will soon be coming up.

DISTRICT 8

- I would like to thank the Cabot Fire Dept for the invite to their Awards Ceremony and Dinner, both Warden Organ and I attended. It was so nice to see all the Volunteer Fire Fighters who keep our community safe, alongside the Ladies Auxiliary, thank you for all the hard work you do.
- A big congratulations to our very own Norman MacDonald with 25 years of service as a paramedic. Thank you for your Service we are lucky to have you.
- As Celtic Colours come to a close so do a lot of restaurants and other businesses. I hope everyone had a great season, I know it was a busy one.
- Still receiving complaints about RV's being on Dingwall Beach, even RV's going on residents' private properties because they can't find the beach, leaving garbage because there is no signage of where the beach is at.
- Attended the Blanket Exercise with other Councillors, Warden and CAO, it was very moving, I was glad that I went.

MOTIONS/RESOLUTIONS

On Motion of Councillor Kerr seconded by Councillor Born to approve $35,000.00 over a three (3) year period for Cape Breton University Medical School.

Motion Carried.

On Motion of Deputy Warden MacLeod seconded by Councillor Matheson-Lefort to send the seasonal tax letter to the provincial government.

Motion Carried.

On Motion of Deputy Warden MacLeod seconded by Councillor Born to approve the Second Reading of the Mobile Food Vending Bylaw.

Motion Defeated.

Council discussed the Public Hearing held prior to the Regular Meeting of Council and expressed appreciation for the feedback provided by the food truck operators. It was noted that one of the primary reasons this bylaw was brought forward was due to concerns raised by local restaurant operators; however, no restaurant operators were in attendance at the hearing.

CAO MacEachen reminded Council that a bylaw review had previously been completed, and this particular bylaw was not identified as a priority at that time. She asked Council to consider whether this bylaw should now be treated as a priority, if amendments are being proposed, or if it should be tabled. This matter, along with other bylaw considerations, will be discussed further at the next Committee of the Whole meeting.

On Motion of Councillor Born seconded by Councillor Patterson to

1. Write a letter to Bell Aliant expressing concern about the lack of communication and support for residents during the fibre optic transition, and request:

a) Clear, plain-language information about how landline services now function over fibre.

b) A plan to proactively inform and support affected customers, especially seniors and vulnerable residents.

c) Details on battery backup options to ensure 911 access during power outages.

2. Invite a representative from Bell Aliant to attend a future Council meeting to address these concerns directly.

Send copies of the letter to our MLA and the appropriate provincial ministers responsible for consumer protection and seniors.

cc: Hon. Barbara Adams, Minister of Seniors and Long-Term Care

Hon. Leah Martin, Minister of Communications Nova Scotia

Hon. Jill Balser, Minister of Service Nova Scotia / Cybersecurity & Digital Solutions

Hon. John Lohr, Minister of Municipal Affairs

Hon. Becky Druhan, Minister of Justice / Attorney General

Dianne Timmins, MLA, Victoria The Lakes

Motion Carried.

CAO AND COMMITTEE REPORTS

- The Province has approved the Victoria County Land Use Bylaw, with an amendment, in relation to Wind Turbines, and definition of a "Dwelling Unit" to include Small Options homes.
- I have made contact with NSHA and Parks! To get the Warden's house lease renewed and discuss our future in relation to maintenance of the property.
- Water bills out this week. Will include an insert explaining the new requirement to add a “W” to online banking payments
- We are on track for the November tax sale even despite Canada Post mail strike. Many accounts have paid so there are only 4-5 remaining. Ad will be on website later this month.
- Finance staff are meeting with other municipalities who have implemented online EFT payments to vendors so we can begin to transition away from cheques.
- We are running a social media awareness campaign during the last half of the year to promote the importance of properly posting civic address signs.
- Waste Reduction Week is Oct 20 – 26 and we are promoting the two local initiatives we are hosting and a province-wide contest from Divert NS.

    - Reusable Cup Savings – Monday, October 20
    - Community Clothing Swap – Thursday, October 23
    - Divert Nova Scotia contest: The Gifted Thrifter – October 20–26
- Snow removal tender is posted and closes November 7.
- C&D tender will be posted in the next week to week and a half.
- Tipping floor access changes coming in November.
- Intermunicipal solid waste collection project is moving along. Routes were sent to us this week for review.
- October is the last month for the Reuse Centre.
- Cabot Trail 100 advisory group is presenting to Cape Breton MLA's on October 27th, 2025 to convey the importance and collective desire for the NS Government to play a large and supportive role in this exciting upcoming celebration.
- Continued work on our Signage and Wayfinding project, STGI (Sustainable Tourism Growth Initiative), and on supporting Ingonish STEP as well as Jajiktek / Seawall Trail and Central Cape Breton Community Ventures initiatives.
- Washroom supply costs support program for businesses and organizations providing public washrooms has been launched last week and is retroactive.
- Will be attending with a booth and information about the IDEA plan at the pow-wow on Saturday & Sunday in Wagmatcook October 18th and 19th)
- Working to assist community groups in being prepared and organized to take best advantage of funding opportunities. Inviting NS department representatives to attend an open house for information sessions on annual funding opportunities. Next steps chats to be scheduled with Larry Maxwell & Mike MacSween for rural funding information sessions.
- Terry Smith has reached out, still trying to fill the DCBA Board position. Is anyone interested?

Councillor Born asked if she were to put her name forward, would there be a conflict of interest since she owns a tourism business and CAO MacEachen will look into this.

- General contractor is starting in Ingonish this week. Groundwork being started
- We are in the final stages of efficiency upgrades to our buildings. Heat pumps, LED lighting, etc.
- A regional meeting is scheduled for next week to meet the NSEMO Deputy Minister to discuss REMO. Plans are in the works to form a REMO with Richmond, Port Hawkesbury, and Inverness.
- We have also been requested by another development to consider more water/wastewater areas. We are investigating. How does Council feel about having a strategic priorities session? A check in, and discuss Council Operational and Capital Priorities (similar to our session last year in Iona)

Council agreed that a strategic priorities session/check-in would be beneficial.

- Several members of Council and myself attended a Blanket Exercise last week. Very impactful.

Warden Organ asked Councillors to let the Municipal Clerk know if they want any Committee of the Whole meetings held in their districts.

Deputy Warden MacLeod mentioned some of the transit drivers are sick, so trying our best to accommodate and encourages anyone interested to apply for casual driver positions

CORRESPONDENCE

All forwarded.

QUESTIONS FROM GALLERY

No one in attendance.

IN CAMERA MEETING

Warden Organ called for an In-Camera meeting to discuss legal.

On Motion of Councillor Donovan seconded by Councillor Hennick to accept the recommendations made at the In-Camera Session.

Motion Carried.

NEXT MEETNG

November 17, 2025, at 10:00am.

ADJOURN

Councillor Organ made a motion to adjourn at 1:30pm.