

Council Workshop / Municipal Reform

February 3, 2026

Workshop Results

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CAO's Amalgamation: Benefits & Challenges

Common Benefits & Challenges to all units:

Benefits:

- Unified strategic plan
- Unified Utility planning, maintenance & replacement (Sewer & Water)
- Unified land-use planning
- Unified housing strategy
- Unified economic development strategy
- Unified community promotion strategy
- Unified events planning
- Unified community group funding commitment
- No competition for Federal & Provincial funding opportunities
- Stronger regional advocacy
- Potential for administrative efficiencies
- Improved regional asset-management planning
- Greater capacity to meet provincial regulatory requirements (environmental, infrastructure, emergency management)
- Clearer service standards and consistency for residents and businesses

Challenges:

- Identifying a harmonized tax rate strategy
- Identifying a fair governance framework
- Identifying a strategy to avoid community alienization or loss of identity
- All units having to take on share of future buildings & infrastructure replacement costs from other units
- All units having to take on share of future environmental liabilities from other units
- Complex transition period requiring significant staff time, change management, and external professional support
- Short- to medium-term financial pressures before long-term efficiencies are realized

Unique Benefits & Challenges:

Benefits:

- TOS - Improved long-term staffing resilience by being part of a larger organization with greater succession-planning capacity

Challenges:

- TOS - The Town currently has aging infrastructure and environmental liabilities that must be fully understood and fairly addressed prior to amalgamation
- TOL – The Town of Lockeport also has aging infrastructure that would need to be addressed pre-amalgamation
- Loss of jobs/retirement options ? Only one CAO – Who decides who that will be?
 - Will the smaller units have a fair voice at the Council table ?

Guiding Principles:

Guiding Principles for Windsor and West Hants Transition Committee

Guiding Principles were developed at a Joint council workshop between the Town of Windsor and the District of the Municipality of West Hants which can be viewed below. The intent of the Guiding Principles was to provide the Windsor/West Hants Transition Committee with broad values to consider when making decisions concerning the consolidation of the two communities.

1. **Boundaries:** When looking at boundaries, ensure equitable representation for both urban and rural communities for the new council. It is essential that the culture and Identities of both the urban and rural communities are retained in the new consolidated community.
2. **Taxation:** When developing a taxation model for the consolidated community, the existing tax system should serve as a base. Business as usual, services as usual. The electoral boundaries should not impact taxation.
3. **Debt:** When addressing debt from the former communities, 'area rates' should be used to ensure the repayment of the debt is paid in the spirit it was incurred. By way of example, If the debt was incurred for the benefit of the taxpayers in Windsor, the debt should be 'area rated' to the tax payers of Windsor.
4. **Administrative Structure:** When developing the blended administrative structure of the consolidated community, all efforts should be taken to ensure there is no job loss as a result of the consolidation. Any planned efficiencies should strive to be achieved through attrition and maintaining corporate knowledge should be prioritized.
5. **Regional Service Strategy:** An overall strategy for regional service delivery and regional infrastructure prioritization should be Informed by an inventory of existing assets.
6. **Regional Planning:** Regional planning should be a priority for the consolidated community to ensure that the strengths of the urban and rural communities are being leveraged appropriately.
7. **Public Engagement:** A Public Engagement Plan should focus on transparency and provide diverse ways to Inform and engage the public and stakeholders.
8. **Decisions:** All pertinent decisions should be reviewed with the view of looking for economic development growth and opportunities.

Guiding Principles identified by MODS, TOS & TOL combined councils as Important:

In no order of importance, the three combined councils identified the following guiding principles as important for consideration should the amalgamation identify at a future point that they recommend to the three councils that guiding principles be adopted should they wish to proceed further in the process:

1. **Taxation**
2. **Regional Planning**
3. **Decisions**
4. **Public Engagement**
5. **Debt**
6. **Boundaries**
7. **Other – Protecting staff**

Breakout Session Questions:

The breakout session was structured with three tables of councilors (each table made up of a mix of councilors from each unit) discussing three core issues and providing feedback on the pros and cons of each core issue. The three issues were Governance & Administration, Infrastructure / Services and Financial. The following is a summary of the feedback provided by the councilors from each table:

Governance & Administration:

Benefits:

- Unified, blended, broader vision
- One strategy / plan. Streamline services
- With an open-minded council, can look at the entire area as a whole and not divided, independent areas. Overarching view.
- Depth of knowledge
- Reduced cost
- Buying power – shared financial resources
- Strength in numbers
- Potential economic growth (using each other strengths)

Challenges:

- Conflicting priorities
- Loss of voice / identity for smaller communities
- Eliminating entrenched perspectives & opinions – protectionism
- One location/place – will this create a physical challenge
- Merging bylaws & policies

- Potential loss of services
- Staff reorganization, restructuring (union environments, salary differences, hours of operations, etc)

Infrastructure / Services:

Benefits:

- Unified asset management planning & prioritization
- Strategic growth plans
- Efficient & equitable service delivery
- Sharing of infrastructure
- Economies of scale – larger unit can coordinate more efficiently and effectively
- Recruitment & retention of qualified staff

Challenges:

- Disproportionate capital investment between town and rural areas. Challenge of all units sharing future infrastructure replacement
- Aging infrastructure
- Different needs across a broad geography
- Imbalance in service delivery
- Gaining trust of tax payers
- Complex transition period

Financial:

Benefits:

- Single unified budget is more efficient
- Access to more funding opportunities
- Wider tax base to pay for services
- Unified asset management planning
- Economies of scale for procurement
- Asset management planning and scheduling ensures optimal prioritization
- Potential reduction in admin costs
- Unified community group funding
- One Voice – more leverage over provincial and federal government

Challenges:

- Identifying a fair tax strategy that endeavors to achieve harmonized taxes over time.
- Identifying debt repayment plan
- Financial allocation
- Asset management planning
- Backlash from residents when selling off surplus assets

- Financial challenge for street, sidewalk and lights maintenance
- Possible loss of experienced employees