

September 27, 2018

An open letter to our residents regarding StFX Homecoming (2018)

To our residents,

At our Council meeting this month, we passed a motion to provide \$4,000 to St. Francis Xavier University to support a Head Phone DJ Party and BBQ for students, organized by Student Life and hosted on campus as part of 2018 Homecoming celebrations. We have received both positive and negative feedback for this decision, and this letter is intended to provide further context around why that decision was made.

Last year – as in years past – we witnessed some unpleasant scenes or incidents related to homecoming celebrations. While each year this is a concern for our community, we were alarmed by the issues raised by our RCMP. In a report on the event, the local detachment detailed the increasing police presence required, and the growing number and severity of the issues they are responding to at this time of year that pose a risk to all residents of our Town. We have also noted that the number of complaints received from concerned residents regarding behaviors observed during this weekend has grown over the past few years.

I, too, am concerned by these trends, and I think our Council collectively recognizes something has to change. Together, we determined that it was in the community's interest to take proactive steps towards mitigating the challenges posed by this weekend-long celebration.

Shortly after Homecoming, 2017, the Town and its By-law Enforcement Office, Landlords Association, RCMP and StFX began working together to develop a plan to ensure that the safety and well-being of students and Town residents, as well as lessening the impact of disruptions to our neighborhoods, are priorities this weekend. The rationale behind the resulting event is to provide students with a new, fun option for celebrating homecoming on campus.

The \$4,000 we have put towards this event is not just a financial contribution; it is a strong demonstration of a commitment to working in partnership with StFX to find a solution to the issues and challenges this weekend can pose. We view the event as a first step toward finding alternatives to neighborhood and community disruption during this otherwise exciting weekend.

We cannot forget that Homecoming is a time for celebration; a time that draws the Xavierian family together. However, we must also recognize that Antigonish is home to more than students and alumni of StFX, and that everyone has a responsibility at all times to demonstrate respect and good citizenship within our community as a whole. It is important to keep in mind that, too, that we are attempting to change the culture around homecoming in our community, and cultural change takes time before we may see the fruits of our decisions. What I can promise is that our Council will continue to work with our community partners to find solutions that will mitigate the effects of what should otherwise be a positive celebration of the spirit of the Xaverian family.

I would encourage any residents with questions or concerns to please contact me at mayor@townofantigonish.ca or by calling 902-867-5577 or 902-870-7795.

Regards,

Mayor Laurie Boucher