



SSJ Restructuring Committee

Key Questions Raised at the January 2025 Public Engagement Consolidated by J. Consulting Inc. answered by SSJ Restructuring Committee and Maclaren Consulting Inc. For presentation and distribution for Public Engagement #2 - August 15, 2026.

Rationale & Potential Benefits of Amalgamation

1. Why is amalgamation being considered in the first place?

- Last term of Council voted for and established the SSJ Restructuring Committee;
- Amalgamation discussed for many years but never studied;
- Shared services can be a challenge (different facilities/governance models, delay in decision making – Committee to Council to Committee);
- To determine if there is a mutual benefit to the municipalities: tax savings, improvement of service delivery, no competition for business/industry

2. What are the expected benefits of amalgamation for each of the three municipalities?

- Reduced number of meetings and bureaucracy, increase decision-making efficiency;
- Economies of scale/efficiencies (i.e. Administrative Monetary Penalty System);
- Even together, still considered a small community;
- Specialization of labour therefore reducing bureaucracy (i.e. staff, consultant planner and Central Almaguin Planning Board);
- Greater borrowing power ;
- Greater visibility/branding power as “Sundridge”;

Recognizing the potential CONS:

- Loss of history/identity/community/cultural heritage;
- Fear of change/unknown;
- Transition costs (decided by future Councils)
- Perceived reduction in service (i.e. longer wait time for snowplowing to be completed)

3. Will amalgamation lead to lower costs for residents? If so, how? (Maclaren Consulting Inc., 2026, Pg 13)*

A clear answer would be yes. The major savings would occur through the ability to eliminate seven staff positions, while creating only three lower cost positions. As noted in the report, the lower cost staff positions need to be created coincident with the departure of the corresponding staff positions. The longer-term savings would relate to the current existence of three clerk administrators, two assistant clerks, two treasurers, two deputy treasurers, one deputy clerk/treasurer and three superintendents of public works.

The total savings would be:



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Annual Impact

Item Creating Impact	Short-term Impact	Long-term Impact
Council	(106,000)	(106,000)
Employees	21,500	(330,000)
Joly contract with South-River Machar	(26,930)	(26,930)
Total	(111,430)	(462,930)

This does not take into account the one-time costs. The one-time costs of conducting an official plan and zoning review would be off-set by a decision to sell surplus property, and by the need of the three municipalities to review the official plan and zoning every ten years (the related savings would depend upon when amalgamation occurs).

The employee incentives would accelerate the savings from employee departures and would be recovered within two years. However, they could also be avoided if not funded by the province.

*answer provided in consultant report *Financial Analysis for the Restructuring Study*

4. Will there be better access to (senior level) government funding and grants as an amalgamated municipality?

- Potential impact to OCIF, NORDS, Canada Community Building Fund (formerly Gas Tax);
- Increased specialization of staff to dedicate time in pursuit of grants/loans;
- Less competition when seeking grant opportunities (currently 3 staff completing 3 applications for same grant) – better opportunity but not necessarily better access.

5. How will businesses, job opportunities, and economic growth be impacted by amalgamation?

- Currently, new industry may struggle with boundary issues – difference in by-laws/services/policy between small communities;
- Specialization of duties for staff may improve development turnaround timelines
- Streamline by-laws and clarify rules (OP, ZBL, development/housing)
- Opportunity for an increase in affordable housing to support local employers
- Increased services (parks, Public Works, recreation), leads to attracting more industry (doctors, business, etc.), leads to increased local economy

Almaguin Community Economic Development Staff were requested to provide input on this question:

Clear, consistent development rules across the region

One municipality means one set of by-laws, fees, and approval processes. This reduces uncertainty and risk for investors and developers making long-term decisions.

Faster, more coordinated development approvals

Streamlined internal decision-making allows projects to move from concept to construction more efficiently, which is a key factor for businesses choosing where to locate or expand.



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Stronger, unified economic development and investment messaging

A single municipal voice improves credibility and clarity when promoting the region to investors, funding agencies, and senior governments.

Improved capacity for strategic infrastructure and land-use planning

Coordinated planning for industrial, commercial, and employment lands supports long-term economic growth and helps ensure infrastructure investments align with job creation goals.

Greater ability to attract and retain workforce through coordinated housing and community planning

Aligning housing, services, and economic priorities supports local employers and strengthens labour force stability.

Other points of consideration:

- Larger municipal scale may improve resilience during economic downturns by spreading financial risk across a broader tax base.
- Amalgamation alone does not guarantee economic growth, but it can remove barriers that currently limit development and business expansion.

6. Are there specific examples of successful amalgamations in Ontario that we can learn from?

- South Algonquin, Temiskaming Shores, Essex, Magnetawan, McMurrich/Monteith, North Huron Shores

Financial & Tax Implications

7. Will amalgamation increase my property taxes? If so, by how much? (Maclaren Consulting Inc., 2026, Pg 13)*

Amalgamation will result in increased property tax in Strong. If there are no savings from amalgamation the increase could be 16.5%. Even the short-term savings would reduce the tax increase to 12.5%. In the long term, assuming full savings from staffing, the increase would be reduced to 7%. Note that some members of Council believe that Strong taxes are already too low and as a result Strong does not have the capacity to apply properly for provincial grants.

Joly and Sundridge would experience tax decreases of 16% to 18% with no savings from amalgamation, and longer term, would experience tax decreases of 30% to 32% - if no service levels are increased.

**Tax Impacts of Amalgamation**

Tax Requirements	Joly	Strong	Sundridge	Combined
Current Tax Rate	0.01609294	0.01152551	0.01642782	0.013425
Current Tax Revenue	888,017	3,111,705	1,999,902	5,999,623
Current Share of Tax Revenue	14.8%	51.9%	33.3%	100%
Future Taxes				
Future Tax Revenue	740,798	3,624,537	1,634,342	5,999,678
Reduction/Increase	-16.6%	16.5%	-18.3%	0%
With Amalgamation Reductions				
Short Term	727,040	3,557,219	1,603,988	5,888,247
	-22.14%	12.52%	-24.68%	-1.89%
Long Term	683,638	3,344,868	1,508,237	5,536,743
	-29.9%	7.0%	-32.6%	-8.4%

*answer provided in consultant report *Financial Analysis for the Restructuring Study*

8. How will municipal debt and assets be distributed among the three municipalities? (Maclaren Consulting Inc., 2026, Pg 14)*

The debt related to the sewage system will be recovered from those who use the sewage system. It is the only service that is not provided to all residents.

The debt related to particular assets, particularly the shared services, will continue to be allocated to the shared services. For example, the medical centre, the arena and the fire department will each be responsible for their portion of the debt, and the accounting system should show their debt servicing as part of their costs. Strong has the greatest debt per person and will experience the largest tax increase due to amalgamation. It is suggested that the amalgamated municipality assume the debt of each municipality and that Strong tax increases be seen as compensation for the higher level of debt. Each of the municipalities has a municipal headquarters, a public works facility and trucks and equipment related to their roads and other assets that require maintenance. Those assets will be folded into the new municipality, and the new municipality can determine which assets to keep, and which to retire.

*answer provided in consultant report *Financial Analysis for the Restructuring Study*

9. Will there be any cost savings from amalgamation? If so, where will these savings come from? (Maclaren Consulting Inc., 2026, Pg 14)*

The major source of potential long-term savings will come from reducing staffing. Five of those would come from the administration and two of them would be from the Public Works area. Three will need to be replaced with lower cost clerks. An additional savings will come from the merger of the three Councils into a single Council. We have assumed the new Council will cost more than any existing Council but still expect savings of \$106,000. There is also the current contract between Joly and the fire department in South River-Machar. It would not be required if



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Joly was covered by the Sundridge/Strong Fire Department, which would result in a savings of \$26,930.

*answer provided in consultant report *Financial Analysis for the Restructuring Study*

10. What has been spent on the amalgamation study so far, and how much will the process cost moving forward?

- 2024
 - \$166.93 (meeting supplies);
- 2025: Budget of \$41,500 approved (Strong 50%, Sundridge 40%, Joly 10%)
 - \$11,074 J Consulting Inc. – Communication Support and Public Engagement January 25, 2025
 - \$840.90 – OPP Support – Public Engagement
 - \$270.97 – Public Engagement Meeting Supplies and Flyer Mail-out
 - \$15,000 – Maclaren Consulting: Financial Consulting Support
 - TOTAL as of October 22, 2025 - \$27,185.87
 - NOTE – Anonymous donation of \$2,200 received
 - REVISED TOTAL - \$24,985.87

11. Will there be financial assistance from the provincial or federal government to support amalgamation?

- It has been requested from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, but not yet approved.

Governance & Representation

12. How will council representation be structured in an amalgamated municipality?

- 5 Member Council - 1 Mayor at Large; 4 Wards with 1 Councillor from each
 - Wards details are currently under consideration, being structured to equalize population as much as possible.

13. Will residents have a vote or say in whether amalgamation happens?

- Amalgamation is a locally driven process – residents vote for their members of Council to represent them and vote in the best interest of the Municipality at large;
- The details are developed locally by Elected Officials through a Restructuring Order
- Municipalities must hold at least one public meeting prior to Council voting on and submitting a Restructuring Order prepared in accordance with O. Reg. 216/96.

14. What role does the province play in approving or rejecting amalgamation?

- The current Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing approve Restructuring Orders at their sole discretion through the process outlined in applicable legislation (Municipal Act, O. Reg. 204/03, O. Reg. 588/00, O. Reg. 216/96)



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15. How will decision-making be balanced to ensure all three municipalities have fair representation?

- Through the proposed ward system, post-amalgamation, to balance representation from major areas of the amalgamated municipality.

16. Will existing municipal offices and services be consolidated? If so, what changes can we expect?

- This would be a decision for the new municipality – this committee has reviewed and would recommend:
 - maintaining the Township of Strong and Village of Sundridge administration offices and public works garages to re-purpose to support growth. The Township of Joly office/yard would be declared surplus and sold.
 - Public Works – the Township of Strong and Village of Sundridge yards would be maintained, and all fleet maintained. A small public works area would be established at the Landfill #1 property, at the licensed aggregate pit entrance (Inlet Creek)
- Services – more specialization of duties of current staff would be anticipated, i.e. parks and recreation, mechanic, planning. Elimination of some shared service agreements would reduce bureaucracy and increase efficiency (landfill, arena, fire, recreation).

Service Delivery & Infrastructure

17. How will road maintenance, waste collection, and emergency services be impacted by amalgamation?

- Roads: proposal is to maintain “urban and rural” departments – to manage residential (town streets, sidewalks, catch basins) and rural roads. There would no longer be a separation of service based on boundary or shared road between SSJ. Municipalities are regulated by the Minimum Maintenance Standard, Ontario Regulation 239/02, which defines the basic requirements for municipal road maintenance and must be met. There is no proposed reduction in staffing or fleet.
- Waste: No change, other than removal of payment agreement between Sundridge, Strong and Joly for landfill services. Residents receiving curbside pickup would be maintained, with a local improvement charge sent to those receiving the service.
- Emergency Services – no change or reduction. The goal is to maintain the same level of service.

18. Will fire services, policing, and ambulance response times change under an amalgamated model?

- Fire Department – Township of Joly currently purchases the services of Sundridge-Strong Fire Department. Amalgamation would change only management to include Joly as a full partner. Mutual Aid agreements with surrounding fire departments would be maintained.



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- Policing – The Almaguin Highlands Ontario Provincial Police is a Provincial Service and billing is based on number of households and number of call for service.
- Land Ambulance – The District of Parry Sound EMS is a Provincial Service. The municipal billing model is based on weighted property assessments.

19. Will water, sewer, and other utility costs be affected by amalgamation?

- No – residents who receive these services would continue to be billed as a local improvement charge. A local improvement charge is a fee levied by a municipality against specific properties for services/projects that only benefit those properties – such as sewer, sidewalks, streetlights, curbside garbage collection. These charges are identified on the municipal tax bill for the affected residents only. Residents who do not use these services, are not billed or taxed.
- There would be financial planning improvements for these through unified asset management and long-term capital forecasting

20. Will existing municipal staff lose their jobs as a result of amalgamation? (Maclaren Consulting Inc., 2026, Pg 15)*

No municipal staff would lose their jobs under the amalgamation, although some might be assigned to other work. The financial analysis does conclude that each would retire, find other work, or replace someone else who retired or found alternative work before the “long-term” savings are realized. If the province were to fund an employee incentive plan, some employees would have the option to leave the municipality, but none would be required to leave.

*answer provided in consultant report *Financial Analysis for the Restructuring Study*

21. Will services improve, decline, or stay the same?

- The goal is to improve services for residents through specialization of duties, reduction of bureaucracy and efficiencies/streamlining – economies of scale.
- Current shared facilities are managed under a shared service agreement with a Committee of Council (2 representatives each from Sundridge-Strong-Joly). These committees carry out the work of council and then report back to council with recommendations. They are not legal entities who can bind the corporations, so decision making is subject to the following process which can take months (using the arena committee as an example):



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Request is made to Committee – i.e. Junior Hockey Team declare SSJ Arena as home ice.



Committee reviews the request at their meeting (one per month) and makes a recommendation to Councils



Recommendation goes to Sundridge Council (meets 2nd and 4th Wednesday)



Recommendation goes to Strong Council (meets 2nd and 4th Tuesday)



Recommendation goes to Joly Council (meets 2nd Tuesday)



Decision of each Council is returned to Committee at the next monthly meeting, and majority rules. Committee creates an agreement between the Junior Team and the Municipalities. The agreement now has to be recommended back to each Council and adopted by each by by-law (following the above steps).

Community Identity & Quality of Life

22. Will Strong and Joly lose their individual identities, or will new names be introduced?

- The aim is to achieve administrative alignment, not to lose identity.
- The recommendation is to name the amalgamated municipality: “Sundridge” – most residents use this mailing address and identify they are from Sundridge.
- History and identity will be preserved with signage/plaques to identify former municipal boundaries and founding families.

23. How will amalgamation impact rural areas differently than the Village of Sundridge?

- Location of some municipal services will change (i.e. where taxes are paid), but the services themselves will not change.

24. Will there be changes to local zoning and development regulations?

- Municipalities adopt Official Plans to guide future land use and development which aligns with the community’s long term vision and goals. Zoning By-laws legally control land use, ensuring orderly and appropriate development (how land is used, size of



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buildings, setbacks). These policies are mandated to align with the Provincial Planning Statement for Ontario.

- At amalgamation, Council would generally harmonize by-laws during the transition process - Council pick and choose from existing policies, while implementing any Provincial changes. The Restructuring Order would specify how the Zoning By-laws and Official Plans would apply to the amalgamated municipality pre- and post-transition.

25. Will amalgamation attract more businesses or investment to the region?

- Increased consistent branding (Sundridge) to attract residents and businesses
- Reduce red tape and bureaucracy for potential development
- Access to grants and funding increased with more staff and increased municipal size.

Almaguin Community Economic Development Staff were requested to provide input on this question:

- Amalgamation can improve investor confidence by signaling long-term stability and a clear governance structure, which is often a key consideration for external investors.
- A larger municipality may be better positioned to support strategic investment readiness, such as pre-zoned employment lands or shovel-ready sites.
- Consistent leadership and clearer accountability can make it easier for businesses to build relationships and navigate municipal decision-making.

Ways to attract more business- Incentive Programs:

- A larger municipal tax base can improve the financial sustainability of Community Improvement Plans (CIPs), allowing programs to run longer, cover more areas, or support higher uptake.
- Amalgamation may enable the introduction or expansion of façade improvement, accessibility, and building upgrade grants, which are often difficult for smaller municipalities to fund consistently.
- With increased administrative capacity, the municipality may be better positioned to design, administer, and monitor incentive programs in compliance with provincial requirements.
- A broader tax base can help spread program costs, reducing pressure on any single community while still targeting support to priority areas.
- Larger municipalities are often better able to leverage municipal incentives alongside provincial and federal funding, increasing the overall impact for participating businesses.
- These programs remain discretionary and would be subject to Council approval, budget decisions, and demonstrated economic benefit.

26. How will this affect seasonal property owners?

- Same services, potential change in locations
- Less confusion for seasonal residents on where to go for which service (Landfill card, dog tag, fire permits, ice rentals)



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- Specialized staff to better serve and communicate with all residents.

Next Steps & Decision-Making

27. What are the next steps in the amalgamation process, and when will a final decision be made?

- No opportunity to consider restructuring before the end of this current term of Council. Councils wished to ensure adequate research and public consultation was completed prior to a decision on boundary changes.
- Per Section 222 (8) of the Municipal Act, municipalities need to have boundary changes confirmed prior to January 1 of an election year.
- Research and public engagement/consultation will continue for a decision to be made by the next Councils for the end of 2029.

28. Will there be more opportunities for public consultation before a decision is made?

- Yes – another public engagement session is tentatively planned for July or August of 2026

29. What happens if the community overwhelmingly opposes amalgamation?

- Councils are voted in to represent the community at large while balancing the best interests of all
- If there is overwhelming opposition, the community needs to notify and communicate with a member of their Council
- Members of the community need to ensure they vote in municipal elections and be engaged and involved with local government

30. Are there alternatives to full amalgamation, such as increased shared services?

- Sundridge, Strong and Joly already are involved in a number of shared services agreements, not much else would be successfully managed under this model practically (staff resources and timing to manage and administrate)
- Sundridge, Strong and Joly received a municipal modernization grant in 2021, which was used to complete a Shared Services Review – looking at current agreements to find improvements/efficiencies, and to identify opportunities for further shared services.
- Increasing shared services, increases complexity of that service – increase in administration, increase in number of meetings

31. If amalgamation is approved, how long will it take to implement?

- This is typically outlined in the required Restructuring Order submitted to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, as it is a local decision. It typically involves a Transition Council/Committee who implements all changes/harmonization outlined in the Order (consolidation of by-law/policies/employment contracts/services).
- It could take up to 10 years to fully implement all changes and updates required.