



Marathon
Human Resources
Consulting Group Ltd.

Regional Governance and Shared Service Review

Frequently Asked Questions

Town of Mahone Bay

Town of Bridgewater

Municipality of the District of Lunenburg

Report

January 2012





Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is a summary of the key recommendations of the Report?

- The consultants recommended that the three municipalities agree to form a Regional Services Board to gradually take over managing municipal services for the three units.
- This would start with Solid Waste, Recreation and municipal Economic Development and then add further services.
- This would be accomplished by bringing the managers of each service together to discuss how to work together to deliver the services, under the guidance of a Regional Services Board representing Mahone Bay, Bridgewater and the Municipality of the District of Lunenburg (MODL).

2. What are the study highlights, and reasons for sharing more services?

- Mahone Bay, Bridgewater and the Municipality of the District of Lunenburg are in fairly good positions in terms of financial viability, human resources and operational performance.
- There are significant challenges related to economic and regulatory factors that are outside of the control of the municipalities.
- There is a high percentage of municipal revenue from residential taxation and area rates, which mean the three units have the ability to generate the revenues needed to provide necessary services, but the balance between commercial and residential tax payers could be improved.
- Within the three municipalities, population growth is focused on the retired age groups and the percentage of working age people is shrinking dramatically. In the ten years between 1996 and 2006, there was a drop of 26% in the 20-34 age group; minimal growth (4%) in the 35-54 age group; 52% growth in the 55-64 age group; and, 16% growth in both the 65-74 and 75+ age groups. This has significant impact on service needs (more seniors focused) (seniors moving from homes) and the availability of a skilled workforce.
- The combined municipal workforce is strong in some service areas and very stretched in others. It is evident that there is strong operational leadership and very dedicated staff within each unit. Overall 39% of employees are over age 50. Like many employers the units have 'hard to fill positions' especially in technical fields.

3. What difference will this make?

- The Regional Services Board approach will formalize the way the three municipalities work together
- It will eliminate time consuming negotiations and provide one approach to developing agreements for the services that we share.
- It will provide citizens and businesses a seamless and consistent approach to receiving services across the three municipalities.
- It will address three important goals to make the Lunenburg Region more attractive to future economic investment:
 - I. To make better use of every municipal tax dollar raised.
 - II. To create a more sustainable local government organization.
 - III. To work together to attract economic development.
- Eventually it will reduce duplication and the costs of delivering services.
- It will allow the municipalities to share the skills of employees more effectively.

4. What will this mean to my tax bill?

- The recommendation is to transfer existing staff and budgets to the Regional Services Board, and not to increase your tax bill as a result.
- The goal is to attract more Economic Development to increase the commercial tax base so that residential tax increases can be minimized.

5. What will this mean to other bills from the town / municipality?

- Because the other money that the municipalities collect for services such as Fire Protection and utilities go directly to those services, these rates should not increase as a result of this change.

6. What about the jobs of employees?

- Because the goal is to provide more efficient services we need to rely on our employees to do this. They are the experts in their fields. The transition to a Regional Services Board is meant to be gradual, and result in no loss of services, existing staff benefits, or jobs. Changes in employee numbers will naturally result from retirements, and these changes will be utilized to rationalize staff numbers when providing shared services.

7. What did the report say about amalgamation?

- The Report examined the amalgamation option very carefully. It was determined that a deliberate but more gradual approach to sharing services, using a Regional Services Board, is better for all three municipal partners. It is recommended that, after three years of working together with the Regional Services Board, the municipalities re-examine the amalgamation option.

8. When will the changes start?

- It is recommended that the three municipalities initiate the Regional Services Board within the next few months.

9. How will we know that the Joint Services Board is working?

- The Regional Services Board should provide regular reports to Councils and the community. These reports should include information on activities and outcomes.

10. Regional Services Board make-up

- It is recommended that the Regional Services Board be made up of Elected Officials and that representation should be distributed according to the proposed Solid Waste Board arrangement: MODL: 4; Town of Bridgewater: 3; Town of Mahone Bay: 2. This representation model is not based on the transfer of any particular service, but is an attempt to represent the three municipalities broadly, with a view to looking out for the needs of the larger Lunenburg Region

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