

STEWIACKE
RIVERS OF OPPORTUNITY



HALF WAY BETWEEN THE NORTH POLE & EQUATOR

AMALGAMATION ENGAGEMENT SESSION

The Motion: Why are we here?

Council directed that we hold a public engagement session to seek feedback from residents.

Council is here to listen to your feedback.



Definitions:

Amalgamation

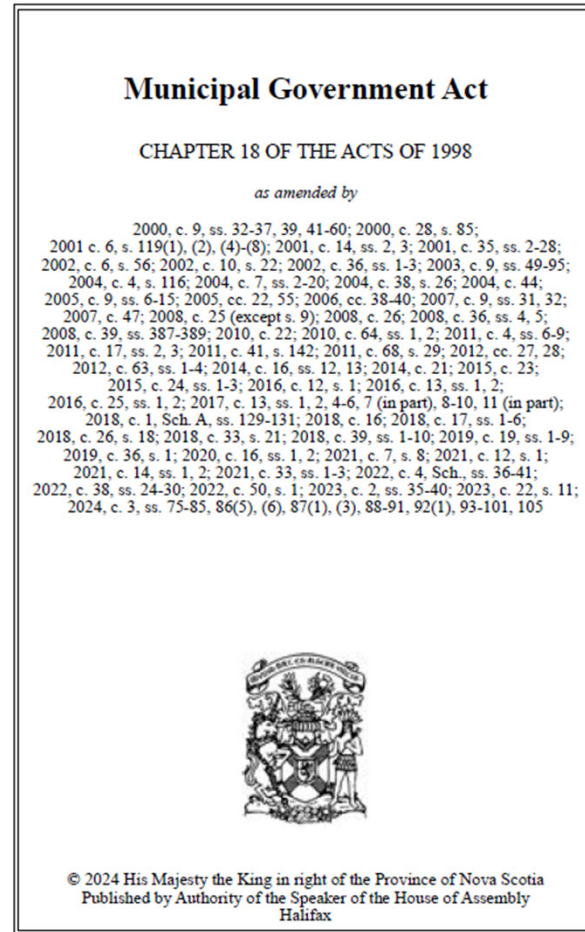


the action, process, or result of combining or uniting.

In a Municipal context it would be the process of joining another Municipal Government.

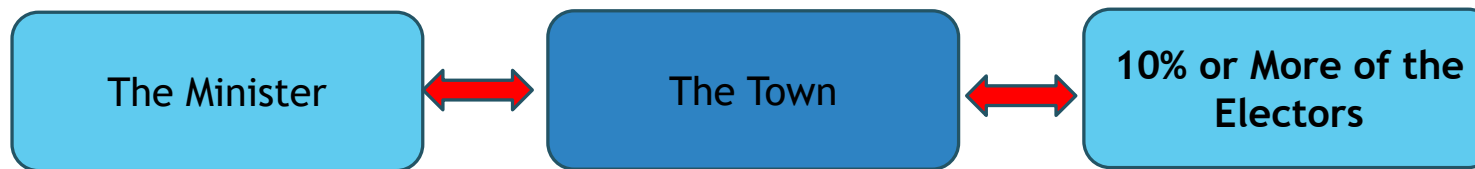
What does the Municipal Government Act say?

- Application Must be made to the Nova Scotia Regulatory and Appeals Board led Process (NSRAB or “the Board”).
- Requires an application and a hearing.
- Requires studies and reviews.
- Requires another partner to amalgamate with.



What does the MGA say?

Who can make the application to the NSRAB?



Amalgamation or annexation

358 Municipalities may be amalgamated or the whole or part of a municipality may be annexed to another upon application to the Board by

- (a) the Minister;
- (b) a municipality; or
- (c) the greater of ten percent or one hundred of the electors in the area proposed to be amalgamated or annexed.

1,282 voters
(at time of last election)

10% = 129

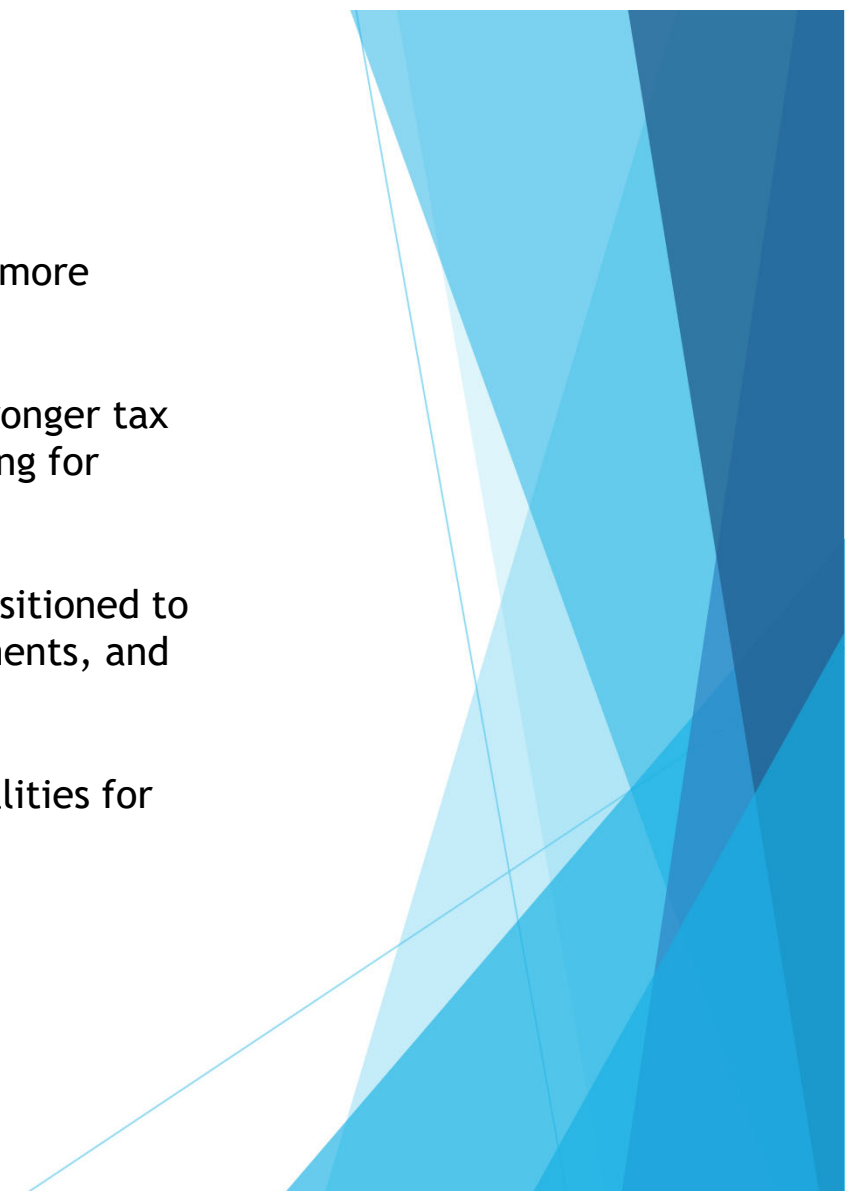
PROS:

Increased efficiency: Amalgamation can pool resources to create more efficient services and reduce redundant administrative costs.

Stronger tax base: A larger, combined municipality may have a stronger tax base, which could lead to more economic growth and better funding for projects like housing and infrastructure.

Improved service delivery: A single municipality can be better positioned to tackle larger issues, manage projects like infrastructure improvements, and deliver services more effectively.

Reduced competition: Eliminating competition between municipalities for residents and industry can help create more stable and consistent development within the region.



CONS:

- **Loss of local representation:** Amalgamation can lead to a loss of local representation, as larger merged entities may have fewer councillors.
- **Higher costs:** Instead of reducing costs, amalgamation can lead to higher costs as the new entity may level up service costs to the most expensive level among the pre-amalgamated units.
- **Loss of democratic accountability:** A single, larger government can reduce the direct accountability that residents feel to their local representatives.
- **Complexity and time:** The process of amalgamation is complex and can be lengthy, requiring significant time and effort to complete.
- **Lack of public information:** Some residents feel that amalgamation is being pushed without sufficient information or public consultation, leading to distrust and concerns about the lasting effects on their communities.



Example - Springhill, Nova Scotia:

The dissolution of Spring Hill, Nova Scotia, was the process by which the town gave up its municipal charter to become part of the Municipality of Cumberland County, a change that was officially approved by the Nova Scotia Utility and Review Board in January 2015 and took effect on April 1, 2015.

The decision was driven by the town's severe financial and infrastructure challenges, including a lack of capital, an overextended line of credit, and rising costs that could not be sustained by a declining tax base and population.

The dissolution was supported by the town council and Cumberland County council, and was also influenced by a significant financial penalty the town would have faced for switching its police force to the RCMP.



Example - Springhill, Nova Scotia:

Reasons for dissolution

- Financial instability:** Springhill was unable to borrow more funds, had no capital reserves, and its line of credit was at its limit. The town was also no longer able to meet its infrastructure needs.
- High taxes:** The town had the highest municipal property tax rate in Nova Scotia, yet it still could not cover its expenses.
- Declining population:** The town had a decreasing population and a significant out-migration of younger residents.
- Pension Penalty:** The town faced a punitive \$2million pension top-up if it had switched from its municipal police force to the RCMP, which was a major factor in the decision.





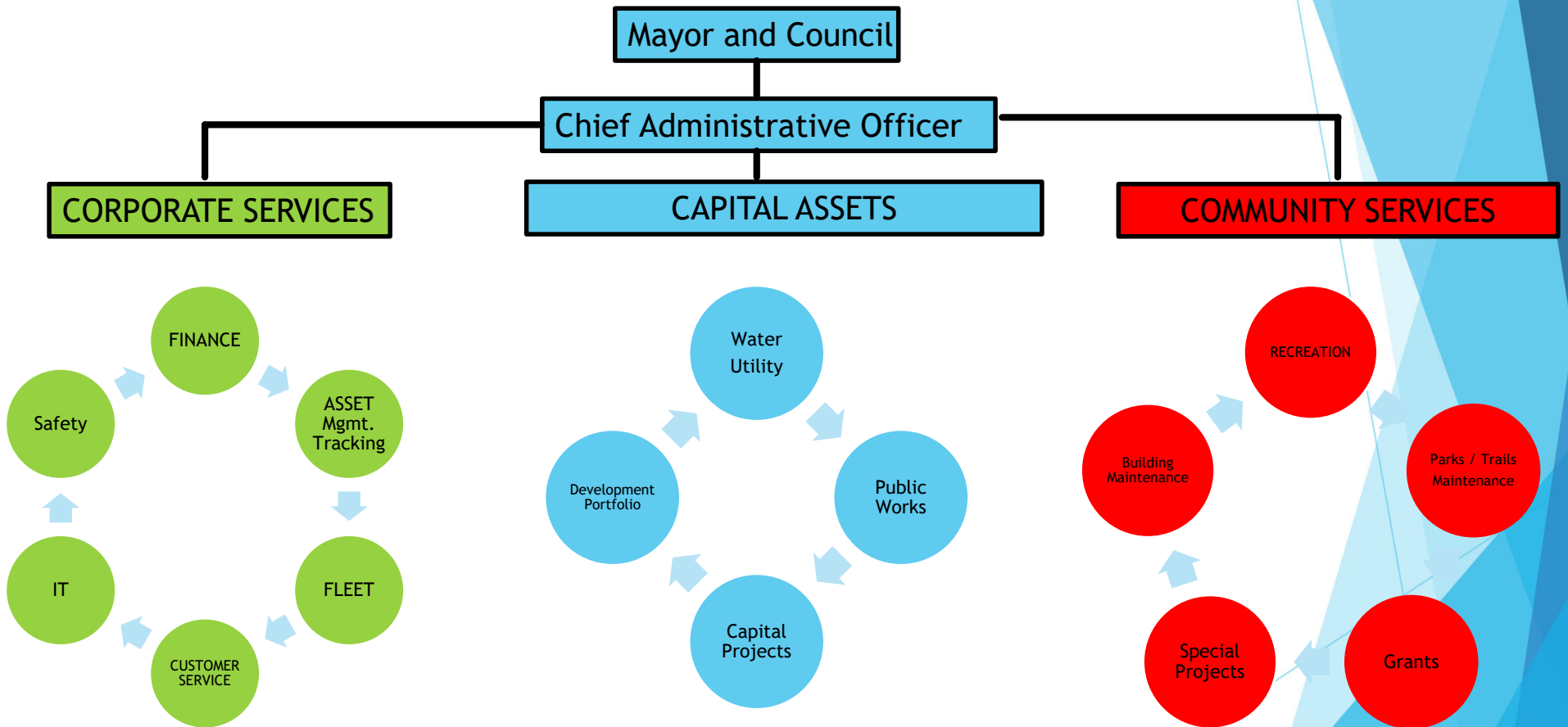
Key events

- **March 2014:** Springhill's Town Council voted to dissolve its municipal status, citing the financial pressures.
- **December 2014:** The Nova Scotia Utility and Review Board held a public hearing on the dissolution application.
- **January 2015:** The Utility and Review Board approved the dissolution, stating it was in the best interest of the residents.
- **April 2015:** The Town of Springhill officially ceased to exist as a legal entity and became part of Cumberland County.

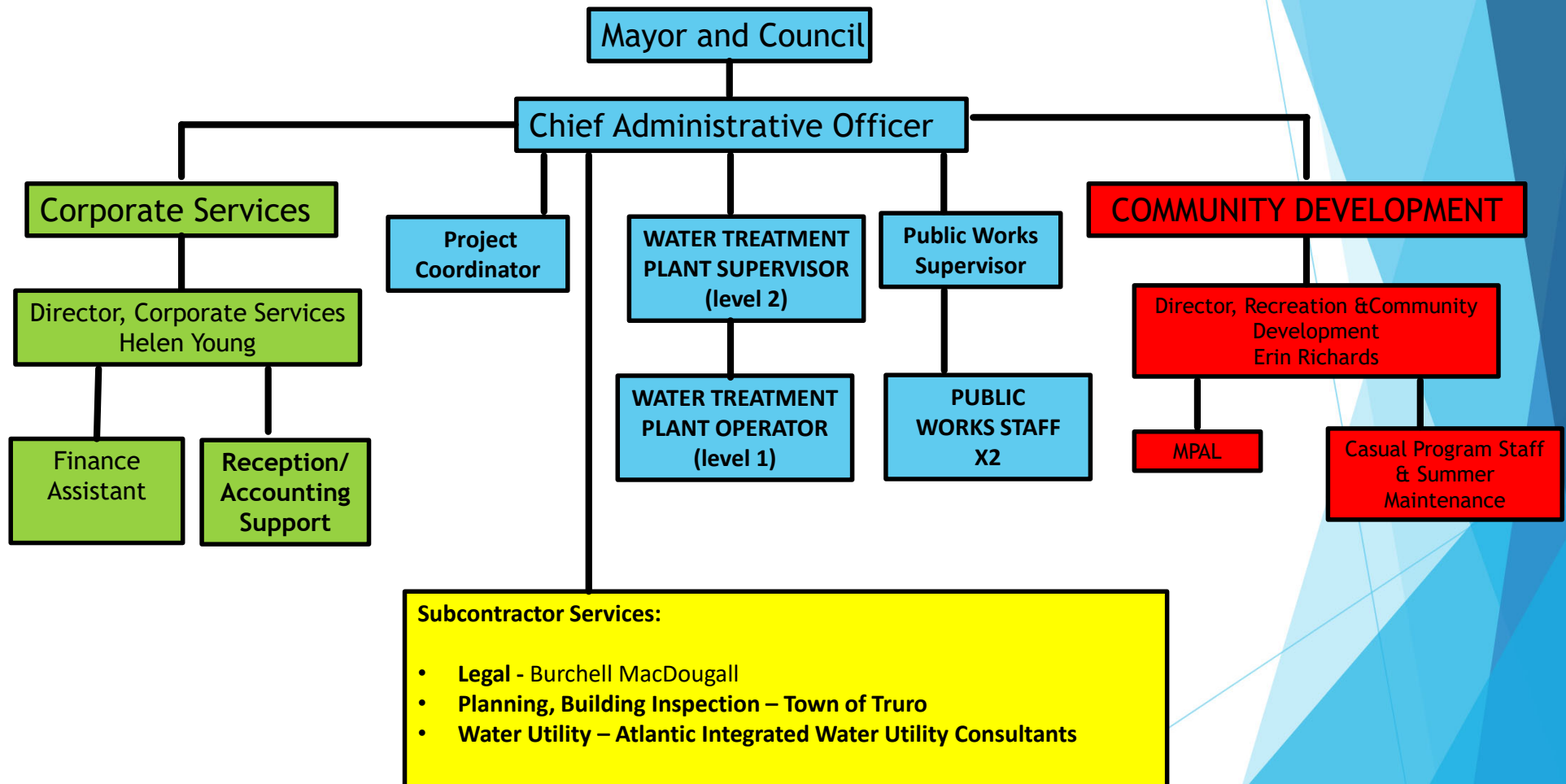
Aftermath

- The provincial government pledged millions of dollars to ease the transition, with funds allocated for equalization, infrastructure, and roads.
- The town's assets, such as the town hall and community center continue to serve the community, possibly as a municipal service center for the county.
- The Springhill Police Service was disbanded, and policing services are now provided by the RCMP, who also service the rest of Cumberland County.

Town of Stewiacke – Departmental Breakdown



Town of Stewiacke Organizational Chart



Staffing Gaps



Role (full time)	Stewiacke	Colchester	Truro
Engineering	0	4	6
Bylaw Officer	0	1	1
Planning	Subcontracted	11	4
Development Officer	Subcontracted	1	1
Building Inspectors	Subcontracted	2	2

Town of Stewiacke subcontracts development, planning, and building inspection to the Town of Truro.

What do my taxes pay for?

Town FLAT RATE	County - TAX RATE + +	Villages - TAX RATE + +
FLAT Rate Includes: • Stormwater (ditches, catch basins etc.) • Streets and roads • Sidewalks • Streetlights • Police Protection • By-Law Enforcement • Planning & Development • Recreation • Parks & Grounds • Community Center • Library-operational support • Animal Control • Tourism-local • Infrastructure Fire Protection -separate rate, plus operational support Water Utility-NSRAB rate plus usage Waste Management-annual flat fee	• Base Rate • Area Rate • Fire Rate • By-Law Enforcement • Streetlight Rate • Sidewalk Rate • Recreation Rate • Development Rate • Infrastructure Rate • Policing Approx. 90% of road maintenance and construction is provincially managed & funded Water Utility-NSRAB rate plus usage Waste Management-annual flat fee	• Base Rate • Area Rate • Fire Rate • Streetlight Rate • Sidewalk Rate • Recreation Rate • Development Rate • Infrastructure Rate • Policing Approx. 90% of road maintenance and construction is provincially managed & funded Water Utility-NSRAB rate plus usage, if applicable Waste Management-annual flat fee, if applicable Note: new, formally incorporated villages are not being created, existing, smaller communities are expanding into other municipalities.

What do you say?



We want to hear from you:

- What do you think are some pros?
- What do you think are some cons?
- What do you feel will be lost?
- What do you feel will be gained?

What do you say?



Ground Rules:

1. There will be one microphone for public comments.
2. Public is asked to line up at the microphone.
3. The Mayor will signal when it is a person's time to speak.
4. Speaker will begin by stating their name and residency.
5. Each person will have the ability speak for up to 3 minutes.
6. The Mayor will signal when there is one minute remaining.
7. Questions will be recorded but not necessarily answered tonight.
8. You may speak more than once, but you will need to let others speak before you provide your second set of comments.

Before we open for comments...

What will we do with this information from tonight?

- Video recording will be posted and will be available for viewing on the Town of Stewiacke YouTube Channel.
- Council will review the comments and information.
- Council will determine the next steps (if any).

WHAT
NEXT ?



Your feedback is important:

- What do you think are some pros?
- What do you think are some cons?
- What do you feel will be lost?
- What do you feel will be gained?



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