

Good morning Chair and Committee Members;

I grew up in the university Town of Antigonish, spent lots of time in the county, and currently live and work in Town.

The information sessions put on by Brighter Community Planning and Consulting was in large part a posterboard presentation. The regional municipality of Windsor – West Hants was touted as a good example for Antigonish Town and County.

The sessions were completed in June 2022 and a report issued late summer same year.

However the mayor and warden in September of 2022 announced, on social media and a press release, a sudden and striking change.

The new plan would be to dissolve the Town of Antigonish and amalgamate it with the Municipality of the county of Antigonish apparently to avoid RCMP cost escalation. no more regional municipality.

They never made public any documentation from the solicitor general to support this.

No council meetings were held on this significant change.

No new consultations were held with the people.

They didn't consider other options such as an economic development partnership of the 2 municipalities to reduce competition, have a coordinated development strategy and reduce inefficiencies.

Instead the mayor and warden pushed on with a vote on Oct 20 ,2022 requesting the province to do the consolidation.

The motion passed in Town with 3 councillors for and 3 against and the mayor voted for it.

A bare majority.

In the county , 5 voted for it , 3 against and 2 declaring a conflict .

Centering now on 3 issues:

1. LEGAL

Some residents of Antigonish took the matter to court in January 2022.

The province did not bring the request forward to the legislature in the spring of 2023,

The province did not bring the request forward in the fall session of 2023 as it was before the court.

This is serious case with a significant public interest component and continues in the Nova Scotia Court of Appeal.

I am asking the premier and you , our MLAs to please respect the process.

I am asking this committee to pass a motion to the effect that the bill is put in abeyance until the legal process is completed.

Issue 2 : PLEBISITE:

The people deserve a vote on this fundamental change in their government structure

The councils did not have a mandate for consolidation from their citizens.

By the way, I note the timeline set out by the mayor and warden in their plan had consolidation formally occurring on April 1 2025.

There should not be a rush to pass this bill.

I am asking this committee to placing the bill in abeyance until after the respective municipal elections in the town and county in October 2024

In addition the trust issues raised with these officials would be addressed in the October 2024 elections.

3 SETTING THE NUMBER OF COUNCILLORS AND DISTRICTS

Bill 407 at section 12(1) gives the transition committee up to April 26 . 2024 to apply to the NSUARB for a determination of the number of councilors and the boundaries of the polling districts in the consolidated municipality .

The municipality of the county of Antigonish couldn't get the mandatory 369 review done in a timely way notwithstanding that Stantec was retained in July 2023 ,and in spite of Stantec working diligently, the county had to ask the NSUARB for an extension to late January 2024 to complete the 369 review. It goes without saying that the study for the combined town and county will be more complicated. It is important for the people and candidates to know the districts well in advance of the election.

So by putting the bill in abeyance at this time, the concern of the tight time line is also addressed.

SUMMARY

This bill comes before you with 2 divided councils. The recent "revotes" in the town and county on January 29 confirmed this. The same bare majority in town .

And less support in the county than in 2022: 5 for and 4 against and 1 in conflict.

The people of the town and county of Antigonish are not divided. They never have been . They built out beautiful town and county and will continue to do so.

Thank you to people of Antigonish Town and County for your continued interest in this matter.

Coline Morrow

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ANTIGONISH

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November 23, 2023

Bruce Kiley, Chief Clerk of the Board
Nova Scotia Utility and Review Board
3rd Floor, 1601 Lower Water Street
Halifax, Nova Scotia B3J 3P6
Via email: board@novascotia.ca

Dear Mr. Kiley,

RE: M0417 - 2022 Municipal Boundary Review – Municipality of the County of Antigonish (MB-21-01)

Thank you for your correspondence of November 15, 2023, noting the Board's requirement to file the Municipality's municipal boundary review application as soon as possible.

As noted in my correspondence of August 16, 2023, the Municipality has retained Stantec Consulting Ltd to facilitate its required boundary review. Mr. Heseltine and Mr. Burke are working diligently to ensure the Municipality's review is of a high quality and reflects the Board's proscribed process. Likewise, Municipal Council is aware of the need to conduct this process expeditiously while also providing reasonable opportunity for public consultation, and its own consideration and decision-making.

By way of an update, the first phase of this review related to council size is complete and I expect a Council decision on options for phase two related to specific boundaries to be provided next week. I further expect the upcoming holiday season will affect scheduling of phase two public consultation. On that basis, a more realistic timeline for submission of the Municipality's application is late January, 2024.

As you know, it was not our intention to complete this exercise under these conditions. I thank you and the Board for your support and patience as we've navigated this difficult and now time-constrained path.

Sincerely,



Glenn Horne
CAO

Cc: Warden Owen McCarron, Municipality of the County of Antigonish
Nick Barr, Acting Director, Strategic Policy & Planning, NS Department of
Municipal Affairs and Housing
Mayor Laurie Boucher, Town of Antigonish
CAO Jeff Lawrence, Town of Antigonish

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August 16, 2023

Bruce Kiley, Chief Clerk of the Board
Nova Scotia Utility and Review Board
3rd Floor, 1601 Lower Water Street
Halifax, Nova Scotia B3J 3P6
Via email: board@novascotia.ca

Dear Mr. Kiley,

RE: M0417 - 2022 Municipal Boundary Review – Municipality of the County of Antigonish (MB-21-01)

Further to my correspondence of July 12, 2023, I wish to inform the Board that the Municipality has retained Stantec Consulting Ltd to facilitate its required boundary review. This work will commence immediately. Stantec is prepared to complete this review for the County as it is currently constituted, complete its report and submit it to Municipal Council by the end of 2023. Should special legislation be passed to consolidate the County and Town into one municipal during the fall sitting of the legislature, we will work with Stantec to adjust the scope of this exercise in compliance with that legislation.

Sincerely,



Glenn Horne
CAO

Cc: Owen McCarron, Warden, Municipality of the County of Antigonish
Nick Barr, Director Governance & Advisory Services, NS Department of
Municipal Affairs and Housing
Laurie Boucher, Mayor, Town of Antigonish
Jeff Lawrence, CAO, Town of Antigonish

ANTIGONISH

Our Community

TO: CONSOLIDATION STEERING COMMITTEE
FROM: MUNICIPAL & TOWN STAFF
SUBJECT: CONSOLIDATION: DECISION MAKING PROCESS
DATE: OCTOBER 4, 2022

SUMMARY

The attached infographic illustrates the consolidation decision making process, outlining what decisions are made by what body and when. Municipal and Town Councils have framed this process around the following question:

“Would the residents, businesses and the overall community be better served if the Town of Antigonish and the Municipality of the County of Antigonish became one municipal unit”

The attached infographic (Appendix A) breaks this process down into three phases:

1. Exploration Phase (current phase)
2. Consolidation Phase (transition to one municipal unit)
3. Operational Phase (business as usual & ongoing operation).

Each phase requires key decisions of Municipal and Town Council, as outlined in the infographic.

Exploration Phase

Beginning in September 2021, the County and Town have been exploring the potential for consolidation between the two municipal units. Guided by a Steering Committee comprised of the Mayor, Warden, and deputies, and supported by staff and consultants, this process has been about identifying the main questions and areas of interest for councils to make a decision. While many questions have been asked and answered, the recently completed public consultation framed the decision in terms of four key areas of consideration:

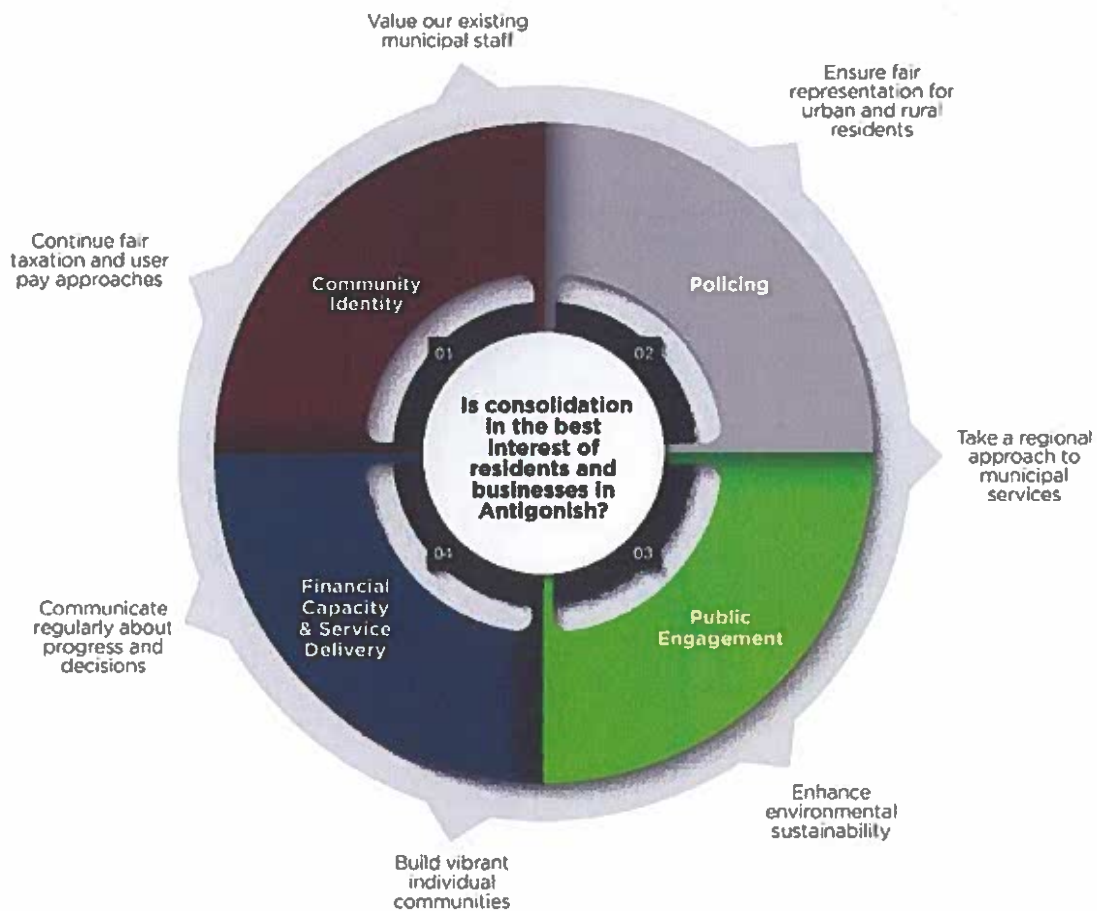
1. Policing
2. Community Identity
3. Public Engagement
4. Financial Capacity & Service Delivery

Information is being provided to councils to support its decisions in each of these four key areas. With this information Councils will answer the question above. The proposed motion on which councils will decide will be along the lines of: *the Municipality request*

the provincial government consolidate the Municipality of the County of Antigonish and the Town of Antigonish into one municipal unit through special legislation.

If a majority of councillors of both the County and Town vote “yea” to this motion, the Province will proceed to draft special legislation for the spring sitting of the House. If a majority of councillors of either the County or Town vote “nay”, consolidation does not proceed.

Figure 1 - Decision Making Wheel



Consolidation Phase

This phase would begin after councils make their decisions to consolidate or not and special legislation was passed by the province. The key activities of this phase are described in Appendix A. To provide more insight on the Consolidation Phase, the *Region of Windsor and West Hants Municipality Act* is provided for your reference (Appendix B). While details will differ (ie: if councils choose to consolidate Antigonish will become a consolidated rural municipality rather than a regional to avoid RCMP cost escalation; and

there is likely little debate on the name of the consolidated municipality) this legislation provides a good description of the process of consolidation, timelines and decision-making responsibilities. It also addresses succession of employment and continuity of records, documents and by-laws.

During the Consolidation Phase the existing Town & County councils continue to conduct business as usual, with some limitations on long-term decisions as described in the Act. Existing councils maintain responsibility to deliver municipal services and advocate for local issues.

Based on the projected timelines consolidation would formally occur on April 1, 2025. Only at that date would the Town and County become one. Until that date they continue to conduct business as usual as the consolidated municipality is organized. An election for the council of the consolidated municipality would take place in the winter of 2025. Therefore, the current council terms would be extended past October 2024, to March 31, 2025.

During this time a Co-ordination Committee (sometimes referred to as the Transition Committee), comprised of an external Coordinator, the Mayor, Warden, and deputies, and supported by staff and consultants is responsible for designing and implementing the administrative structure of the consolidated municipality.

It is important to note that in the experience of the consolidation between Windsor and West Hants there was ongoing discussion and consultation between the Co-ordination Committee and the existing councils. Existing councils were made aware of the Co-ordinating Committee activities and engaged in decision-making. This ongoing dialogue is in addition to the *Guiding Principles*, which we passed by both councils and used to guide the Co-ordinating Committee's decisions.

Operational Phase

The operational phase can be readily described as "business as usual". In this phase the consolidated Municipality of Antigonish (or however it is branded) continues to serve the needs of its residents through the provision of municipal services and advocacy of local issues within the bounds of the Municipal Government Act.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Before community engagement began, Municipal and Town Councils framed the following Guiding Principles related to the decision-making process:

6) Communicate regularly about progress and decisions: Communications with residents, businesses, councils, and staff should be frequent, transparent, and inclusive.

Based on feedback from the community, it appears these guiding principles are still appropriate and should be considered reflective of the community's perspective and expectations as council's consider their decision.

NEXT STEPS

Councils are invited to reflect on the information contained in this memo as it relates to its principal question: "Would the residents, businesses and the overall community be better served if the Town of Antigonish and the Municipality of the County of Antigonish became one municipal unit?"

Councils are further invited to discuss and provide feedback on this information. Additional information may be obtained based on specific questions of councils. Otherwise, councils are invited to consider this information in its decision making related to consolidation.

Appendix A - Consolidation Decision Making Process, October 4, 2022

Exploration Phase (September 2021 - Fall 2022)

- Municipal and Town Councils will assess if the residents, businesses and the overall community be better served if the Town of Antigonish and the Municipality of the County of Antigonish became one municipal unit.
- Key activities:
 - Develop Guiding Principles
 - Determination on RCMP Contract
 - Assess High-Level Impact on Municipal Operations
 - Public Engagement
 - Decide if municipalities will consolidate or not.

Consolidation Phase (Spring 2023 - April 1, 2025)

- If councils decide to consolidate, special legislation will be passed to establish the consolidated municipality and guide the transition.
- **Transition Committee** oversees the transition to a consolidated municipality. Operating within the Guiding Principles, key activities include:
 - Hire a CAO
 - Design and implement the administrative structure of the consolidated Municipality.
 - Apply to the NSUARB for a determination of the number of councillors and the boundaries of polling districts.
 - Conduct an election for the consolidated municipal council.
 - Begin the coordination and alignment of municipal services as appropriate.
 - Prepare the first operating, capital and utility budgets for a consolidated municipality.
- **Municipal & Town Councils:**
 - Continue to oversee the operations of the existing municipal units.
 - Continue to develop and approve operating, capital & utility budgets for the existing municipal units.
 - Continue to consider and approve bylaws, policies and initiatives for the existing municipal units.
 - Continue to exercise authorities as a councillor for municipal unit.
 - Represent constituents.
 - Receive regular updates, provide input & feedback on Transition activities.

Operational Phase (After April 1, 2025)

- In the same fashion a municipality does today, the staff and council of a consolidated municipality will:
 - Assess how / if services can be delivered more effectively;
 - Evaluate requests for services;
 - Foster community initiatives;
 - Consider bylaw and policy reflective of the community it is meant for;
 - Develop current and future priorities;
 - Develop and approve operating, capital & utility budgets.