

March 1, 2024

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

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

Re: Bill 407: Antigonish Consolidation Act

I write to you today as a resident of the Municipality of the County of Antigonish in support of Bill 407: Antigonish Consolidation Act. I want to thank you in advance for reading this submission.

In October 2021, when the councils of the Town and County of Antigonish voted to explore consolidation, I was one of thousands of residents who were excited to learn more about what this could mean for our communities. I don't have to tell you that the world we live in is much more complex than it was 20 years ago, and the expectations placed on municipal governments have changed significantly. As someone who works in the health and non-profit sector, I see regularly how municipal governments are looked at to solve social, health and economic challenges and I can tell you, in Antigonish, they are quick to answer the call but as times change, we need to examine how we will be best served to support our communities in the future, and residents believe consolidation is the answer.

Since October 2021, both Town and County Councils have worked with residents and businesses to explore what consolidation could do for our communities. They have engaged, they have asked questions, they have shared information and finances. They have listened. They've been consistently communicating with our communities, and I can tell you, they have our support.

As a mother of young children, when I think of where I want to see our rural community in 20 or 50 years, I want to see families, food security, social support like recreation centers and daycares that can meet the needs of the population. I want to see young parents able to thrive in rural communities because they have the support and services they need. I want to see functioning regional health facilities, with high tech medical equipment. That's my vision for our future.

All of this is achieved through innovative and informed decision making, through community engagement and partnerships. Consolidation has the potential to bring incredible change for Antigonish. We could cut through some of that red tape and pool resources to build recreation centers that house pools, rinks, places to gather, collaborative health centers, daycares even! We could develop tourism and economic development strategies that support long term sustainability. Coordinated initiatives for recreation programming and more opportunities for community funding to support projects aimed at tackling food insecurity, social isolation, and health equity. We may think health, wellness and social services are provincial responsibilities, but municipalities have a huge role to play and consolidated they are stronger and more equipped to understand and meet the needs of our communities. Our two municipalities are

collaborating already. Equip them with an efficient and effective system to enhance that collaboration and cooperation.

As you discuss Bill 407: Antigonish Consolidation Act, you have an opportunity right now to be visionaries. Consolidation can support economic growth and put a real coordinated effort into community development. Our municipal leaders have shown tremendous leadership over the past two and a half years and have earned the respect of so many in our community. I only hope as members of the Committee discuss this Bill, they can demonstrate the same leadership and courage. Change presents challenges, yet within those challenges lie opportunities. Be the leaders who seize these opportunities and drive positive change, rather than merely just reacting to it.

I strongly encourage you to pass Bill 407.

With kindness,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Sarah MacDonald".

Sarah MacDonald
St. Joseph's Nova Scotia