

October 29, 2023

The Honourable Brad Johns  
Chair, Standing Committee on Law Amendments  
Email: [Legc.office@novascotia.ca](mailto:Legc.office@novascotia.ca)

Dear Minister Johns & Members of the Standing Committee on Law Amendments;

**RE: Bill 340 – Municipal Reform Act**

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I write today on behalf of the Municipality of the County of Antigonish in support of Bill 340, the Municipal Reform Act (the Act). Thank you for considering the County's views.

First, I'd like to thank officials from the Department of Municipal Affairs and Housing (DMAH) and Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities (NSFM) who have worked diligently to bring these proposals forward. These are not easy issues or conversations, but they are important and will move our province and communities forward.

As introduced on October 17, the Act will remove mandatory municipal contributions for corrections and public housing. These are clearly provincial responsibilities, and this is a welcomed change. These changes will result in an estimated annual savings of over \$400,000 for Antigonish County.

We also applaud the creation of a new \$15-million application-based infrastructure program, which we understand to follow the approval of the Act. In the development of that program, we encourage DMAH to make calls for applications predictable and early so municipalities and their contractors can appropriately plan. This will make limited public funds go much further. We also encourage the province to increase the amount of funding available over time.

The Act will also see pre-1981 surplus schools remain in provincial ownership, rather than being transferred to municipalities, while providing municipalities with the first right of offer to purchase these facilities. This is also a positive step that will reduce risk for municipalities and create opportunities for our communities. As this process is further defined, we encourage the province to work closely with the local municipalities and communities to determine the best use for surplus schools that reflect their needs.

Antigonish County is one of nine municipalities that do not receive a Municipal Financial Capacity Grant, and this will not change as a result of this Act. Similarly, Antigonish County will not see any benefit from a new infrastructure program that will support

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municipally owned trunks & routes. Therefore, we will not provide comment on those aspects of the Act and Service Exchange proposal.

The Act will not result in a windfall of savings and significant extra funding for Antigonish County; the benefits and implications are greater for other municipalities. Rather, it will make small but meaningful adjustments to our municipality's relationship with the province, which is why we are providing our support. We don't consider this an end, but a beginning.

Our province and communities are growing. Meeting the challenges of growth means thinking and acting in new and innovative ways. Like municipal modernization more broadly, we understand and respect that this may look different in different communities; what works for or is supported in one part of our province may not be in another. At the end of the day, we are each doing what we believe to be right, and in the best interest of our communities.

The Municipality of the County of Antigonish embraces the challenges of growth and we are committed to working with our partners, including the province, for the betterment of our communities. The Municipal Reform Act is an important step in the right direction, which is why it has our support. We look forward to all the steps that come after and continuing to work with the provincial government on matters that increase capacity, address challenges, and strengthen communities and municipalities.

Sincerely,



Owen McCarron  
Warden

Cc: Mayor Brenda Chisholm-Beaton, President, NSFM  
Mayor Laurie Boucher, Town of Antigonish  
Honourable John Lohr, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing  
Honourable Greg Morrow, MLA for Guysborough Tracadie  
Honourable Michelle Thompson, MLA for Antigonish c  
Bryon Rafuse, Deputy Minister, DMAH  
Juanita Spencer, CEO, NSFM

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