

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

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Why is the province encouraging larger municipalities?

Strong municipalities will be able to deliver quality services to their residents and to deal with the challenges that communities and rural areas are facing.

Larger municipalities have the base needed to ensure active elections, the people needed for projects and committees, and the population to make even basic services affordable.

Sharing the costs across a larger population means municipalities will be better positioned to provide services to residents, to develop programs and initiatives, to attract investment opportunities, to promote economic growth, and to access funding programs.

How will living in a municipality benefit me?

Local governments provide great tools to improve the quality of life for their residents. A municipality provides people with a local voice and the means to promote local initiatives and priorities that are important to the people in that area.

Many services that Islanders count on everyday are best provided at a local level. Stronger municipalities will have the ability to provide the standard of services that their residents expect. Combining the resources of existing municipalities can remove duplication – this can result in cost savings for the larger area or simply ensure that services work better.

Towns and rural areas benefit from working together to attract opportunities and investment for their area. Municipal councils provide a framework to address the challenges we face.

What services can municipalities provide?

On PEI, municipal governments should be well positioned to provide: recreational programs and facilities; emergency planning; land use planning and development services; environmental services; libraries; fire protection; and other infrastructure-related services. Our two cities are full-service municipalities providing a larger range of services.

Why should I pay for services I do not use?

Many services that benefit a wider area are used by residents and non-residents of municipalities, such as: parks, rinks, trails, land use planning, emergency planning, libraries or community halls.

Even if you do not actively use recreation or library services, other services (like land use planning and emergency planning) are provided to protect broader public interests such as health and safety, water quality and protection of resource land or natural areas.

All municipalities must ensure their residents receive fire protection. Some municipalities own their fire departments while others purchase fire services from private companies. If you live in a municipality, the cost of fire protection is included in your tax rate. When you live outside of a municipality, you pay fire dues through a fire district committee (this is identified on your property tax bill).

[Tax and Land Information](#) has more detailed information about property tax and assessment.

More specific questions about property tax and municipal restructuring are available:

[Frequently Asked Questions About Municipal Restructuring and Property Tax](#).

How can I participate in conversations about municipal restructuring?

There are formal requirements for municipal restructuring processes outlined in the *Municipalities Act*. These include public notifications and public meetings.

Public engagement is a critical part of the restructuring process and municipalities should provide many opportunities for individuals to provide input if restructuring is being considered.

The province has committed to provide funding for Municipal Growth Management Studies. This type of study provides an opportunity for interested municipalities to study the available resources in their area to increase capacity, optimize service delivery and promote economic development. Public consultation and engagement are required processes for an area receiving funding for a Municipal Growth Management Study.

Why should you participate?

It is important for municipalities and communities that are thinking about restructuring to talk to residents and share information. By being involved in the process you have an opportunity to provide valuable input. It is also an opportunity to ask specific questions that are important to you.

Can we keep local community names?

Geographic place names will not change. Place names and identity can still be used and recognized within a new municipality. For example, the current Community of Belfast (a municipality in Eastern PEI) covers a very large area, yet geographic place names still exist within this larger municipality (e.g. Wood Islands, Point Prim, Belle River, Iona, and Pinette).

Land use planning is another way to recognize the heritage of your area. Public consultation allows people to have a voice and set the direction for development within their community.

How will my community's interest be looked after if we join a larger municipality?

New municipalities may establish electoral wards to allow equitable distribution of population. Municipal politicians are elected to represent the interests of the municipality as a whole.

Are there more restrictions in a municipality?

Living in a municipality is not necessarily more restrictive than living in an unincorporated area. A lot depends on the priorities and objectives of the people in the municipality.

Municipalities do have the authority to establish bylaws to meet the needs of citizens and resolve issues. Bylaws can address matters such as: public safety; protection of public and

private property; nuisances and unsightly premises; services; and animal control, black fly or mosquito control.

Whether you live in a municipality or not, there are rules and regulations related to land use and development. The Province is committed to developing a Provincial Land Use Policy that will set standards for land use and development that will apply province-wide.

Municipal land use planning processes are currently more advanced than provincial processes. Individuals in municipalities with official plans have better opportunities for input and more certainty about development.

How is the province supporting municipal restructuring?

The province is committed to supporting strong, sustainable municipalities.

- Funding is available for Municipal Growth Management Studies.
- The Department of Communities, Land and Environment can provide resources and support for restructuring. Information is available about municipalities and restructuring processes.

What is a Municipal Growth Management Study?

A Municipal Growth Management Study can help municipalities and communities study the social, cultural and economic resources in an area to increase capacity, improve service delivery and promote economic opportunities. This study can help an area determine the appropriate size and scope for restructuring initiatives. A Municipal Growth Management Study can consider a range of service and taxation options and provide a thorough description of different taxation scenarios.

How does municipal restructuring take place?

Restructuring processes are governed by the *Municipalities Act*. There are three types of restructuring processes and the requirements for each process are different:

- **Incorporation** is the creation of a new municipality.
- **Amalgamation** is the joining of two or more municipalities.
- **Annexation** is the expansion of municipal boundaries to an unincorporated area

Viability criteria have been established to guide municipal restructuring processes.

Why can't things just stay the same?

Expectations and requirements for municipalities are increasing. Residents expect quality local services and expect their local concerns and issues to be addressed. Unfortunately, many municipalities are struggling to meet today's requirements.

Larger municipalities will be able to respond more effectively and efficiently to the challenges we face. Commissioner Thompson in the Report of the Commission on Land and Local Governance said, "we cannot afford to maintain the status quo in a world that is changing all around us".

How can I find out about my municipality?

Some municipalities have a website to keep residents informed. In other areas, you may have to contact the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) for specific questions or concerns.

The Department of Communities, Land and Environment collects data and information about municipalities, publishes an annual municipal report, and maintains a Municipal Directory.

- [Municipal Statistical Reviews](#)
- [Municipal Directory](#)