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Sent: March 4, 2024 9:02 AM
To: Office of the Legislative Counsel; johnlohrmla@gmail.com; Michelle Thompson; Tim Houston; gregmorrow4gt@gmail.com; Town of Antigonish Mayor; Owen McCarron
Subject: Letter Of Support for the Town and County of Antigonish Consolidation Bill 407

You don't often get email from mary.farrell@townofantigonish.ca. [Learn why this is important](#)

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The Province of Nova Scotia wants to double our population by 2060.

As a small business owner and councillor, I understand the importance of a sustainable, growing population. Antigonish is very fortunate to have two large economic engines, a regional hospital, and the university. To attract new students and staff to StFX, and healthcare professionals to St. Martha's, we need a thriving downtown, new commercial development for more services, as well as affordable and available housing.

Areas of municipal responsibilities are increasing, our demographics are changing, infrastructure needs to be upgraded, and the pressure for economic growth have never been higher. We need to break free from our municipal silos and move forward together.

As a councillor for the Town of Antigonish, I am often asked, "how will consolidation affect me and my family?" To be honest, it likely won't impact your day-to-day life. As a resident under a consolidated municipality, I, just like you, will continue to pay my taxes, my utility bills, and have my waste collected curbside.

That leads to the next question, "then why do it?" The future of our community, its longevity, depends on it. To do more and to accomplish what we need to, we need to create a new structure that will better serve Antigonish. Consolidation will allow us to make decisions for the entire community, it will lead to better planning, less bureaucracy, and reduced confusion.

Since the unanimous decision of both councils to explore the option of consolidation, there has been considerable effort by some members of our

community to share inaccurate information about what consolidation will mean for residents.

In October 2022, Town and County councils voted to ask the province to enact special legislation to consolidate us into one. Once an item becomes the will of council, it then becomes a priority for staff to complete. This often includes ensuring accurate and correct information is being presented.

The Town has spent \$48,542 on consolidation since the Fall of 2021. This includes the cost of a communications firm to assist staff in the creation and execution of a strategy to correct misinformation related to consolidation. Part of this strategy has been asking individuals and organizations with considerable experience and expertise to join the conversation. I am thankful to those individuals for speaking to the benefits of consolidation and for bringing more clarity to the topic. Their respectful contributions have elevated the discussion to help residents understand and trust that we made the right decision while looking at the bigger picture.

As a councillor my responsibility is to the taxpayer and to make decisions based on what I believe is the best interest of the community; it is why we are elected. I know the cost of everything is increasing. I see this in my own small businesses and in my home life. If I see an opportunity to stretch our tax dollar further to accomplish more – I am going to make it a priority.

Under the current model, Town or County staff spend a lot of time coordinating with one another. While it's fantastic there is so much collaboration it's not efficient and therefore not the best use of our tax dollars. I want to do more.

When Antigonish hosted the Special Olympics Summer Games in July 2018, it generated over \$8.6 million in economic spinoff to our community. We have the potential to attract and host more events like this, but it takes staff time and resources we don't have under our current structure. I believe we can free up staff time to focus on items like event hosting and sport tourism.

Currently Antigonish has two municipal councils making decisions for a community with municipal boundaries that no longer reflect the bigger

picture for Antigonish. Town and County residents cross the municipal boundaries daily without giving it a second thought. Visitors certainly don't see our boundaries, to them we are simply Antigonish.

The status quo should not be an option when we have an incredible opportunity before us. We want to be a partner in the growth of the province. We want people to choose Antigonish.

Respectfully,
Mary Farrell
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