



Amalgamation Steering Committee Meeting

June 3, 2026 | 6:00 pm

Municipality of Shelburne | 414 Woodlawn Drive

AGENDA

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Amalgamation Steering Committee Meeting
April 1, 2026 | 6:00 pm
Municipality of Shelburne | 414 Woodlawn Drive | Room 114

Those in Attendance:

Mayor Derek Amalfa, Chair TOL
Warden Penny Smith, Vice Chair MDS
Mayor Stan Jacklin, TOS
Deputy Mayor Craig Hillen, TOL
Deputy Warden Heidi Wagner, MDS
Councillor Therese Cruz, TOS
Warren MacLeod, CAO MDS
Sarah Mattatall, CAO TOS
June Harding, Clerk, TOL
Nicole Blades, Recording Secretary MDS
Members of the Public

1. Call to Order

Mayor Derek Amalfa, Chair, called the meeting to order at 6:00pm.

Chair Amalfa outlined the purpose of the Amalgamation Committee, noting it was established to explore amalgamation and to collect and share information with the respective Councils. It was emphasized that any decisions regarding amalgamation will be made by each individual unit, not the Committee.

2. Approval of Agenda

2.1. April 1, 2026

Being duly moved and seconded, the agenda for April 1, 2026 was approved with the amendments of interchanging 4.1. and 4.2. Motion carried.

3. Approval of Minutes

3.1. March 4, 2026

Being duly moved and seconded, the minutes for March 4, 2026 were approved. Motion carried.

4. New Business

4.1. Discussion – Infrastructure Reports & Amalgamation Economic Modelling

CAO MacLeod advised the Committee that he had reviewed the list of required reports to accompany the NSRAB application and provided an overview of the three primary areas: financial, human resources, and infrastructure.

A discussion was held regarding the potential use of existing infrastructure reports and previously collected data, as well as the importance of the report outcomes in determining whether to submit an application.

4.2. Discussion – Council Requirements for NSRAB Application Decision

A discussion was held, and consensus was reached that a funding guarantee from the Province is required to complete the necessary studies and reports prior to making a decision on submitting an application to the NSRAB.

It was noted that a response has not yet been received from the Province requesting funding or MLA Young requesting advocacy for provincial funding commitment and that Chair Amalfa will follow up.

4.3 Discussion – Antigonish Consolidation Public Engagement Presentation

Chrystal Fuller and Brian Smith, public engagement consultants for Antigonish consolidation, were contacted and could present to the Committee for \$3,500.

A discussion was held and consensus was given that a funding commitment is required from the Province prior to requesting a presentation from Mrs. Fuller and Mr. Smith.

Willa Thorpe, CAO of Region of Queens, was contacted and noted that no current staff or Councillors could provide insight on the consolidation that took place in 1996. Former staff and Mayors were also contacted, with no response at this time.

A discussion was held regarding public engagement, and it was noted that residents have multiple avenues to address the Committee, through email to the Chair or by attending a meeting in-person or online.

5. Resident Comments/Questions

Chair Amalfa invited members of the public attending both in-person and virtually to come forward with any questions or comments for the Committee.

A discussion was held regarding the timing of public engagement, the potential benefits of a presentation from Region of Queens given similar circumstances, clarification on the funding request to the Province, the amalgamation transition period and associated costs, and the possible use of internal data for required reports.

It was noted one email had been received from a resident since the previous meeting and that a response would be issued. The Committee agreed all future correspondence, along with responses, will be posted on the webpage.

Staff were directed to contact MLA Young to request his attendance at the next meeting.

6. Adjournment

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at 7:01pm. The next Amalgamation Steering Committee meeting will be held on May 6, 2026.

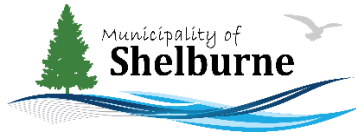
Nicole Blades, Executive Assistant MDS
Recording Secretary

Mayor Derek Amalfa, Chair

Warden Penny Smith, Vice Chair

Date

DRAFT



Town of Shelburne
Nova Scotia

12 LESSONS FROM QUEENS COUNTY AMALGAMATION - April 1, 1996

1. **Fear, Not Leadership** - Town of Liverpool and Municipality of the County of Queens amalgamated because of fear they would be amalgamated with Lunenburg or Shelburne County, not for financial reasons or because of leadership, but it took guts to amalgamate 30 years ago.
2. **Internal Hiring First** - All staff in the newly amalgamated Region of Queens Municipality (RQM), except CAO, were chosen from qualified internal staff first before any external advertisements took place.
3. **Fear of Loss of Community** - Residents argued that a larger municipality would mean some of the 50 community identities would be lost. This never happened and in fact some now play a larger community role.
4. **Competition Exhaustion** - Prior to amalgamation, most services between the two local governments were covered by legal agreements that each cost thousands to develop and months to argue over and then they did it all over again at each renewal period. Joint committees existed for everything! This was exhausting for council members and staff.
5. **Tax Rates and Reserves** - Liverpool has high taxes and few reserves, County had low taxes and high reserves. Liverpool had most of the infrastructure but little money to maintain or improve it. County wanted access to town services on Town fringe but Town would not expand it unless County paid full cost plus administration fee.
6. **Base Tax Rates plus Area Rates** - RQM established a base tax rate for all basic services like police and fire and area rates for special services like new pool in North Queens and grants to former village commissions, now incorporated community groups. They later realized that area rate for pool was wrong.
7. **Lack of Early Identity** - no visual identity was established early on as efforts were all put into taxes and staffing and left communities and the county overall feeling insecure and unknown. It was recognized many years after as one of the biggest mistakes they made and should have been a priority at the outset and not left for years of consultation on identity.

8. **Arguing Over Reserves** - A great deal of time was spent on where money currently in reserves could or could not be spent and not wanting any of the money accumulated at the time of amalgamation to be spent in the others jurisdiction. In the end, the money all went into one bank account and everyone benefitted fairly. Town residents used county pools and parks and trails and county residents used town streets and sidewalks. All evened out.
9. **Spread the Wealth** - One of the most important decisions early on was to show county-wide investments and programs. Therefore, the capital projects were spread across the county plentifully through new sidewalks, pools, parks and trails, fire departments, lighthouses, grants, et cetera.
10. **Infrastructure Investments** - It was only through this regional cooperation that they were able to afford to build a new regional wastewater treatment facility, new regional water treatment facility, Queens Place Emera Centre, and now a new regional outdoor pool in South Queens.
11. **Electoral Districts** - one of the smartest decisions at the outset was to not have specific Liverpool electoral districts but to split them up with 50-50 and 60-40 between town and county residents. This was to avoid councillors feeling they only represented Liverpool whereas all other councillors represented numerous communities each.
12. **Provincial Punishments** - one of the still unsolved mysteries is why former towns are punished for amalgamating and do not receive the \$50,000 town foundation grant for former town roads each year. Additionally, there are other issues where funding applications have been scored lower because those that work regionally are scored higher. Good grief!

What are the items that you heard about, or wondered about, with the Queens amalgamation?

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12 LESSONS FROM SPRINGHILL DISSOLUTION - March 31, 2015

1. **Speak Truth to Power** - Town of Springhill was in a dire financial crisis but Town staff decided against sounding the alarm bells with council and simply went about their daily affairs as usual until the province told council otherwise. Councillors couldn't read or fully comprehend financial statements.
2. **Role of Municipal Auditor** - Town had used the same auditing firm and specific auditor for many years and became good friends and enjoyed the consistent businesses. Auditor reported a few months before notice of dissolution was announced that the finances were in good shape. This was said in terms of auditing for compliance, not solvency. Council expected auditor was required to notify them of financial issues.
3. **Governance Report** - Previous council had contracted for a governance report which made certain recommendations about leadership. Council declined to follow the recommendations and implement them. Doing so may have alerted council to the problems much earlier.
4. **No Infrastructure Investment Signs** - With streets crumbling, buildings and recreation facilities lacking investments and maintenance, and no long-term plans for new facilities or the use of geothermal energy, the community could feel the downturn.
5. **Police Commission Ruled Police Operations** - Town of Springhill Police Department was overseen by Board of Police Commissioners and not Council. Officers were booking vacation time when they knew they had upcoming court hearing dates in Amherst, then came to work as call-in and were paid 4-hour double time callout for a 15-30-minute court appearance.
6. **Village Option** - Some residents wanted to keep a local government and argued for a village commission, but new villages are not allowed in NS.
7. **Tax Rates and Base Rates** - Tax rates for both residential and commercial in Springhill were near the highest in the province and near the lowest for the County of Cumberland. Shillers wanted the same base rates, but that would have required a significant subsidization from Cumberland which their councillors promising that would not happen.

8. **Job Promises** - Warden promised all current employees the same or similar job with the new amalgamated County of Cumberland after dissolution. Springhill wanted a reduction in taxes but that's hard to do when you keep all the same employees including five accountants, but only have a workload for 2.
9. **Big Provincial Investments and Last One** - A significant financial incentive package was negotiated by Springhill and Cumberland and the province while agreeing, was clear there would be no more such deals in the province. The deal included Transition Coordinator, Transition Manager, study costs, two legal costs, and 5-year capital investments.
10. **NSUARB Process** - While a more public process and while the URB acts independently on behalf of all citizens, the process was time consuming and expensive as there was an aggressive community group that fought against it and brought forth an aggressive fight that cost the process in excess of \$200,000 in extra costs and required us to answer about 120 information requests totally over 200 questions. They even advocated for the province to pay for their lawyer and independent studies, but were not successful in that argument.
11. **Amendment 11** - Where the police force is replaced with the RCMP, all members are automatically entitled to an equivalent RCMP Pension for all their years of service. This would have cost Springhill about \$1.6 million. They dissolved at 11:59 p.m. and the RCMP began policing Springhill effective 12:00 a.m. April 1, 2015, to legally avoid being replaced.
12. **Multiple Offices** - the decision was made to keep multiple offices and separate staff into various buildings, including renovations, in order to gain public support. This did little for public support and ended up costing more and putting additional pressure on an already strained budget in terms of both building costs and staffing costs.

What are the items that you heard about, or wondered about, with the Springhill dissolution?

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12 LESSONS FROM BRIDGETOWN DISSOLUTION - April 1, 2015

1. **Lack of Leadership** - council was not actively engaged with the governance and overall financial operations of the Town. Financial statements were not well understood and the financial position of the Town, including cash flow, was not being reviewed regularly.
2. **Segregation of Duties** - with a small finance staff of 3-4, and when some staff left or went on leave, one person was responsible for payment receipting, reconciling accounts, creating cheques, paying bills, and approving all payments. Council trusted this one person without questioning anything.
3. **Loss of Community Identity** - Bridgetown has a strong volunteer base and continues to do so. Concern was expressed over loss of volunteers and community identity. Community identity has remained strong and volunteerism has adapted. Like most communities, turnover of businesses continues because of the changing world.
4. **Loss of Recreation Volunteers** - Concern was expressed over the potential closure or downgrading of recreation facilities because most are operated by volunteers like the pool, arena, baseball field, and synthetic track and fields. There has been continual turnover, but volunteer efforts remain strong.
5. **Audit Committee** - Town Council lacked a functioning audit committee and didn't understand the need or role. When problems arose, rather than dealing with them, they asked staff to deal with them quietly. Eventually the police were called, then the entire council resigned en masse. This led to a provincially mandated forensic audit that cost in excess of \$100,000.
6. **Taxation** - County residents were concerned that their taxes would rise to subsidize town debts and problems. They were correct to be concerned, and Town residents were concerned that county residents would take Bridgetown's money to subsidize county programs and services. Bridgetown had no money!
7. **Interim 3-Person Council** - After the council resigned en masse, the province appointed a 3-person council from outside and an interim CAO. The new "Mayor" was in the office one day a week for public appointments and the new council met bi-weekly. The new structure was created by non-local residents.

8. **Infrastructure Deficits** - Bridgetown was not keeping up with required repairs and maintenance to its facilities including roads in bad shape, many sidewalks requiring repairs, recreation facilities deteriorating, and water and sewer system operating without upgrades or new investments, which led to multi-million-dollar costs later on.
9. **Provincial Funding** - During the dissolution process, Bridgetown was watching the Springhill process and wanting the same deal, although the issues were somewhat different. It didn't hurt that Bridgetown was the Premier's community. These deals now seem to be over.
10. **Nova Scotia Utility and Review Board Process** - The URB process was long and costly and allowed for public input, although that public feedback focused on wanting to keep the status quo and worries that Annapolis County would treat them poorly. Reports were completed on infrastructure and the Town's financial situation which highlighted the serious financial situation the town had put itself in.
11. **Lack of Public Interest** - Like Springhill, there wasn't a lot of interest from residents to run for council and residents didn't attend meetings often or pay close attention to the affairs of the Town. A former long-time administrator kept things smooth and quiet. Public engagement was limited to council meetings.
12. **Staffing Competency** - The Town like many small towns with few staff employed who they could attract and often didn't have the right education, experience or skill set, but it was what they could afford to pay. This lack of solid education and qualified people led in part to the demise of the Town.

What are the items that you heard about, or wondered about, with the Bridgetown dissolution?

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Town of Lockeport
'An island to sea'



Town of Shelburne
Nova Scotia

12 LESSONS FROM PARRSBORO DISSOLUTION - 2017

1. **Staffing** - Parrsboro had staffing issues from inexperience to unqualified and long-term employees that acted more like a social club and council was not willing to deal with HR issues. This led to poor planning, lack of informative and well researched reports and recommendations, and poor financial management.
2. **Old Infrastructure** - Town Hall was an old house it looks like, community gazebo was small and tired, and demands for more infrastructure and services. Streets were cracking and pothole paved, sewer that only served one-third of the town was being released into Minas Basin inlet by Kipawo Theatre, and town programs and services were limited to a few recreation ones.
3. **Tax Rates and User Charges** - Tax Rates were high so staff recommended removing solid waste and charging that separately as a flat fee per property to reduce tax rate. Public did not understand and were very upset and council felt that public was consulted by staff and were aware of this change.
4. **Failing Sewer System** - The former sewer system that served only about one-third of the Town was failing and designs were prepared to add another one-third of households to the system to remove sewage from outflowing into Minas Basin. The price had escalated from 3 million to 6 million. Then a couple years later after dissolution, tenders came in about 9 million. Residents were then sent frontage charge bills from about \$2,000 to \$5,000 each without awareness, to help pay for the extra costs because the Municipality did the work anyway.
5. **Public Engagement Was Hard** - As much as the council wanted to inform the public with meetings and monthly mailouts, the public was not really interested. An on-line Facebook site was controlled by a few people who had past relationships with council directly or through businesses.
6. **Transition Coordinator** - Province used same person who facilitated Springhill dissolution and applied the same media approaches with very little public interaction or media attention. He travelled to Town every few weeks, held a meeting, then left. A Transition Manager was hired by the province to support this role, and they supported each others' views of local government and community.

7. **Generational Change** - It will take a generation, or 20 years, for the community to fully understand and move forward instead of being angry or upset about no longer being a Town. Even though they were not aware of what was going on at Town Hall, more than 10 years later, they are still upset.
8. **Policing Contract** - Parrsboro had a direct contract with the RCMP, whereas Cumberland County had a provincial contract. This caused some initial problems and Parrsboro wanted to keep paying the direct cost price which can be less sometimes, but this was not allowed and were forced into Cumberland's provincial contract.
9. **Provincial Financial Support** - After Springhill received significant financial support for dissolution, Parrsboro council was expecting the same but the province lost its desire to offer up multi-millions because of past bad governance decisions. Parrsboro received a base funding amount and that became the new standard for dissolutions because of failed governments.
10. **Divided Leadership** - Some on Council wanted to make changes to Town operations while others fought to maintain the status quo. This led to many disagreements and delays in decisions being made. When faced with these hard decisions, Council by a majority chose dissolution over making the hard decisions.
11. **Distance from Services** - Parrsboro geographically is somewhat separated from other communities in Northern Nova Scotia and this made it hard to attract qualified staff, attract year-round businesses including banks, and provide programs, services, and infrastructure to an increasingly demanding public for more and better. This was an impossible task.
12. **Small Town Politics** - Because of the small size of Parrsboro, many people feel they know what is best and while some have taken their turn on council, most leave after one term. This has led to town policies and directions being taken based on a select few always influencing the ears of a few council members.

What are the items that you heard about, or wondered about, with the Parrsboro dissolution?

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Derek Amalfa <derekamalfalockeport@gmail.com>

Fw: Public Questions

1 message

Amalgamation Chair <amalgamationchair@temp.g23.ca>
To: Derek Amalfa <derekamalfalockeport@gmail.com>

29 May 2026 at 12:08

From: [REDACTED] >
Sent: Sunday, May 24, 2026 8:29:11 AM
To: Amalgamation Chair <amalgamationchair@temp.g23.ca>
Subject: Public Questions

Hello Derek,

Please find attached the current list of public questions, ordered by "likes." It is necessary to point out - again - that the committee has not responded to any of them, despite having ample time.

My own question about how agenda items are set has gone unanswered for weeks. This silence directly undermines any claim of transparency.

The committee's lack of responsiveness is unacceptable.

Regards,

 **amalgamation-report-20260524-081951.pdf**
79K

Amalgamation Questions Report

Shelburne Voice – generated May 24, 2026 8:19 AM

Sorted by number of likes (most liked first).

#	Likes	Question	Submitted
1	16	Is there a similar municipality to ours where amalgamation has been shown to work?	Mar 24, 2026
2	13	Under what conditions would amalgamation NOT proceed?	Mar 24, 2026
3	13	What is broken within our towns and municipality, that amalgamation will fix?	Mar 24, 2026
4	11	At what specific dollar amount of projected tax increase would you, as a committee, vote 'No' on amalgamation?	Apr 03, 2026
5	9	Under amalgamation would there be an open competition for the CAO position and not just a selection of the CAO from the existing 3 CAOs?	Mar 27, 2026
6	6	Many of us living outside the town limits already see limited services, despite paying taxes. As a municipality, we at least currently have a voice through our councillors. If amalgamation goes ahead, how will rural residents be protected from being overlooked and ignored especially if towns priorities take precedence and taxes rise?	Apr 03, 2026
7	6	If amalgamation were to move forward, what are the mandates/targets to ensure duplication and redundancies are removed and/or eliminated?	Mar 25, 2026
8	5	Will the Committee provide a written explanation of how they arrived at their recommendation on amalgamation? And just as important, will residents have access to that report before the decision point, not after?	May 03, 2026
9	5	amalgamation doesn't always save money. Some studies show costs actually increase due to: Higher wages (standardizing to the highest level) Expanded services Larger bureaucracy How can the committee guarantee that tax payers won't see an increase in taxes?	Apr 04, 2026
10	5	Depending if you live in the towns or municipality will the property taxes go up?	Mar 24, 2026
11	4	Merging systems, staff, contracts, and infrastructure is expensive and messy upfront. IT systems, union agreements(if applicable) pay scales—all need to be aligned. It can take years before any savings actually show up (if they do). Does the committee know, how many years it could take, to actually see a savings ? (If any at all)	Apr 04, 2026
12	4	Policies that work in a town don't always fit rural or coastal communities. Standardized bylaws can ignore local realities (agriculture, fishing, distance, etc.). How can we be assured that if amalgamation happens, that towns and municipalities will be fairly treated and represented?	Apr 04, 2026
13	4	If amalgamation were to happen, how would representation look? How many elected officials? Mayor or Warden?	Mar 24, 2026
14	3	The largest population centre often ends up with the most influence. Investment may gravitate toward growth areas instead of smaller communities. How can you reassure, if amalgamation happens, that all units are treated and represented fairly?	Apr 04, 2026
15	3	To eliminate duplication, some administrative will may be cut. How will you decide who keeps their employment and who gets fired?	Apr 04, 2026
16	1	If the amalgamation happens will there be water lines in the south for those who need and want water.	May 20, 2026