



Services Questionnaire on Regionalization – Local Service Districts and Unincorporated Areas

What We Heard

November 2021

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Services Questionnaire on Regionalization – Local Service Districts and Unincorporated Areas

Overview

In November 2020, the Minister of Municipal and Provincial Affairs (MAPA) established a Joint Working Group on Regionalization (the Working Group) with representatives from the department, Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador (MNL) and the Professional Municipal Administrators of Newfoundland and Labrador (PMA). The Working Group required data from residents of Local Service Districts (LSDs) and Unincorporated Areas (UIAs) on current local service availability, cost, and attitudes toward potential regional services and service delivery.

Newfoundland and Labrador is one of only two jurisdictions in Canada without any form of regional government. Currently, any formal service sharing between communities is limited and inconsistent. This consultation sought input from residents of LSDs and UIAs to aid in establishing baseline data and to collect input on the effects regionalization could have on their communities. The information collected will assist the Working Group in making recommendations to the Regionalization Steering Committee and Minister.

Methodology and Approach

EngageNL hosted an online questionnaire that was used to engage LSD committees, residents of LSDs and residents of UIAs. The online questionnaire was open from August 9, 2021 to September 3, 2021. Individuals were also invited to participate through a written submission to the department via mail, email or fax.

The focus of the online questionnaire included:

- Collecting information on current service offerings in LSDs, current extent of service sharing in LSDs, and what, if any, local services are available to residents in UIAs;
- Collecting information on the cost of current services;
- Collecting information on services that are not available but are desirable to residents in LSDs and UIAs;
- Collecting information on the perceived annual value of these services and willingness to pay for these services.

A total of 321 questionnaires and 2 written submissions were received. This report is a summary of the findings.

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Overview of Participants

1. My community is located in:

Eastern	160	49.84%
Central	44	13.71%
Western	112	34.89%
Northern Peninsula	3	0.93%
Labrador	2	0.62%
Total	321	100.00%

2. Population size of my community is:

Less than 250	134	41.74%
250-499	65	20.25%
500-999	25	7.79%
1000-2,999	89	27.73%
3000-4,999	2	0.62%
5000-10,000	2	0.62%
Over 10,000	4	1.25%
Total	303	100.00%

Note: The population size category 500-999 was added to this question on August 20, 2021. This table may not accurately reflect the population size of those that responded to the question.

Overview of Results

3. The property I own in this area is:

My primary residence	275	85.67%
A seasonal residence	38	11.84%
A business	2	0.62%
Other	6	1.87%
Total	321	100.00%

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4. Does your community have civic addressing?

Yes	217	67.60%
No	79	24.61%
I don't know	25	7.79%
Total	321	100.00%

5. My community is a:

Local Service District	245	76.32%
Unincorporated Area (skip to Question 11)	66	20.56%
Other, please specify (skip to Question 11)	10	3.12%
Total	321	100.00%

If respondents identified “Local Service District” in the question above, they were asked the following five questions. Individuals that identified “Unincorporated Area” or “Other” didn’t complete the following five questions.

Note: The total number of responses vary in the questions following as some participants chose not to answer all questions.

6. Are you currently a member of a local service district committee?

Yes	49	20.00%
No	196	80.00%
Total	245	100.00%

7. Is your local service district committee active?

Yes	216	88.89%
No	4	1.65%
I don't know	23	9.47%
Total	243	100.00%

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8. Does your local service district own any infrastructure and/or equipment?

Yes	129	52.44%
No	52	21.14%
I don't know	65	26.42%
Total	246	100.00%

9. Does your local service district maintain insurance on all infrastructure and equipment?

Yes	76	31.15%
No	33	13.52%
I don't know	135	55.33%
Total	244	100.00%

10. Does your local service district share any services, equipment or infrastructure with other local service districts and/or municipalities?

Yes	54	21.95%
No	77	31.30%
I don't know	115	46.75%
Total	246	100.00%

Fifty-four local service district respondents identified they share services, equipment or infrastructure with other local service districts and/or municipalities. When asked to “please specify”, the main service identified was fire and emergency services. Other services identified included waste management, recreation facilities and animal control.

The questionnaire resumed for all respondents for the remaining questions.

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11. a) Please indicate who provides fire protection services to your community:

My Local Service District	114	35.63%
Neighbouring Municipality or Local Service District	119	37.19%
Regional Service Board	3	0.94%
Private Company	3	0.94%
I don't know	14	4.38%
Not Applicable. I do not pay for this service	25	7.81%
Other, please indicate:	42	13.13%
Total	320	100.00%

Respondents that identified “Other” were asked to please indicate. The main provider identified was volunteer fire departments. Others indicated fire protection services were provided as a joint venture with other LSD communities or a shared service with multiple municipalities.

11. b) Approximately how much do you pay annually for fire protection services?

Amounts ranging from \$0.00 to \$580.00 were identified. Respondents also indicated they were unsure or it was included in a fee with other services.

12. a) Please indicate who provides curbside waste collection services to your community?

My Local Service District	90	28.13%
Neighbouring Municipality or Local Service District	27	8.44%
Regional Service Board	108	33.75%
Private Company	49	15.31%
I don't know	16	5.00%
Not Applicable. I do not pay for this service	10	3.13%
Other, please indicate:	20	6.25%
Total	320	100.00%

Respondents that identified “Other” were asked to please indicate. Other providers identified included waste management committees, private contractor organized by LSD committee and self-removal.

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12. b) Approximately how much do you pay annually for curbside waste collection services?

Amounts ranging from \$0.00 to \$500.00 were identified. Three respondents indicated amounts over \$2000.00. Others indicated they were unsure or it was included in a fee with other services

13. a) Please indicate who provides recycling collection services to your community:

My Local Service District	59	18.44%
Neighbouring Municipality or Local Service District	21	6.56%
Regional Service Board	88	27.50%
Private Company	39	12.19%
I don't know	20	6.25%
Not Applicable. I do not pay for this service	66	20.63%
Other, please indicate:	27	8.44%
Total	320	100.00%

Respondents that identified “Other” were asked to please indicate. Other providers identified included the Multi-Material Stewardship Board (MMSB) and self-removal.

13. b) Approximately how much do you pay annually for recycling services?

Amounts ranging from \$0.00 to \$500.00 were identified. Many respondents indicated it was included in the waste collection services (garbage fee). Others indicated they were unsure or it was included in a fee with other services

14. a) Please indicate who provides waste disposal (i.e. landfill, dump, transfer station, etc.) services to your community:

My Local Service District	51	16.09%
Neighbouring Municipality or Local Service District	32	10.09%
Regional Service Board	100	31.55%
Private Company	25	7.89%
I don't know	43	13.56%
Not Applicable. I do not pay for this service	46	14.51%

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Other, please indicate:	20	6.31%
Total	315	100.00%

Respondents that identified “Other” were asked to please indicate. Other providers identified included waste management committees, private contractor organized by LSD committee and self-removal.

14. b) Approximately how much do you pay annually for waste disposal services?

Amounts ranging from \$0.00 to \$700.00 were identified with the exception of one respondent who indicated \$1900.00. Respondents also indicated they were unsure or it was included in a fee with other services.

15. a) Please indicate who provides public water services to your community:

My Local Service District	115	35.94%
Neighbouring Municipality or Local Service District	1	0.31%
Regional Service Board	1	0.31%
Private Company	0	0.00%
I don't know	4	1.25%
Not Applicable. I do not pay for this service	129	40.31%
Other, please indicate:	70	21.88%
Total	320	100.00%

Respondents that identified “Other” were asked to please indicate. The majority of respondents identified they have an artesian well. Others indicated community wells, local water committees and municipalities.

15. b) Approximately how much do you pay annually for public water services?

Amounts ranging from \$0.00 to \$1000.00 were identified with the exception of two respondents who indicated \$3000 and \$6300.00. Respondents also indicated they were unsure or it was included in a fee with other services.

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16. a) Please indicate who provides sewer services to your community:

My Local Service District	15	4.73%
Neighbouring Municipality or Local Service District	0	0.00%
Regional Service Board	0	0.00%
Private Company	7	2.21%
I don't know	3	0.95%
Not Applicable. I do not pay for this service	210	66.25%
Other, please indicate:	82	25.87%
Total	317	100.00%

Respondents that identified “Other” were asked to please indicate. The majority of respondents identified they have a septic system.

16. b) Approximately how much do you pay annually for sewer services?

Amounts ranging from \$0.00 to \$900.00 were identified. Many indicated they had private septic systems. Respondents also indicated they were unsure or it was included in a fee with other services.

17. a) Please indicate who provides road maintenance services to your community:

My Local Service District	17	5.38%
Neighbouring Municipality or Local Service District	6	1.90%
Regional Service Board	31	9.81%
Private Company	9	2.85%
I don't know	25	7.91%
Not Applicable. I do not pay for this service	71	22.47%
Other, please indicate:	157	49.68%
Total	316	100.00%

Respondents that identified “Other” were asked to please indicate. The majority of respondents identified the provincial government. Some respondents identified local contractor paid by local road committee or that they were unsure.

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17. b) Approximately how much do you pay annually for road maintenance services?

Amounts ranging from \$0.00 to \$400.00 were identified. Many indicated it is included in their provincial taxes or they were unsure.

18. a) Please indicate who provides snow clearing services to your community

My Local Service District	20	6.41%
Neighbouring Municipality or Local Service District	4	1.28%
Regional Service Board	37	11.86%
Private Company	10	3.21%
I don't know	20	6.41%
Not Applicable. I do not pay for this service	72	23.08%
Other, please indicate:	149	47.76%
Total	312	100.00%

Respondents that identified “Other” were asked to please indicate. The majority of respondents identified the provincial government. Some respondents identified local contractor paid by local road committee or they provide their own snow removal.

18. b) Approximately how much do you pay annually for snow clearing services?

Amounts ranging from \$0.00 to \$400.00 were identified. Many indicated it is included in their provincial taxes. Others did their own snow clearing or they were unsure.

19. a) Please indicate who provides snow clearing services to your community

My Local Service District	9	2.88%
Neighbouring Municipality or Local Service District	5	1.60%
Regional Service Board	2	0.64%
Private Company	3	0.96%
I don't know	36	11.50%
Not Applicable. I do not pay for this service	214	68.37%

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Other, please indicate:	44	14.06%
Total	313	100.00%

Respondents that identified “Other” were asked to please indicate. Other providers identified included the SPCA, local rescue group and RCMP.

19. b) Approximately how much do you pay annually for animal control services?

Respondents mainly indicated \$0.00 or service not provided. Others indicated they provide a donation to a local charity/not-for-profit for providing service.

20. a) Please indicate who provides snow clearing services to your community

My Local Service District	53	17.04%
Neighbouring Municipality or Local Service District	0	0.00%
Regional Service Board	3	0.96%
Private Company	14	4.50%
I don't know	16	5.14%
Not Applicable. I do not pay for this service	137	44.05%
Other, please indicate:	88	28.30%
Total	311	100.00%

Respondents that identified “Other” were asked to please indicate. Other providers identified included NL Power and home owners.

20. b) Approximately how much do you pay annually for street lighting services?

Amounts ranging from \$0.00 to \$480.00 were identified with the exception of one respondent who indicated \$2700.00. Others indicated they did not have street lighting or it was included in a fee with other services.

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**21. Would you be willing to pay for additional local services (i.e. garbage collection, water, fire, etc.)?
If yes, please indicate which services you would be willing to pay for. Check all that apply.**

Note: because respondents were able to select multiple answers, the percenta

Fire Protection	80	13.40%
Curbside Waste Collection	49	8.21%
Recycling	45	7.54%
Waste Disposal (i.e. landfill site, transfer station etc.)	33	5.53%
Public Water Services	40	6.70%
Sewer Services	36	6.03%
Road Maintenance	60	10.05%
Snow Clearing	48	8.04%
Animal Control	23	3.85%
Street Lighting	44	7.37%
Emergency Planning	41	6.87%
Recreation	50	8.38%
Other, please indicate:	48	8.04%
Total	597	100.00%

Respondents that identified “Other” were asked to please indicate. The majority of respondents indicated they did not want any additional services and were pleased with the services currently provided. Some respondents indicated they would be willing to pay for land use planning, development oversight and road signage.

22. a) Regionalizing local services would offer more services to your community.

Strongly agree	45	14.11%
Agree	26	8.15%
Neutral	54	16.93%
Disagree	59	18.50%

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Strongly disagree	135	42.32%
Total	319	100.00%

22. b) Regionalizing local services would offer more services to your community. Why do you feel this way?

Themes from respondents that strongly agreed or agreed:

- Better services would be provided
- Access to more money to provide better services
- County system should be considered
- Provide a better governing body, better coordination and shared services
- People would be more accountable for their property to be maintained
- Strength in numbers

Themes from respondents that strongly disagreed or disagreed:

- Already have the services that are needed and community comes together when needed
- Do not want to pay more for what is already there/currently paying for the services that are provided (private system, fees, etc.)
- This would be another added layer
- Can't afford more particularly seniors and low income
- Already happened in the past
- Feel they would pay more for less service
- Would be difficult to provide certain services because of geography (some communities are too spread out)
- Feel the larger centers will benefit from increased tax base but smaller communities would not get same level of service
- Cabin owners already pay taxes at their residence
- Happy with the current way – it is a rural way of life
- Don't fix what is not broken

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23. a) Regionalizing local services would offer better quality services in your community/region.

Strongly agree	43	13.48%
Agree	28	8.78%
Neutral	64	20.06%
Disagree	55	17.24%
Strongly disagree	129	40.44%
Total	319	100.00%

23. b) Regionalizing local services would offer better quality services in your community/region. Why do you feel this way?

Note: Many respondents indicated “see responses to the question above” as their response is the same. A summary of the comments that were made are listed below and are similar to feedback to the previous question.

Themes from respondents that strongly agreed or agreed:

- Provide better services
- Provide a better governing body, better coordination and shared services
- People would be more accountable for their property to be maintained
- Themes from respondents that strongly disagreed or disagreed:
- Already have the services that are needed, happy with the way things are now – don’t feel they will get better services
- Don’t want to pay more for what is already there
- This would be another added layer
- Can’t afford more
- Feel they would pay more for less service
- Would be difficult to provide certain services because of geography (some communities are too spread out)
- Feel the larger centers will benefit from increased tax base but smaller communities would not get same level of service

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24. a) Regionalizing local services would be more cost effective in your region.

Strongly agree	38	11.95%
Agree	23	7.23%
Neutral	61	19.18%
Disagree	62	19.50%
Strongly disagree	134	42.14%
Total	318	100.00%

24. b) Regionalizing local services would be more cost effective in your region. Why do you feel this way?

Those that agreed felt they would have better services. The majority felt it would not be cost effective as they are satisfied with their current services and what they pay. They do not feel they would pay less with regionalization.

25. Please indicate which services you think would be best provided at a regional level:

Note: because respondents were able to select multiple answers, the percentage below is representative of the total selections, not the total number of respondents.

Fire Protection	100	11.83%
Curbside Waste Collection	76	8.99%
Recycling	74	8.76%
Waste Disposal (i.e. landfill site, transfer station etc.)	70	8.28%
Public Water Services	58	6.86%
Sewer Services	41	4.85%
Road Maintenance	90	10.65%
Snow Clearing	76	8.99%
Animal Control	37	4.38%
Street Lighting	56	6.63%
Emergency Planning	71	8.40%
Recreation	55	6.51%

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Other, please specify:	41	4.85%
Total	845	100.00%

Respondents that identified “Other” were asked to please indicate.

The questionnaire ended by asking respondents if they had any additional comments. The feedback provided reiterated the same themes that emerged in responses provided for questions 22, 23 and 24.

Summary of Written Submissions

Two respondents provided written submissions rather than complete the questionnaire. A summary of the comments that were made are listed below.

- Waste collection provided by Eastern Waste Management/Regional Service Boards is satisfactory for the needs of residents of UIAs.
- Fire protection services are provided by a neighbouring municipality through a local service agreement.
- Provincial government shouldn't expect residents of unincorporated areas to pay for services that are neither delivered nor of value for money.
- It is not and has never been the choice of residents of unincorporated areas to make payments upon the ratable value of their rural properties.
- The residents of our LSD view the move to establish regional governments as a means to appease municipalities that have been lobbying the Provincial Government because of their perception that LSD's are getting a “free ride”.
- There is a perception that LSD's are being provided services by the Province at no cost to the LSDs.
- Under a regional government residents of LSDs would have their fees (taxes) increased without any additional services and little or no representation.
- A regional government would not be an advantage to LSDs.
- Regionalization could lead to a decrease in seasonal population and secondary homes if seasonal residents are required to pay property tax on secondary homes. As a result this could lead to a decrease in fees to pay for local service districts.
- Proper oversight and regular audits of LSDs would resolve current compliance issues.
- There has been little effort to amalgamate municipal councils where feasible.
- Regionalization efforts should begin with eliminating duplicate services that exist amongst neighbouring municipalities and not with abolishing LSDs.

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- Imposing taxes on 10% of the population that live in LSDs and UIAs will not generate enough revenue to fund a regional government.
- The public consultation process ignores the sociological implications of instituting regional governments.
- Regionalization will lead to further erosion of community pride and independence in rural NL.