

On May 14, the **Town of Lockeport** joined the **Town of Shelburne** and the **Municipality of the District of Shelburne** for a presentation from the *Nova Scotia Department of Municipal Affairs* about potential options for municipal restructuring and modernization.

Key Options Discussed

1. Municipal Joint Services Board

This model is currently used by the Town of Bridgewater, the Town of Mahone Bay, and the Municipality of Lunenburg. These three units have a dedicated board to manage an expanded range of shared services, and infrastructure through a jointly governed board. These communities have used this model for over 10 years, improving efficiency and saving money through pooled resources. It is widely viewed as the gold standard for collaboration without losing local governance.

2. Municipal Restructuring – Presented by Andrea Hyslop (Department of Municipal Affairs)

This presentation focused on two major restructuring models:

Dissolution: A town, like Lockeport, would dissolve and become part of a surrounding rural municipality. The town no longer exists as a legal entity, but the community continues to exist—its name, character, and identity remain intact.

Amalgamation: Two or more municipal units are combined into a brand-new municipal unit. Neither original unit continues to exist legally.

A key concern under amalgamation is that policing costs typically increase, rising from 70% to 90% coverage for the new municipality, which could affect overall budgeting and tax rates.

It's important to note that “**consolidation**,” a past option where towns and municipalities combined under a shared agreement, is no longer available under current legislation.

Above all, a key message we heard was this: these changes affect legal governance, not the identity or spirit of the community. Lockeport would always be Lockeport in name, culture, and history—even if legal structures change.

What Happens Next – The Legal Process & Lockeport's Role

Any move toward restructuring must follow a formal process involving the Province of Nova Scotia and the Utility and Review Board (UARB). Municipal units must submit an application to initiate the process. The UARB then undertakes a detailed review, including:

- Public hearings
- Financial and governance studies
- Possibly ordering a plebiscite (vote) to gather input from residents

The UARB evaluates whether restructuring is viable and in the public interest, and then makes a final, legally binding decision. Municipalities are responsible for the costs of this process, though in some past cases, the Province has offered financial support—this is not guaranteed.

Next Steps for Lockeport & Resident Involvement

Lockeport Council has passed a motion to join a steering committee with the Town and Municipality of Shelburne. This group will work together to:

- Explore each restructuring model in depth
- Assess the potential financial impacts, service changes, and community outcomes
- Develop a cost-benefit analysis specific to each community
- Ensure all possible options are reviewed before any decisions are made

This committee's role is strictly exploratory. We are not entering into any restructuring process at this time—we are seeking to fully understand what changes could mean for Lockeport.

As this work continues, resident engagement will be essential. We will share updates, invite public input, and make sure the people of Lockeport are informed every step of the way. This process will be transparent, thorough, and community-centered.

We know that topics like amalgamation or dissolution can spark strong feelings. That's why we are committed to respecting Lockeport's identity, and to making decisions that are grounded in community input and facts, not assumptions or fear.

More updates will follow soon. We look forward to working together on this important conversation about our future.

— Town of Lockeport Council