

**Presentation to Law Amendments Committee
Speaking Notes**

Thank you Mr. Chair,

And thank you Committee members for given me this opportunity to speak today.

Jack Sullivan

This is the first opportunity I have had as a resident of Antigonish to speak on this very important issue in an official public forum.

I am a proud member of Let Antigonish Decide, but today I am here representing myself, and I take no position on consolation.

My wife, Valerie and I are life-long residents of Antigonish. We raised our family here; ran a successful construction company for 30 years; and we continue to be active in our community. I held numerous elected positions , Parish Council, SchoolBoard, town councillor, deputy mayor and currently president of Antigonish Landlords Association.

Before I go any further I must state that I take offence to Mayor Pam Mood's remark here on Monday. Painting my town in such a negative light.

What the people of Antigonish are saying is

they are **against the process**

the lack of information

the lack of a business analysis

In the Warren submission he refers to is a financial statement. What is needed is a business analysis, simply put the pros and cons

Example :

The condition of the Town infrastructure, the sewer treatment plant, the water treatment plant, town streets,

Town has unionised workers the county has not

Mayor says no one is going to lose their job.

Warren says we can save costs by cutting duplication.

The only financial analysis quoted by Warren and Deputy Mayor was the one done by KPMG that is almost 20 years old.

In a recent poll, conducted by MainStreet research noted that the poll has grown from 70% to 75% of respondents feel Town and County residents should be given a vote on consolidation.

It is also important to note support for the position taken by the councils has declined from 14% to 12%.

In an open and democratic society we elected individuals to represent us.

Last week when I was in the Legislature, Premier Houston took the time to speak with some of us.

I felt like it was the first time we had the ear of someone who had the power to give us a voice.

During our discussion, Premier Houston shared the concern that he felt bound to proceed with Bill 407 because both Councils voted in favour of this action.

However, we are all well aware that it is Premier Huston's government that has the power to make it law.

1. **Not one member of the Town or County Councils** ran on a platform of consolidation. They had **no mandate for consolidation.**
2. I find it quite interesting that when the council voted to **explore** consolidation – no councillor was found to be in conflict. Yet when it came time to vote for consolidation, **two county councillors were informed that they were in conflict and were threatened with legal retribution if they voted.**
3. The Mayor and Warden have consistently said that there are **only a few disgruntled people.** Yet **over 42-hundred people** signed a petition asking for information to make an informed decision on the direction for their community.

This petition was rejected by the house leader on Monday

We live a life of privilege in Canada but it is a privilege **we must protect.** Just look around at what is happening in the world today. Democracy is fragile.

With the municipal elections just months away, **a solution is staring us in the face – .**

Let Councillors run on their platform, that avoids a plebiscite while giving the people their opportunity to have their say.

As a proud father of 13 children, I want my children and grandchildren to understand the importance of standing up for what they believe in

Democracy is worth fighting for.

Thank you

Premier Houston's government has the power to make this law.

Debate belongs in Antigonish

Questions:

Why was the petition rejected? A technicality I guess. You'll have to ask the House Leader. As someone who collected many of those signatures and who stood in front of a packed hall in Tracadie asking Zach XXX to present our petition to the government, I know our intention was always to present it to the government.

Poll – Mayor Boucher indicated not valid – Letter from the President and CEO clearly corrects the Mayor on her inaccurate statements. I understand she has been officially asked to retract her statements and apologize to this Committee and Mainstreet Research.

The Deputy Mayor confirmed both municipalities are in good financial situations. So what is the rush? Why the need for special legislation? Why not just follow the existing legal process?

After reading the Chronicle Herald article this week, I feel compelled to dispel the negative impression of Antigonish that may have been left with some comments about hate talk and bullying since our Mayor did not defend our Town.

Let me tell you what Antigonish is.

We have a beautiful town nestled in a valley, surrounded by a beautiful countryside and filled with beautiful, warm people who look after each other.

We are the home of the Antigonish Movement and the Coady Institute.

We are the home of STFX and the world renowned X Ring

We are the home of a people that work together for a great good.

When our country put out a call to support refugees - Antigonish stepped up.

In our community we have 2 sisters, one of whom recently became a widow and the other who lived in their family home to look after their parents until they had passed away. The two sisters moved in together, freeing one of their homes for a family with 5 children so they could have a place to live.

Across the street where I live is a mother with 4 children who only knew the life of a refugee camp. When they arrived they could not speak any English. Now the children are excited about school and their future.

That is Antigonish.

Emotion: it is tossed around as if it is a sign of weakness.

I say to you members here representing your communities - if you don't have love and passion for the community you represent you shouldn't be seated here.

I must admit I have felt annoyed when some people seem to dismiss our concerns saying it is "an emotional topic" but I accept the truth. It is emotional. At first, I thought it was because I love my town so much and thought that 3 councilors and a mayor with no political mandate could pass a vote to dissolve the town and bring an end to 135 years of history made me physical sick.

I love my community but I've realized the real issue is how wrong this process has been.

Public life is not always easy. I know. I was once a Town Councillor and then the Deputy Mayor for the Town of Antigonish. I was also elected to the local parish and school boards. I know you sometimes have to make unpopular decisions. But those decisions are made easier when you know the why and you have a mandate for the issue and you have the facts and can explain the why to people. I've stood in front of a packed room in Canso and defended our decision to close the school. It was not a decision anyone of those in attendance wanted to hear but we could stand up and defend our decision. We could explain why. We could show them the numbers.

In closing Mr. Chair, I would like to share my concern that Bill 407 is a foregone conclusion. That our efforts may be in vain. But I continue to hold on to a glimmer of hope that

you will see that this debate does not belong here – it belongs back in Antigonish.

The Mayor and Warden may have cooked up this lethal concoction for our Town but this government has the power to right this ship. Premier Houston passionately defended his community's right to a vote – I ask him to defend ours.