

How Amalgamation Benefits Rural Citizens

Lower taxes for rural services, infrastructure improvements, strong community identities, and fair representation.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Separate urban and rural tax bills
- Tax decrease
- No change in farm or forestry taxation
- County residents do not pay town debt
- Towns do not have access to County reserves
- Provincial and federal funding to address necessary rural infrastructure



FINANCES

Property Taxation

Separate rural and urban tax bills are to be maintained. **Rural bills will continue to be less than urban bills** and **everyone's taxes will be lower**. This is possible because expenses for the New Municipality are projected to decrease by \$1 million per year. Rural ratepayers will only pay for services they receive. There will be no change in farm or forestry property taxes. **Farm exemptions and forestry rates are set in provincial legislation.**

Debt and Reserves

Long term debt of the towns **will not** be paid for by rural taxpayers. Pre-existing town debt will be paid by the taxpayers of the former towns. County savings (also called Reserves) going into amalgamation will be used for rural projects only.

Provincial Funding

In recent Nova Scotia dissolutions, when towns become part of the County government, provincial funding has been provided to the dissolving town – nothing for the receiving County. In this voluntary process, both rural and town infrastructure projects are being funded.

INFRASTRUCTURE PLAN

The five-year \$69 million capital budget includes County projects, including central drinking water systems, stormwater and wastewater installations, and improved road access to the regional hospital.

We will pay for these improvements with external funding, our existing reserves, and modest amounts of long-term debt and operating funds. The \$30 million external funding includes approximately \$14 million from the province, and over \$16 million in Building Canada Fund infrastructure money.

Government funding allows for the completion of rural projects that have been on the books for many years, **without burdening the rural taxpayer.**

FAIR REPRESENTATION

One council for this area will be better able to make timely decisions and develop comprehensive plans to address community priorities such as attracting businesses, professionals and residents to the area.

The recommended Council includes:

- 5 councillors representing rural communities
- 3 councillors representing urban communities
- 2 councillors representing a mix of rural and urban communities
- 1 mayor elected at large who could be from anywhere in the New Municipality

Each Councillor represents an average of 3,000 voters. Reducing committee work and shifting the priority to constituency work will ensure citizens continue to have ready access to their elected officials. **One team with a common focus** can ensure that Pictou County's priorities are addressed.

COMMUNITY IDENTITY

Our plan calls for the preservation of community identity. For example, the 18 rural fire departments will continue as is – they are an important part of our community fabric. The proposed staffing structure of the New Municipality calls for rural development workers to work with rural organizations, and the budget includes updated signage for each community. Municipal service grants will continue. Our communities will keep their character and their traditions within a stronger, unified municipality.

REGION OF QUEENS - AN AMALGAMATION SUCCESS

The County of Queens, the Town of Liverpool and the incorporated villages of Brooklyn and Milton were amalgamated as the Regional Municipality of Queens in 1996. The secret to their success: 32 elected representatives reduced to 7 Councillors and 1 Mayor; separate levels of taxation for urban and rural communities; annual savings of \$750,000; ratepayers of the former town kept their debt; ensuring that investment is spread fairly around the region; and the ability of the Council to move forward with one vision and one plan. Today, community identities and spirit remain strong in the Region of Queens.

YOUR VOICE IS IMPORTANT

On May 28, each municipality will hold a plebiscite to determine public opinion. There will be regular paper ballot polls, telephone and electronic voting. Citizens will be asked to answer "Yes" or "No" to the following question: "Do you favour the amalgamation of the Municipality of the County of Pictou and the towns of New Glasgow, Pictou and Stellarton into one municipal unit?"

MORE INFORMATION

To read the detailed amalgamation application materials, visit www.nsuarb.novascotia.ca and search under case number M07050.



One thing that's constant in my work is change. The environment, people, place – everything changes. I see amalgamation as a re-imagining of our community. This is our chance to be an active agent in the change that's happening around us. Growing up on a farm in rural Pictou County made me appreciate uniqueness, diversity, and quality of place. It's always about balance. How do we keep the best of our history and traditions and turn it into something that can help us for our future? I see challenges as opportunities. I want to lean into the positive and be a part of progressive, forward-thinking change that is an example for my kids, the province, and the world. I'm voting yes because I believe that together we can build a better Pictou County.

*Rachael MacLean, Green Hill
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