

# Guiding Principles for Potential Consolidation

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## ANTIGONISH

Our Community

Experience with other municipal mergers has shown that it is important to be clear at the outset about the reason to consider a merger and to set in place some Guiding Principles for key decisions. Councils for both municipal units sat together early in the exploration process and developed these Guiding Principles to reflect what is important to our community. They also provide insight into what is top of mind for Councillors.

### Objective for the Potential Consolidation of Town and County

Consolidation is being considered to explore the creation of a stronger local government and a unified voice to improve municipal services, community development, economic opportunities, and the quality of life for everyone in Antigonish.

### Guiding Principles

- 1. Take a regional approach to municipal services:** Work creatively, deliberately, and visibly to improve municipal services, economic development, tourism, culture, and community infrastructure for all residents and businesses in the Antigonish region.
- 2. Build vibrant individual communities:** Promote community identity in rural, urban and First Nations communities, so the whole municipality will be stronger.
- 3. Communicate regularly about progress and decisions:** Communications with residents, businesses, councils, and staff should be frequent, transparent, and inclusive.
- 4. Continue fair taxation and user pay approaches:** Residents and businesses should only be taxed for services and infrastructure they have access to. Property tax rates and infrastructure debt should utilize area tax rates and utility fee approaches that exist today wherever possible.



- 5. Value our existing municipal staff:** The blending of Town and County employees will recognize the value, knowledge and dedication of our current staff and every effort will be made to retain staff and to provide new opportunities.
- 6. Ensure fair representation for urban and rural residents:** District boundaries should ensure every voter has the same electoral power as every other voter, balance rural and urban interests, and recognize local communities of interest.
- 7. Enhance environmental sustainability:** Ownership of the Antigonish electric utility is central to expanding green energy options and reducing our carbon footprint. Build upon the success of initiatives and partnerships with the Alternate Energy Resource Authority and the Municipality's Energy Management Plan.

**Summary:** The Town and County are exploring a possible merger to one new municipal unit. They have developed a clear objective for this process, and some Guiding Principles to provide a transparent framework for consolidation.

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