

# The Consolidation Process

3

ANTIGONISH

Our Community

## Introduction

In September 2021, both Councils approved the exploration of a possible merger. As a result, they began a process with a few important steps.



### Guiding Principle(s)

- [1. Take a regional approach to municipal services](#)
- [3. Communicate regularly about progress and decisions](#)
- [5. Value our existing municipal staff](#)
- [7. Enhance environmental sustainability](#)

## When would the potential consolidation of Town and County be decided?

Town and County Councils are researching the possibility of consolidation. As part of that research, both Councils would like to conduct a thorough community engagement process. After obtaining funding from the Department of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the Town and County hired Brighter Community Planning to develop and implement an engagement and communication project to ensure as many people and businesses as possible have the opportunity to provide their input.

The community consultation process will take place in April and May with a final report going to the Municipalities summarizing the findings from the engagement to be made available in late May. **Town and County Councils will make a decision to move ahead or maintain the status quo in Summer 2022.** Before this important decision is made, both Councils are committed to a wide ranging community consultation process.

## What is the objective of the consultation process?

“

**For Councils to decide if residents, businesses and the overall community would be better served if the Town and County became one municipal unit.”**

Brighter Community Planning will use a variety of online, print and in person approaches, respecting public health guidelines, to talk, listen, respond to questions and to identify important themes and issues coming from residents in all parts of the Town and County.



## How can I take part in the consultation?

There will be lots of opportunities to provide your comments, to meet with Council and Staff, and to get questions answered:

- ✔ Basic information about the consultation process became available in March on **Antigonish.ca**.
- ✔ A special Antigonish Consolidation Consultation and Engagement website, called Howspace, launched in February. This is a place to share information, ask questions, provide comments and take part in discussions.
- ✔ For those who prefer to receive information on paper, the April issue of County Connect was distributed in all communities and included a special insert on the consultation process and possible consolidation.
- ✔ Community information sessions are being planned for April and May, subject to any health restrictions, to provide a face-to-face opportunity to learn about a possible consolidation, ask questions and have them answered.
- ✔ You can also contact **info@antigonish.ca** or call toll free **1-833-563-2786** or **1-833-563-2787** and staff will respond to you directly.

## What happens, if Councils want to move forward with consolidation?



The following is a partial list of what would need to be done if both Town and County Councils vote to move forward with consolidation:

- ✔ Work with the Department of Municipal Affairs and Housing to obtain special Transition Legislation and funding for the consolidation process.
- ✔ Transition Legislation would provide for:
  - Creating a Joint Transition Committee (Mayor, Warden, Deputy Mayor and Warden, CAO's) to establish the new Municipality.
  - Hiring a Transition Coordinator to direct the consolidation process with a target date of April 1, 2024.
  - Guiding the Transition Committee and CAO's in establishing a consolidated organization, creating the new administrative structure.
  - Recruiting a CAO for the new municipality.
  - Developing combined financial, taxation and debt policies and first budget.
  - Transferring all existing municipal by-laws, policies and contracts to the new municipal unit.
- ✔ Complete an electoral boundary review study and seek approval from the Nova Scotia Utility and Review Board.
- ✔ Organize the first election of Mayor and Council for the combined municipality.
- ✔ Complete the joint transition process by April 1, 2024.

**Summary:** Town and County Councils have begun a process to consider whether consolidation would better serve residents, businesses and the broader community. They have created a joint Steering Committee and have retained Brighter Community Planning to lead the consultation and engagement to take place in April and May. Public input will help Councils make a decision on whether it will proceed with consolidation.