

Antigonish Consolidation Act

Thank you Mr. Chair,

I am Bruce MacLean, a.k.a. Bruce, representing myself today as a resident of the Town of Antigonish.

My concern with the proposed Antigonish Consolidation Act, which would eliminate Antigonish as a separate town, is its failure to democratically allow the Town and County residents to express their voices on the issue.

It has been argued by the Town and County Councils that they have the right to decide the fates of their respective communities without seeking the authorization of their constituents through a plebiscite. In my view, this is an unacceptable course of action. When the Town Council was last elected, the demise of the Town as an independent municipal entity was not raised as an issue for voters to consider when casting their ballots. Omitting this very fateful action from the Candidates' platforms in the 2020 Municipal election, and subsequently denying residents a vote on the issue, has effectively denied those citizens their most significant democratic involvement. Specifically, their right to cast a vote on the issue of whether they wish to continue as residents of the Town of Antigonish or to become residents of the consolidated Town and County, has been ignored by Town Council.

The significance of denying residents the right to have input into their basic political status, is not only an infringement upon the local democratic process, but also a potential prelude to the unravelling of the democratic process at higher, more determinative political levels. Specifically, the weakening of the electoral process at the most basic level, the Municipal level, risks becoming a prelude to usurping citizen's electoral rights at the provincial and national levels.

With reference to the processes that serve to protect the democratic principles, awaiting the outcome of the Appeal Court process that has been initiated, is fundamental to a respectful

coexistence between the political and legal procedures and is essential for a viable democracy. Hence, the Nova Scotia Legislature should await the outcome of the Appeal Court initiative, prior to moving forward with Bill 407. As aptly expressed by Nancy Nunn during her Monday presentation to this Committee, "What is the rush?"

In summary, it is not Consolidation that is opposed, but rather the undemocratic process by which it is being pursued. Ensuring the democratic participation by residents of both the Town and County of Antigonish is fundamental to this process. Allowing the residents to vote on such a significant issue, would result in a more representative Municipal structure, regardless of the outcome of the vote. In addition, the Provincial Government would be applauded for safeguarding the underlying core principle of democracy – the right to vote.

Thank you for the opportunity to address the Committee on this matter.
