

# Representation, Council Size and District Boundaries

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ANTIGONISH

Our Community

## Introduction

When discussing the potential merger of the Town and County, questions arise about the possible changes in representation, the size of a new council and the impact on existing District Boundaries.

### Guiding Principle

6. Ensure fair representation for urban and rural residents

When are these things decided?

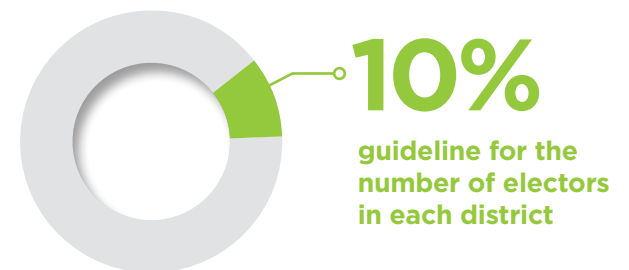


Representation, Council Size and District Boundaries are important questions, and there is a well-established process in Nova Scotia to determine these and regularly review them through the Nova Scotia Utility and Review Board (UARB). *This work would be done by a Joint Transition Committee in preparation for the election of a new regional council. This will only happen after a decision to consolidate has been made.*

The Transition Committee would consult with all of the communities involved, develop options and propose the size of Council and the geography of district boundaries and explain their decision to the UARB. The UARB would also consult with the public as part of its review of the proposed Council size and boundaries.

## Balanced Representation

The UARB has established a general concept of balanced representation - everyone's electoral vote will carry the same weight, regardless of where they live and uses a guideline that the number of electors in each district should be within 10% of the average for all districts. Exceptions can be made to reflect things like travel distances and communities of interest.



There are two main issues when considering Council size.



## 1 Council Size



## 2 District Boundaries

### 1. Council Size

How many Councillors are needed to effectively represent citizens and to govern the municipal unit? Currently, the Municipality of the County of Antigonish has 10 Councillors, one of whom is chosen by their peers as Warden. The Town of Antigonish elects 6 Councillors at large plus the Mayor.

**In terms of relative size, the County has a population (2021) of 15,473 and the Town has 4,656.**

In recent years, Nova Scotia municipal councils are smaller. The Province has created a process through the UARB where municipalities have to review their size and boundaries on a regular basis. The County currently undergoes this process every eight years. The Town does not because councillors are elected at large.

### 2. District Boundaries

The review and consultation process for establishing each district must consider several factors listed in the Municipal Government Act (Section 368 (4)):

Number of electors

Relative parity of voting power

*(the 10% plus or minus guideline)*

Population density

Community of interest

Geographic size

The typical approach for establishing municipal boundaries involves the preparation of maps showing the proposed changes and consulting with the communities involved before making a decision.

Current Councils will not be able to determine any new district boundaries or size of a new Council before the decision about consolidation is made.

## Recommended Approach

We believe that electoral districts should foster a balance between rural and urban communities. This would require some blending of urban and suburban areas around the Town with their surrounding communities, and adjustments across more distant districts to reflect these changes. This same concept was used in Queens Regional Municipality, and it has worked well to balance rural and urban interests when making decisions for the whole municipality.

**Summary:** Should the Town and County decide to consolidate, there are clearly established procedures to ensure balanced representation for all voters in a new municipal unit to determine the number of councillors required for accessible and effective decision-making, and for deciding on the boundaries of new electoral districts.