

September 12, 2022

Town and County provide update on policing as part of the exploration of consolidation

(ANTIGONISH, NOVA SCOTIA) – As the Town and County of Antigonish prepare to share feedback received during its public engagement sessions almost one year after both councils voted unanimously to explore consolidation, they are providing information on what they have learned regarding policing contracts in a consolidated municipal unit.

The public engagement held in the spring was aimed at gathering input to better understand the opportunities and concerns of residents, businesses, and the overall community if the Town and County consolidates. Throughout the engagement sessions, both the County and Town acknowledged the potential for consolidation to change the costs associated with their respective policing contracts. As a result, staff have been working diligently with provincial and federal government partners to better understand the options before Council makes their final decision.

When consolidation was first reviewed by Councils, it involved the dissolution of the Town and County and the creation of a consolidated municipality. Further engagement with the provincial and federal governments, as well as independent legal counsel, identified that a new municipality would require a new contract for RCMP services which would result in additional costs with no changes to the level of service for the Antigonish area. However, using the same collaborative consolidation process but dissolving the Town of Antigonish, and retaining the legal name of the Municipality of the County of Antigonish would eliminate the need for a new contract and avoid approximately \$1 million in additional costs per year.

“At the end of the day, whether you currently live in the Town or County, we all call Antigonish home,” said Laurie Boucher, Mayor, Town of Antigonish. “The way to move forward and avoid the increase in costs is to dissolve the Town and simultaneously restructure the County where the two units enter as equal partners to create a consolidated organization.”

Currently, the Town and County have their own, separate contracts with the RCMP. Each unit has a 70/30 funding formula meaning each municipal unit covers 70 percent of the contract and the federal government covers the remaining 30 percent of the costs. This funding formula would continue under a consolidated municipality.

“The goal when reviewing the option for consolidation is to determine if the residents, businesses and the overall community would be better served by one municipal unit while also creating efficiencies therefore, we need to avoid any unnecessary costs in the process,” said Owen McCarron, Warden, County of the Municipality of Antigonish. “Our goal is, and has always been, to build a stronger Antigonish for all.”

If both Councils decide to move forward, the consolidated municipal unit would be legally called the Municipality of the County of Antigonish. All other aspects of consolidation would remain the same. A

new organizational structure would be created in partnership between the existing municipalities, and Council's guiding principles, including valuing staff from both organizations, would be the driving force behind the creation of a consolidated municipal unit.

"Based on what was presented to us by our government partners and legal counsel, it is as simple as a name to avoid a significant unnecessary increase in policing costs. The Town will always be the Town and our history will remain strong and proud, that I know for sure. If we move forward, we are doing it together, to build a stronger Antigonish as partners with equal opportunities," said Boucher.

The Town and County are committed to keeping the community updated on progress and information gathered as Councils assess the consolidation opportunity. The public engagement findings will be released later this week in a What We Heard Report that will be available for comment until September 29th. Councils are preparing to vote on whether to consolidate this fall.

For more information on the exploration of consolidation, please visit www.antigonish.ca

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