



Structure Workshop Discussion Points

Presentation to Caucuses

May 2016

Structure Workshop Topics

- Strategies for the Province to consider regarding those municipal units who do not wish to pursue traditional approaches to structural change
- What additional information is needed from the Province?
- What questions need to be answered? By council and on behalf of the community?
- What are some alternative service delivery strategies?
- Public engagement strategies for municipalities wishing to discuss structural change prior to going to UARB
- Long term vision for municipalities

A light blue map of Nova Scotia is centered in the background. The text "Risks of Structural Change" is overlaid in a large, bold, dark blue font.

Risks of Structural Change

Loss of Control

- Municipal units with assets will lose control of those assets (i.e. electric utilities)
- Town interests will be minimized and not reflected in new municipal structure - Rural/urban balance of power, representation, service delivery
- Loss of control over administrative process, bureaucracy will grow, costs increase
- Loss of community identity, culture and language (for Acadian communities)
- Ability to influence within Province
- Access to quality services
- Ability to control destiny

Risk of Rejection by Citizens

- Community engagement will fail and citizens will reject restructuring
- Risk of miscommunication. Timing of communication is critical
- Costs - well managed by small units now but will larger units be more expensive?

Risk of Reduction in Council/staff Positions

- Elimination of positions, elected and non-elected, need to recognize and manage.
 - NS Demographics mean there are fewer staff available/volunteers.
- Adding more work to councillors through greater geography/distance – impacts ability to effectively represent the people
- Many councillors not paid much, but gain democracy with numbers we have. Representation is important.

Top Three Motivators for Structural Change

- Rationalization of the cost of service delivery
- Centralization of decision making to facilitate economic development
- Regional control of economic development
 - HRM example

What do Municipalities Need to make their Decision?

- How do municipalities obtain financial data before making the decision to apply to the UARB?
- What is best for citizens? How do you find out that information? How do you communicate that information?
- What if citizens and councils differ in their views on the need for amalgamation?
- Perception is that amalgamation is needed everywhere, but it isn't, when is it?
- Is a plebiscite binding and when should it be introduced in the process?
- How can communities that are doing the right things be rewarded?

What do Municipalities Need to Make Their Decision?

- What are the alternatives to amalgamation and dissolution?
- What if one unit wishes to amalgamate and others don't?
- Do all amalgamations result in the desired outcome?
- Can the UARB overturn the results of the plebiscite?
- What value does amalgamation provide to citizens?
- How do we explain benefits to the general public?
- How much debt does each unit carry?
- How many units are involved?

Questions to be asked of Municipal Affairs

- Does amalgamation have to be county wide to receive provincial funding? What if only some municipalities within a region wish to amalgamate?
- What about villages? Can they be forced to amalgamate if county and other units move towards amalgamation?
- What resources are available to municipalities to explore other models of governance?

Questions to be asked of Municipal Affairs

- Which governance models are supported by the province and which aren't?
- What information exists about amalgamations in similar jurisdictions?
- Is the province funding the studies? Are we bound by the studies?
- At what point would the province force amalgamation?
- ***Is the province open to other models of governance?***

Questions to be asked of Municipal Affairs

- How does the Province interpret municipal reform?
- How much provincial funding is available?
- Who makes the final decision?
- Is a plebiscite mandatory?