

March 3, 2024

Honourable Brad Johns, Chair
Standing Committee on Law Amendments
Via Email: Legc.office@novascotia.ca

RE: Support for Bill 407, the Antigonish Consolidation Act

Dear Minister Johns and Committee members,

Please consider this my written submission to the Law Amendments Committee regarding An Act to Consolidate Antigonish.

I was the Warden for the Municipality of the County of Antigonish from 1994-2012. One of the most commonly asked questions during my tenure as an elected official was, "why can't the Town and County just get along?".

When I was first elected, the relationship between the Town and County of Antigonish couldn't have been further apart. Every decision was made in silos and there was next to no collaboration. It resulted in delayed infrastructure projects and programming, along with an overall disconnect in priorities for Antigonish residents.

It was frustrating. Not only that: it was unnecessary. Take the Antigonish Skatepark, for example. The fruition of the project took over 25 years, all due to the division between the Town and the County. It took a partnership with St. FX for things to come together.

Rather than duplication, we should focus on collaboration. We've learned this through authentic experiences of both municipalities joining forces for a greater goal.

Just look at the Antigonish Town & County Library. This project is a huge success story for our community. But there is a councillor from each municipality on the board and a member from each administration overseeing the facilities and attending meetings. This is unnecessary duplication. Also, when issues came up during construction it meant having to share all information twice, getting consensus from two councils instead of one. Inevitably, the process was jeopardized and slowed.

In Antigonish, we're one community that collectively holds the same values. County residents work in the Town. Town residents work in the County. We all use the same sidewalks, same parking lots, and same roads. County residents go to town for banking, for their appointments, and to eat at restaurants. Town residents come to the County for school, groceries, beaches and more. We all want our community to be great and prosper.

I have said it before and will say it again: Antigonish is one community of people that live together with shared cultures and rely on each other for our social and economic well-being. The current political boundaries between the Town and County don't affect our sense of belonging to the greater Antigonish community. As a community, we have progressed despite this artificial boundary, not because of it.

Times are becoming more challenging for everyone, and municipalities are no different. With increased demands on municipalities, we need to work together. Town and County Councils seem to get that. We're no longer seeing the Town-County division. Instead, we're seeing proactive collaboration.

A lot of time has been spent repairing our relationship. When I served as Warden, there were no joint council meetings. Our councils were working independently. Now, they happen quarterly, allowing town and county councillors to be in the same room, hear the same presentation and information, and have open conversations.

It's easy to debate why consolidation is important when both councils get along and are trying to make decisions together. We need to be taking politics out of it and thinking about what is best for our children and our community, today and in the future.

Our residents deserve the advantages associated with having one strong, united local government. A government that will be able to spend its time and resources fighting for and delivering better services to residents. One local government will be able to give residents the best services possible for their tax dollars and deliver them efficiently.

Today, the foresight of Town and County Councils has presented our community with a distinctive and historic opportunity for generations to come.

It is an opportunity we are not likely to get again. And it's why I feel consolidation is an obvious choice.

Herbert J. Delorey
Former Warden, 1994-2012
Municipality of the County of Antigonish