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To whom this may concern,

I have attached my submissions for Bill 407.

Thanks,
John Hurley

My name is John Hurley,

I am here on my own accord.

I would like to start off by thanking God for this opportunity to speak today!

Thank you, Mr. Chair,

A little bit of my history, I was born and raised in New Waterford and still call it my home. Many family members still reside there today. After high school, I attended trade school for plumbing and heating. After completing this course, I left NS due to lack of trade work. I went to Alberta for approximately 10 years where I received my red seal certification in the pipe trades. I also met my beautiful wife from Antigonish county. After marrying, we relocated to Antigonish County where we continue to reside today. I continued to work toward my blue seal certification while maintaining my work and home life balance between Alberta and Nova Scotia. I had many roles in the trade, Job steward, Foreman, and Supervisor. Much of my career was spent dealing with personal and contractual issues with colleagues and contractors. Each job had its own individual contract, and you were required to know the contract to protect yourself and others, depending on my position. I also spent time Teaching in the classroom of the NSCC before being injured in a car accident in 2013.

When I was in high school, my community was part of an forced amalgamation of the Cape Breton Regional Municipality.

I would like to state that I am not for the consolidation/amalgamation, and I DO NOT support the way it was presented.

If I was a purchasing a business, I would want to see all the records before a purchase agreement is made.

Now, if my wife, who runs a small business, came home, and told me that she went out and bought a business and here is some of the details. How should I react? Should I just trust my wife and say its ok, you run a business, I am sure your decisions are in our best interest. I am not a businessman, but I am a logical thinker. So, I try to question everything.

So, why is this a rushed decision?

Both the Town and County are corporations, so where is all the documents? If it was the best decision for the people, where are the records to show the public? If consolidation was the next step to collaborate on, why was it so hard for the public to get any information from both corporate bodies during the process?

The Mayor and Warden talked about services that are duplicated in the town and county. Why are they not collaborating, to work them out? It seems like an easy solution to me. Work together like you have been on pushing for this special legislation or amalgamation.

This process has not divided the people of Antigonish Town and County, rather it has brought us together. Thank you, LAD!

If two communities are working well and collaborating, why change? We heard from Port Hawkesbury Mayor Brenda Chisholm Beaton, who pointed out a good thing and I quote "They had a regional working group between 4 municipalities that was collaborating and working well". Thank you for your kind words, Brenda! I ask, should we just amalgamate all these counties? Is that the next step?

If you surveyed folks for one hour in New Waterford or towns surrounding Sydney in the CBRM and asked how they feel about their forced amalgamation, you would want to turn and run in horror. The feelings of the forced amalgamation are still felt today. While Mayor Bouchie and Warden McCarron are quick to talk about the successful amalgamation, they have not spoke to the possible downsides of an amalgamation of Municipalities like the residents of the CBRM.

I live in Michelle Thompson's riding, and I am also a neighbour of Greg Morrow. Neither Greg nor Michelle has had the time of day for me. I find the small government structure of our municipality although it has some inefficiencies, is best for the people and the people have more of a say in their future. If they dissolve, I am sure that our representation will go from 1200/ 2000 people per council to almost double the size per council. Our community will see less because of the size of the new districts and representation will have less time to address the issues in OUR community. Take CBRM for example, they are still working to decrease the size of council in the CBRM. When I lived in New Waterford, we had 4 wards with 2 council per ward and a mayor. Now the entire town has 1 councillor and the district covers all the surrounding county communities. Do you think he is able to work for the population like the 8 council and 1 mayor could?

Efficiencies can be made without amalgamation.

A transparent government is a government that operates openly and with transparency in its decision-making processes. This includes making information about government operations, policies, and decisions easily accessible to the public. Transparent governments are accountable to their citizens and strive to keep them informed about their actions and expenditures. Transparent governments also allow for greater public participation in the decision-making process and work to prevent corruption and misuse of power.

There are many reasons why I am here today. One would ask, why have laws in place, if every time the government sees fit, they can make a work around? That is what is happening here today. The government is making a work around the current structured law that is already in place for such a process. By creating special legislation for amalgamation/consolidation when the current legislation already in place is sufficient, is setting a dangerous precedent. The rules are very simple, give the people all the information and let the people vote on the matter. The current laws that are in place are sufficient for protecting the rights of the residents should

amalgamation or consolidation arise. If the people in this house are respecters of the law, then bill 407 should not pass into law.

Michelle Thompson recently talked about how about how fast she was going on the 28th, in the House of assembly according to the auditor generals report. Michelle referred to this as being the only issue she had. Maybe she should take a minute and talk to her constituents. Maybe just return one or two calls. Michelle is proud of her works, and we all know what happens with pride. Why not talk to her constituents and listen to their concerns?

Last week in the House of Assembly members of the Houston Government talked about Bullying. How is this legislation not bullying the residents of the Antigonish Town and County? Do the members of this house not recall last weeks talk on Bullying?

This government talks all about efficiencies. But we have not seen any of these plans for efficiencies. No, just talk. Up until June in 2023 you could not speak in the local Municipality of the County of Antigonish council without an agenda item. Does this seem like an efficient way for the public to address council with issues? The council rules did not allow for community issues to be heard. With much missing information and a shortage of time, I have spent a lot of time researching. The only way to get information on the most important issues in Antigonish County's history was thru FOIPOP. Is this efficient? Is this transparent?

I could not get a response from either Greg Morrow or Michelle Thompson on a meeting to talk about any of these important local issues. I had zero representation in the House of assembly.

Every time I needed a government response to a question, it could take at least two weeks and could take up to six weeks. Where does this leave me? It leaves me blind on the biggest deal in the history of my county.

Here are a couple things that might have been overlooked while the government is rushing the process. Is there any conflict of interest with the Warden and the Conservative Government moving on this legislation? Is the CAO in a conflict-of-interest position when moving this legislation? Who under the municipal Government should be deciding if someone is in a conflict of interest? Is it right that the courts are the place to decide a conflict of interest and not the ministers legal team? Is there a Judge and ethics commissioner that should be looking at all the relevant information? Should the same minister granting the special legislation be also offering to help you decide if you are in a conflict of interest? Nothing to see here. Maybe a second opinion should have been sought on Sean Brophy's conflict. No time allowed for this; they were forced into an emergency meeting. Maybe the courts should have been used in this question of conflict. Sean Brophy was considered in a conflict-of-interest position, he had two hours notice before the emergency vote was scheduled, he had no time to obtain a second opinion. Is this how democracy should work?

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Has there been investigations into any donations received by the political party that is moving the special legislature forward? Could this cause someone to be in a conflict-of-interest position? i.e. the Warden CAO and voting council members.

The government said they would respect the wishes of the people if there was a court case against the Municipality. Do they respect the people? In fact, both the municipal and provincial governments were so rushed in the decision-making process, some mistakes were made.

Here are some things I think are key to consider before Bill 407 is goes to its final reading. There are many potential disadvantages of an amalgamation. Here is just a few:

1. Resistance to change: People within the communities involved may resist the amalgamation due to uncertainty about their roles, potential changes in leadership, or the impact on their job security.
2. Cultural differences: When communities with different cultures are amalgamated, it can create conflicts and challenges in terms of aligning values, communication styles, and work practices.
3. Loss of identity: Each community has its own unique identity. Amalgamation may result in the loss of this identity, leading to confusion and disconnection among some parts of the community.
4. Integration challenges: Bringing together different systems, processes, and operational structures can be complex and time-consuming. Integration challenges can lead to disruptions in service delivery, customer satisfaction, and productivity.
5. Financial risks: Amalgamations can be costly, with expenses associated with restructuring, rebranding, and integrating systems. There may also be financial risks if the organizations involved have different financial statuses or liabilities.

Overall, while there can be benefits to amalgamations such as increased efficiency and economies of scale, it is important for communities to carefully consider and address these potential disadvantages to ensure a successful merger or consolidation process.

Community amalgamations can sometimes lead to conflicts of interest, particularly when different groups or organizations within the community have competing interests or goals. Some potential issues that may arise include:

1. Power struggles: When multiple community groups are amalgamated, there may be power struggles and conflicts over who controls decision-making processes, resources, and priorities within the newly formed entity.
2. Allocation of resources: Conflicts of interest can arise when there are disagreements over how resources (such as funding, equipment, or staff) should be allocated among different programs or projects within the community.
3. Conflicting priorities: Different community groups may have different priorities or objectives, and amalgamation can bring these differences to the forefront. Conflicts of interest may arise when one group's goals are prioritized over another's.

4. **Personal relationships:** In small or close-knit communities, conflicts of interest can arise due to personal relationships or connections between individuals involved in the amalgamation process. This can lead to perceptions of bias or favoritism in decision-making.
5. **Lack of transparency:** If the process of amalgamation is not transparent and inclusive, it can lead to mistrust and suspicions of conflicts of interest. Community members may question the motivations behind the amalgamation and the decisions made by those in power.

To address conflicts of interest in community amalgamations, it is important for all stakeholders to engage in open and transparent communication, involve community members in the decision-making process, establish clear governance structures and mechanisms for resolving conflicts, and ensure accountability and ethical behavior among those involved. It is also important to recognize and respect the diverse perspectives and interests of all community members to create a more inclusive and harmonious amalgamated community.

It is important to establish clear codes of conduct and conflict of interest policies to guide the actions of individuals within the amalgamated entity and promote fairness, integrity, and trust within the community.

Special legislation refers to laws that are specifically tailored to address a particular group, organization, or situation, rather than applying to the general population. While special legislation can sometimes be necessary to address unique circumstances, there are several potential problems associated with this approach:

1. **Lack of accountability:** Special legislation may create exemptions or special privileges for certain groups, which can lead to lack of accountability and transparency in decision-making processes.
2. **Inequity:** Special legislation may create inequalities by providing preferential treatment or advantages to specific groups, potentially disadvantaging other groups or individuals in society.
3. **Complexity:** Special legislation can add complexity to the legal system by creating a patchwork of laws that apply only to certain groups or situations, making it difficult for individuals to navigate and understand their rights and responsibilities.
4. **Lack of consistency:** Special legislation may lead to inconsistencies in the application of laws and regulations, as different rules may apply to similar situations based on specific criteria or circumstances.
5. **Political influence:** Special legislation may be susceptible to political influence or lobbying efforts, as legislators may be more inclined to pass laws that benefit specific interest groups or individuals, rather than serving the broader public interest.
6. **Legal challenges:** Special legislation may be subject to legal challenges on the grounds of discrimination, lack of equal protection under the law, or violation of constitutional principles, leading to uncertainty and potential conflicts in the legal system.

Overall, while special legislation can be a useful tool in addressing unique problems or situations, it is important to carefully consider the implications and potential drawbacks of creating laws that apply only to specific groups or circumstances. It is essential to balance the need for targeted solutions with the principles of fairness, equity, consistency, and transparency in the legal system.

There are several reasons why people should have a vote on amalgamation, which is the process of combining two or more entities into a single integrated entity:

1. **Democratic principle:** Giving people a vote on amalgamation ensures that the decision-making process is democratic and inclusive. It allows citizens to have a say in major changes that could affect their communities, resources, and governance structures.
2. **Transparency and accountability:** A vote on amalgamation promotes transparency and accountability in the decision-making process. It gives people the opportunity to voice their opinions, ask questions, and hold elected officials accountable for their actions.
3. **Community engagement:** A vote on amalgamation provides an opportunity for community engagement and dialogue. It allows residents to discuss the potential benefits, drawbacks, and implications of the amalgamation and to participate in shaping the future of their communities.
4. **Fairness and representation:** By allowing people to vote on amalgamation, decision-makers can ensure that the interests and concerns of all stakeholders are considered. It promotes fairness, representation, and equity in the decision-making process.
5. **Legitimacy of the decision:** When people have a vote on amalgamation, the decision is seen as more legitimate and credible. It demonstrates that the decision was made with the consent of the governed and reflects the will of the community.

Overall, giving people a vote on amalgamation is a way to uphold democratic principles, promote transparency and accountability, engage the community, ensure fairness and representation, and legitimize the decision-making process. It allows residents to have a voice in shaping the future of their communities and ensures that their interests are considered in major decisions that will impact their lives.

A good public disclosure is an essential component of any amalgamation process between municipal units. It is important to ensure transparency, accountability, and engagement with the community throughout the process.

When municipalities amalgamate, it is important to consider the protection of stakeholders, including shareholders, to ensure their rights and interests are safeguarded during the process. While municipal amalgamations involve public entities rather than traditional corporations with shareholders, there are legal frameworks and mechanisms that can help protect the interests of individuals and businesses impacted by the merger. Here are some considerations for legal protections for stakeholders in municipal amalgamations:

1. **Legislation and Regulations:** The legal framework governing municipal amalgamations should include specific provisions that outline the rights, responsibilities, and protections for stakeholders, such as residents, businesses, property owners, and taxpayers. This

legislation should address issues related to representation, governance, service delivery, financial impacts, and other key aspects of the amalgamation process.

2. **Public Consultation and Engagement:** The legal framework should require municipalities to engage in meaningful public consultation and engagement with stakeholders throughout the amalgamation process. This ensures that the concerns, perspectives, and interests of shareholders are considered and addressed in decision-making.
3. **Transparency and Accountability:** The legal framework should promote transparency and accountability in the amalgamation process, including requirements for disclosure of information, reporting on progress, and mechanisms for stakeholders to access relevant documents and data related to the merger.
4. **Legal Protections for Property Rights:** During an amalgamation, stakeholders with property interests, such as homeowners, landlords, and business owners, should have legal protections for their property rights. This may include safeguards against expropriation, zoning changes, or other impacts on property values and rights.
5. **Financial Protections:** The legal framework should include provisions to protect the financial interests of stakeholders, such as taxpayers, shareholders of municipal bonds, or individuals with financial investments in the affected municipalities. Clear guidelines on funding sources, taxation policies, and financial responsibilities in the amalgamated entity can help ensure financial stability and fairness for all stakeholders.
6. **Dispute Resolution Mechanisms:** In the event of conflicts or disputes between stakeholders and the amalgamated municipalities, the legal framework should provide mechanisms for resolution, such as mediation, arbitration, or legal processes. These mechanisms help protect the rights of stakeholders and address conflicts in a fair and impartial manner.

By establishing a robust legal framework that incorporates these protections for shareholders and other stakeholders, municipalities can promote trust, fairness, and accountability in the amalgamation process. Legal safeguards ensure that the rights and interests of individuals and businesses are respected and upheld during a significant change like a municipal merger.

Give the people the information and let the people vote on the most important issue in the History, of the Antigonish Town and County.

Thank you for your time,

John Hurley