

THE LIMITS OF WATER? AMALGAMATION AND WATER SUPPLY
SYSTEM DEVELOPMENT IN ST. JOHN'S, NEWFOUNDLAND,
1980-2012

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Abstract

This thesis investigates water provision in the city of St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador. A key issue addressed is whether recent water provision in the city can be understood in terms of the 1992 amalgamation which joined St. John's with the neighbouring towns of Goulds and Wedgewood Park. Data analyzed in this thesis was collected over the summer of 2011 from archival research and semi-structured interviews with key participants. Literature cited includes work from the sub-disciplinary traditions of historical geography and environmental history. The findings indicate that traditional amalgamations may not be the most ideal option for rapidly improving municipal servicing or for achieving financial austerity. The 1992 amalgamation was slow to improve water provision in Goulds where private groundwater wells were prone to failure in respect to both supply and quality. The consolidation of developmental control within the city of St. John's appears to have been the primary concern.

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Abbreviations

CNS – Centre for Newfoundland Studies
CSJA – City of St. John’s Archives
PANL – The Provincial Archives of Newfoundland and Labrador
PRIDE – People Residing in Dehumanizing Environment

Chapter 1

The Limits of Water?

Those who write about water are often quick to state the fact that it is a resource which is essential for life. Based on its importance in sustaining life, it has even been said that “the history of cities can be read as a history of water”.¹ Cities must be built around some sort of infrastructure that provides water to those living within their boundaries. The type of infrastructure used to provide access to water may differ from place to place, but the provision of water is a thread which ties together municipalities that may otherwise have little in common. However, the fact that water provision is ubiquitous does not mean that it is always of an equal quality. Even within a single municipality the system that provides residents with water may be superior in particular locations. Private water supplies, including groundwater wells, further complicate this situation as the testing and maintenance of such systems is typically the responsibility of homeowners.

Along with other resources, a reliable supply of water ensures that a city can grow and accommodate new development. However, as cities grow other obstacles appear that slow new development or halt it altogether. Adjacent municipalities are one major barrier to such growth and development. As a result, processes like municipal amalgamation enter into public discussion, joining municipalities with one another to ensure continued growth. The importance of consolidation and annexation is highlighted by statistics that

¹ Gandy, M. (2002). *Concrete and Clay: Reworking Nature in New York City*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press. p. 22.

show a city's population growth will often stagnate without boundary expansion.² Growth may be difficult without expansion but evidence also shows that populations often shrink when cities fail to extend their boundaries and capture fast-growing areas at their fringe.³ Based on these observations it is easy to see why a city might wish to expand its boundaries through amalgamation or annexation, especially if it wishes to remain competitive with neighboring municipalities.

Despite their apparent usefulness as tools for fostering growth and development, amalgamations often join together municipalities with widely varying levels of servicing. Poor or inadequate servicing can limit the benefits provided by expansion and prevent future growth from taking place. As a result, some sort of strategy must be developed in order to reconcile these differences. Inequalities in servicing can also be a source of resentment for residents, especially if they perceive these inequalities not being resolved after amalgamation (to be a direct result of amalgamation processes).

Purpose

At the broadest level, this thesis seeks to understand how municipalities make decisions about the provision of water. In providing water to the residents of a municipality a variety of common issues tend to arise. Many of these issues, some of which are financial, political, and environmental, will be addressed here. In addition to this, the way in which municipalities expand and how this expansion impacts the services that the residents of

² Rusk, D. (2003). *Cities Without Suburbs: A Census 2000 Update*. Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press. p. 9.

³ Ibid, p. 30.

such a municipality receive will also be discussed. More specifically, these topics will be addressed in relation to the city of St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada. The ways in which these issues have been experienced in St. John's may not be identical to the ways in which they have been experienced in more populous North American cities like New York City and Toronto but certain issues tend to arise repeatedly, regardless of the location or size of a municipality, making the story of water provision in St. John's a particularly useful case study. The story of water in St. John's is also one of continued urbanization. To be exact, this thesis provides insight into some of the difficulties faced when predominately urban municipalities attempt to spread out into rural and semi-rural areas along their boundaries.

In focusing on St. John's this study provides an in-depth look at water supply system development and the provision of municipal services, including piped water, in the city. Amalgamation and the impact it has had on municipal servicing and quality of life in St. John's is also a major focus. Beyond its value as a case study, the research presented in this thesis will also help to inform future debates over water supply system development and urban expansion in St. John's and elsewhere. Municipal consolidations are often controversial and highly public processes. On the other hand, there is a tendency for some persons to take municipal services such as water and sewer for granted until a problem arises. As a result, this thesis will also help to archive an important intersection in the history of St. John's, one that has largely been overlooked by the general public to this date.

Research Questions

This thesis was formed around a set of questions which helped to shape the direction in which the research it presents was conducted. However, the results of the fieldwork and literature review undertaken for this thesis have also had an impact on the research questions as these processes helped the questions to become more focused in reflection.

The primary research question that this thesis addresses is: how can the extension of the St. John's water supply system, in the later part of the 20th century, be understood in terms of the city's amalgamation with smaller outlying communities? To be exact, how can the extension of the St. John's water supply system be understood in term of the city's 1992 amalgamation with the outlying communities of Goulds and Wedgewood Park? While this is the primary question that this thesis works to answer, there are other important research questions that arise in relation to it.

While the 1992 amalgamation is the primary focus of this thesis, it is only one of a number of factors that have influenced the provision of piped water in St. John's. Apart from the amalgamation, what other factors, be they environmental, political, or technical, have influenced the development of the city's water supply system? Once again, a number of sub-questions arise from this. For example, how did public and private actors, and assorted other interests, interact to affect the progression of water supply in the city? How has contestation over the expansion of the city's water supply system shaped the current direction of growth in St. John's?

By answering the research questions listed above, this thesis provides a historical-geographical account of the development of the water supply system that serves St.

John's. This account focuses on specific events related to the expansion of St. John's at the end of the last century including the city's interactions with adjacent municipalities, such as regional planning. These events represent important junctures in the growth of the city's water supply system and they will help to outline the overall course of change in the city of St. John's. The findings presented in this thesis also help to illuminate the context of more recent developments, principally the extension of the water supply system in relation to the pivotal 1992 amalgamation.

Methodology and Research Design

The research and fieldwork conducted in the preparation of this thesis took place primarily in the summer of 2011. The core fieldwork consisted of archival research and a series of semi-structured interviews with residents of St. John's, local politicians, and former city employees. In addition to this, a tour of the fieldwork site was conducted in order to gain more familiarity with the area and to photograph specific points of interest. This fieldwork was supplemented by an ongoing literature review process which helped to fill some of the gaps that existed within the research conducted in the field. This literature review also helped to connect the fieldwork with larger issues and themes that are discussed more broadly in relation to the provision of water, such as environmental access, uneven power relationships, and municipal governance.

Archival fieldwork was conducted at various locations throughout the city of St. John's. The archives visited during the summer of 2011 included The Centre for Newfoundland Studies (CNS), located at Memorial University's St. John's campus, The

City of St. John's Archives (CSJA), and The Provincial Archives of Newfoundland and Labrador (PANL). The type of material that was accessed during this archival research included government documents, technical reports, engineering reports, and newspaper clippings. While this material is quite useful by itself, it more or less represents the “official” view of the events that have impacted the provision of water in the city of St. John's. As a result, it was determined that semi-structured interviews, involving individuals from a variety of roles and backgrounds, would be useful in providing a more balanced understanding of the expansion of the water supply system in the city.

The semi-structured interviews conducted for this study took place at a variety of locations in and around the city of St. John's. In total, nine persons were interviewed over the course of the summer of 2011. Out of the persons interviewed, two were former elected officials who had previously served the city of St. John's, one of whom currently sits as a Member of the House of Assembly with the government of Newfoundland and Labrador. In addition to these politicians, two former city employees who have worked closely with the water supply system in some form or another were also interviewed. The rest of the interviewees cited in this paper were residents of the community of Goulds at some point in their lives. In all cases, the interviews were conducted at a time and place chosen by the interviewees themselves. Interviewees were given the option of being interviewed in person or by telephone. Whether or not the interview was recorded was also determined by the interviewees. Two sets of questions were utilized during these semi-structured interviews. The first set of questions was directed towards local residents. The second set of questions, which was more technical in nature, was directed towards

city employees and local politicians, both current and former. In all, seven interviewees consented to being recorded. Of the nine interviews in total, eight were conducted in person and one was completed by telephone.

A tour of the field site was conducted at the end of the fieldwork period in August of 2011. This tour was conducted by automobile and focused primarily on the community of Goulds and the area surrounding it at the southern edge of the city of St. John's. From this tour, a series of photographs were taken in order to gain a better understanding of the various landscapes and streetscapes present in this particular area. Select photographs from the tour are featured in this thesis in order to help readers better visualize particular aspects of Goulds.

The literature review process, which was directed primarily towards sources from the sub-disciplines of historical geography and environmental history, began in the winter of 2011. This literature review continued throughout the spring and summer of 2011 in conjunction with the archival research and semi-structured interviews. After the completion of fieldwork in Newfoundland the literature review process was extended as a result of reflecting on some of the initial findings. The literature review process as a whole came to a close in the summer of 2012.

Finally, it is also important to note any potential sources of bias or subjectivity that may be present in this work. In reflecting on my own position as a researcher the fact that my permanent place of residency is the province of Newfoundland and Labrador must be stated. As a result of this, I have preexisting relationships with various individuals throughout the region as well as my field site. In conducting my fieldwork, these

relationships were utilized at various times for a variety of reasons. Furthermore, at particular times throughout my life I have lived in and around the city of St. John's. As such, I have personally used the city's water supply system for extended periods of time. I have also experienced other aspects of municipal servicing in the city firsthand. It is likely that these experiences have impacted this thesis in some way.

Sampling

The majority of the participants who took part in this study were found by word of mouth. As someone who was born and raised in Newfoundland, and whose family lives a short distance from St. John's itself, I was in a position to use existing contacts to search out participants living in my study area. In addition to those persons who were residents of the study area, I was also able to utilize contacts currently working for the city of St. John's to find potential interviewees.

From these initial contacts, I was able to use a method known as snowball sampling to search out other participants. Under this method, other potential interviewees were suggested by my initial contacts. As a result, I was able to reach a number of individuals who fit the criteria of my study but were previously unknown to me. The only exceptions in this process were the two former city politicians who were interviewed for this study. These individuals, who were selected as a result of being prominently featured in archival material, were directly available for contact due to the fact that they have maintained public positions since their terms as elected officials with the city of St. John's expired.

Outline of Thesis

This thesis is divided into six distinct chapters beginning with this introductory chapter, which provides an overview of the thesis, its purpose, and the methodology and research design implemented in its preparation.

The second chapter presents a comprehensive literature review, forming the foundation of the arguments that will be made in the following chapters. Literature on the history of water provision is at the forefront of discussion here. This chapter also addresses literature on municipal amalgamations and discusses the profound impact that such processes can have on services like piped water.

Chapter three focuses on the city of St. John's itself and provides important background information on which the subsequent chapters stand, including the physical geography and hydrology of the city. This chapter also addresses the history of urban and regional planning in and around the city. The planning history of the town of Goulds prior to its amalgamation with St. John's in 1992 is also a topic of discussion.

The fourth chapter is the first of two core empirical chapters that focus directly on the issues surrounding the extension of piped water to outlying areas of St. John's. Chapter four focuses on the growth of the city and its water supply system in relation to the overall direction of planning in the region and the recommendations of specific planning efforts that came to the forefront of discussion during the second half of the 20th century. The events leading up to the 1992 amalgamation of St. John's with the towns of Goulds and Wedgewood Park are also discussed.

Chapter five discusses a number of controversial issues that came to the attention of local media following the 1992 amalgamation. In particular, the fifth chapter focuses on the impact that the consolidation process has had on piped water and other municipal services in the community of Goulds. In general, this chapter calls into question the ability of municipal consolidations to equalize services such as piped water over a broad region.

The sixth, and final, chapter of this thesis concludes the discussion of water provision in St. John's and synthesizes the various issues and themes that have been raised throughout the preceding chapters. This chapter also provides recommendations as to the possible direction future research might take.

The fact that the successful provision of water is essential for the life of a municipality does not mean that the practice has been mastered or that it is problem free. Particular systems may be technically sound but political decisions, public pressure, and private interests have a great deal of influence over their development and operation.

Amalgamation is a process that can greatly complicate the development of a water supply system, especially when distinct areas with varying levels of servicing are quickly brought together. While official boundaries erode in the wake of an amalgamation, preexisting development patterns and other dividing factors may persist for years. In some cases, these dividing factors may never completely disappear.

The following chapter addresses the literature that has helped to shape this thesis and direct its path of inquiry. It also situates this work within the sub-disciplines of

historical geography and environmental history, effectively outlining its contribution to the wider body of knowledge that exists on the topics of water supply development, environmental access, and municipal consolidation. This chapter will also provide background for the following chapters and the arguments presented within them.

Chapter 2

Water, The Environment, and Amalgamation

The suggestion has been made that “analyzing physical flows of water 'narrates stories' about social structure and cultural norms”.⁴ While this may be true, the water supply systems that exist in most large cities today have been developed and managed in similar ways throughout history. Local political and geographical factors work to create unique situations that must be dealt with individually but there are ultimately a number of common threads connecting the majority of water supply networks that are currently in use. As a result, when studying such systems it is useful to draw on the knowledge and experiences of those who have dealt with them in the past, regardless of the location in which they conducted their work. In addition to the literature that directly engages with issues related to municipal water, it is also possible to draw insights on these systems from other research that has been conducted within related fields. This chapter provides an overview of such research in order to provide the foundation for my discussion of municipal water in St. John's, Newfoundland, that will follow in subsequent chapters of this thesis. Furthermore, literature related to municipal government and urban expansion is also discussed in order to address the issue of amalgamation and its impact on affected residents. In reviewing such literature, this chapter highlights a number of key themes at play in the provision of services such as municipal water. In particular, tensions between private and public interests, uneven power relationships, and issues of unequal access to

⁴ Linton, J. (2010). *What is water? The history of a modern abstraction*. Vancouver: UBC Press. p. 231.

natural resources are at the centre of discussion.

The way that the public interacts with water on a daily basis has changed a great deal over the last two centuries in cities and towns throughout the world as piped water has replaced other sources in most areas. While it is obvious that there is a great deal of human involvement in the provision of piped water, sources that may seem “natural” or “pristine” ultimately bear “traces of human involvement in the form of minute quantities of anthropogenic substances such as chlorinated compounds”.⁵ Human involvement in, and alteration of, various aspects of the hydrological cycle led to the development of what some are now calling the hydrosocial cycle. The development of the hydrosocial cycle as a concept is centred on the argument that it is “unreasonable (and irrelevant) to isolate flows of water from social processes and vice versa”.⁶ This line of thinking stems from research in political ecology that challenged “the apparent naturalness” of processes like drought and water scarcity, which had previously been conceived of as being a consequence of the absence of water.⁷ The idea of the hydrosocial cycle is also closely related to a practice of social hydrology that geographer Jamie Linton terms hydrolectics, which “conceives of a water process out of which particular instances of water get fixed, or instantiated, in social relations”.⁸ Hydrolectics can then be broken down into the practical and the analytical. According to Linton, practical hydrolectics is a type of activism that “means getting ourselves into the water, not only by becoming involved in decisions about water but by actively becoming mixed up in the solution that produces

⁵ Ibid, p. 229.

⁶ Ibid, p. 231.

⁷ Ibid, p. 70.

⁸ Ibid, p. 223.

what water is and what it might be”.⁹ In comparison, analytical hydrolectics “means identifying the particular structure of water in any given situation. That water is different things to different people, depending on their modes of engagement, is the main principle behind this mode of analyzing problems and issues involving water”.¹⁰ Whatever the case, it is essential that we continue to think about how we as a society understand water and that we work to build on these understandings to achieve results that benefit the common good and help to maintain public access to water resources.

One controversial aspect of water provision, which may detract from its ability to serve the common good, is the private ownership of water supply companies and the contracting of water testing to private labs.¹¹ While such private enterprises may be accountable to the general public, by way of legal agreements with the municipalities with which they serve, they nevertheless exist to generate a profit for their owners or shareholders.¹² As a result, the goals of such a company may be at odds with the desire of a municipality's residents to be provided with a safe and reliable source of drinking water. Furthermore, these residents, who formerly had access to water, are transformed into paying customers, forever changing their relationship with this vital resource.¹³ Through privatization, water becomes not a right, but a privilege. In the absence of outright private ownership, the influence of the private sector on municipal utilities is another potential

⁹ Ibid, p. 235.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Prudham, S. (2004). Poisoning the Well: Neoliberalism and the contamination of municipal water in Walkerton, Ontario. *Geoforum*, 35.

¹² Bakker, K. (2003). From Public to Private to... Mutual? Restructuring Water Supply Governance in England and Wales. *Geoforum*, 34(3), p. 370.

¹³ Swyngedouw, E. (2005). Dispossessing H2O: The Contested Terrain of Water Privatization. *Capitalism, Nature, Socialism*, 16(1), p. 91.

source of conflict. As private industry relies on water and other utilities to operate, it has a vested interest in ensuring that it has a good supply of water as and when it is required. There is, therefore, the potential that these private interests will petition government to gain preferential treatment or otherwise negatively influence the service of the general public as they attempt to achieve their self-serving goals. However, identifying such conflict between the public and the private may not be as simple as in the case of outright private ownership, due to the fact that municipal water supplies have often been thought of as providing an essential public good.¹⁴

While services such as municipal water are often considered to be a public good, inequalities in servicing continue to exist. Technology is one aspect of water provision in which there are clear inequalities as the technologies that people use to supply themselves with water vary widely throughout the world. In some areas, water is extracted directly from open watercourses or water bodies and carried by hand to homes or elsewhere. However, most people in North America are serviced by large, technologically intensive, systems that transport water over significant distances and provide purification. While they are less common, especially in urbanized areas, groundwater wells are also used to provide drinking water in some municipalities. Most large-scale water supply systems receive treatment and are closely maintained and monitored but private wells typically lack treatment and they often go untested, especially if testing is the responsibility of the owner. Even when testing is done on private wells there may be significant gaps between testing periods, creating an opportunity for the quality of the water they provide to drop

¹⁴ Ibid, p. 84.

without the owner's knowledge.¹⁵ The reliability of private wells is also questionable if they are not physically maintained or if water levels are not closely monitored. Also, the responsibility for conservation during dry periods falls upon the owners of private wells, whereas municipalities can enact bylaws or other measures to help manage their systems.¹⁶ As such, North American municipalities face significant disparities in their water supply systems, with those that rely on private wells placed at a significant disadvantage when it comes to having peace of mind over the water they drink. Despite the benefits of piped water, some users who rely on private wells may be reluctant to connect to such a system, and abandon their wells, if it comes at a high personal cost or if they believe that their existing sources provide superior water, a perception often based on taste.¹⁷ Clearly, as concepts like the hydrosocial cycle and hydrolectics suggest, water is caught up in a wide-reaching network of human relations and, within this network, it has come to mean different things to different people. As our interactions with water vary greatly from person to person, it is important to think about such differences, considering why they exist and why something that literally falls from the sky is the source of injustice and disparity.

The Power of Municipal Water: A Public Good?

It has often been the case throughout history that access to water, for drinking and other

¹⁵ Kreutzwiser, R., de Loe, R., Imgrund, K., Conboy, M., Simpson, H., & Plummer, R. (2011). Understanding Stewardship Behaviour: Factors Facilitating and Constraining Private Well Stewardship. *Journal of Environment Management*, 92, p. 1113.

¹⁶ City of St. John's, The. (2002). Water Conservation Order. Retrieved from <http://www.stjohns.ca/cityservices/water/waterconservation.jsp>

¹⁷ Williams, B. (Aug. 10, 2011). Personal Communication. Resident of Goulds.

purposes, has been indicative of the uneven power relations that exist in society. Such relationships are sometimes quite obvious, while others are more subtle and their complexities are only revealed in hindsight. If one looks back to the origins of most of the public water supply systems existing in municipalities today, one will discover that they often began as private enterprises launched by individuals or groups that had less interest in the public good than in their own profit margins. The provision of piped water to New York City, which has been described as “one of the most elaborate feats of civil engineering in... North American urbanization”, is an excellent place from which to begin to engage with such issues.¹⁸ While the provision of water to New York City was quite an achievement, the city's water supply system has not been free from controversy. The first municipally owned waterworks in New York City came into existence thanks to state legislation which granted the city the right to construct such a system in 1834.¹⁹ Prior to this, the large-scale provision of water to the city's residents was largely handled by a private corporation known as the Manhattan Water Company, the profits of which were later used to establish “the Bank of Manhattan Company (later to become Chase Manhattan after the 1955 merger with Chase National Bank)”.²⁰ However, these profits were by no means earned in an ethical manner as the Manhattan Company conducted its waterworks operations without much concern for quality or accessibility. Despite promising the construction of a modern system operating on a steam pump and a million-gallon reservoir, the company's main supply was a well that had been drilled adjacent to a

¹⁸ Gandy, M. (2002). *Concrete and Clay*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press. p. 19.

¹⁹ Ibid, p. 30.

²⁰ Ibid, pp. 27-28.

polluted pond. In addition to this, only 25 miles of water-mains were laid by the company over the course of its history and the water itself cost \$20 a year, an amount beyond the means of many of the city's residents. The dominance of the Manhattan Water Company over the city's water provision began in 1799 when Aaron Burr, chair of the company's board and a leading Republican, succeeded in persuading the state legislature to pass legislation that granted it a charter. A redraft of the bill that granted the company this charter also gave it the freedom to use its surplus capital to purchase stock and actively conduct other "moneyed" transactions. As a result, the company was not limited to simply reinvesting its surplus back into the water supply system, effectively stunting its development. While municipal water is often thought of as a public good, this early example of large-scale water provision in New York City illustrates how it is not always the case. In fact, after the system went public in the 1830s, the city decided to invest substantial funds into it only after the cost of fire damage began to outweigh the cost of its improvement. Much of the pressure to invest these funds came from the insurance industry, a group well represented within government at the time, which was under threat as a result of paying out claims on this costly form of damage.²¹ While improvements in fire protection may have benefited the city as a whole it is clear that some groups, such as the insurance companies, benefited more so than others as funds were pumped into the water supply system.

The story of water supply development in New York City has much in common with other North American municipalities, even though much of the action in New York

²¹ Ibid, p. 30.

took place on a much larger scale than elsewhere on the continent. One smaller municipality in which the uneven development of water supply has been studied is Paris, Ontario. In Paris, as in many other municipalities, fire protection was a leading factor driving the installation of piped water.²² Without piped water a municipality could expect its business owners and residents to be subject to higher insurance rates than cities and towns that could boast such a service. As a secondary interest to fire protection, piped water was also introduced throughout North America in situations where wells were deemed inadequate for domestic use. However, the clear economic benefits stemming from decreased fire insurance rates took precedence over issues such as health. According to Paris businessmen who advocated fire protection by waterworks, the system would eventually pay for itself through the lowering of insurance rates and a decrease in losses due to fire. While fire protection is commonly considered to be a service that benefits the common good, the manner in which it was developed in Paris suggests otherwise. In fact, the installation of piped water in the town may have caused more harm than good for the majority of the taxpaying public. By 1894, following the start of construction in the early 1880s, Paris' water system was arranged in such a pattern that suggested factories and other places of business had been given priority. Domestic use of the Paris system was virtually non-existent at that time and many homes were still without piped water by as late as 1924. Even though the water supply system only benefited a small portion of Paris' residents, mainly its wealthy merchants and industrialists, it was paid for "primarily by

²² Hagopian, J. (1994). The Political Geography of Water Provision in Paris, Ontario, 1882-1924. *Urban History Review*, 23(1), pp. 32-38

debentures which were repaid from the town treasury”.²³ Furthermore, it has been noted that, “[n]ot surprisingly, the municipal tax mill rate increased sharply once the decision to build was made”.²⁴ Access to piped water in Paris was put further out of reach as a result of council's subsequent decision to only extend service to streets on which residents were in a position “to pay the interest (at 7 percent) on the town's cost of constructing that extension” which led “the chronology of water main extensions” to “reflect the town's social geography”.²⁵ The Paris town council also granted ten-year tax exemptions to a number of local businesses following connection to the system, placing an ever greater burden on the general public. These issues were largely sidestepped by claims that decreased insurance rates would attract new industries to the town, and provide benefits to the working class in the form of new employment opportunities. It has been noted that such potential benefits were used by promoters simply to deflect “attention away from the obvious inequalities in the scheme as presented to the public” and “reduce the level of argument to that engaged in by optimistic, progressive 'ayes' and cynical, regressive 'nays’”.²⁶ In the end, even though it was a publicly funded project, the Paris waterworks were implemented in a manner that primarily served private interests while largely ignoring the needs of the general public. Based on the cases of Paris and New York it is clear that both private and public enterprises can fail to serve the public good, even when they are promoted in such capacity.

²³ Ibid, pp. 43-44.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid, pp. 44-45.

²⁶ Hagopian, J. (1995). Would the Benefits Trickle Down? An Examination of the Paris, Ontario, Waterworks Campaign of 1882. *Ontario History*, 87, p. 150.

The examples given above highlight the unevenness of access to water in general, but the issue of access to safe drinking water also brings into question power relations and the role of government in protecting those who put them in power. In particular, there has been much discussion in recent years over the neoliberalization of public utilities, including water supplies and water supply testing, in various municipalities. In Canada, the most shocking example of the failure of such neoliberal advances, which have shifted the control of public services like water towards private interests, is that of the E. coli tainted public water supply in Walkerton, Ontario. The tragedy that took place in Walkerton saw a number of individuals lose their lives and many others become severely ill. Due to their exceptional nature, the circumstances that allowed this event to happen have been discussed extensively over the last decade. In part, Walkerton was blamed on the policies enacted in 1995 by Mike Harris' newly elected Progressive Conservative government. Among the changes it instituted, Harris' government sought to achieve fiscal austerity by targeting Ontario's "environmental regulatory and resource management agencies".²⁷ To do so, Harris' Progressive Conservatives eliminated "provincial regulatory responsibilities" and dismantled "most of Ontario's environmental advisory boards and commissions".²⁸ In general, "the production of environmental risk was tied to a new, neoliberal mode of social regulation that critically undermined environmental governance".²⁹ These changes, combined with the elimination of funding for various citizen groups, "meant closure of critical avenues for independent scientific and public

²⁷ Prudham, S. (2004). *Poisoning the Well*. p. 352.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 357.

input, effectively consolidating the power of elite policy-makers within Harris' inner circle, and freeing up capital from independent oversight and accountability".³⁰ However, neoliberal reforms had already infiltrated Ontario politics prior to the election of Mike Harris as premier. Harris' predecessor, Bob Rae, sought to privatize a wide array of environmental programs and operations that were previously under the control of the provincial government in response to deteriorating economic conditions and pressure from international finance capital to adopt fiscal reforms. Water testing was one of the programs targeted by Rae, leading to changes in practices and standards in communities like Walkerton, which subsequently contracted out its testing responsibilities to a private lab. Leading up to the outbreak of illness, this laboratory passed Walkerton's tests results onto the town's managers, but they failed to inform provincial authorities as required. Rae's actions "provided the thin edge of the neoliberal wedge" that Mike Harris would later expand upon and exploit in the name of greater cost-cutting measures.³¹ Despite the questionable reforms enacted by Ontario governments in the years leading up to Walkerton, all the blame for the tragedy cannot be placed on government. It has also been emphasized that the "highly particular biophysical environment" of the area and the "actions of environmental managers turned a 'normal' accident waiting to happen into a specific one with tragic consequences".³² While the Walkerton tragedy was a relatively unique event in recent history, it has been stated that it was not an isolated event, but rather "an example of broad regulatory failure and the systematic production of

³⁰ Ibid, pp. 350-353.

³¹ Ibid, p. 351.

³² Ibid, p. 345.

environmental risks by neoliberal governance reforms, an environmental and human health manifestation of... neoliberalism's 'thin policies and hard outcomes'".³³ This event also brings into question the benefits of a municipal water supply system, in regard to the safety of such a source, over private single-family water wells or bottled water. If nothing else, Walkerton is dramatic proof that without strict environmental regulations, and the enforcement of those regulations, the private sector may not be trustworthy enough to operate and manage the public utilities that the residents of most municipalities rely on, and often take for granted. However, it has also been argued that "the problem is neither quite the state nor quite the market but 'a lack of democratic process in the public sector'".³⁴ It is clear that the position of water as a public good, one of the issues at the heart of the Walkerton tragedy, has become increasingly complex. While the Walkerton tragedy was one of the more visible events of its kind in recent years, the history of access to and control over the environment and natural resources in Canada has not been without controversy.

Environmental Access in 20th Century Canada

Historically, access to "pristine" environments has often been limited to those with the means to afford them. The consequences of such limits are often aesthetic but they also tend to have concrete impacts on health and overall quality of life. For example, it is often the less fortunate members of society who tend to be denied access to safe drinking water.

³³ Ibid, p. 344.

³⁴ Linton, J. (2010). *What is water?* p. 238.

Hamilton, Ontario, is one city in which research has been conducted on the history of such limits to environmental access. Although not directly related to water supply, the issues at play in Hamilton can teach us a great deal about the ways in which socio-economic constraints are reflected in the environment of a city. In particular, it has been noted that early settlement patterns in Hamilton were directly impacted by a number of socio-economic factors. Wealthy residents of the city tended to build further inland on elevated and well-drained land while working class housing was constructed on low cost land that was “low, flat, and poorly drained”.³⁵ Along with one's financial means, ethnicity also played a role in developing settlement patterns in Hamilton. For example, in the first half of the 20th century, real estate contracts in one Hamilton suburb forbade homeowners from selling to people of particular ethnic backgrounds, including “Negroes, Asiatics, Bulgarians, Austrians, Russians, Serbs, Romanians, Turks, Armenians... or foreign born Italians, Greeks or Jews”, unjustly pushing them towards undesirable lands elsewhere in the city.³⁶ It has often been the case in North American cities that “local environmental impacts were gendered, racialized, and class-structured”.³⁷ While such restrictions have long since been outlawed, at least on the surface, they have nevertheless had a longstanding impact on the relationship particular marginalized groups have with Hamilton's environment. Furthermore, it has been argued that the environmental inequality already existing within Hamilton's settlement patterns were later “legitimized

³⁵ Cruikshank, K. & Bouchier, N. (2004). Blighted Areas and Obnoxious Industries: Constructing Environmental Inequality on an Industrial Waterfront, Hamilton, Ontario, 1890-1960. *Environmental History*, 9(3), p. 468.

³⁶ Ibid, p. 466.

³⁷ Olson, S. (2007). Downwind, Downtown, Downstream: The Environmental Legacy in Baltimore and Montreal. *Environmental History*, 12(4), p. 859.

and deepened” by the actions of planners “who had given little thought to local access to waterfront resources” in their attempts at attracting more heavy industry to Hamilton.³⁸ Early in the 20th century, working class residents of Hamilton generally lived closer to the waterfront, within walking distance of their places of employment on the waterfront as a result exposing themselves and their families to industrial pollution. Additionally, until treatment was introduced, the city's sewerage system discharged at various points along the waterfront, adding to the problem. Those who lived in these areas had little access to safe recreational areas, as they could not afford the cost of transportation to various “undisturbed” areas accessible to Hamilton's more affluent citizens.³⁹ While pollution had already severely limited working class access to safe recreational areas along the waterfront, city planners systematically eliminated other options by promoting infill along the shoreline in order to provide more space for industry. The “official zoning of neighborhoods as industrial”, following World War II, effectively ended the access of working class residents to the city's waterfront and subsequently legitimized the encroachment of industrial operations into parts of Hamilton that were still largely residential.⁴⁰ Ultimately, the aspirations of private industry were privileged over those of others and initial patterns of uneven development, partially based upon socio-economic factors, were exacerbated as a result. If such patterns were able to influence the longterm development of Hamilton it also suggests that, broadly speaking, the expansion of water supply systems in smaller cities like Paris, Ontario and St. John's were likely impacted by

³⁸ Cruikshank, K. & Bouchier, N. (2004). Blighted areas and obnoxious industries. pp. 484-485.

³⁹ Ibid, p. 476.

⁴⁰ Ibid, pp. 488-489.

their initial patterns of development as well.

While the working-class residents of Hamilton may not have been able to effectively resist the environmental inequality they faced, the concept of practical hydrolectics has helped to create some interesting forms of resistance to such struggles in recent years. In particular, it is the suggestion that “our physical engagements with water can have the potential to change things” that makes practical hydrolectics a useful tool in fighting injustice.⁴¹ Recent examples of this include public swims in Quebec and Ontario that were organized to draw attention to a lack of recreational swimming areas for citizens who cannot afford private summer houses or vacations to exotic beaches. In effect, “by placing themselves in the water, people can physically produce public water spaces while simultaneously constituting themselves as a body politic with an interest in supporting public efforts to maintain high water-quality standards”.⁴² While such an approach was likely not even conceived of back when Hamilton's residents saw their access to their waterfront begin to disappear, it does prove that there are means by which effective resistance to such development can be organized.

Hamilton's waterfront provides just one example of the regulations that often restrict access of the public to natural resources. Another interesting case is that of British Columbia's Fraser River, where local residents, many of whom were aboriginal, lost access to fish stocks along the river as a result of increasing pressure from commercial fishing operations. The debate surrounding the management of the Fraser River began

⁴¹ Linton, J. (2010). *What is water?* p. 236.

⁴² *Ibid*, p. 237.

following a series of rock slides that occurred between 1911 and 1913, due to railway construction, and obstructed a section of the river known as Hells Gate. The Hells Gate slides had an immediate impact on the success of salmon runs on the Fraser, even after work was done to repair the damage caused by the slides.⁴³ Following the slides at Hells Gate, restrictions were placed on the extent to which aboriginal groups could fish for salmon, in the name of conservation, despite their knowledge of the fishery “to 'time immemorial'”.⁴⁴ These restrictions stemmed from “an environment of decreasing supply and an expanding commercial fishery” which helped to privilege, among other things, commercial value and equate “native uses of salmon... with waste”.⁴⁵ Clearly, those in power placed little value on the historical uses of the Fraser's fish stocks. Based on this, historical uses of any resource, regardless of location, could just as easily be overlooked or undervalued and, once again, the privileged position of the market and “modern” technology made apparent. Another lesson that the Fraser River salmon fishery makes clear is that development in one area often correlates with a lack of development in another. The fact that the Fraser River's main channel was never dammed is often celebrated as a victory for conservationists. However, if it had not been for the alternative hydroelectric projects that went forward on the Columbia River and the Peace River, it is likely that the Fraser would have undergone such a transformation itself. It has been said that the development of these rivers “operated as both a political outcome of, and a

⁴³ Evenden, M. (2004). *Fish Versus Power: An Environmental History of the Fraser River*. New York: Cambridge University Press. p. 19.

⁴⁴ Ibid, p. 36.

⁴⁵ Ibid, p. 38.

solution to, the fish vs. power debate on the Fraser River”.⁴⁶ While the circumstances surrounding the absence of hydroelectric development on the Fraser are unique, the situation does indicate that regional boundaries, be they real or imagined, are porous and that looking beyond them is essential for understanding and engaging in debates over natural resources.

Continuing on the topic of boundaries, it is also important to consider the concept of urban metabolism and changes in the flow of natural resources into, and waste products out of, cities. Discussions of urban metabolism help to shed light on environmental issues across municipal boundaries and within wider city-regions. The scale and tempo of urban growth is one of the main points that must be considered in such a discussion. In fact, it has been stated that “[w]hat we build in the span of four or five years creates a stream of future demands for operation and upkeep”.⁴⁷ A housing subdivision, for example, requires the consumption of natural resources far beyond those required for its initial construction, including a constant supply of fresh water. Therefore, the flow of resources into a city must increase in order to allow for continued development. In this process it is also important to note that the “pattern of flows that distinguishes a particular city today was modeled – and remodeled – in the creation of its infrastructure. Each surge of growth reengineered the hydrology and energy balance within the city, in the surrounding region, and at remote sites of exchange”.⁴⁸ By investigating a city's infrastructure, and the changes that it has undergone over time, we

⁴⁶ Ibid, p. 228.

⁴⁷ Olson, S. (2007). *Downwind, Downtown, Downstream*. p. 846.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

can learn a great deal about its urban metabolism and the efficiency of resource flows across its boundaries. In particular, gaps in infrastructure may point to areas in which growth has stalled or raise questions as to the equality of a system in general. Finally, “it is at the scale of the polis that impacts of material flows – the magnitudes and technological options, the economics, and the chemistry – can best be grasped without losing sight of the personal implications for city-dwellers: their health, life chances, range of choice, and sense of agency”.⁴⁹ The ideas and suggestions put forward by engineers and other experts are still important but, more often than not, the degree to which they are put into action depends largely upon the decisions of politicians at various levels of government. As politicians may have no formal training or knowledge of municipal infrastructure, such as a water supply system, the decisions they make are often made in consultation with technical experts, but they are also subject to pressure from individuals or groups from various backgrounds who carry with them a wide array of interests. As a result, a city's urban metabolism may not follow the most logical pattern and the infrastructure that shapes it may serve particular residents better than others.

The “Benefits” of Municipal Amalgamation

While some municipalities might grow at a predictable rate, one process that can dramatically expand a city's boundaries beyond normal patterns of growth is amalgamation, or annexation in some cases. Amalgamation can be defined as “a process by which two or more municipalities come together with the expressed objective of

⁴⁹ Ibid.

restructuring the operations and administration of local governance”.⁵⁰ Annexation simply refers to the enlargement of the area of an incorporated place. When one incorporated municipality is “annexed” by another it “does not create a new municipality through the merger of two... municipalities, as much as it dissolves the municipality through its absorption into the territory” of the other.⁵¹ Almost overnight, such processes can dramatically change the infrastructure and resource flows under the control of a city's managers. Taking over management of existing infrastructure in the areas which have been amalgamated can also influence any related technical or monetary issues, or create entirely new ones. As a result of the effort required to undertake an amalgamation there is often a great deal of pressure for its proponents to fully justify their proposals. Typically, supporters of amalgamations argue that such processes save money by eliminating duplication of services and unnecessary positions on city councils, facilitate more effective regional planning, improve equity among taxpayers, and allow municipalities to market themselves better in the global economy.⁵² However, do such claims always hold true in the historical record?

There have been numerous examples of municipalities merging throughout history. These mergers, be they amalgamations or annexations, have taken place under a variety of circumstances and in a wide range of locations. One of the most extensive mergers ever to take place was that which formed New York City in the late 19th century.

⁵⁰ Meligrana, J. (2000). Toward a Model of Local Government Restructuring: Evidence from Canada. *Canadian Journal of Regional Science*, 23(3), p. 525.

⁵¹ Ibid, p. 524.

⁵² O'Brien, A. (1993). *Municipal Consolidation in Canada and its Alternatives*. Toronto: ICURR Press. pp. 8-9.

This process saw the consolidation of 15 cities and towns and 11 villages into a single city with a population of 3.5 million. The primary reason behind the supposed need for the creation of this new city was to allow local business interests to better compete with up-and-coming western American cities, most notably Chicago, through the efficient development of infrastructure such as railroads. It is worth noting that it was never argued that the formation of New York City would save money and that its promoters were fully aware that expanding, improving, and equalizing infrastructure and services would likewise mean increased spending. In fact, by the mid-1970s New York was effectively bankrupt, which has been used to bolster the claim that “the city obviously did not benefit from any possible economies of scale that resulted from its size”.⁵³ However, those who support municipal consolidations attribute the economic failure of the city to the fact that New York was unable to capture its suburban growth, as its boundaries remained static over the 20th century due to the growth of adjacent municipalities, which decreased the amount of unincorporated land available for annexation, and the existence of laws limiting municipal annexations. In New York State a municipal annexation requires the filing of a petition by 20% of qualified voters, a public hearing to determine if it is in the best interest of the public, and the approval of the boards of each affected local government. Once approved, “the proposition must be submitted for election by the voters in the territory to be annexed”.⁵⁴ In the United States at least, such measures ultimately make it easier for middle-class suburbanites to maintain their civic-focus on

⁵³ Sancton, A. (2000). *Merger Mania: The Assault on Local Government*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press. pp. 30-34.

⁵⁴ New York State Assembly. (2009). *Annexation of Territory of Local Governments*. Retrieved from <http://www.assembly.state.ny.us/comm/StateLocal/20070823/annex.pdf>

their own communities, retaining a wealthier lifestyle focused upon “homeownership, children, and automobiles”.⁵⁵

Proponents of consolidations argue that when cities are unable to expand their boundaries and capture their suburbs, creating a situation in which they are unable to tap the greater economic growth in these areas, it increases their reliance on aid from higher levels of government and the likelihood that they too will fail socially or financially.⁵⁶ Despite its later economic troubles, and the limits of its geographic expansion, New York City succeeded in becoming a dominant global economic centre in the decades following the amalgamation. Whether this success was a result of the merger is debatable, as it has been pointed out by some observers that there is little or no mention of New York's municipal government or the 1898 consolidation in recent discussions on the phenomenon of “world cities”.⁵⁷ This absence does not necessarily mean that the amalgamation was not in some way responsible, but it calls into question its role in ensuring New York City's success as major global economic centre. Alternatively, some economic development theories suggest that the success of cities like New York may be more closely related to their diversity and the quality of life they provide as a result of this diversity, insofar as it attracts highly creative individuals, rather than an outcome of regional economic dominance due to processes of amalgamation.⁵⁸ The absence of any clear consensus over the success of New York's amalgamation brings into question the

⁵⁵ Teaford, J. (2006). *The Metropolitan Revolution: The Rise of Post-Urban America*. New York: Columbia University Press. p. 85.

⁵⁶ Rusk, D. (2003). *Cities Without Suburbs*. p. 48.

⁵⁷ Sancton, A. (2000). *Merger Mania*. p. 35.

⁵⁸ Rusk, D. (2003). *Cities Without Suburbs*. pp. 71-75.

value of amalgamation on a wider scale and the ability of such schemes to solve the problems that their supporters claim.

While the creation of New York City was a major event in the history of municipal amalgamations the existence of numerous state laws limiting the annexation of incorporated municipalities accounts for the lack of more recent consolidations in the United States.⁵⁹ Despite this absence, subsequent consolidations undertaken by municipalities in Europe as well as other parts of North America provide useful case studies. In particular, mergers undertaken in the 1960s and 1970s provide a different set of insights into the reasons why municipalities have taken such actions, and the impacts on the residents of affected municipalities. Amalgamations during this period were often proposed based on the “notion that [a central government] could effectively reorganize long-standing arrangements for local government so that it would not be left behind by the wonders of technological progress”.⁶⁰ However, in England, where such notions were put forward in order to rationalize municipal mergers, the government's own statistical research found no evidence that the services provided by larger existing local governments were more efficient than those provided by existing smaller ones. Nevertheless, authorities proceeded to reduce the number of municipalities in the country, from 1,349 to 521 between 1960 and 1975, based on the largely subjective advice of central government inspectors who equated larger municipalities with superior educational services. Looking back to North America, the 1972 amalgamation that

⁵⁹ Ibid, pp. 17-19.

⁶⁰ Sancton, A. (2000). *Merger Mania*. p. 42-44

formed the current city of Winnipeg, Manitoba, was “aimed at promoting economic growth, administrative efficiency, area-wide equity in levels of municipal services and property taxes, and greater opportunities for citizen participation through... community committees and residents' advisory groups”.⁶¹ While some of these goals were achieved, Winnipeg continues to confront many of the same issues as other municipalities due to the fact that the majority of the region's growth is occurring outside its municipal boundaries, renewing the need for enhanced regional cooperation. This raises the question, where should growth through amalgamation end? If the problems that consolidations seek to remedy continue to reappear, or are never resolved in the first place, is there any point in undertaking them?

Toronto is one city which has undergone a highly publicized amalgamation in recent years. In Toronto, “questions of boundaries, efficiencies, scale and democracy were central to the efforts to alter the form and substance of urban government”.⁶² However, it has been claimed that:

While questions of size and boundaries of local government are important, the real political cleavage in cities is not fundamentally between separationists and consolidationists, but remains one between those who favour democratization, social justice and ecological integrity and those who hope instead to protect the market economy (and the privileges and unequal freedoms associated with it) from what they regard as inappropriate efforts to impose social controls.⁶³

So, what was the reality of the situation in Toronto and who benefited from it?

What does the experience of amalgamation in that city suggest for others? It has been

⁶¹ Ibid, p. 58.

⁶² Keil, R. (2000). Governance Restructuring in Los Angeles and Toronto: Amalgamation or Succession? *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 24(4), p. 758.

⁶³ Ibid, p. 760.

observed that, on the surface, the driving force behind amalgamation in Toronto was “cost-cutting and efficiency in local government”. These intentions have, however, been criticized as being nothing more than a thin veil covering an agenda of “suburbanist, neoliberal and socially conservative politics”.⁶⁴ In fact, following amalgamation, urban development and growth in Toronto took precedence over other political matters, including the environmental and social, and the decision-making process began to withdraw from the public eye and distance itself from traditional avenues of critique. Furthermore, Toronto's amalgamation may have actually caused the local government to become less efficient. For example, the city's mayor at the time, Mel Lastman, admitted that the merger had overwhelmed council and that he was unable to keep himself informed on a number of important issues.⁶⁵ This burden is not surprising considering that the amalgamation process made redundant many positions within the former municipal governments that had been brought under the umbrella of the new city of Toronto. In fact, in Ontario as a whole, including other unrelated mergers that were backed by the provincial government at the time, 1,059 municipal council positions were eliminated in 1997. With such drastic cuts taking place across the province, it is no wonder that efficiency dropped in the time immediately following Toronto's own amalgamation. Such cuts limit the representation of certain groups and individuals, removing the avenues available for them to voice their concerns and centralizing the decision-making process.⁶⁶

Looking back, much of what transpired in Toronto during the amalgamation process has

⁶⁴ Ibid, pp. 766-767.

⁶⁵ McKay, R. (2004). Reforming Municipal Services After Amalgamation: The Challenge of Efficiency. *International Journal of Public Sector Management*, 17(1), pp. 24-27.

⁶⁶ Ibid, p. 39.

been directly attributed to the neoliberal policies championed by Mike Harris' Conservative government which, as discussed earlier in this chapter, led to the failures that allowed for the tragedy that struck Walkerton to occur.⁶⁷ In the end, whether or not amalgamation is a vehicle for fiscal austerity and efficiency, if such goals are attainable at all, is of less importance overall than the impact of such a process on the ability of a municipality to govern in a manner which is equitable to all its citizens, which cases like that of the amalgamated city of Toronto show is difficult to achieve. In fact, one observer has gone as far to say that traditional municipal mergers erode the foundations of liberal democracies by undermining notions that there can be forms of self-government that exist outside the institutions of central governments.⁶⁸

If amalgamations like that which took place in Toronto have failed to improve municipal governments or municipal services beyond question, are there any options in existence that might? Two alternate schemes that have been highlighted within the literature on municipal government include what are known as “public choice” and “new regionalism”.⁶⁹ Public choice favours the existence of more municipal governments within a city-region, rather than fewer, in order to provide property owners with competing bundles of taxes and municipal services, with the belief that competition will push individual municipalities to provide the best possible bundles in order to attract taxpayers. Such competition has been promoted as a vehicle for the efficient delivery of

⁶⁷ Keil, R. (2000). *Governance Restructuring in Los Angeles and Toronto*. p. 768.

⁶⁸ Sancton, A. (2000). *Merger Mania*. p. 167.

⁶⁹ *Ibid*, pp. 69-70

municipal services without the need for large municipalities.⁷⁰ This is not to say that large municipalities cannot provide services efficiently, only that it is not a specific requirement. New regionalism differs from public choice in that it looks at cities in their full regional context while simultaneously taking into consideration fairness, equity, and openness. Such considerations are unlikely in public choice arrangements due to the competitive nature of the municipalities within a region, as they would inhibit their ability to differentiate themselves from one another. The new regionalist school of thought advocates revenue sharing, regional strategic planning, and public-private partnerships as actions that can achieve these goals without the need for the creation of larger municipalities. Whether or not these arrangements are superior to municipal consolidations is difficult to say, but the inability of direct mergers to produce desired results necessitates the discussion of such alternatives.

Conclusion

Based on the cases discussed above, it is clear that the decision-making process, at all levels of government, is exceedingly complex and often subject to input from a variety of stakeholders with different goals and opinions on the best course of action to take. It is important to note, therefore, that, “the exercise of different options raises questions: Who made the decisions? Were they made locally or beyond the reach of the city? In private or in public?”⁷¹ In practice, the answers to such questions are often difficult to uncover. For

⁷⁰ Ibid, pp. 78-82.

⁷¹ Olson, S. (2007). *Downwind, Downtown, Downstream*. p. 856.

water specifically, it has been noted that decisions regarding supply systems are rarely open to public deliberation or debate, despite the fact that “water is a collectivity in a metabolic sense because urban life depends on its supply”.⁷² Based on this, it has been suggested that “the most promising solution... may lie in the development of a more sophisticated public sphere through which new forms of democratic decision making can emerge”.⁷³ Whether or not amalgamation can aid in such development is debatable, especially in light of the view that “continuous battles about ideal structures and boundaries for municipal governments” may be less productive than implementing other changes to the urban policy-making process.⁷⁴

While the decision-making process is important in itself, the outcomes of the decisions made by politicians, planners, and other experts must be considered as well. As the historical record shows, the implementation of service improvements in cities like New York and Paris, Ontario, often benefited private interests and wealthy citizens more so than others. These inequalities often negatively impacted marginalized groups the most, along lines of class, gender, race, and ethnicity. Furthermore, as the history of environmental inequality in Hamilton indicates, such disparities can become entrenched within a city and directly impact patterns of development for years to come. Water infrastructure is particularly vulnerable in this respect, as investments in service improvements are capital-intensive.⁷⁵ As such, the technology in any given municipality is unlikely to be uniform, with particular residents benefiting from access to safer and

⁷² Gandy, M. (2002). *Concrete and clay*. p. 74.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Sancton, A. (2000). *Merger Mania*. p. 82.

⁷⁵ Swyngedouw, E. (2005). *Dispossessing H2O*. p. 88.

more reliable forms of water provision. Even in municipalities in which such disparities are less apparent, uneven power relationships and the influence of private interests can work to undermine attempts to protect citizens from the degradation of their local environments. The neoliberalization of water testing in Ontario is one example of the damage that can be caused when private interests take over formerly public roles, bypassing traditional avenues of accountability in the process. Municipal consolidations have often been presented as a means of introducing equality into regions in which there are debates over levels of services. However, the ability of consolidations to solve these problems is a matter which is greatly contested across the literature. In fact, it may be the case that amalgamations exacerbate inequalities and allow private interests new opportunities to benefit at the expense of the general public. The impact on representation within municipal government through the elimination of council positions is certainly one cause for concern as it weakens the voice of the public while simultaneously increasing the burden placed on those representatives who remain. Alternate forms of municipal government may offer solutions to the issues associated with consolidation but there appears to be little consensus as to the effectiveness of these schemes as well. The following chapter introduces the city of St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador, providing the foundation for later discussion of regional governance reform and its impact on the provision of services, piped water specifically, in the municipality.

Chapter 3

The St. John's Metropolitan Area

The city of St. John's is bounded to the east by the Atlantic Ocean, only a short distance away from the easternmost point in North America at Cape Spear (see figure 3.1). While St. John's dominates much of the northeastern portion of Newfoundland's Avalon Peninsula, the city is almost completely surrounded by independent incorporated municipalities along its inland boundaries. In recent decades, the city has had to compete with these municipalities for new commercial and residential development. There has also been a great deal of discussion in the region over servicing issues, such as garbage disposal, fire protection, and water supply. While there has been some cooperation on these issues over the years, there were times when certain forces sought to resolve conflicts over development and servicing by reorganizing local government. One prominent attempt at reorganizing local government in and around St. John's involved the introduction of metropolitan administration and planning to the region.⁷⁶ In other cases, amalgamations were championed as the ultimate solution for streamlining both development and servicing.

⁷⁶ Morrissey, A. (2010). Come Together? Not Now. *The Telegram*. Retrieved from: <http://www.thetelegram.com/News/Local/2010-09-10/article-1739441/Come-together%3F-Not-now/1>

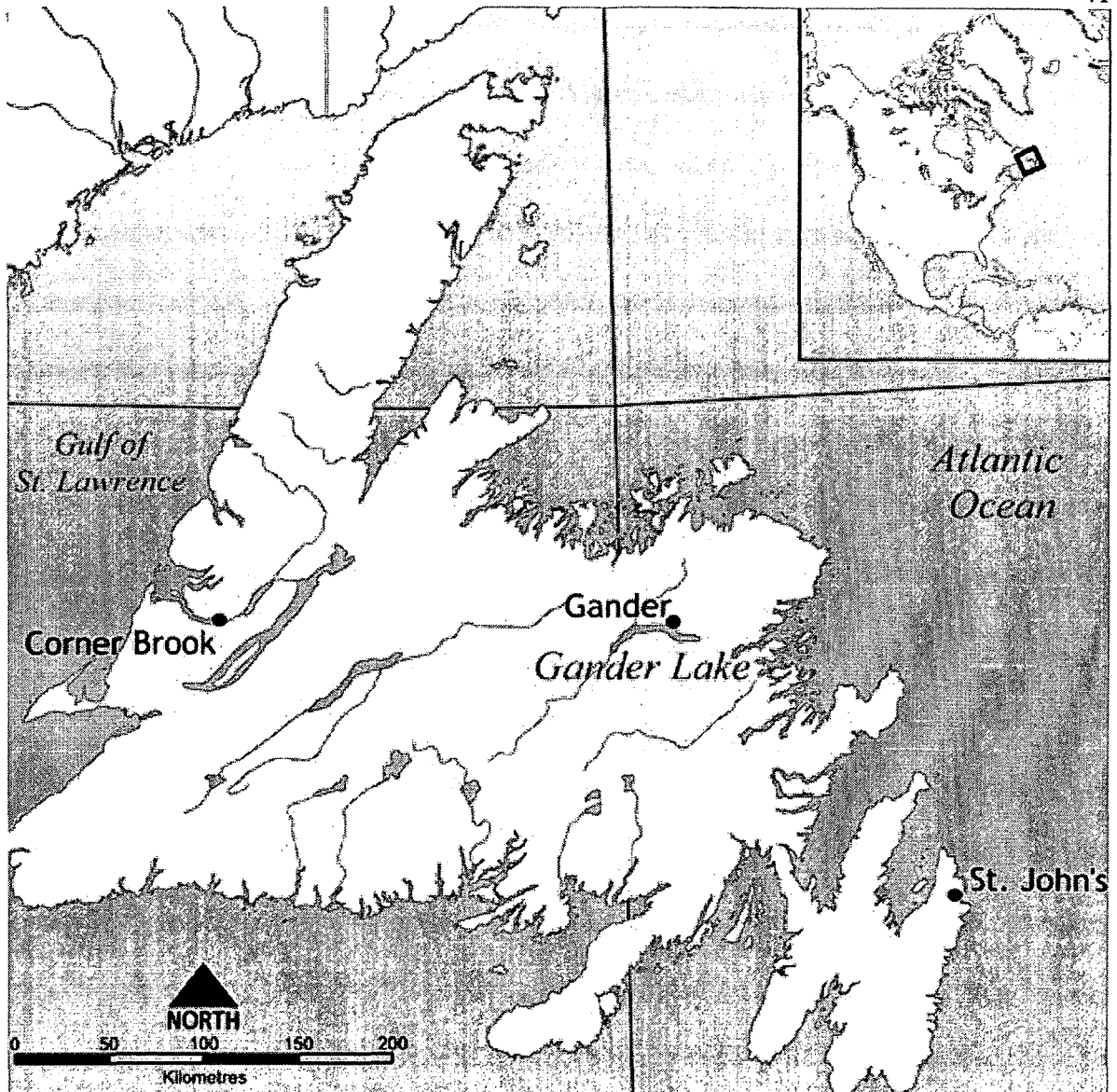


Figure 3.1. Map of Newfoundland. This map displays the location of three major municipalities in Newfoundland as well as Newfoundland's position within North America (inset). (Einstein, N. (2006). Gander Lake map. Retrieved from http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Gander_Lake_map.png)

This chapter focuses on the evolution of St. John's and the communities that surround it in order to determine exactly how such issues have typically been approached in the past and the implications for more recent processes. In particular, this chapter

provides the context that will help to inform later discussion of the 1992 amalgamation of the municipalities of Goulds and Wedgewood Park with the city of St. John's, a controversial process that has had long-term implications related to development and the provision of services like piped water. The contextual topics that will be covered include the area's geography and natural hydrology as well as the origins of piped water in the city, metropolitan planning in the region, and municipal planning in the former town of Goulds. The area's geography and natural hydrology are important in that, among other things, they provide the physical foundation for St. John's water supply system. The origins of piped water in St. John's help to connect the city to larger themes and issues that exist in relation to such intensive infrastructure projects. The history of planning at both the regional and municipal level is useful in tracing patterns of development, and the power relations inherent in them, and provides context for subsequent shifts in these patterns.

The Hydrology and Geography of the City of St. John's

As this thesis is focused primarily on servicing issues related to the St. John's water supply system, it is important to have an understanding of the area's natural hydrology as the water supply system in place in the city is ultimately an extension to and an alteration of its preexisting waterways and inland water bodies. Perhaps the most important elements of the area's natural hydrology are its watershed basins, as they ultimately dictate the path that precipitation falling on the area takes as it drains into the Atlantic Ocean. The two major watersheds in St. John's are the Waterford River basin and the

Quidi Vidi Lake basin. The Waterford River basin originates south of the Waterford River's headwaters and drains into St. John's harbour, covering a total area of 65 square kilometres, while the Quidi Vidi Lake basin originates west of Windsor Lake before ultimately draining into Quidi Vidi Lake itself, covering a total area of 75 square kilometres.⁷⁷

The Quidi Vidi Lake and Waterford River basins are situated in such a way that they collect water from the majority of St. John's urban core. However, it is important to note that the community known as Goulds is drained by neither of these two major basins. In fact, Goulds lies to the south of the city, reaching the margins of Bay Bulls – Big Pond and extending within the limits of its protected watershed area (see figures 3.2 and 3.3).

⁷⁷ Canada-Newfoundland Water Quality Monitoring Agreement. (1993). *Waterford & Quidi Vidi Watersheds Survey Report*. CNS. pp. 47-50.

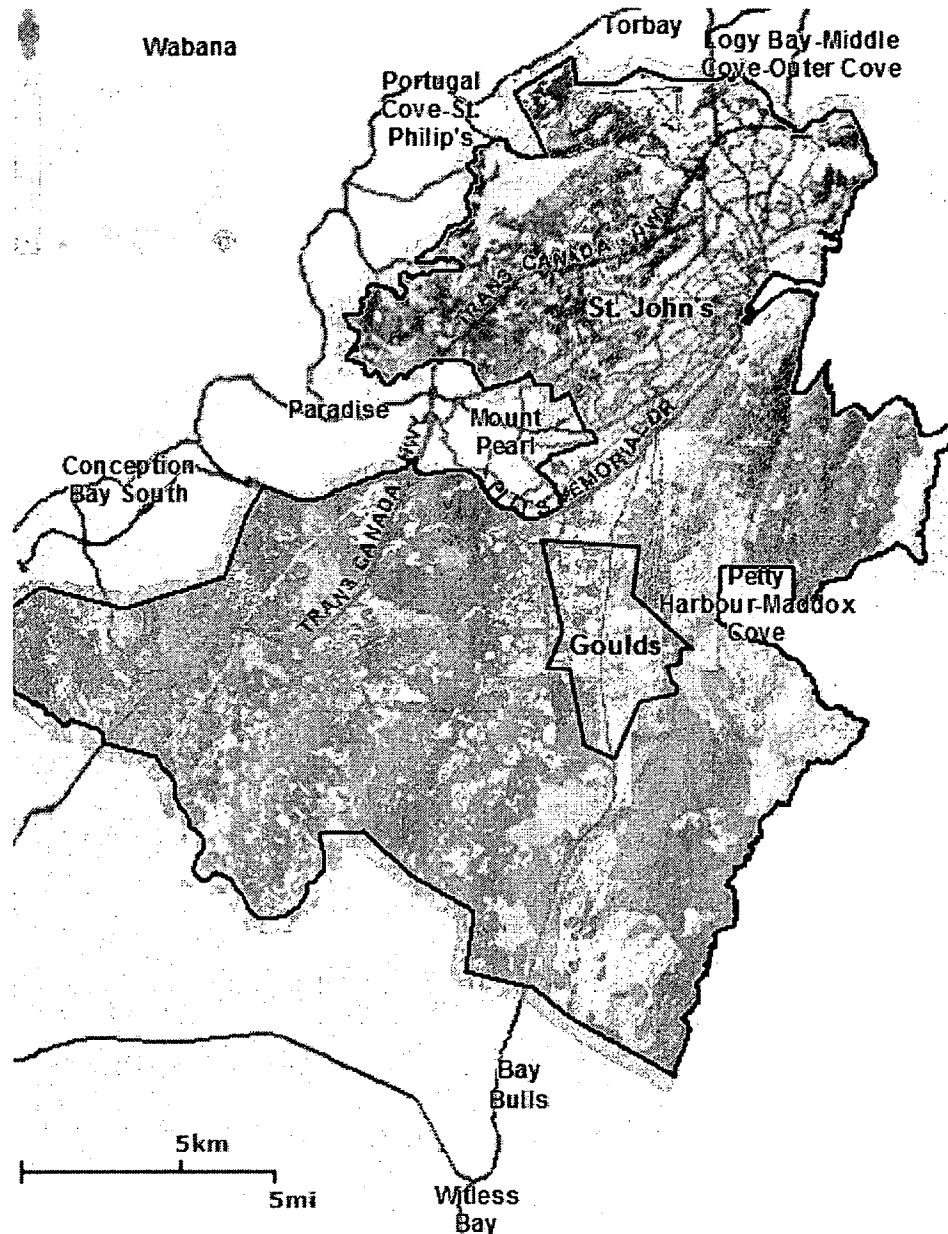


Figure 3.2. Boundaries of the community of Goulds. This figure outlines the extent of the community of Goulds, to the southeast of the city of Mount Pearl. These boundaries correspond with the former boundaries of the town of Goulds. (City of St. John's. (2012). Mapcentre. Retrieved from <http://map.stjohns.ca/mapcentre/mapcentre.html>)

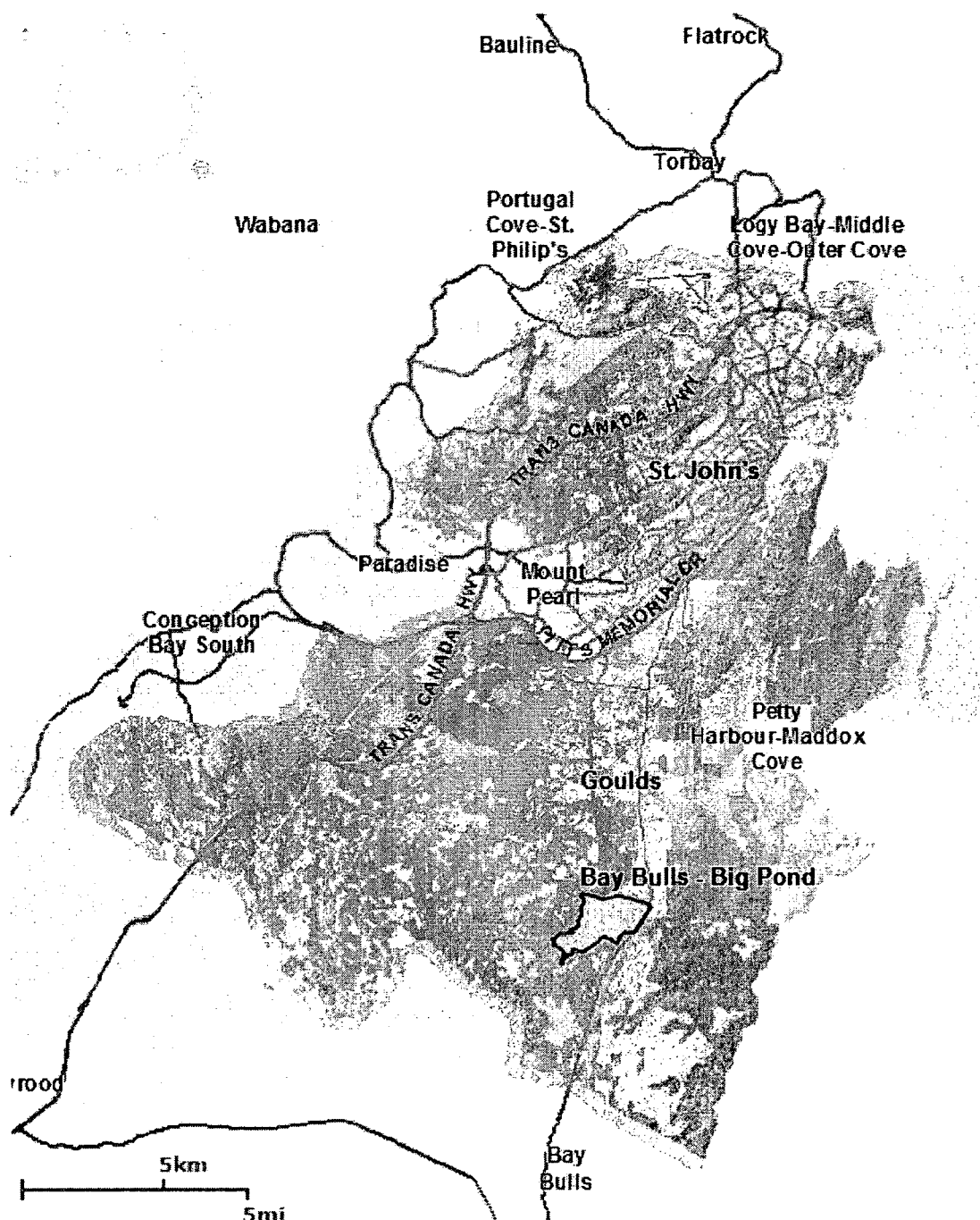


Figure 3.3. Location of Bay Bulls – Big Pond. This figure outlines Bay Bulls – Big Pond in red towards the southern extent of St. John's, south of the community of Goulds and north of the town of Bay Bulls. (City of St. John's. (2012). Mapcentre. Retrieved from <http://map.stjohns.ca/mapcentre/mapcentre.html>)

As a result, Goulds also lies to the south of the Waterford River basin and is instead

located within the Raymond Brook drainage basin which terminates into the Atlantic Ocean at Petty Harbour.⁷⁸ Due to its position within the city of St. John's, the pattern of drainage in Goulds is unique to the community. The extent of these drainage basins can be seen in figure 3.4. These watershed basins are important on a broad scale, but the area's freshwater lakes are of greater importance for the provision of drinking water insofar as a number of them have been utilized as reservoirs within the water supply system. The main reservoirs currently serving the city of St. John's include Windsor Lake and Bay Bulls – Big Pond. Windsor Lake and Bay Bulls – Big Pond are the only major reservoirs within the St. John's water supply system at the present time but a third major reservoir, Petty Harbour – Long Pond, was also utilized in the past. However, this reservoir was removed from the system due to insufficient water treatment facilities. As of 2011, there are plans to reconnect Petty Harbour – Long Pond to the system, but these plans are contingent on the completion of a series of upgrades to bring the reservoir up to current treatment standards.⁷⁹

⁷⁸ Department of Environment and Conservation: Government of Newfoundland & Labrador. (1992). *Water Resources Atlas of Newfoundland: Hydrology*. Retrieved from: http://www.canal.gov.nl.ca/reports/Water_Resources_Atlas/Water_Resources_Atlas_of_Newfoundland_1992_03_HYDROLOGY.pdf

⁷⁹ Canada's Economic Action Plan. (2011). *St. John's Petty Harbour Long Pond Water Treatment*. Retrieved from: <http://www.actionplan.gc.ca/initiatives/eng/index.asp?mode=8&imode=5&clientid=30&initiativeid=116&id=285>

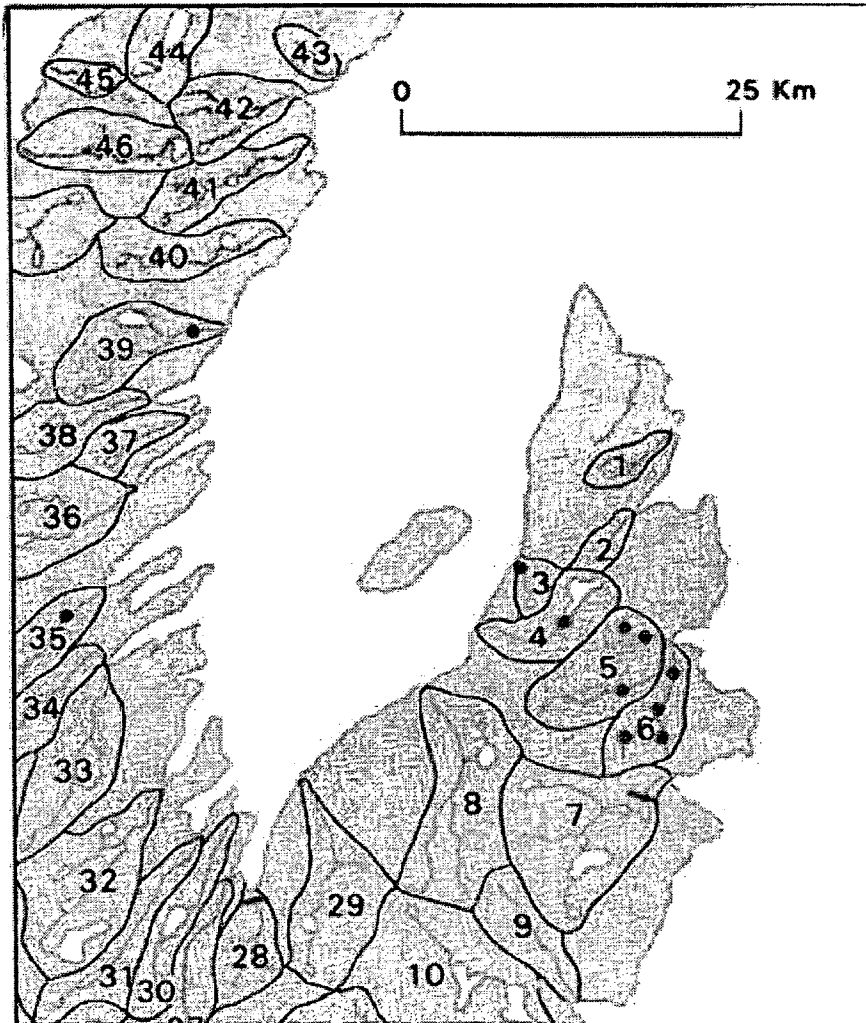


Figure 3.4. Drainage Basins on the northeast Avalon Peninsula. 5 - Quidi Vidi Lake basin, 6 - Waterford River basin, 7 - Raymond Brook basin. (Department of Environment and Conservation. (1992). *Water Resources Atlas of Newfoundland*. Retrieved from http://www.canal.gov.nl.ca/reports/Water_Resources_Atlas/Water_Resources_Atlas_of_Newfoundland_1992_03_HYDROLOGY.pdf)

While the city's reservoirs are important in their own right, what ultimately matters is their ability to serve the residents of St. John's. As the proximity of Goulds to Bay Bulls – Big Pond suggests, those parts of the community that do receive municipal water are connected to this particular reservoir. Topographically, “most of the area is

fairly flat but [its] eastern edge... rises steeply... forming part of the ridge which runs along the whole eastern coast of the northeast Avalon Peninsula".⁸⁰ Politically, Goulds is located entirely within the boundaries of St. John's 5th ward (see figure 3.5).

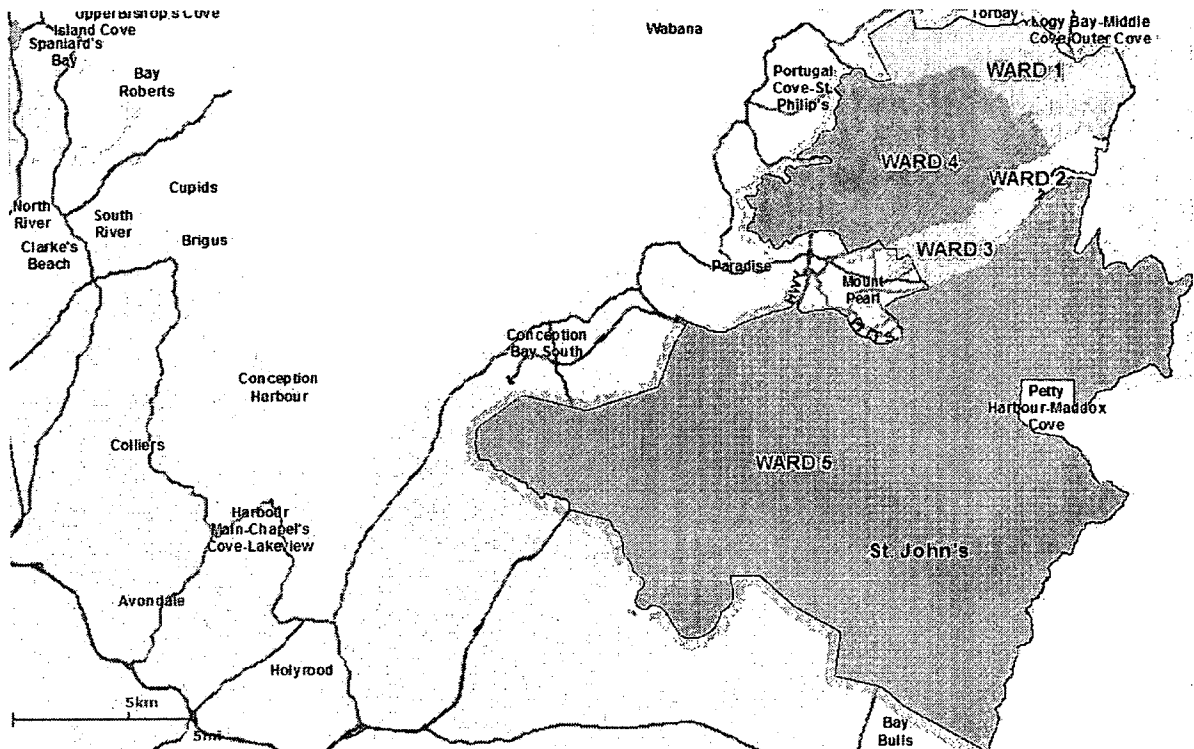


Figure 3.5. St. John's ward map. This figure outlines the positions of the five wards from which councilors are presently elected to the St. John's City Council. (City of St. John's. (2012). Mapcentre. Retrieved from <http://map.stjohns.ca/mapcentre/mapcentre.html>)

It is a community that has been an important centre of agricultural production for St. John's and the surrounding region from the time it was settled in the late 1800s. As one might expect with a farming community, many parts of Goulds are rural in nature. In fact, Goulds rural nature and its position as a centre of agricultural production were solidified

⁸⁰ Edge, R. (1977). Town of Goulds Municipal Plan. CNS. pp 2-4.

by the introduction of an agricultural land freeze for the area.⁸¹ This long-running land freeze was implemented as a measure to protect Newfoundland's agricultural land from increasing development pressure. The need to protect farmland in Newfoundland stems from the lack of fertile agricultural land in the province. The agricultural land in Goulds is particularly important as it is considered to be superior to all other farmland in the region surrounding St. John's.⁸² Figure 3.6 displays hay bales which have been stacked alongside a busy road in the community, highlighting its rural nature. Despite the land freeze, there are parts of the community that are relatively urbanized, where there is a greater density of development.

⁸¹ Knott, G. (2008). Thawing Out Land Freeze Debate. *The Telegram*. Retrieved from <http://www.thetelegram.com/Politics/2008-01-29/article-1443688/Thawing-out-land-freeze-debate/1>

⁸² Edge, R. (1977). Town of Goulds Municipal Plan. pp. 3-4.



Figure 3.6. Hay bales in Goulds. This figure displays bales of hay which have been stacked alongside one of the community's roads.

While the community of Goulds is located at the edge of St. John's city limits, and it exhibits many rural features, Wedgewood Park differs in that it is situated closer to the city's centre (see figure 3.7).

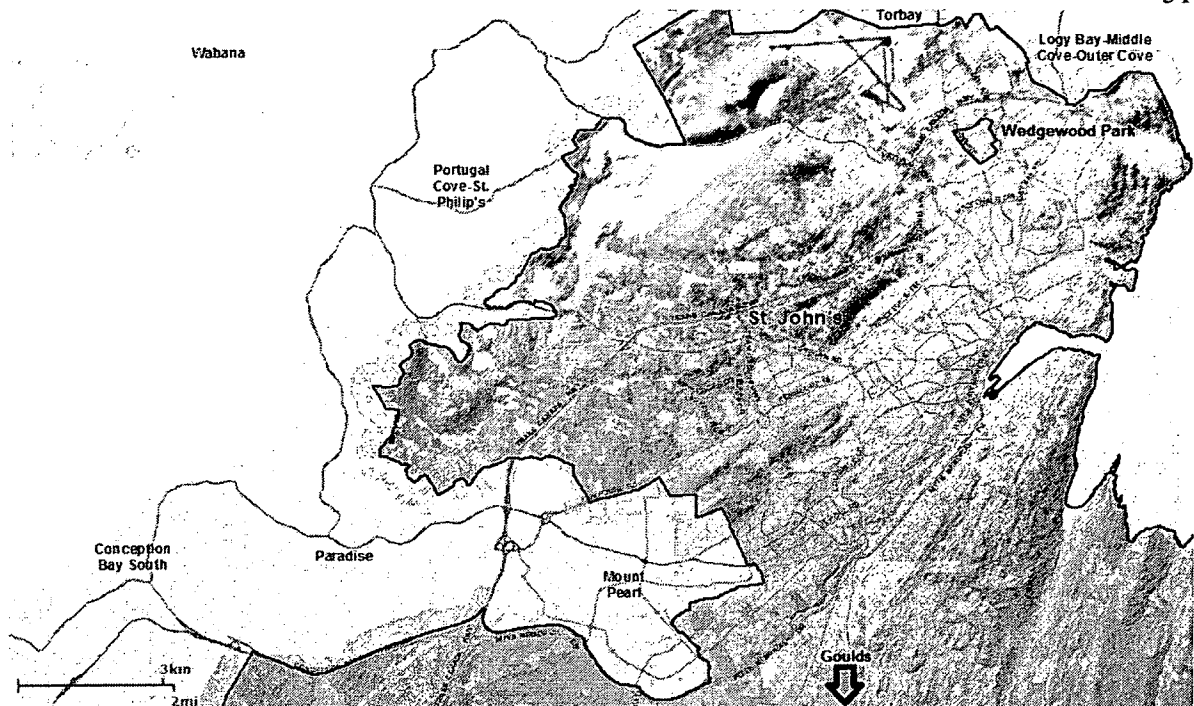


Figure 3.7. Boundaries of the community of Wedgewood Park. This figure outlines the community of Wedgewood Park in bold, near the northern extent of the city of St. John's. These boundaries correspond with the former boundaries of the town of Wedgewood Park. (City of St. John's. (2012). Mapcentre. Retrieved from <http://map.stjohns.ca/mapcentre/mapcentre.html>)

As a result of its location, Wedgewood Park is very much an urban community and it features many of the same characteristics as other urbanized sections of St. John's. The differences between the two communities are further highlighted by the fact that Wedgewood Park was created, from the ground up, as a private housing development in 1959 while Goulds had already existed as a farming community for almost a century prior.⁸³ Furthermore, those residents of Goulds who receive piped water are connected to Bay Bulls – Big Pond while the residents of Wedgewood Park receive their water from the Windsor Lake reservoir. Politically, Wedgewood Park is located within the current

⁸³ Town Council of the Town of Wedgewood Park, The. (1990). The Town of Wedgewood Park Amalgamation Brief. CNS. p. 4.

boundaries of St. John's 1st ward. Overall, even though Wedgewood Park was amalgamated at the same time as Goulds, the two towns had very little in common prior to joining with St. John's and the differences between the two communities are useful when discussing the motivations behind the 1992 amalgamation.

The Origins of Piped Water in St. John's

In order to begin to engage with recent events in the history of St. John's and the development of its water supply system, it is useful to first look at the origins of this system and the processes that helped to shape it. While the cases discussed in chapter two provide a number of useful insights into the development of municipal utilities, the origin of the water supply system existing in St. John's also reveals a great deal, especially about the unevenness of the provision of such services. The system began its life due to the fact that St. John's was in need of one for the purpose of fire protection. In contrast to other small towns like Paris, Ontario, the system in St. John's began its life as a private enterprise. St. John's, however, differed from Paris in that before the incorporation of the city in 1888 “there was no government directly responsible for local services, nor was there a strong tax base to provide revenue for such needs. As a result matters such as the problem of water services for St. John's became the concern of the colonial legislature”.⁸⁴ The legislature ultimately oversaw the entire colony and based on this, it was difficult for the colonial government to raise support for a project such as a water supply system that

⁸⁴ Baker, M. (1982). The Politics of Assessment: The Water Question in St. John's, 1844-1864. *Acadiensis*, 12(1), p. 59.

would only benefit those living in St. John's, leading such motions to be readily defeated by representatives from outside of the city. Following this failure, the task of providing St. John's with water for fire prevention was taken up by local merchants who had previously had success in 1845 in "providing the town with gas lighting through the formation of the locally-owned St. John's Gas Light Company".⁸⁵ These individuals were mostly concerned with providing piped water to their own businesses, most of which were located at the heart of the municipality, on Water Street, with the suggestion that they would extend their lines to other parts of the city when it became economical. Interestingly, two of the merchants involved in the formation of the new water company were also leading members of the legislature, raising fears that the company would make the formation of any future rivals difficult. These circumstances led opposing members of the legislature to demand a provision in the new company's bill of incorporation that limited "shareholders to a maximum 10 per cent annual dividend on the paid-up capital" and that any "surplus was to be used by the company for establishing additional fireplugs and for providing water, free of charge, to the poor".⁸⁶ Despite these efforts, adequate fire protection did not arrive fast enough and in June of 1846 St. John's experienced one of the worst fires in its history. All told, the damage cause by the fire was estimated at "£888,356, only £195,000 of which was recovered through insurance".⁸⁷ The impact of the fire and a renewed urgency for fire protection led the water company to persuade "the legislature to remove the clause in its act of incorporation restricting its annual profit to a

⁸⁵ Ibid, pp. 61-62.

⁸⁶ Ibid, p. 63.

⁸⁷ Ibid, p. 63

maximum 10 per cent dividend on the paid-up capital” and work was subsequently completed on the originally proposed water lines.⁸⁸ However, once these initial lines were put in place, the city's merchants showed little interest in extending lines or improving service, as they had previously suggested would be the case, due to the cost involved in undertaking such improvements and the fact that annual dividends in the company's stock were running at only 3 to 5 percent. It would not be until 1888, when the city of St. John's was incorporated, that the water company would be turned over from private interests and begin to serve the public good in a more equitable manner.⁸⁹

Reflecting on the origins of the water supply systems in municipalities such as New York City and Paris, Ontario, which were discussed in Chapter 2 of this thesis, it is clear that they have much in common with St. John's. While the system in Paris was public at its outset, New York City's water supply system began as a private enterprise in much the same way as the system in St. John's. However, regardless of this distinction, it is clear that all of these systems were prone to inequalities. One common element shared among these early systems was their role in fire prevention. While fire protection is usually thought of as a common good, it is clear from these examples that particular groups, including wealthy merchants and the insurance companies, benefited more from its introduction than other groups, including the working class residents of these cities. The cost of servicing one's home was also often beyond that of ordinary citizens and patterns of development began to emerge along socio-economic lines in some cases.

⁸⁸ Ibid, p. 64.

⁸⁹ Ibid, p. 71.

Despite the fact that these systems developed continuously over the following years, moving away from their original configurations and the obvious inequalities associated with them, the way in which they were originally put in place set a precedent for future disparity stemming from the provision of municipal services.

Metropolitan planning on Newfoundland's northeast Avalon Peninsula

The arrival of metropolitan planning in St. John's and the surrounding area was an important benchmark for the development of the local water supply system and other such municipal services. Metropolitan planning entered the consciousness of those in St. John's as a result of increasing rates of population growth in the city following the end of World War II and the arrival of Newfoundland's confederation with Canada in 1949.⁹⁰ These events were important in that they allowed for an influx of funds into the newly admitted province, which had been faced with economic hardship during the 1930s, and provided Newfoundland with access to Canadian housing programs, such as those offered by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation.⁹¹ As a result of these important events, and the increasing rate of physical growth that they facilitated in St. John's, a committee was formed in 1956 in order to research metropolitan planning, utility servicing, and administration. In the case of St. John's, metropolitan planning acknowledged that future growth would not be confined to the city itself. Moving forward, it was understood that St. John's and the town of Mount Pearl Park – Glendale

⁹⁰ Malcolm Pirnie Engineers. (1959). *Report on Water Supply and Sewerage*. WAS 013, SJA

⁹¹ Baker, M. (1983). 'In Search of a New Jerusalem': Slum Clearance in St. John's, 1921-1944. *Newfoundland Quarterly*, 69(2), pp. 23-32. Sharpe, C. (2005). Just Beyond the Fringe: Churchill Park Garden Suburb in St. John's Newfoundland. *The Canadian Geographer*, 49(4), p. 409.

(now the city of Mount Pearl) would enter into competition with one another if action was not taken to ensure otherwise. In addition to Mount Pearl Park – Glendale, the other growing communities comprising St. John's rural fringe also stood to compete for development. The growth of these unincorporated communities can be seen in the population growth of the St. John's East and St. John's West federal electoral districts, in which they were included along with the city of St. John's and the town of Mount Pearl (see table 3.1).

	1951	1956	1961	1966
City of St. John's	52,873	57,078	63,633	79,884
Mount Pearl	N/A	1,979	2,785	4,428
St. John's East	55,116	66,132	77,070	84,413
St. John's West	56,338	62,921	68,979	70,915
(St. John's East + West) – City	58,581	71,975	82,416	75,444

*Table 3.1. Avalon Peninsula Population Data. St. John's East and St. John's West comprised two of the eight original federal electoral districts "established as a result of the Act of 1949 which approved the Terms of Union of Newfoundland and Canada". These districts have since been changed. (Department of Finance, Government of Newfoundland and Labrador. (1970). *Historical Statistics of Newfoundland and Labrador Vol. I*. Retrieved from <http://www.stats.gov.nl.ca/publications/Historical/>)*

Furthermore, metropolitan planning recognized the need to provide municipal services to

these fast-growing areas in an orderly and economic manner.⁹² This planning was set into motion years before the first consolidations ever took place between St. John's and its neighbours. However, even at that time, it was the intention of the Metropolitan Committee to progressively extend the boundaries of the city as the surrounding areas became urbanized and ultimately unify the entire metropolitan area as a single city, under the jurisdiction of a single council. Meanwhile, proposals were in place for a metropolitan council to be created to act as an independent tier of government between the local municipal councils and the province. As it was originally proposed, this council heavily favoured the city as the majority of the individuals sitting on it, four out of six councilors, were to be elected from St. John's itself.⁹³ Despite these intentions, this metropolitan council was never actually put into place, at least not in the manner in which it was originally envisioned. Instead, the province formed the St. John's Metropolitan Area Board following an act of legislation known as the St. John's (Metropolitan Area) Act in 1963.⁹⁴ This metropolitan board oversaw the administration of public services such as piped water throughout a number of small communities surrounding St. John's including Goulds, which represented the southern extent of the land it was charged with managing. In effect, the St. John's Metropolitan Area Board acted as a town council for these previously unserved communities. More importantly, the city itself had no direct influence over the Metropolitan Area Board, nor did it ever come under its jurisdiction.

⁹² Canadian – British Engineering Consultants. (1957). *St. John's Metropolitan Area: A Report on the Planning, Utility Services and Metropolitan Administration of an Area Embracing the City of St. John's, the Town of Mount Pearl Park – Glendale and the Surrounding Areas*. CNS. p. 13.

⁹³ *Ibid.* pp. 123-124.

⁹⁴ Withers, P. (Mar. 15, 1991). Metro Board has a Niche in Municipal History. *The Telegram*, p. 6.

The town of Mount Pearl Park – Glendale was also excluded from the metropolitan area. As such, the city did not gain the level of control over its rural fringe that it would have if the originally proposed council had been put in place. By eliminating the planned metropolitan council, the provincial government effectively retained a higher level of control over the region than the city.

One major point of criticism of the St. John's Metropolitan Area Board was the fact that the members of the board were not elected by the residents it was formed to represent.⁹⁵ Instead the board was appointed by the provincial government. With this in mind, it is important to note that the formation of the Metro Board did not actually reduce political representation in the way that municipal consolidations sometimes do.⁹⁶ As the communities brought under the jurisdiction of the newly formed board were unincorporated, there were no preexisting elected positions to be eliminated. Regardless of this, the creation of an unelected tier of government for these areas appears to have done nothing more than consolidate the power of the provincial government over St. John's rural fringe, whereas previous plans would have given the city of St. John's a greater level of control. In fact, the attempt by the St. John's Metro Board to limit development in the area outlying St. John's could be interpreted as nothing more than a preemptive attack on local government at a time when many communities on the northeast Avalon were getting ready to incorporate.

The first official report investigating the possibility of introducing metropolitan

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ McKay, R. (2004). Reforming Municipal Services After Amalgamation: The Challenge of Efficiency. *International Journal of Public Sector Management*. 17(1), pp. 24-27.

planning and a metropolitan government to the area was undertaken by the Halifax-based Canadian – British Engineering Consultants and completed in November of 1957. One of the most important goals of this report was to set the actual boundaries that would define the metropolitan area itself. As it was described in the report, the limits would be set so that they would encompass only that which was “directly related by topographical and administrative considerations to the development of the City and of the neighbouring Town of Mount Pearl Park – Glendale”.⁹⁷ The southern boundary of the metropolitan area, as it was proposed in this report, was of particular interest in that it dealt directly with the community of Goulds, which was unincorporated at that time. While the southernmost boundary of the metropolitan area was a topic of debate, Canadian – British Engineering Consultants determined that Goulds could not be excluded from the metro area as the development there was not wholly distinct from other suburban development in St. John's at the time. Furthermore, it was claimed that the importance of Goulds as an agricultural area, and its role in servicing the entire metropolitan area in this capacity, would be compromised if the construction of new houses was allowed to continue unchecked, as had been the case up to that point. As a result, it was imperative that Goulds be included within the metropolitan area so that future development in the area would be subject to an official plan and a greater deal of control. Even though Goulds may not have been directly related to St. John's or Mount Pearl in any topographical or administrative fashion, beyond its role in food provision, the need for control and power over development in the area's rural fringe was too important to ignore, even as early as

⁹⁷ Canadian – British Engineering Consultants. St. John's Metropolitan Area. pp. 13-14

1957.

While the 1957 Metropolitan Report provided recommendations that were related to a number of servicing and administrative issues, one section of the report was specifically focused on the topic of water supply. In general, this section addressed the situation of the water supply system at the time the report was published while also providing a series of recommendations for future development. Regarding the state of the system in 1957, the report noted that it provided “water of a very high quality” and was capable of serving “almost all of the inhabitants” of St. John's as well as those living in a few small areas at the city's fringe.⁹⁸ The report does not go into any detail about how water was provided to those inhabitants who were not on the city's system at that time, but it does focus a great deal on how piped water would be extended to them over the following years. Following the common theme of municipal water as a public good, it was noted that a reliable water supply system is “essential for maintaining a reasonable standard of health and amenity” and for providing fire protection, in conjunction with “suitably placed hydrants”.⁹⁹ Continuing on the topic of future development, the report also noted that any new water supply system proposals should take into consideration the ability of the system to assist in attracting new industry to the metropolitan area. Based on these points, it was the recommendation of the Metropolitan Report that the city's water supply services be extended as widely as possible over the metropolitan area in order to facilitate growth. However, the report did make clear that some locations were not in a

⁹⁸ Ibid, p. 86.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

position to be economically serviced at the time and that others might never be in such a position. It was suggested that the density of development in these outlying areas be kept low in order to allow for the proper operation of shallow residential wells and to minimize the potential for widespread fire damage.

While many of the points made in the Metropolitan Report are valid, as health and fire protection are indeed cause for concern, they are presented primarily as a means to justify the lack of servicing and limitations on development outside of the city, which raises some important questions. Were there any groups or individuals that would have benefited by having development restricted to the area within the city's boundaries? If the quality of water being provided by private wells suddenly decreased would it have warranted the extension of water lines to affected areas that were previously considered too costly to service? Since the recommendations of the consultants who prepared the Metro Report were never fully implemented as a result of the creation of the St. John's Metropolitan Area Board, it is difficult to answer some of these questions. Regardless of the truth of the matter, the report nevertheless indicated a desire to limit the extent of servicing, based primarily on economic considerations. Furthermore, if the Metro Report had been fully implemented in its original form it would have led to a situation in which residents under the jurisdiction of the same regional government would have been subject to widely contrasting levels of servicing.

Despite the fact that the 1957 Metro Report and other regional planning initiatives largely advised against extending servicing too far beyond the boundaries of the city, there came a point in the early 1970s where the growth of the smaller communities in the

region had reached the stage where many of them began to incorporate (see table 3.1). Once incorporated there was no need for the Metro Board to oversee a community as its own municipal council took over the duties previously handled by the board. So, as more and more communities incorporated, the jurisdiction of the St. John's Metropolitan Area Board began to shrink. Also at this time, the water supplies which were servicing St. John's began to reach or exceed their reliable yield. As a result, it was decided in 1974 that Bay Bulls – Big Pond should be brought into the system as a reservoir to augment the already existing sources of supply in the region.¹⁰⁰ Bay Bulls – Big Pond began to supply water to St. John's, Mount Pearl, and parts of the metropolitan area in 1977, but it would take until 1980 for construction to be completed and for treatment of water pumped from the reservoir to begin. This supply could also help to relieve the strain on Windsor Lake, the city's primary water supply, during dry periods or other times when the supply there was low.¹⁰¹

One of the previously unorganized communities incorporated in the 1970s was Goulds, which came into existence as a municipality in 1971. Even though it was the closest municipality to this particular reservoir, Goulds did not immediately benefit from its activation. In fact, the first water supply system in Goulds was a privately constructed system that utilized local groundwater sources and was designed to provide water to a single subdivision and a nearby trailer park.¹⁰² This private water supply is relatively inconsequential on a broader scale, but the fact that it existed indicates that there was a

¹⁰⁰ Withers, P. (Mar. 15, 1991). Metro Board has a Niche in Municipal History. *The Telegram*, p. 6.

¹⁰¹ Kieley, P. (July 29, 2011). Personal Communication. Water Treatment Plant Manager with the City of St. John's (Retired).

¹⁰² Edge, R. (1977). Town of Goulds Municipal Plan. p. 34.

desire to develop land in Goulds and that there was sufficient value in this land, and in the development of a subdivision there, to warrant its construction. While it was significant during its time, the end of the St. John's Area Metropolitan Board's influence over the water supply at Bay Bulls – Big Pond arrived on January 1, 1992. On this date, control of the reservoir and the facilities located there were handed over from the Metro Board to the City of St. John's.¹⁰³ The implications and impacts of this change in power, and the coinciding amalgamation of Goulds and Wedgewood Park with St. John's, are discussed in the following chapter of this thesis.

Municipal Planning in Goulds Prior to Amalgamation with St. John's

Following its incorporation in 1971, the town of Goulds proceeded with commissioning a series of municipal plans. As Goulds' incorporation meant that it was no longer under the jurisdiction of the St. John's Metropolitan Area Board, this period signaled a reversal in the policy of development control that had previously restricted the community's growth. However, the municipal plans put in place by the town indicate that there was a desire to ensure that new development in the town was done in an orderly manner, maintaining some restrictions on its growth. There are also indications that the provincial government and the city of St. John's still had a great deal of influence over planning in the region.

The first municipal plan commissioned by the town of Goulds was an interim plan prepared by Newfoundland's Provincial Planning Office, which was operated at the time by the Department of Municipal Affairs and Housing. This plan, completed in 1973, was

¹⁰³ Withers, P. (March, 15, 1991). Metro Board has a Niche in Municipal History. p. 6.

prepared in order to bring the newly formed town into compliance with Newfoundland's Urban and Rural Planning Act, 1965. This interim plan gave way to a second, more comprehensive, plan in 1977 which was also prepared by the Provincial Planning Office. One of the main functions of this plan was to address recent decisions that had been made regarding servicing in St. John's and the municipalities that surround it on the Avalon Peninsula. These decisions are discussed in a set of documents that make up what was known as the St. John's Urban Region Study.

The St. John's Urban Region Study had much in common with previous attempts at controlling development in the region, including the St. John's Metropolitan Area Plan, as it exhibited the same desire to limit servicing beyond the city's boundaries based primarily upon economic concerns. At the time, the pattern of development across much of the Avalon Peninsula was tied closely to the location of the main roads leading out of St. John's and growth in these areas often took place in the absence of basic services or, prior to the formation of the St. John's Area Metropolitan Board, without any form of control.¹⁰⁴ As a result, there was an explicit need for piped water and sewerage to service these existing outlying areas and to provide for future development outside of the city. However, due to the amount of work that was needed, it was decided that a system of phasing and priorities should be adopted. Under this system, the basic choice was between providing for most of the population close to St. John's or for development in more outlying areas, including Goulds. The 1977 Goulds Municipal Plan notes that it was decided to give priority to those living closest to St. John's and to strengthen

¹⁰⁴ Edge, R. (1977). Town of Goulds Municipal Plan. p. 5

infrastructure across the “St. John's/Mount Pearl/Conception Bay axis”.¹⁰⁵ As such, the extension of services to Goulds was contingent on the phasing of development beyond this area of priority, with the understanding that Bay Bulls – Big Pond would be available to provide the town with water when it was ready to receive it. Furthermore, it was decided that development in Goulds should be limited to infilling in order to protect the farmland on which much of the town was situated.¹⁰⁶ The need to protect the watershed of the increasingly important reservoir at Bay Bulls – Big Pond was likely another factor in driving the desire to limit development in Goulds, lest development stretch any closer to the pond than it already had.

While the 1977 Goulds Municipal Plan was an important step in directing the future of the town, it was eventually amended and later succeeded by another municipal plan. This second municipal plan was completed in 1984 and later revised in 1985. Instead of utilizing the Provincial Planning Office, as the town had previously done, the 1984 plan was prepared by a private planning firm known as DELCAN. The outsourcing of planning to DELCAN coincided with a desire in Goulds to move away from the earlier planning policies of the province and the city of St. John's, on which development in the town had previously been based. While these earlier policies sought to limit development in Goulds, the town had since resolved to shape itself as a local centre and envisioned its rate of growth to proceed at a level greater than that of the city, albeit with the provincial

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, pp. 7-8.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid. p. 14.

land freeze acting as a continuing constraint.¹⁰⁷ However, this growth, and the majority of new development in the town was to be limited to the area within Goulds' "Urban Development Boundary".¹⁰⁸ This central area of the town had been connected to Bay Bulls – Big Pond by that time and it was the intention of the planners that all future development within this boundary be connected to piped water and sanitary sewer.¹⁰⁹ The plan also noted that the quantity of water available at Bay Bulls – Big Pond was more than enough to meet the town's needs for domestic consumption and fire prevention over the plan period. However, concerns were raised regarding the capability of the town's storm drainage network and its susceptibility to flooding as a result of poor infrastructure. Poor drainage was just one barrier to the urbanization of Goulds. Outside of its Urban Development Boundary, where residents were still reliant on private wells and septic systems, new construction would be limited to infilling in order to prevent the pollution of groundwater and other potential issues. The servicing of these areas and the progression of development beyond infilling would take place as soon as it became economically feasible. In effect, the planning policies of the town of Goulds echoed those of St. John's and the Metropolitan Area Board in earlier years. All of the plans that were put forward by these policymaking bodies sought to limit "rural" development and focus servicing and utility improvements within preexisting "urban" areas. However, the scale and location of the rural fringe described by these plans varied widely and the incorporation of Goulds allowed the community to free itself from many of the

¹⁰⁷ DELCAN. (1985). *The Town of Goulds Newfoundland: Municipal Plan*. CNS. p. 1(2).

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid*, p. 4(1).

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid*, pp. 6(1)-6(2).

limitations it previously faced as a rural community.

Even though the town of Goulds prepared a number of municipal plans, it is important to point out that none were ever followed through to completion. The most influential factor in changing the course of planning in the community was the 1992 amalgamation with St. John's, which saw the city's plans supersede those of Goulds. As such, the municipal plans prepared for Goulds are useful in indicating what might have been had Goulds not been consolidated with St. John's. However, even if the amalgamation had not taken place it is possible that planning in the town might have taken a different direction due to financial constraints or changes in political will.

Conclusion

Piped water in the city of St. John's is supplied primarily by two major reservoirs, Windsor Lake and Bay Bulls – Big Pond. However, other reservoirs have been utilized in the past and it is likely that more will be added to the system in the future. The development of Bay Bulls – Big Pond was one of the more important and long-lasting actions overseen by the St. John's Metropolitan Board during its existence. The fact that this reservoir was eventually handed over to the city of St. John's is also important as, due to the existence of multiple reservoirs, residents of the city are supplied with water under slightly different circumstances depending on where exactly in St. John's they live. While water provision within the municipal system may differ between certain areas, there are others who rely on groundwater sources and, as a result, are subject to an entirely different set of issues when faced with gaining access to water.

Goulds is one community within St. John's in which a portion of the residents rely on groundwater sources. As such, Goulds differs from Wedgewood Park, the other community that amalgamated with the city in 1992, as residents there are served exclusively by piped water. The use of groundwater wells in Goulds is not entirely surprising given its rural, or in some cases semi-rural, nature and long history of agricultural production. Furthermore, the fact that an agricultural land freeze exists in Goulds is likely to ensure, at least for the near future, that the community will maintain some, or all, of these qualities. The unique nature of Goulds within St. John's is further highlighted by the fact that it lies outside of St. John's two main watershed basins and that it is subject to an entirely different drainage pattern than the majority of the city. Goulds is very much segregated from the rest of the city's hydrosocial cycle.

While the original water supply system in St. John's was put in place many years before the arrival of municipal planning, the way in which the system developed paralleled other cities and towns throughout North America and, as was the case in cities like New York, set a precedent for future patterns of development and the uneven power relationships embedded within it. Municipal water has often been promoted as a public good, in St. John's and elsewhere, but the reality of such a service is often more complex. As a result, the history of municipal and metropolitan planning in St. John's and the surrounding region following the end of World War II is important for understanding many recent issues related to the provision of utilities and services to area residents.

As it was first envisioned, metropolitan planning for the region would have helped to consolidate St. John's control over the region. However, the original proposal for a

metropolitan government encompassing the entire northeast Avalon Peninsula never took shape and the regional government that was ultimately formed was done so without the inclusion of St. John's or Mount Pearl, two of the largest municipalities in the area. Despite the exclusion of these two municipalities, one former board member has argued that “the Metro Board's original mandate to control developments in unorganized areas surrounding St. John's and Mount Pearl was largely achieved”.¹¹⁰ While this may be true, the municipalities that were incorporated in the area during the lifetime of the Metro Board nevertheless provided St. John's and Mount Pearl with competition as development in these newly formed towns was not subject to the board's control. However, after a short period as independent municipalities, towns like Goulds and Wedgewood Park were eventually subject to consolidation with St. John's and they began to experience different forms of control and impacts on development, infrastructure, and servicing as a result. The following chapter focuses on this amalgamation and its impact on servicing in Goulds in particular, as municipal services in Wedgewood Park were already at a level that paralleled that of St. John's. As such, Wedgewood Park provides a clear contrast between the differences in infrastructure between Goulds and other parts of the city and helps to highlight the wider goals of the amalgamation process.

¹¹⁰ Withers, P. (March, 15, 1991). Metro Board has a Niche in Municipal History.

Chapter 4

Amalgamation: A Tool for Improvement?

This chapter will discuss some of the arguments provided by those who were in favour of the 1992 amalgamation of Goulds and Wedgewood Park with St. John's while subsequently comparing them with the arguments of those who were against the process. By engaging with the arguments put forward by those on both sides of the debate, and some of the outcomes of the amalgamation itself, a number of underlying themes and issues ultimately come to the surface. While some of the specifics of water supply development and municipal amalgamation in St. John's are unique to the region, the literature and examples discussed in previous chapters of this thesis reveal relations to wider, more ubiquitous processes. In particular, it will be argued that the debates surrounding municipal consolidations are often quite similar, regardless of location. Furthermore, the arguments in favour of municipal consolidations, such as the one that took place on the northeast Avalon, often fail to stand up in light of the historical record and evidence of their benefits is often weak and difficult to confirm. So, if municipal amalgamations are not effective at solving issues such as inadequate servicing, what purpose do they serve?

In the late '80s and early '90s, municipal consolidation became a topic of great interest in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador. The provincial government pushed for consolidation, primarily as a means to achieve financial austerity. The amalgamation campaign, which was led by then Provincial and Municipal Affairs

Minister Eric Gullage, was also promoted as a means to achieve better municipal government for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. Under the provincial Municipalities Act, municipalities in the province were not considered to be a wholly separate level of government but rather, as Gullage described them, “a creature of the province”.¹¹¹ However, Gullage asserted that the province would not force amalgamation on any municipalities in Newfoundland, which he as minister had the right to do unilaterally under the Municipalities Act, without first bringing it to a vote at the House of Assembly. However, as the ruling Liberal Party held a majority of the seats in the House of Assembly at that time, it was almost certain that any vote on amalgamation would pass. Furthermore, Premier Clyde Wells expressed no desire to call off Mr. Gullage's “campaign to provide better municipal government” to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.¹¹² Gullage's desire to push forward amalgamation, either with or against public opinion, earned him the nickname “Eric the Amalgamator”.¹¹³ Minister Gullage, and the provincial government as a whole, hoped that amalgamation would cut costs by centralizing services province-wide. Rural areas of the province were of particular interest in the context of this plan, as the development of services in these locations were more reliant on provincial grant funding than urban areas like the city of St. John's.¹¹⁴

In its original form, amalgamation on Newfoundland's northeast Avalon Peninsula was all-encompassing and it would have reduced the number of incorporated

¹¹¹ Sullivan, A. (July 22, 1990). Gullage Says He Won't Force Amalgamation – but Define 'Force'. *The Telegram*, pp. 1-2.

¹¹² Doyle, P. (May 17, 1991). Premier Won't Call Off “Eric the Amalgamator”. *The Telegram*. p. 3

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Porter Dillon Consulting Engineers. (1990). *Amalgamation Proposal: Northeast Avalon Peninsula*. CNS. p. 10.

municipalities in the region from eighteen to four. However, in addition to the original amalgamation proposal, a number of other potential municipal groupings were investigated by the province. The groupings investigated included an urban core grouping, consisting of all the urbanized areas on the northeast Avalon at the time, an expanded urban core grouping, which added the “rural” communities of Paradise and Conception Bay South and other urbanizing areas, an expanded urban core grouping excluding the city of Mount Pearl, which was a major opponent of amalgamation in the region, and a super city grouping, encompassing the entirety of the northeast Avalon Peninsula.¹¹⁵ The scale of these groupings varied widely, but they all would have resulted in a reduction in the number of municipalities on the northeast Avalon.

From the onset, it was clear that large proposals like the super city would do little to cut costs and achieve financial austerity as the provincial government intended. Due to the sheer size of the proposed super city it would have been next to impossible to provide shared services like fire protection in such a way that it would be cheaper than operating volunteer fire departments.¹¹⁶ The logistics of servicing such a large area, across which infrastructure levels and population densities varied widely, was considered too complex to work. The decision-makers in St. John's were against the super city proposal due to this complexity. As a result, smaller municipal groupings became the major focus of the amalgamation drive. The grouping of choice for the city of St. John's was the expanded urban core, which was seen as the most advantageous due to the fact that St. John's,

¹¹⁵ Ibid, pp. 5-7.

¹¹⁶ Ibid, pp. 7-8.

Wedgewood Park, and Mount Pearl already had similar services and that areas like Goulds, Paradise, and Conception Bay South had aspirations to achieve the same level of servicing in the near future. As a result, it was suggested that administration and planning could readily be standardized across the municipalities in this grouping.

While the province considered a number of different amalgamation proposals, the grouping of Goulds and Wedgewood Park with St. John's was eventually determined to be one of the most logical. Despite this, the town council of Goulds was opposed to amalgamating with St. John's, as were many of the town's residents. Similarly, elected officials in Wedgewood Park saw no reason for their town to be included in the process, but their concerns were not enough to halt it. So, residents and elected officials in both Goulds and Wedgewood Park ultimately came to comprise the bulk of the opposition to the amalgamation and the widespread changes that it would bring. The rest of this chapter looks directly at this particular grouping of municipalities, investigating the arguments both for and against the proposal.

The Argument for Amalgamation

As with most municipal consolidations, which tend to be highly controversial and highly publicized processes, the amalgamation of St. John's with Goulds and Wedgewood Park was the subject of a great deal of discussion prior to the decision to join these municipalities with one another. During the amalgamation blitz of the early 1990s, it was noted that public opinion in the region was strongly in favour of retaining local autonomy and identity. However, the public also recognized that there was a “need to coordinate

services to create greater efficiencies and provide higher levels of service to residents” in the areas which were at the centre of the discussion.¹¹⁷ A number of reports were prepared, both for and against amalgamation, which help to shed light on the debate surrounding the addition of these communities to the city of St. John's. Even before one looks at these reports, it is immediately clear that the justifications given for the amalgamation were researched extensively by both the provincial government and the city as the amount of literature that favoured their position was much larger than that existing in opposition to it. The fact that the amalgamation was researched so intensively by its proponents is likely due to the large body of resources available to both the city and the province. Looking at population alone, 96,216 persons were living in St. John's in 1990 while, at the same time, Goulds and Wedgewood Park had populations of 4,688 and 1,385 respectively.¹¹⁸ So, financially, the city had the benefit of a much larger tax base with which to fund such projects. The city's larger population also granted it more significant voting power with which to sway the opinion of the provincial government. However, the large body of resources available to both the city and the province are no indication of the validity of their position on the organization of municipal government in the region. As a result, a spirited and determined effort in opposition to the amalgamation was not out of the question.

As noted above, the amalgamation of St. John's with Goulds and Wedgewood Park was the final in a series of proposed consolidations aimed at the municipalities on the

¹¹⁷ Peckham, D., Hickey, T., Tilley, G., & Williams, L. (1990). *Planning for the Future: Consolidation of Municipalities Within the Northeast Avalon*. CNS. p. 1.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid*, pp. 10-11.

northeast Avalon Peninsula. This final amalgamation proposal signaled a reversal from earlier groupings that had suggested the entire area be merged to form one giant all-encompassing municipality, among others. While the shape of the proposed amalgamation changed over time, the goals it was designed to achieve remained the same. The amalgamation proposal set forth by the provincial government was intended provide a number of benefits related to administration, finances, population, and planning. With respect to administration, the provincial government hoped that consolidation on the northeast Avalon Peninsula would eliminate the duplication of costs, allow for more effective use of existing equipment, recreational assets, and staff, and provide smaller municipalities with access to equipment and staff that they previously would not have had access to. Regarding finances, it was hoped that amalgamation would allow the municipalities involved to pool their budgetary resources to provide better services in areas that were not affordable at the time. A larger population size was promoted as providing a wider base for candidates for municipal councils, supposedly reducing the difficulty of finding individuals to act as council members in smaller communities and replacing inadequate committee systems that were a result of the small councils existing in these towns. Finally, due to the tendency of communities to plan separately, without any regard for regional activities, it was argued that amalgamated municipalities would benefit from coordinated planning as it would ensure that growth and development for the core areas were enhanced and that efforts were not duplicated.¹¹⁹ Reduced competition between municipalities on the northeast Avalon was also promoted

¹¹⁹ Peckham, D., et al. (1990). *Planning for the Future*. pp. 14-15.

as a benefit of consolidation as it would enable the region to become “more competitive with other major urban centres” in Atlantic Canada.¹²⁰

Consolidations have often been designed to reduce the number of elected and appointed officials working in specific municipalities. Critics of municipal consolidations have noted the negative impact that such processes can have on the access of residents to elected officials. In extreme cases, a reduction in representation can even result in taxation without representation. Looking at the example of Goulds, there were seven members, elected at-large, sitting on the town's council prior to it merging with St. John's. At that same time, the city had a nine member council operating on a part-ward and part at-large system. The amalgamation would eliminate six of the positions in Goulds, leaving behind one elected representative on a restructured St. John's council. One report on the issue argued that a decrease in representation in Goulds was not an issue due to the notion that, “in this age of electronic communications, access to elected and appointed officials should not be an insurmountable problem”.¹²¹ The reduction of elected officials in the region was further justified by the claim that the population living in rural communities like Goulds was overrepresented prior to amalgamation and that decreasing the number of councilors would actually provide a more balanced distribution of representation in the region. While this is true to some degree, it assumes that the residents of St. John's were not underrepresented by their nine member council at that same time.

¹²⁰ Porter Dillon Consulting Engineers. (1990). Amalgamation Proposal. p. 2.

¹²¹ Peckham, D., et al. (1990). Planning for the Future. p. 46.

For comparison, the capital of Nova Scotia, known as the Halifax Regional Municipality, has a population of approximately 408,000 and is currently served by a twenty-four member council.¹²² The capital of New Brunswick, Saint John, has a population of approximately 70,000 but it is served by an eleven member council.¹²³ So, while Halifax has a smaller number of elected officials per person than St. John's, Saint John has a higher rate of representation. Clearly, there is no standard level of elected representation across Atlantic Canada's major cities. The optimal number of elected officials for a municipality of a given size may be difficult to determine, but it is clear that the proponents of amalgamation on the northeast Avalon Peninsula had a desire to reduce the existing number as part of their campaign to reduce the cost of servicing and administration in the region.

The province and the city of St. John's supported the 1992 amalgamation based primarily on the principles of financial austerity and regional cooperation. However, in the municipalities that were to be amalgamated with St. John's, most notably Goulds and Wedgewood Park, these benefits were less obvious and the entire process became the focal point of much contestation. The following section addresses the concerns that those living in, and representing, both Goulds and Wedgewood Park had with the process.

¹²² Halifax Regional Municipality. (2012). Halifax Regional Council. Retrieved from <https://www.halifax.ca/council/index.html>; Halifax Regional Municipality.(2012). Community Demographics. Retrieved from <http://www.halifax.ca/community/fact1.html>

¹²³ City of Saint John. (2011). Saint John Common Council. Retrieved from <http://www.saintjohn.ca/en/home/mayor-and-council/default.aspx>; City of Saint John. (2011). Facts & Demographics. Retrieved from <http://www.saintjohn.ca/en/home/aboutsaintjohn/factsdemographics/default.aspx>

The Argument Against Amalgamation

It is important to restate the fact that amalgamations are often highly controversial processes. As such, it is no surprise that the amalgamation of Goulds and Wedgewood Park with St. John's was opposed by many. While some of the opposition dissipated as the amalgamation process moved beyond its initial stages, others continued to speak out against the consolidation even after it had been finalized. In fact, the public outcry over the servicing issues that were to eventually plague residents throughout Goulds in the years and decades following the amalgamation could potentially be traced back to the pro-amalgamation arguments surrounding service improvements in the region and a perception that these claims were never truly acted upon by those in power.

From the beginning, the town of Goulds was strongly against amalgamating with the city of St. John's and it actively campaigned against the provincial government's proposal to join the two municipalities. The position of the town was made quite clear by the media as well as in the town's own briefing notes on the feasibility of the amalgamation. In its briefing notes, the Goulds town council actually framed the process in terms of an annexation, in which the city was poised to benefit at the expense of the community and the other areas that were to be included within the expanded boundaries of St. John's.¹²⁴ The framing of the amalgamation as a hostile takeover was quite different from the mutually beneficial process, based upon the principle of regional cooperation, that had been described by the city and its consultants in their reports.

¹²⁴ Goulds Town Council. (1990). *Brief on Feasibility of Municipal Amalgamation*. CSJA. AM014 C.1 p. 33.

Goulds' amalgamation brief, which was prepared by the town's staff, describes the process by which it was determined whether or not residents of the town would be advantaged or disadvantaged if the amalgamation went forward. To make a determination as to Goulds stance on the amalgamation, the brief addressed all the official goals of the consolidation on an individual basis. First of all, it was noted that amalgamation would do little to cut costs by reducing duplication of administration, services, and equipment as the town of Goulds staff were already being paid less than the city's staff, various services in the town were contracted out at rates lower than those of the city, and all of the municipal buildings were paid for in full.¹²⁵ The brief also argued that a single municipal planning program would provide no benefits over the preexisting Goulds municipal plan and that the size of the expanded city would not allow for savings or for the smooth integration of Goulds into its water and sewer system, as a result of its geographic location at the city's fringe. It was also feared that amalgamation would slow development in the town while benefiting growth in other parts of the proposed municipality, by shifting tax dollars away from the community. The tax rate itself was another contested point of the amalgamation, as it was estimated that the average amount paid by homeowners in Goulds would jump from \$500 per year to \$825 per year.¹²⁶ Goulds' mayor Peter Murphy questioned the rate increase and whether or not the residents of his town would get improved servicing as a result, as he felt there were no assurances that any real action would take place if the amalgamation went ahead. Improved servicing

¹²⁵ Ibid, pp. 1-3.

¹²⁶ Brenton, B. (May 17, 1991). Amalgamation Forced on Goulds. *The Telegram*, p. 3.

was stated to be a goal of the amalgamation, but this was apparently not enough of a guarantee for Mr. Murphy. It was suggested by the city that any tax rate increase could be implemented in stages, for both Goulds and Wedgewood Park, but this plan was reliant on St. John's receiving subsidies from the provincial government.¹²⁷ However, with less than two months until the merger was to take place, Mayor Murphy was unaware of any official plan to implement the phasing of taxes. As such, the town's residents continued to face the prospect of having to pay considerably higher taxes in the year immediately following the consolidation.

In the weeks and months leading up to the amalgamation, the town of Wedgewood Park was also vocally against merging with the city of St. John's, a fact which is clearly displayed in the briefing notes prepared by its town council. As described in these notes, amalgamation was proposed as a means to eliminate the duplication of services in order to eliminate unnecessary public expenditure, and the money saved by this process would then go towards improving services in general in the affected municipalities. The main point of contention for the town council of Wedgewood Park was the fact that servicing in the town was already equal to that of, or possibly even superior to, the level of servicing found in most parts of the city of St. John's. In fact, they noted that, at the time, the residents of Wedgewood Park were "overwhelmingly satisfied with the tremendous level of services being provided" and that the town paid for every service it used.¹²⁸ As such, the claims of amalgamation proponents regarding inadequate servicing levels were at

¹²⁷ Bennett, B. (Nov. 23, 1991). Two Towns' Taxes Will Double. *The Telegram*, pp. 1-2.

¹²⁸ The Town Council of The Town of Wedgewood Park. (1990). *The Town of Wedgewood Park Amalgamation Brief*. pp. 1-2.

odds with the beliefs of the residents of Wedgewood Park. The argument that the duplication of services in municipalities like Wedgewood Park was causing a drain on the Provincial Government was also called into question due to the fact that the town paid for all of its services. As the situation in Wedgewood Park was quite different from that of Goulds, which was actually in need of servicing improvements, it is interesting that those in power would use the exact same justifications for amalgamation without focusing on the specifics of each municipality. Furthermore, the fact that one of the main arguments for municipal consolidation was barely applicable to Wedgewood Park, at least in the opinion of its town council and those who lived there, suggests that there may have been another motive for it being included in the process along with Goulds. Wedgewood Park's mayor, Paul Reynolds, pledged to fight the amalgamation right up to the deadline, publicly challenging the provincial government to provide him with "one single benefit" with which to sway the opinion of those living in the town.¹²⁹

Another argument against the amalgamation was that it would negatively impact the identities of those living within the towns which were to merge with St. John's. It was feared that, over time, residents of towns like Goulds would begin to identify more closely as residents of St. John's than as members of their own communities, leading to some sort of cultural loss. In the opinion of the Goulds town council, the organization of local government had a significant impact on community identity.¹³⁰ However in the case of Goulds, the loss of identity that many feared would take place in the community, as a

¹²⁹ Bennett, B. (Nov. 23, 1991). Two Towns' Taxes Will Double. *The Telegram*, p. 2

¹³⁰ Goulds Town Council. (1990). *Brief on Feasibility of Municipal Amalgamation*. p. 20.

result of the amalgamation, never came to pass. According to John Dinn, the community still has a strong sense of identity, which he attributes to its long history of volunteering.¹³¹ In fact, this aspect of life in the community may have actually been strengthened by the consolidation. For example, the construction of the Goulds' hockey arena provided new volunteering opportunities, including coaching positions, and a place where residents of Goulds could come together as a community. As Mr. Dinn describes it, Goulds continues to have one of the strongest identities of any community in St. John's to this day.

While there were no obvious negative outcomes related to identity as a result of the amalgamation, it is hard to ignore the negative impact the process has had on the provision of piped water and sewerage to many residents in Goulds. In fact, as the following chapter shows, water and sewer issues in Goulds came to define the community's post-amalgamation relationship with the city of St. John's as a result of public outrage and a series of associated events that captured the attention of local media.

Boundary Expansion or an Attack on Local Government?

Prior to the amalgamation of Goulds and Wedgewood Park with St. John's, and the dissolution of the St. John's Metropolitan Area Board, the system of government in place on Newfoundland's northeast Avalon Peninsula was quite different from what it is today. As discussed in the previous chapter, the St. John's Metropolitan Area Board comprised a tier of government situated somewhere between the municipal and the provincial level.

¹³¹ Dinn, J. (Aug. 18, 2011). Personal Communication. MHA for Kilbride.

The Metro Board worked to provide unincorporated communities in the region with a variety of services that would typically be provided by municipal government.¹³² As a result of this, the St. John's Metropolitan Area Board effectively helped to facilitate development in these areas. However, it was the desire of those in power to limit the growth of these areas, based on financial concerns and a fear of competition. Efforts to apply these limitations on growth were actually written into the mandate of the Metro Board. So, the St. John's Metropolitan Area Board was in the precarious position of having to service these areas, a number of which were growing quite rapidly, while simultaneously working to restrict their growth, by whatever means that were available. Despite this, a number of these areas were attractive enough that they continued to grow at a relatively rapid rate. When the growing communities in the region such as Goulds began to incorporate they were subsequently removed from the jurisdiction of the Metro Board and gained some degree of self-determination. They were, however, still reliant on support from the provincial government to carry out servicing and major capital works projects. Following its incorporation in 1971, the central area of Goulds began to receive access to piped water and sewerage, due to the newly operational water supply at Bay Bulls – Big Pond. However, the rest of the town was still reliant upon private wells and septic systems, limiting growth and the density of new housing construction. The use of such systems had helped to facilitate growth before the arrival of servicing and this trend continued well into the following decades, maintaining similar patterns of development.

While it was promoted as a means to achieve equality, the drive towards

¹³² Withers, P. (Mar. 15, 1991). Metro Board has a Niche in Municipal History. *The Telegram*, p. 6.

amalgamation in Newfoundland in the late '80s and early '90s can be looked upon as an attack on local government and an attempt to restructure and enhance the role of regional government which had formerly manifested itself through the St. John's Metropolitan Area Board in limiting growth in areas outlying St. John's. This process would redirect development away from the rural fringe, where municipalities operated under "inadequate" taxation levels and were more reliant on the provincial government to finance administrative work, servicing improvements, and other programs than were more urbanized municipalities like St. John's.¹³³ Extending piped water and sewer to older rural developments, which often sit on large lots due to a reliance on private wells and septic systems, is more costly than servicing new developments in high density subdivisions as much of the costs are assumed by developers and passed on directly to their customers.¹³⁴ More important than saving money as a result of not having to extend services, restricting growth in areas outlying the city worked to limit the number of municipalities that could compete with St. John's for new development and the lucrative taxes, assessments, and other forms of associated income that would be received as a result. As noted in the previous chapter, the mandate of the Metro Board, to limit development in these areas bounding St. John's was considered successful, at least in the opinion of one of its former members, but at what cost did this success come? Surely, the persons who have suffered in Goulds as a result of poor municipal servicing have paid some of the highest costs due to the efforts to limit growth outside of the city.

¹³³ Peckham, D., et al. (1990). *Planning for the Future*. p. 15.

¹³⁴ Cheeseman, A. (Aug. 10, 2011). Personal Communication. Engineer with the city of St. John's (Retired).

Judgment has been passed on the success of the St. John's Metropolitan Area Board, but whether or not the amalgamation of the city of St. John's with the municipalities of Goulds and Wedgewood Park has been successful is still up for debate and, even if one was to make such a determination, the opinions of those involved may change as time continues to pass. However, understanding the amalgamation and its impact on servicing in terms of power, the promise of equality, and access to resources and the environment is ultimately more important than attempting to determine the success of the consolidation based upon its official goals. To begin to address some of these issues it is important to ask the question: was the amalgamation of Goulds and Wedgewood Park with St. John's even necessary in the first place? Looking back to the literature on amalgamation, supporters of such processes typically argue that they save money by eliminating duplication of services and unnecessary positions on city councils. It is also claimed that they facilitate more effective regional planning, improve equity among taxpayers, and allow municipalities to market themselves better in the global economy.¹³⁵ These claims no doubt help to sell amalgamations to the general public, but the historical record of municipal consolidations throughout North America and Europe indicates that the benefits are not as clear as some suggest. In the case of the amalgamation that formed New York City in the late 19th century, it was never argued that the process would save money by improving the efficiency of administration and servicing. Those who promoted the process were well aware that it was likely to raise costs. In fact, the consolidation's primary purpose was to decrease competition between

¹³⁵ O'Brien, A. (1993). *Municipal Consolidation in Canada and its Alternatives*. pp. 8-9.

itself and other large cities like Chicago. While the process may have helped achieve the goal of decreasing competition, by the mid-1970s New York City was effectively bankrupt and it was generally agreed that “the city... did not benefit from any possible economies of scale that resulted from its size”.¹³⁶ More recently, statistical research undertaken in the United Kingdom in the 1960s and '70s, during a widespread program of municipal amalgamations, found no evidence that large local governments were more efficient at providing services than smaller ones.¹³⁷ While the amalgamations in New York City and the United Kingdom took place on a scale much larger than the consolidation on the northeast Avalon, they nevertheless display the danger of amalgamation and its failure to achieve its commonly advertised ability to streamline servicing and cut any associated costs.

While municipal consolidations have the potential to improve regional cooperation, whether those involved like it or not, this particular argument does not hold up well in the case of the 1992 merger on the northeast Avalon. The existence of the St. John's Metropolitan Area Board, prior to the consolidation, indicates that there was already a degree of regional cooperation in place, centred primarily around administration and planning. While the city of St. John's and the town of Mount Pearl were not included in the area overseen by the board, almost all of the unincorporated lands on Newfoundland's northeast Avalon Peninsula were under its jurisdiction. However, the people living in these areas were not self-governing in the sense of a traditional municipal

¹³⁶ Sancton, A. (2000). *Merger Mania*. pp. 30-34.

¹³⁷ *Ibid*, pp. 42-44

government due to the fact that the board's members, who were appointed by the provincial government, sought to reduce the expense of servicing uncontrolled development in the area by redirecting new development towards St. John's. So this particular regional government was more of a town council for these areas than a forum for cooperation between incorporated municipalities. Even if amalgamations are successful in improving regional cooperation, where do they end? What is the ideal sized municipality? Evidence from Winnipeg, Canada, suggests that, even after a consolidation has been completed, the same problems that faced the formerly independent communities persist as growth occurs outside the boundaries of the newly formed municipality.¹³⁸ Instead of perpetually pursuing amalgamations, perhaps there are more efficient ways to achieve regional cooperation that provide more effective solutions to the problems that consolidations supposedly solve.

More important than its role in overseeing these unincorporated areas, the St. John's Area Metropolitan Board was also in charge of the administration of the Bay Bulls – Big Pond water supply system. The Metro Board's control over Bay Bulls – Big Pond did, in fact, represent a significant degree of cooperation between municipalities, as towns like Goulds and Mount Pearl were connected to the supply despite being free from the Metro Board otherwise. The water supply itself was located on land that was overseen by the St. John's Metropolitan Area Board, with the town of Goulds extending to its protected watershed area. This Metropolitan Area Board land located to the south of Goulds was to be annexed by St. John's under the amalgamation proposal. As a result,

¹³⁸ Ibid, p. 58.

some believe that one of the reasons the city of St. John's was so enthusiastic to proceed with this amalgamation was the fact that they would gain control over Bay Bulls – Big Pond if it went forward. Commenting on this issue, John Dinn has stated that, “the plum that was there for them to take the Goulds was Bay Bulls - Big Pond, because they could control Bay Bulls – Big Pond water supply which meant that they could control the whole region in a way”.¹³⁹ By limiting development outside of the city, through control of this particular water supply system, the city could more easily facilitate new development within its own boundaries. This is not surprising as, throughout history, it has often been observed that development in one location is indicative of a lack of development in another.¹⁴⁰

Instead of enhancing cooperation throughout the region, which already existed to some degree as a result of the Metro Board and the shared use of Bay Bulls – Big Pond, the consolidation actually put more power in the hands of the city and allowed it to manage more closely development on the northeast Avalon as a whole. A regional water committee did emerge to manage Bay Bulls-Big Pond following the dissolution of the Metropolitan Area Board, but representation on this newly-formed committee was weighted in favour of the city of St. John's. Specifically, 50% of the committee's members represented St. John's. Despite this, former St. John's Mayor Andy Wells has commented that it was not a contentious issue and that when the board did meet, which

¹³⁹ Dinn, J. (Aug. 18, 2011). Personal Communication. MHA for Kilbride.

¹⁴⁰ Olson, S. (2007). *Downwind, Downtown, Downstream*. p. 846.

happened about six times per year, there was nothing controversial for them to discuss.¹⁴¹ Urban development is heavily reliant on water and, as time has passed, many parts of St. John's have been opened up to expansion as a result of the city having access to the water supply at Bay Bulls – Big Pond. Development in the city could have taken place without Bay Bulls – Big Pond, but it is likely that it would have been more reliant on private wells and septic systems or that it would have necessitated the construction of a new water supply system. The use of private wells and septic systems would have placed limitations on the density of housing in any newly formed subdivisions, as has been the case in Goulds, reducing the profitability of such an enterprise. As such, it is easy to see the benefits that piped water provides in relation to development and expansion.

The dissolution of Goulds town council was one of the major impacts of amalgamation in the community. In fact, the entire Goulds council was replaced by one new position on the St. John's city council. This restructuring of local representation was considered to be a benefit by the proponents of the 1992 amalgamation, but many of those who have written on such processes see a reduction in elected officials as a negative outcome of municipal consolidation. According to the proponents of amalgamation on the northeast Avalon, a reduction in municipal representation would benefit voters by reducing over-representation, among other things. However, a reduction in elected and appointed officials can be detrimental, especially with regards to efficiency, which amalgamations are typically designed to improve. In fact, during the transition period, a quick reduction in elected and appointed officials often places an unnecessary burden

¹⁴¹ Wells, A. (Aug. 29, 2011). Personal Communication. Former Mayor of St. John's.

upon those who remain, as fewer people are left to do work that was once done by many. Using Toronto as an example, even the city's mayor felt the burden of an increased workload, admitting that he had trouble keeping himself informed on a number of important issues following the highly publicized consolidation in 1998.¹⁴² In the case of the 1992 amalgamation on the northeast Avalon, much of the work that had previously been done by the seven members of the Goulds town council immediately became the responsibility of a single city councilor who was elected in a by-election under the terms of the amalgamation. The winner of the by-election, John Dinn, was initially responsible for the same geographical territory as Goulds.¹⁴³ However, over the following years the number of wards in the city would fluctuate to some degree, along with their boundaries. As figures 3.2 and 3.4 show, Ward 5, in which the community of Goulds is located, now encompasses a larger geographical area than the former town of Goulds by incorporating other areas around the city's fringe. This expanded ward effectively presents its councilor with an even greater responsibility than had previously been undertaken by the Goulds town council. The reduction in municipal representation in Goulds places unfair burden on this councilor in much the same way that similar processes have done in municipalities like Toronto, albeit on a much smaller scale.

The reduction of elected officials was used to achieve “equality” through the 1992 amalgamation, but it was not the only means of doing so. As Wedgewood Park was fully serviced prior to the amalgamation, equalization of services throughout the region could

¹⁴² McKay, R. (2004). *Reforming Municipal Services After Amalgamation*. pp. 24-27.

¹⁴³ Frampton, P. (Feb. 26, 1992). Dinn Newest Councilor. *The Telegram*, p. 3.

not be reached by improving Wedgewood Park itself. Equality would have to be achieved by bringing servicing in areas like Goulds up to the same level as Wedgewood Park. In the opinion of Andy Wells, the amalgamation of Wedgewood Park with St. John's was not a matter of improving servicing but rather an event that was inevitable due to the fact that the town was completely encircled by the city at the time it was proposed.¹⁴⁴ The fact that servicing was already at a level equal to that of the city simply meant that there was less work for city engineers and maintenance crews once Wedgewood Park had been brought into the fold. It is likely that, in the case of Wedgewood Park, the benefits of amalgamation for the city of St. John's outweighed the benefits that the town's residents received once they joined the city.

Despite the opinion that the amalgamation of Wedgewood Park with St. John's was inevitable, there is evidence when reviewing the case of Wedgewood Park that at least some of the experts who had been given the task of researching amalgamation on the northeast Avalon Peninsula had advised against the town joining with St. John's. Although they were against Wedgewood Park's involvement in the process, these same experts simultaneously advocated for the consolidation of Goulds and other areas with the city. In one report, titled "Planning for the Future: Consolidation of Municipalities Within the Northeast Avalon", the authors clearly stated that Wedgewood Park should remain an independent incorporated municipality. These experts argued for the town's independence based on the fact that it was able to provide its residents with, what they described as, one of the highest levels of service amongst the municipalities on the northeast Avalon

¹⁴⁴ Wells, A. (Aug. 29, 2011). Personal Communication. Former Mayor of St. John's.

Peninsula. Reflecting on the work done in the town prior to the amalgamation, with respect to the provision of water and sewerage, former city of St. John's engineer Art Cheeseman noted that, "Wedgewood Park was built to good standards" and despite "some local issues" there was nothing that "required major capital expenditures" once the city took control, as was the case in Goulds.¹⁴⁵ Furthermore, at the time the amalgamation was proposed, Wedgewood Park had a number of successful commercial developments which provided an excellent supplement to its residential tax base. The town was also able to pay for its full share of the regional services, including fire services, solid waste disposal, and water, which were provided to it by the city of St. John's and the provincial Department of Municipal Affairs. Essentially, there was little improvement needed.

As a result of the factors outlined above, the authors of "Planning for the Future" concluded that there was no "adequate rationale to disband [Wedgewood Park] simply because it [was] small and contained within the boundaries of the City" as there were "many precedents for such municipalities across Canada".¹⁴⁶ The town's mayor, Paul Reynolds, praised the report but the decision whether to amalgamate or not ultimately was out of his hands.¹⁴⁷ Based on the report, if there was no obvious reason to amalgamate Wedgewood Park with St. John's, for financial or administrative reasons, why did it eventually come to pass? The fact that the town was self-sufficient financially suggests that its consolidation with the city was of little risk to St. John's as Wedgewood

¹⁴⁵ Cheeseman, A. (Aug. 10, 2011). Personal Communication. Engineer with the city of St. John's (Retired).

¹⁴⁶ Peckham, D., et al. (1990). *Planning for the Future*. pp. 96-97.

¹⁴⁷ Sullivan, A. (July 21, 1990). *Wedgewood Park Mayor Praises Report*. *The Telegram*.

Park did not have a large capital debt.¹⁴⁸ Even if there was no room for future growth or development in Wedgewood Park, due to the fact that it was completely encircled, it would have likely benefited the city in the end due to its strong tax base. However, according to Shannie Duff, the deputy mayor of St. John's at the time, the rationale that Wedgewood Park was well-managed and financially viable was wrong.¹⁴⁹ Duff argued that the town be included in the amalgamation process as it had very little employment generation and the majority of its residents worked in St. John's and freely used all of the services available in the larger municipality, including those related to health, education, and recreation. The true impact that Wedgewood Park had on St. John's is difficult to determine, but what is clear is that the amalgamation of the town was deemed unnecessary by particular outside observers and that its residents were strongly opposed to the process as well. Joining St. John's would have done little to benefit the residents of Wedgewood Park, but it most certainly would have impacted the city in a positive manner, at least financially.

In the end, the ability of amalgamations to improve equality in servicing, administration, or any other facet of urban life is questionable at best. In reality, traditional municipal mergers may actually erode the foundations of liberal democracies by undermining notions that there can be forms of self-government that exist outside the institutions of central governments.¹⁵⁰ Instead of improving the lives of those living in the areas affected, the real benefits of such processes are often felt by “those who hope... to

¹⁴⁸ Peckham, D., et al. (1990). *Planning for the Future*. p. 98.

¹⁴⁹ Sullivan, A. (July 21, 1990). *Wedgewood Park Mayor Praises Report*.

¹⁵⁰ Sancton, A. (2000). *Merger Mania*. p. 167.

protect the market economy (and the privileges and unequal freedoms associated with it) from what they regard as inappropriate efforts to impose social controls”.¹⁵¹

Conclusion

Municipal amalgamation on the northeast Avalon Peninsula was the source of a great deal of debate in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador during the late 1980s and the early 1990s. On one side of the debate was the provincial government and the city of St. John's, two powerful political forces which were both in favour of consolidation in some form or another. On the other side of the debate were the town councils of a number of smaller municipalities in the region, including Goulds and Wedgewood Park, along with many of the residents in these communities.

Overall, the pro-amalgamation argument was well researched and benefited strongly from the fact that it was led by both the provincial government and the St. John's City Council. The resources available to the province and the city, especially those related to the fields of engineering and planning, allowed them to form strong arguments in favour of the process. These arguments were intended to sway public opinion and to legitimize the process as a whole. In general, the arguments in favour of consolidation promoted it as a means to improve servicing and administration, limit duplication, and cut costs. However, no matter how strong the arguments in favour of this process were, the ability of municipal consolidations to achieve such goals is unclear, locally and on a larger scale.

¹⁵¹ Keil, R. (2000). *Governance Restructuring in Los Angeles and Toronto*. p. 758.

Conversely, the movement against amalgamation was led primarily by the municipal councils of Wedgewood Park and Goulds, and individual residents of those communities who were also opposed to the merger. While the consolidation's opponents may have had fewer resources available to them to research the impacts of amalgamation, they were able to make their opinions heard by utilizing the local news media. One of the primary reasons behind the lack of enthusiasm for amalgamation in these municipalities was a general fear that tax levels would increase dramatically once they joined St. John's. According to John Dinn, the "fuss over... taxation" was centred around the fact that increased rates of taxation had been "phased in over a three-year period" during previous annexations and amalgamations involving the city of St. John's, whereas increased tax rates were to be implemented immediately in Goulds and Wedgewood Park.¹⁵² These fears were heightened by the notion that some aspects of servicing in communities like Goulds, such as its volunteer fire department, were already economically sustainable and in a position to meet the needs of the persons living there. As such, the residents of towns like Goulds and Wedgewood Park would be forced to pay substantially more for "improvements" to services with which they were already satisfied. Unless other aspects of servicing like water and sewer, which were substandard in Goulds, improved dramatically, the amalgamation would not be well received. In addition to these tax concerns, there was also the fear that the sense of identity shared by the residents of communities like Goulds would be impacted negatively as a result of municipal consolidation. Despite this fear, it appears that the sense of identity in Goulds is still quite

¹⁵² Dinn, J. (Aug. 18, 2011). Personal Communication. MHA for Kilbride.

vibrant and that the community has managed to avoid being completely assimilated by St. John's over the last 21 years. The fact that Goulds has maintained its own independent recreation committee, which attracts numerous volunteers from the community, is one example of this.¹⁵³ In the end, despite the arguments put forward by those against consolidation, the process eventually moved forward. In fact, the possibility that the consolidation would be stopped at all was low to begin with due to the power that Provincial and Municipal Affairs Minister Eric Gullage, and the provincial government as a whole, held over municipalities in the province. In addition to this, the notion that amalgamation would help to urbanize Goulds helped to sway the opinion of some residents in the community in favour of the process in the end.¹⁵⁴ In turn, public expectations that this urbanizing process would actually take place also began to rise as amalgamation took hold and Goulds and Wedgewood Park joined the city of St. John's.

After the amalgamation had passed, there were strong expectations that the city of St. John's would act to make good on the improvements that it had promised during the planning stages. Residents of Goulds hoped that the servicing improvements that had been used to bolster the amalgamation argument would transport their community from being one at the city's rural fringe to one at the heart of a quickly urbanizing region. However, as the following chapter will show, it took many years for these improvements to materialize in Goulds and the modernizing process of amalgamation has not yet truly urbanized the community to the same degree as the rest of St. John's. The city and other

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Williams, B. (Aug. 10, 2011). Personal Communication. Goulds Resident.

proponents of the amalgamation, like the province, are not entirely to blame for this failure, as planning and servicing in Goulds was mismanaged, in a number of respects, prior to the city taking control. However, the desire for control over development in the region did a great disservice to many individuals and families living in the community, whether those in power realized it or not.

Chapter 5

Beyond Amalgamation: Water Provision in an Expanded City

On January 1st, 1992, the city of St. John's amalgamated with the neighbouring towns of Goulds and Wedgewood Park. The amalgamation of these municipalities was controversial from the very beginning for a variety of reasons. However, these initial controversies were later overshadowed by the concerns of residents in Goulds regarding the level of municipal services they had received from the city since the consolidation. Some of the most serious concerns raised by those living in Goulds were centered around the lack of access to municipal water and sewerage services in the community. The absence of piped water and sewers was particularly troubling due to the potential for private well contamination and the health impacts associated with tainted water. The amalgamation process also resulted in control of the Bay Bulls-Big Pond water supply changing hands from the provincially appointed St. John's Area Metropolitan Board to the city itself. A regional water committee was established to manage control of Bay Bulls-Big Pond, but 50% of the members were appointed by St. John's. As a result, the city gained a monopoly over decisions about piped water in the region, changing the course that improvements to servicing would take from that point on.

Amalgamation on Newfoundland's northeast Avalon Peninsula impacted many aspects of servicing in the region, but this chapter focuses primarily on the issues surrounding the absence of piped water and sewerage in the town of Goulds and the implications of these issues in the context of the 1992 amalgamation. Goulds stands out

from Wedgewood Park and the rest of the city of St. John's as the impacts of amalgamation, both negative and positive, were arguably the most visible in the community. Even though Wedgewood Park was included in the amalgamation along with Goulds the level of servicing found there was at a high level, equal to that of the other urbanized sections of St. John's, even before the merger took place. As a result, the residents of Wedgewood Park did not have to contend with serious post-amalgamation servicing problems like many in Goulds.

The consolidation bringing together Goulds and St. John's took place in 1992, but it was a number of years before residents in the community become dissatisfied with the pace at which infrastructure improvements were being implemented. Around the year 2000, the post-amalgamation servicing issues in Goulds increasingly became a matter of public debate. The lack of improvements in the community led many to question the promise that amalgamation would improve and equalize servicing, modernizing Goulds in the process. Local media were quick to report on the complaints of residents in the community and the residents themselves were not afraid to express their opinions directly to city hall. The proximity of Bay Bulls – Big Pond to Goulds, coupled with the difficulty in accessing piped water in many parts of the community, heightened the resentment that some of its residents felt towards the city and its elected officials as a result of their newfound control over the water supply. Commenting on this situation, one Goulds resident remarked that, “they take our water” and “[t]hey sell it to everybody else, but we

don't have it. It passes right alongside of our door and we don't have it".¹⁵⁵ Ironically, while Goulds was the closest community to the Bay Bulls – Big Pond water supply, the position of the community at the city's rural fringe was also one of the factors used by the city to justify limiting the access of those living there to piped water and sewerage: such are the politics of water.

Post-Amalgamation Servicing Issues

The consolidation of St. John's with Goulds was originally promoted as a means to improve servicing in the community and across the region as a whole. Despite this goal, the residents of Goulds became quite vocal with their displeasure regarding the manner in which servicing improvements were implemented throughout the city in the years following the amalgamation. Many of their concerns were focused on the provision of piped water and sewerage to the community. However, in addition to the primary concerns surrounding water and sewerage, there were other aspects of servicing that were in need of improvement in the eyes of those living in the community. In fact, many of these concerns still exist in the community to this day.

Immediately following the amalgamation, the city began to fully assess the situation of the preexisting services in the amalgamated areas. In the case of Goulds, the infrastructure that was already in place was put there by both the town and the St. John's Metropolitan Area Board. However, according to a former city engineer, "there were major issues with the way the infrastructure was put in" and "there was no regular

¹⁵⁵ Rideout, R. (Aug. 14, 2011). Personal Communication. Resident of Goulds.

maintenance done on the system”.¹⁵⁶ In his opinion, the city inherited a nightmare when it took responsibility for servicing Goulds. In some cases the city had no choice but to address these issues as the system was not working properly due to leaks and a variety of other problems with its underground systems. In addition to the problems with the community's piped water supply system, there were also major issues with its sewage collection as the storm water system in Goulds was connected to the sanitary system in certain places. As a result, the community experienced flooding whenever flow from the storm water system overwhelmed the sanitary system. One of the major focal points of this flooding was the Goulds Pumping Station (see figure 5.1), as its parking lot and a nearby road would become submerged in sewage whenever a “major storm” took place.¹⁵⁷ This was a situation which John Dinn assumes the province was aware of prior to the amalgamation.

¹⁵⁶ Cheeseman, A. (Aug. 10, 2011). Personal Communication. Engineer with the city of St. John's (Retired).

¹⁵⁷ Dinn, J. (Aug. 18, 2011). MHA for Kilbride.



Figure 5.1. Goulds Pumping Station. This figure features the Goulds Pumping Station, once a source of severe flooding due to poorly designed storm sewers.

The severity of the post-amalgamation servicing issues in Goulds are perhaps best highlighted by the actions of the group which organized in order to actively protest the lack of access to piped water and sewerage in certain areas of the community. This group, which was known as Goulds PRIDE (People Residing in Dehumanizing Environment), was primarily made up of residents from the community living on its Shoal Bay Road (see figure 5.2).

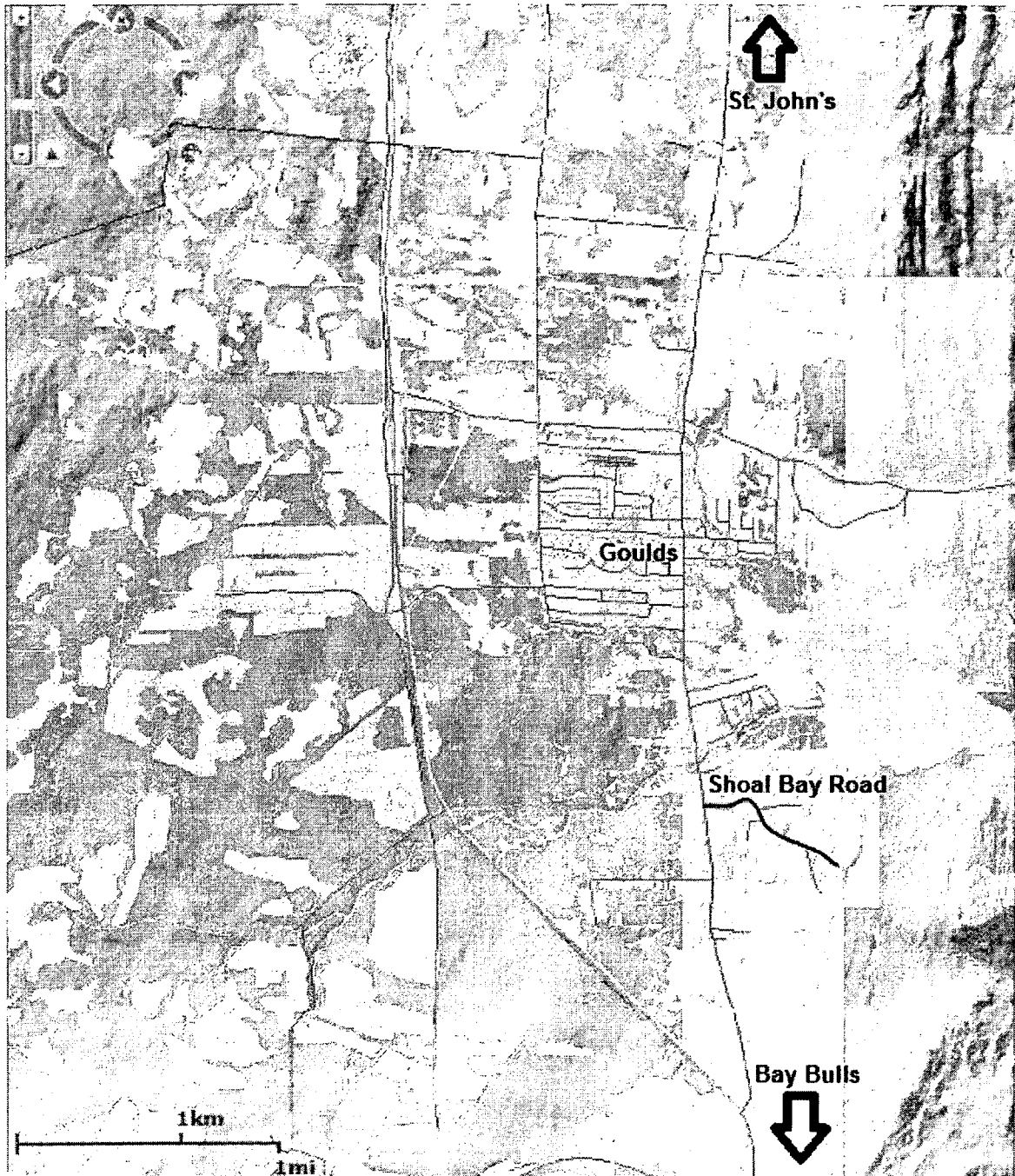


Figure 5.2. Shoal Bay Road. This figure highlights in red the location of Shoal Bay Road within Goulds, towards the southern extent of the community. (City of St. John's. (2012). Mapcentre. Retrieved from <http://map.stjohns.ca/mapcentre/mapcentre.html>)

Goulds PRIDE became active around 2002 and quickly gained the attention of the local media. While a great deal of the previously unserviced lands in Goulds had been serviced by this time, it was argued by the city that the cost of extending piped water to Shoal Bay Road and other “rural” parts of Goulds was too great for the work to take place. In fact, at the time, the city estimated that it would cost a total of \$60 million to service Goulds fully. However, the situation in areas like Shoal Bay Road was such that many private wells failed to function properly and storms drains throughout the community were contaminated with sewage due to the existence of improperly installed or maintained septic systems. As a result of the poor conditions in these particular areas, a number of households in Goulds were forced to rely on water that was provided to their homes by way of a hose that had been connected to the nearest available fire hydrant. In other cases, residents were provided water from the city's water truck service, which had been discontinued in 2000.¹⁵⁸ Describing the situation to local media, Goulds PRIDE member Christine Rowe noted that, “[w]hen you go a day without water, you have to take your children out for a bath or a shower, and you go through the humiliation of having someone coming to your home and having to tell them you can't flush your toilet”.¹⁵⁹ Clearly, the situation of those residing in these “rural” parts of Goulds was not at all equal to that of those living in fully serviced parts of the city, especially when you compare the quality of life they experienced.

The commitment of the group's members to their cause was highlighted by a series

¹⁵⁸ Sweet, B. (Aug. 1, 2001). Drought Means No Water. *The Telegram*, p. A1.

¹⁵⁹ Jackson, C. (Sept. 4, 2003). Shoal Bay Road Residents Welcome Water News. *The Telegram*, p. A1

of acts of civil disobedience that they undertook during a campaign against city council.

In fact, the core membership of this group, known as the Goulds 8, were arrested on two separate occasions in 2002 for causing a disturbance outside of the council chambers at St. John's City Hall.¹⁶⁰ Like Christine Rowe, other members of the Goulds 8 were primarily concerned for the well-being of their children and a desire to live under the same conditions as those living elsewhere in the city.

While Shoal Bay Road was eventually serviced, it has been suggested by some that the efforts of PRIDE had little to do with the improvements that have since taken place in the community and that their highly vocal protests may have actually done more harm than good. In fact, it is the personal opinion of former St. John's Mayor Andy Wells that the members of Goulds PRIDE were nothing more than bullies who thought that they could pressure city hall into focusing on the problems in their community at a time when other parts of the city deserved priority.¹⁶¹ However, there are others in the community who believe that Goulds PRIDE had legitimate claims and that they were justified in their actions, at least to a point. In fact, some went as far to paint a message of support on a rock face bounding a major thoroughfare at the western edge of the community (see figure 5.3).

¹⁶⁰ Ibid. pp. A1-A2.

¹⁶¹ Wells, A. (Aug. 29, 2011). Personal Communication. Former St. John's Mayor.

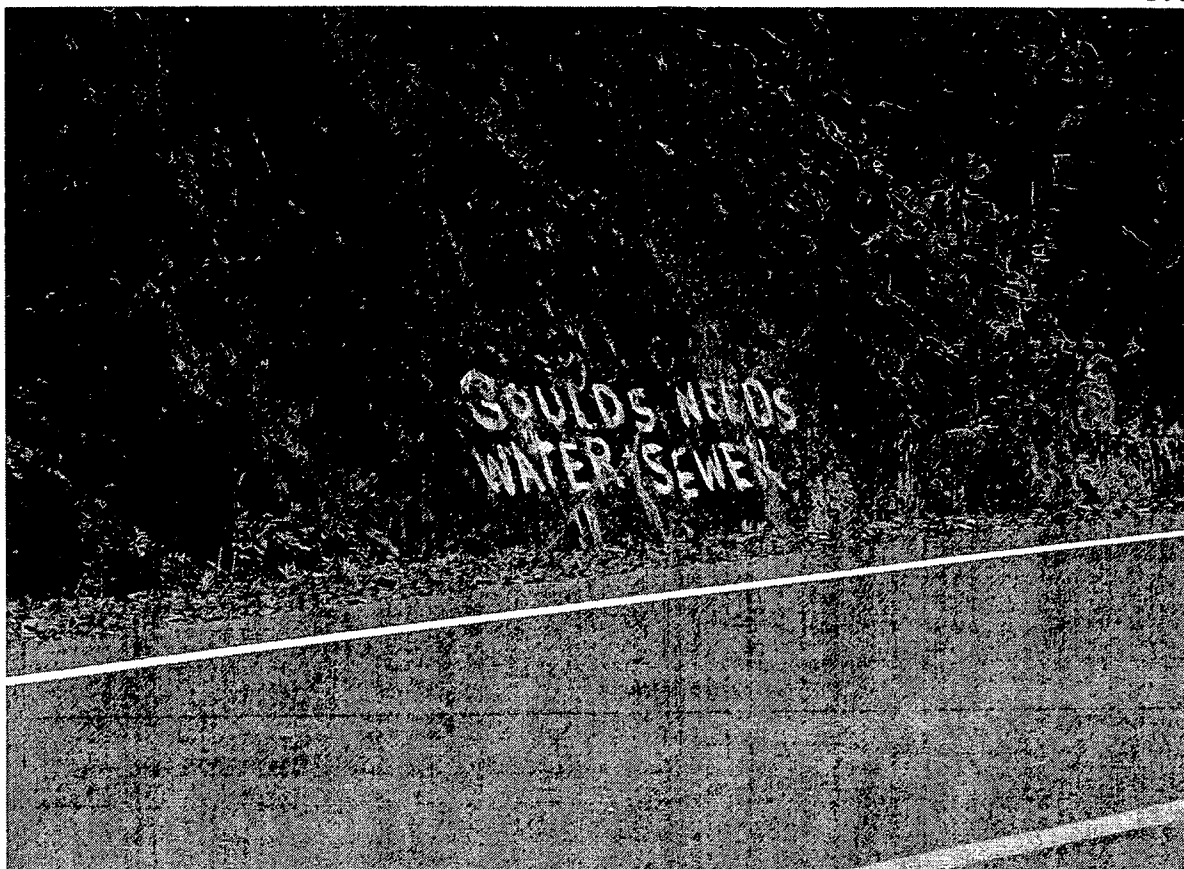


Figure 5.3. “Goulds Needs Water + Sewer”. This figure features a rock face which has been painted with a message supporting the drive to provide Goulds with piped water and sewerage. This rock face is located along Robert E. Howlett Memorial Drive (see figure 3.2).

One long-time Goulds resident, who has lived in the community since 1981, has noted how, despite being included within the boundaries of the city of St. John's, some parts of Goulds have less access to services like piped water than more isolated communities in other parts of the province have had for at least 40 years.¹⁶² In the opinion of another Goulds resident, who had talked with members of PRIDE while the group was active, if she had experienced problems like those with which Christine Rowe and the other members of Goulds PRIDE were faced, she too would have been vocal with her

¹⁶² Rideout, R. (Aug. 14, 2011). Personal Communication. Resident of Goulds.

concerns.¹⁶³ The opinion of this resident was based on her assertion that, regardless of what area of a city one lives in, all the residents of that municipality should be entitled to the same level of municipal services. The opinions of these residents echo the promises of equality that were made leading up to the amalgamation and associated servicing improvements the process was supposed to allow for. As the activities of Goulds PRIDE show, a decade after the consolidation these particular promises had not been kept.

While Goulds PRIDE sought to speed up the process of servicing areas like Shoal Bay Road, it is interesting to note that some individuals in the community believe that the activities of the group may have actually increased the time it took for their homes to be serviced. According to another Goulds resident who was living on Shoal Bay Road at the same time they were active and who was at no point affiliated with Goulds PRIDE himself, the group's members were some of the last to receive servicing when it was finally decided to extend piped water to that area. In the opinion of this particular resident, the city council "treated them hard".¹⁶⁴ He also admitted, however, that the cost of connecting to the municipal water supply system may have led certain individuals to delay having their homes serviced. It is also possible that the order in which homes on the road were serviced was a technical matter, but this observation does call into question whether or not Goulds PRIDE were being "punished" for speaking out against the city council. In the end, it is impossible to prove such claims, but the fact that members of Goulds PRIDE were arrested on two separate occasions for voicing their concerns over

¹⁶³ Williams, B. (Aug. 10, 2011). Personal Communication. Resident of Goulds.

¹⁶⁴ Rideout, R. (Aug. 14, 2011). Personal Communication. Resident of Goulds.

servicing is something that cannot be easily dismissed.

In light of the servicing issues in Goulds, the city of St. John's directed its engineering and planning department to conduct a formal review of the issues facing the community. This review followed an agreement made on October 15, 2001 to “prioritize the installation of water and sewer in... Goulds as the number one ranking on the Capital Works list”.¹⁶⁵ However, the area of Goulds that had priority placed upon it was the community's “urban core”. Excluded from this was “a residential rural area” in which it was stated that people could “enjoy a rural lifestyle based on large rural lot development with private services”.¹⁶⁶ According to the city, 10.3% of private water systems in this “residential rural area”, which were utilizing either shallow wells or drilled wells, had water quality problems¹⁶⁷ The exact number of private water systems with water quality problems was fifty-four, with e.coli bacteria detected in a total of four.

Instead of solving the problem by extending services to the designated residential rural area, it was suggested that any issues related to poor water quality in Goulds could be solved by replacing the shallow private wells in the area with drilled wells, as only one drilled well was found to contain e.coli bacteria. In fact, the city offered homeowners a grant of \$5000 to help with the cost of installing drilled wells on their property, work which would have cost approximately \$7500 at that time. However, some residents who were eligible for these grants rejected them based upon the experience of neighbours who, after accepting the grant and installing a drilled well, continued to have problems with

¹⁶⁵ City of St. John's: Department of Engineering and Planning. (2002). *Review of Servicing Issues in the Goulds*. CNS. p.1.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid, p. 4.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid, p. 14.

their water.¹⁶⁸ In the end, this particular report estimated that it would cost over \$63 million to service the entirety of the unserviced areas in Goulds, including those parts of the community designated as rural.¹⁶⁹ The cost of servicing the rural areas outside of the town's urban core took up the majority of this sum (just under \$49 million). So, from a purely financial perspective, it was deemed to be more practicable to help cover the cost of installing more reliable drilled wells than to provide piped water and sewer. The argument that homes in these areas should not be serviced was further justified based upon the notion that homeowners chose to live on unserviced lots and to utilize private on-site water and sewer systems. Furthermore, it was noted that, even though water issues were detected in a number of private wells there, no disease outbreaks or illnesses associated with water had been attributed to wells in Goulds.

Following the city's review of the servicing issues in Goulds, councilor John Dinn, who was one of the most vocal advocates for improving water and sewerage in Goulds, released his own report on the subject in 2002 in order to counter some of the claims made by the city. While confirming that the majority of the wells in Goulds were safe to drink from, as the city stated in their report, Dinn noted other ways in which the community's poor water quality had negatively impacted resident's lives. The negative impacts mentioned in his report included foul smelling water, which made laundry impossible, and low domestic water pressure caused by improperly functioning filtering

¹⁶⁸ Sweet, B. (Aug. 8, 2001). Drought Means No Water. *The Telegram*, p. A2.

¹⁶⁹ City of St. John's: Department of Engineering and Planning. (2002). *Review of Servicing Issues in the Goulds*. pp. 25-27.

systems, which were costly to maintain even when they worked properly.¹⁷⁰ According to Dinn, these problems were caused by high concentrations of dissolved minerals, such as iron, sulphur, and magnesium, in the area's ground water. In addition to the poor ground water, Dinn also highlighted the fact that the water table in much of the community was high, limiting the ability of septic fields to properly disperse liquid waste. According to Dinn, the high water table also increased the potential for ground water contamination due to nearby farming activity. Due to Goulds being located within a separate drainage basin, it is not surprising that the community is subject to its own unique set of hydrological conditions.¹⁷¹ Despite the indication of John Dinn's report that wells in Goulds suffered from a high water table and high concentrations of dissolved minerals, there are those in the community who believe that the use of private wells is adequate to provide for their needs. One longtime resident of Goulds noted that there has never been "a water issue" with her home's shallow groundwater well, including both "the availability... and the safety of the water".¹⁷² In fact, this resident was so confident in the water provided by her home's well that she has neglected to have it tested on a regular basis, noting that it has never displayed "any discolouration" or any other qualities that might be cause for concern.¹⁷³ Based on such statements, there appears to be some degree of local variation of opinion within the community in relation to groundwater quality. The

¹⁷⁰ Dinn, J. (2002). Report on Servicing Issues in the Goulds. CNS. pp. 1-2.

¹⁷¹ Department of Environment and Conservation: Government of Newfoundland & Labrador. (1992). *Water Resources Atlas of Newfoundland: Hydrology*. Retrieved from: http://www.canal.gov.nl.ca/reports/Water_Resources_Atlas/Water_Resources_Atlas_of_Newfoundland_1992_03_HYDROLOGY.pdf

¹⁷² Joyce, L. (Aug. 2, 2011). Personal Communication. Resident of Goulds.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

fact that some residents of Goulds have never experienced any problems with their private wells may also have been a factor contributing to the slow rate of improvement to piped water and sewerage in the community.

While some residents have faith in their private wells, and nobody became ill in Goulds as a result of tainted water, the provision of water from wells in the community was far from being problem-free. Bringing the city's inaction further into question, Dinn's report put the cost of servicing the entirety of Goulds at only \$22,662,900.¹⁷⁴ The dramatic reduction in cost in his report was based on the assertion that the community did not need storm sewers and that roadside ditches would be adequate for drainage as long as the city properly inspected residential flow towards them. Based on these estimates, Dinn recommended that the city could begin work on servicing all of Goulds, even the rural areas of the community, at some point over the next three years.¹⁷⁵ Dinn's recommendations were further strengthened by the fact that there were no assurances that a water-related outbreak of disease could not happen.¹⁷⁶ Regardless of the probability of it occurring, the city's survey, which identified four private wells in Goulds with e.coli bacteria, was proof that there was the potential for an outbreak to occur.

While much of the blame for the poor level of servicing in Goulds can be placed on the city, and also on the province, homeowners in Goulds are not entirely free from blame for creating the problems with which they were faced. As noted above, prior to the 1992 amalgamation many of the septic systems existing in the community were not

¹⁷⁴ Dinn, J. (2002). Report on Servicing Issues in the Goulds, pp. 5-6.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid, p. 9.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid, p. 2.

installed properly. Most importantly, the septic systems were often improperly connected to storm drains in the community, causing these storm drains to become contaminated or to overflow due to experiencing loads for which they were not designed. Commenting on the situation, John Dinn has stated that he can recall many cases in which he visited the homes of residents and saw firsthand how serious the situation was.¹⁷⁷ In the opinion of Dinn, there was far too little control on housing construction in Goulds prior to the community's consolidation with St. John's. This lack of control and oversight, primarily by the province, meant that many private projects in the community were completed without being properly inspected. So, in this respect, the amalgamation actually helped Goulds by raising construction standards in the community.

The servicing problems in Goulds were quite significant, as those who dealt with them personally can confirm, but they were not unprecedented within the city of St. John's. In fact, an area of the city known as Airport Heights, which amalgamated with the city prior to Goulds and Wedgewood Park, experienced many of the same issues. Following the 1984 consolidation of Airport Heights and St. John's, the city's maintenance crews immediately identified a number of serious issues related to a lack of proper piped water and sewerage in the community. These issues were just as severe as, or even more severe than, the problems that would later be faced in Goulds. According to former city engineer Art Cheeseman, once these problems were identified, it did not take long before city council agreed that they had to be addressed.¹⁷⁸ One important difference

¹⁷⁷ Dinn, J. (Aug. 18, 2011). Personal Communication. MHA for Kilbride.

¹⁷⁸ Cheeseman, A. (Aug. 10, 2011). Personal Communication. Engineer with the city of St. John's (Retired).

between Airport Heights and Goulds that must be mentioned is that only the latter was under a provincially imposed agricultural freeze.¹⁷⁹ As a result, Airport Heights was subject to less development restrictions, allowing more freedom for the city as a whole to grow in the general direction of the community. Furthermore, the ability to readily develop Airport Heights meant that any investments for new infrastructure in the area could be made back by the city at a quicker rate than would be possible in areas that were subject to greater restrictions.

Despite the freedom for future development in Airport Heights, the amalgamation was viewed as a failure by both the community's residents and the city of St. John's. In fact, one resident of Airport Heights, who served as the chairman of a concerned citizens committee in the community, described it as a "classic case of how amalgamation does not work".¹⁸⁰ According to this committee, residents of Airport Heights felt that they had no involvement with the path of development of their community since St. John's took control. The members of this committee were also unhappy with the cost of servicing their homes as the city wished to charge \$8000 to \$9000 per 50-foot lot, which was well above the \$2500 charge they had expected. However, in the city's defense, they have spent over \$15 million to improve servicing in the community without any support from the province. While the city considered the addition of Airport Heights to have been less than favourable, they also claimed that the process was a logical step in the expansion of

¹⁷⁹ Knott, G. (2008). Thawing Out Land Freeze Debate. *The Telegram*. Retrieved from <http://www.thetelegram.com/Politics/2008-01-29/article-1443688/Thawing-out-land-freeze-debate/1>

¹⁸⁰ Dicks, W. (1990). Airport Heights Water and Sewer Meeting Postponed. *The Telegram*, p. 11.

St. John's boundaries.¹⁸¹ The expansion was considered logical based on the fact that the community shared a drainage basin with the city. As a result, any new water and sewerage infrastructure built in Airport Heights could be naturally integrated to the city's existing networks. Furthermore, many of those living in the community were already working in the city or making use of its services and amenities prior to 1984. Overall, the experience of Airport Heights should have been cause for concern for those who wished to promote municipal consolidations in Newfoundland and Labrador. Nevertheless, even though the issues experienced in Airport Heights were common knowledge, the 1992 consolidation of St. John's with Goulds and Wedgewood Park still went ahead.

The problems that arose in relation to water and sewerage provision in Goulds were some of the most publicized issues to come out of the 1992 consolidation. While these problems continually made headlines, it is important to note that the amalgamation of the community with St. John's was actually responsible for a number of improvements, some of which may not have come to pass otherwise. In particular, Goulds gained access to full-time professional firefighters, whereas the town was previously served by a volunteer fire department, and amenities such as street lights and recreational facilities, including a hockey arena, were constructed. In fact, a number of people living in Goulds today, who experienced the transition period firsthand, have expressed their satisfaction with these particular improvements to the community. For example, one Goulds resident has noted how, prior to the construction of the community's arena, those living in the community were reliant on recreational facilities located in St. John's and that they often

¹⁸¹ ATI Consulting Corporation. (2001). *St. John's Amalgamation Review*. CNS pp. 19-20.

had no choice but to use them during unwanted time slots, such as those early in the morning.¹⁸² While such an improvement may not be as essential to day-to-day life as access to potable water, it certainly benefited the quality of life in Goulds to some degree. So, in this respect, it could be argued that the amalgamation was actually beneficial to the residents of the community.

The Experience of Amalgamation in Goulds: A Community's "PRIDE"

When discussing municipal servicing in an area like Goulds, it is almost impossible to ignore the process of modernization. In fact, much of the conflict over servicing can be linked to the perception of individuals in Goulds as to what constitutes a modern urban municipality. Even though the situation in the community has improved to some degree, many of those currently living in Goulds are still conflicted over the community's relationship with the city and, in some cases, the province. In talking with residents of the community, they often express the sentiment that Goulds has been left behind as other areas within the city have succeeded in becoming modern. While some of the disparity between Goulds and other parts of St. John's has been eliminated in the time since amalgamation, those living in the community are still not entirely satisfied. For example, sidewalks are absent from many streets in Goulds and, apart from some of the more recent residential developments in the community, this is seen by some as a situation that should not exist in an urbanized area.¹⁸³ The absence of sidewalks has also been described

¹⁸² Williams, B. (Aug. 10, 2011). Personal Communication. Resident of Goulds.

¹⁸³ Joyce, L. (Aug. 2, 2011). Personal Communication. Resident of Goulds.

as a safety hazard, one which has been exacerbated due to increasing traffic passing through the area over the past few decades.¹⁸⁴ To a large extent, Goulds is still rural in nature, due in part to its role as a centre of agricultural production for the region and zoning in the community. However, residents feel that by joining St. John's the community has moved beyond being rural or even semi-rural and that it has reached a point in time where they should be at an equal level with other communities within the city. These sentiments are further reinforced by the promises of equality made at the time of the amalgamation, which helped shape the expectation that the process would provide more balanced servicing across the region. Sidewalks may not make as dramatic an impact on one's life as something like piped water and sewerage, but they are highly visible aspects of an urban landscape and quite easy to notice when they are not present.

While the majority of the water supply system in the city of St. John's is in the hands of the public, the role of private developers in extending lines at the local level cannot be overlooked. In fact, the existence of private developers who are willing to pay to install new sections of water and sewer lines is essential to the current scheme under which the system expands in the city. Currently, the responsibility for installing local water and sewer lines in new housing developments lies with private developers, not the city.¹⁸⁵ However, it is usually the case that developers pass the cost of installing piped water and sewers along to those who purchase the homes that they have constructed. As such, both the city and private developers avoid having to pay for servicing at the local

¹⁸⁴ Rideout, R. (Aug. 14, 2011). Personal Communication. Resident of Goulds.

¹⁸⁵ Cheeseman, A. (Aug. 10, 2011). Personal Communication. Engineer with the city of St. John's (Retired).

level. In the case of well-established areas like Goulds, where some residents are still reliant on private wells and septic systems, the process of extending piped water and sewerage is more complex. In such areas, the city of St. John's must take on the entire cost of extending the lines and action will typically be delayed until such a time when the city can be assured that they will not lose a substantial amount of money on the installation of this infrastructure. As a result, the density of housing in unserved areas of the city is one of the most important factors in determining whether or not they will receive servicing. As these older, unserved, areas often have lower housing densities than newly constructed housing developments, the ability of the city to recover the money spent on improving infrastructure through assessments and taxes is limited. While it mitigates the financial risk the city undertakes, this system has the unintended consequence of punishing those who have existing homes in unserved parts of the city. It also privileges new home construction, benefiting private interests over persons living in established neighbourhoods in communities like Goulds. In one case in 2002, Goulds residents became "irate" when a section of rural land in the community was rezoned in order to allow for the construction of a new subdivision. Speaking to local media, Goulds PRIDE member Gloria Stephenson noted how the group was opposed to this rezoning as it allowed for the construction of new homes on fully serviced lots while ignoring those residents living older parts of the community who were left without piped water and sewer services.¹⁸⁶ The impact of this process on homeowners is not as profound when their private water and sewer systems work as they should but, as the water supply issues

¹⁸⁶ Sweet, B. (Feb. 26, 2002). Report Flushes Hopes. *The Telegram*, p. A2.

on Shoal Bay Road illustrate, when the wells and septic systems in an unserviced area fail it can seriously degrade the quality of life experienced by those living there.

Since the tragic events that took place in May, 2000 in Walkerton, Ontario, the intrusion of the private sector into the provision of drinking water, and other such essential services, has increasingly become a cause for concern. In particular, it has been noted that neoliberal governance reforms are often responsible for the production of environmental risks.¹⁸⁷ In St. John's, the responsibility for improving municipal servicing, especially in the case of the provision of piped water and sewerage, often falls on the private sector. As a result, gaps exist in the city's water supply system in areas where the private sector has no interest in intervening, such as in older unserviced sections of communities like Goulds. So, due to the inaction of both the public and private sectors, residents in these unserviced areas have unnecessarily been exposed to an array of environmental risks. Although they did not typically reference Walkerton in the media, protestors in Goulds regularly referenced the threat posed by E. coli tainted drinking water.¹⁸⁸ While nobody was reported to have become ill in Goulds as a result of tainted water, the potential for an illness to occur has existed and in some areas continues to exist. This risk could have been eliminated by extending piped water to unserviced areas but in the name of financial austerity, progress to do so was slow. In light of the 1992 amalgamation, which promised to improve and equalize servicing in the region, the lack of progress is even more disturbing. The promises made by those who pushed for

¹⁸⁷ Prudham, S. (2004). *Poisoning the Well*. p. 357.

¹⁸⁸ Hilliard, W. (Oct. 2, 2001). *Goulds Residents Take Fight to Council Chamber*. *The Telegram*, p. A1-A2.

consolidation also serve to further justify the actions of Goulds PRIDE and other members of the community who spoke out against the lack of municipal services in their community.

Opinions over Goulds PRIDE, and the effectiveness of their campaign to improve municipal servicing in Goulds, have been divided ever since the group came to the forefront of the debate over water in St. John's. Whether one agrees or disagrees with the actions taken by Goulds PRIDE, focusing on the group, the conditions under which its members lived, and the activities that they participated in provides evidence of the usefulness of concepts like hydrolectics, which “conceives of a water process out of which particular instances of water get fixed, or instantiated, in social relations”.¹⁸⁹

In all likelihood, the members of Goulds PRIDE did not know that they were actively adopting hydrolectics in their campaign for equality, but it is easy to apply the concept to help better understand their actions. Practical hydrolectics, which suggests that “our physical engagements with water can have the potential to change things”, was exhibited by the members of Goulds PRIDE simply by living in an area without access to piped water.¹⁹⁰ By speaking out against these conditions, Goulds PRIDE arguably enacted change and helped push forward the expansion of piped water throughout the city's rural fringe. On the other hand, analytical hydrolectics asserts that “[t]hat water is different things to different people, depending on their modes of engagement”.¹⁹¹ This particular form of hydrolectics suggests that the members of Goulds PRIDE, and other residents of

¹⁸⁹ Linton, J. (2010). *What is Water?* p. 223.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid*, p. 236.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid*, p. 235.

Goulds, thought about water far differently than did private developers, the city of St. John's, and the province. To the residents of Goulds, who were engaged in efforts to achieve equality with the rest of the city, piped water symbolized the benefits of urban life. To private developers, water was a means to an end, a resource that would help accelerate the rate at which they could build homes and sell them on the open market. To the province, water was an expense that they wished to pass off to municipalities. To the city of St. John's, water was also an expense, but in addition a source of power and control, one that reduced the competition for development they faced from other municipalities in the region, such as the city of Mount Pearl.

Although it has not gained the attention of the public and the media to the same degree that issues surrounding water have, another major point of contention that persists to this day in Goulds is the long running agricultural freeze in the community. In fact, the agricultural freeze may actually represent the single largest burden on future development in Goulds, even more influential than the provision of piped water and sewers to unserviced areas. However, the agricultural freeze and the issue of water and sewerage are somewhat intertwined and the path of new development in Goulds will likely be influenced by both of these issues. At the current time, there is a desire by many who own land in the community to have any excess land that they own removed from the freeze so they can either sell it to developers or so they can personally develop it.¹⁹² In some cases, individual families have been successful in petitioning the government to open up their land as there are existing provisions in the law that allow for children of landowners to

¹⁹² Knott, G. (2008). Thawing Out Land Freeze Debate.

build on their parents' property.¹⁹³ However, in most cases, any development that took place was limited to the construction of single dwellings. Any large-scale development in the community will be contingent on the continuation of this agricultural freeze. If it were to happen, large-scale development would, in turn, help to drive the future expansion of water and sewerage in Goulds. However, the elimination of the agricultural freeze is an issue which is beyond the scope of this thesis, as it is also closely tied to food security in the region. In general, high-quality “agricultural land in the province is at a premium” and there is a great deal of pressure from those in agricultural industries to retain the freeze.¹⁹⁴ As many local farmers currently rent frozen land in Goulds at a rate that is well below market value, ending the freeze would increase their costs and limit their ability to conduct business. However, according to John Dinn, the agricultural freeze has created a shortage of building lots in the community, driving up prices in the process.¹⁹⁵ Any future debates over the extension of piped water and sewer lines in Goulds will likely have to take such factors into consideration.

The inequality inherent in the access that the residents of St. John's have to certain aspects of the environment is another major issue that arises in relation to municipal servicing and the 1992 amalgamation. Throughout history, a variety of socio-economic factors have had a profound impact on the level of environmental access experienced by various groups and individuals. In many cities throughout North America, access to the most sought after, or “pristine”, environments have typically been limited to those who

¹⁹³ Dinn, J. (Aug. 18, 2011). Personal Communication. MHA for Kilbride.

¹⁹⁴ Knott, G. (2008). Thawing Out Land Freeze Debate.

¹⁹⁵ Dinn, J. (Aug. 18, 2011). Personal Communication. MHA for Kilbride.

can afford it. Ethnicity and other factors, such as race and gender, have also been commonly used as justification for denying particular groups and individuals access to the most valuable land in various municipalities. While other influences on environmental access exist in the city, the most important factors impacting environmental inequality in St. John's are economic in nature.

While some of the factors that impact environmental inequality may be less obvious today than they have been at certain times in the past, particular inequalities may become entrenched in the development pattern of a city and persist due to the inaction of politicians, planners, and other decision-makers, and the differential costs of rectifying these problems.¹⁹⁶ Looking at St. John's, the development of water and sewerage in the city began under the control of private interests. The first water lines in St. John's were centred in the city's downtown core and primarily served to lower the fire insurance rates paid by wealthy merchants and developers.¹⁹⁷ This work was undertaken by private interests and the general public only gained access to piped water after the lines were extended beyond its original range, which was slow to happen. Even after the lines were extended, residents were only able to access piped water if they could afford the cost of connecting their homes. It is also interesting to note that the development of piped water in nineteenth century St. John's was promoted as being a project that served the public good, as similar projects have also been promoted throughout history. It is particularly easy to promote the provision of potable water in such a light due to its essential nature

¹⁹⁶ Cruikshank, K. & Bouchier, N. (2004). Blighted areas and obnoxious industries. pp. 484-485.

¹⁹⁷ Baker, M. (1982). The Politics of Assessment. pp. 61-62.

but, even in cases where it is publicly funded, private interests can intervene to assure that they receive the bulk of the benefits that such a resource provides. In the case of Paris, Ontario, where publicly funded water supply development began in the late 1800s, the fact that the town's water lines primarily served factories and other privately owned businesses was justified by the notion that this pattern of development would attract more industry and create new employment opportunities due to decreased rates of taxation.¹⁹⁸ A reliable supply of piped water may have helped to attract new industry to Paris, but this justification ultimately sidestepped the inequalities that were inherent in the system. In the case of Goulds, one could argue that connecting new-home subdivisions to municipal water is more efficient than connecting individual homes in low-density, unserved, sections of the community. Certainly, more homes can be connected more quickly in a modern subdivision than would be possible in some "rural" areas of Goulds.¹⁹⁹ Connecting a greater number of homes at one time also allows the city, or private developers, to more quickly recover any money invested in expanding the water supply system. However, this does not change the fact that the system has not been developed in such a way that it is equally accessible to all the residents of the city of St. John's. A water supply system that is truly equitable to all of a city's taxpayers would privilege health and safety, and quality of life in general, over financial considerations.

While there may be no direct connection between the origins of piped water in Goulds and St. John's, the two situations parallel one another to some degree. When piped

¹⁹⁸ Hagopian, J. (1995). *Would the Benefits Trickle Down?* p. 150.

¹⁹⁹ Kieley, P. (July 29, 2011). Personal Communication. Water Treatment Plant Manager with the City of St. John's (Retired).

water was first brought to the town of Goulds it was limited to the community's urban core, due to the commencement of operations at Bay Bulls-Big Pond.²⁰⁰ Coincidentally, this urban core encompassed the most modern housing in Goulds and many of the community's commercial operations. Those persons who lived beyond the urban core remained reliant on private wells and septic systems. Once again, an unequal pattern of development became entrenched in the region, as piped water and sewer lines were extended beyond the community's urban core based primarily on whether or not it was economical to do so. The fact that the environment in Goulds was not the most ideal for the operation of private wells and septic systems appears to have taken a backseat to the financial concerns of the province and the city of St. John's. The argument could be made that those who built homes in Goulds, prior to the amalgamation, chose to do so to avoid paying the higher costs associated with both land and taxes in the city. However, such a statement ignores the possibility that those who chose to build in Goulds may not have had the financial means to build elsewhere. In fact, in 2007 the average gross personal income per capita in Goulds was lower than St. John's as a whole. At that time, the average gross personal income per capita in the four statistical divisions comprising Goulds was \$25,025 while the average gross personal income per capita in St. John's as a

²⁰⁰ DELCAN. (1985). *The Town of Goulds Newfoundland*. pp. 6(1)-6(2).

whole was \$30,100.²⁰¹ In any case, municipal servicing should not be a tradeoff for affordable housing. Once again, the promise that the 1992 amalgamation would bring forth equality in servicing is called into question as a result of the historical record.

If the amalgamation of Goulds with St. John's has failed to deliver on the promise of equitable servicing for the community, is it possible that the promise itself was not genuine? Was restructuring governance more of a priority for proponents of the amalgamation? One of the most visible effects of the consolidation process was the elimination of numerous elected positions in both Goulds and Wedgewood Park. This particular change was rapid and its effects were felt almost immediately after the consolidation had taken place. In the case of Goulds, the entire seven-member town council was condensed down to one elected position on the St. John's city council. As a result of this, the eleven preexisting members of the city council outnumbered the member from Goulds by a wide margin.²⁰² Not only did the amalgamation reduce the access of those living in Goulds to elected officials, the process effectively limited the power they had over any decisions made at the local and regional levels. In promoting the 1992 amalgamation, it was argued that the process would help to reduce competition between municipalities and make the region as a whole more competitive on a broader

²⁰¹ Newfoundland and Labrador Community Accounts. (2012). Doyle's Road Profile. Retrieved from http://nl.communityaccounts.ca/profiles.asp?_vb7En4WVgbGhyHiRXmQ ; Newfoundland and Labrador Community Accounts. (2012). Heffernan's Line Profile. Retrieved from http://nl.communityaccounts.ca/profiles.asp?_vb7En4WVgbGhyHiRXmU ; Newfoundland and Labrador Community Accounts. (2012). Meadowbrook Drive Profile. Retrieved from http://nl.communityaccounts.ca/profiles.asp?_vb7En4WVgbGhyHiRXmY ; Newfoundland and Labrador Community Accounts. (2012). Hennessey's Line Profile. Retrieved from http://nl.communityaccounts.ca/profiles.asp?_vb7En4WVgbGhyHiRXmc

²⁰² Peckham, D., et al. (1990). *Planning for the Future*. p. 46.

scale.²⁰³ However, the way that this argument was worded sidestepped the fact that reduced competition was to be achieved by consolidating power with the city of St. John's and its existing city council. This consolidation of power also forced regional “cooperation” on the community's residents insofar as their sole council member could do little to vote down initiatives that were unfavourable for them. As concepts like new regionalism suggest, such cooperation can be achieved without having to force it upon citizens through municipal consolidations.

Control of Bay Bulls – Big Pond was another aspect of governance that changed as a result of the amalgamation process. Prior to the amalgamation, the water supply was administered by the provincially appointed St. John's Area Metropolitan Board, from which the city was excluded.²⁰⁴ However, after the consolidation, the Metro Board was dissolved and operation of Bay Bulls – Big Pond became the responsibility of St. John's, even though the supply also served municipalities outside of the city. A regional water board was created in order that all of the municipalities serviced by Bay Bulls – Big Pond could jointly administer the water supply, but the majority of the representation on this board came from the city of St. John's.²⁰⁵ As a result, the city effectively had the final say over the provision of water in the region and they could direct its supply as they saw fit. In recent years, the extra capacity provided to the city's water supply system by Bay Bulls – Big Pond has allowed for the creation of a number of large housing developments in St. John's. As some have suggested, the city's desire to amalgamate Goulds was possibly

²⁰³ Porter Dillon Consulting Engineers. (1990). Amalgamation Proposal. p. 2.

²⁰⁴ Withers, P. (Mar. 15, 1991). Metro Board has a Niche in Municipal History. *The Telegram*, p. 6.

²⁰⁵ Wells, A. (Aug. 29, 2011). Personal Communication. Former Mayor of St. John's.

driven by knowledge of the power that it would gain through controlling the water supply at Bay Bulls – Big Pond.²⁰⁶ Despite the imbalance in power inherent in the makeup of the regional water board, it has been suggested that the situation was not contentious and that the provision of water across the region was never the subject of any great debates.²⁰⁷ However, it would be difficult for any real debate to take place on the board when the city holds the balance of power. Furthermore, the opinions expressed by Goulds PRIDE and other members of the community suggest that the provision of water was actually a contentious issue. The actions taken by PRIDE also indicate that there was some degree of frustration with local governance and the lack of agency those in the community had regarding the decision-making process.

Clearly, the city gained a great deal of power over the region as a result of the 1992 amalgamation. While the power the city gained was less than it might have been under some of the alternative groupings that were proposed, such as those that included the city of Mount Pearl, the acquisition of Bay Bulls – Big Pond meant that the reach of St. John's city council extended far beyond just Goulds and Wedgewood Park. The degree to which St. John's power over the region has stymied the growth of other municipalities, if it has done so at all, is difficult to determine without further research. However, it is clear that the city's council has the potential to limit development both inside and outside of its boundaries if it wishes to do so.

²⁰⁶ Dinn, J. (Aug. 18, 2011). Personal Communication. MHA for Kilbride.

²⁰⁷ Wells, A. (Aug. 29, 2011). Personal Communication. Former Mayor of St. John's.

Conclusion

In the planning stages, the amalgamation of Goulds and Wedgewood Park with St. John's promised widespread service improvements and a more balanced level of municipal servicing across the region. Despite these promises, Wedgewood Park was already benefiting from a level of servicing equal to, or greater than, that experienced by the residents of St. John's. As such, there was little work for city crews in Wedgewood Park once it had joined with the city and capital expenditures there were kept to a minimum. However, in Goulds, where servicing improvements were actually needed, especially in relation to water and sewerage, it took many years for any significant action to take place.

As a result of the slow rate of improvement, a number of persons living in the community organized themselves into the group that became known as Goulds PRIDE and petitioned city council to bring these improvements to unserviced areas of Goulds. As noted earlier in this chapter, PRIDE's activities were so aggressive that its members were arrested on two separate occasions. The legitimacy of PRIDE's demands was called into question as a result of these events and opinions on the effectiveness of their efforts are still divided to this day. While the lack of improvements to water and sewerage was the centre of much of the attention in Goulds, improvements to other services such as fire protection and recreation actually did occur. These improvements were welcomed by those living in the community, but the need for an adequate supply of water into one's home is much more significant on a basic level.

Work may have progressed slowly, but a great deal of progress has been made in Goulds to improve piped water and sewers in the community over the last decade. Many

sections of the community where problems existed, such as Shoal Bay Road, have since been serviced, but more work remains to be done. In fact, as of February, 2012 it was estimated that Goulds required an investment of an additional \$62 million to bring the community's water and sewerage infrastructure up to an "urban standard".²⁰⁸ Of particular concern is the fact that the area's sanitary sewer system has continued to be prone to excessive storm water infiltration, which has also caused pipes to erode in some locations. Despite the need for these upgrades, the city contends that do not have the money to start the work anytime in the near future.²⁰⁹ St. John's city councilor Bruce Tilley has placed the blame on the provincial government for not providing the city with enough funds to complete all of the work needed, adding that the province has failed to provide sufficient funding for improvements in Goulds from the day it joined the city. Whether or not the city or the province is to blame, the ongoing issues in the community are further proof that the amalgamation process has failed to equalize the level of servicing in Goulds with the rest of the city of St. John's over the last 20 years.

While problems such as infiltration still plague the community, the number of residents who rely on private wells and sewers has shrunk since the amalgamation. In addition to this, many of the areas that are still without piped water and sewers are currently under the provincially imposed agricultural freeze. So, unless the freeze is lifted, it is unlikely that the level of development in these areas would be significant enough to warrant servicing. Furthermore, even if they did choose to service these areas,

²⁰⁸ Bartlett, D. (2012). Goulds Upgrade Will Need \$62 Million. *The Telegram*. p. A1.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid*, p. A3.

the city might encounter some difficulty in recovering any money it might invest to improve the infrastructure in the land currently under the agricultural freeze, due to the low density of housing found there. Even if the agricultural freeze was lifted, the extension of piped water and sewerage would almost certainly happen at a slower rate than it would in the case of a newly constructed housing subdivision, where the developer would take on the initial cost of installing local water and sewerage lines.

As the concept of the hydrosocial cycle suggests, it makes little sense to separate the flow of water from social processes and vice versa.²¹⁰ Providing water to the residents of a municipality is much more than just a hydrological problem. Engineering firms are quite capable of highlighting the best course of action to take in such a situation, but what actually takes place is also influenced by the residents of the municipality and the politicians who represent them. The way in which different interests influence decisions made regarding water often depends upon what they, in particular, understand water to be.²¹¹ Looking outside of the province of Newfoundland and Labrador, the case of Metro Toronto provides an excellent example of how particular interests can dictate the path that water and sewerage development takes. Metro Toronto came into existence in the early 1950s and introduced a new tier of government at the regional level to the old city of Toronto and the municipalities adjacent to it, with its boundaries extending to the existing outer boundaries of North York, Scarborough, and Etobicoke.²¹² In practice, Metro Toronto acted as a wholesaler, providing services to local municipalities so they could

²¹⁰ Linton, J. (2010). *What is water?* p. 231.

²¹¹ *Ibid*, p. 235.

²¹² Sewell, J. (2009). *The Shape of the Suburbs: Understanding Toronto's Sprawl*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press. p. 22.

subsequently retail these services to residences and businesses. This system allowed for more effective planning control than could have typically been expected of rural municipalities. To Metro Toronto, water was one means by which such control could be exercised and it was directed in order to address specific development pressures. In this respect, Metro Toronto was not unlike the St. John's Metropolitan Area Board, which undertook a similar role on Newfoundland's northeast Avalon Peninsula by overseeing administration and planning duties for unincorporated areas at the city's fringe. However, the area outlying St. John's was not financially independent and the government of Newfoundland was responsible for financially supporting infrastructure development in the areas under the Metro Board's control. Similarly, in Metro Toronto the Ontario government was responsible for providing the suburban areas under its control with subsidies for water and sewerage. The fact that such "services... generally had to pay their own way in the city", created tension between Toronto and its suburbs.²¹³

The creation of the Toronto Megacity, coupled with other legislative reforms, resulted in Mike Harris' Progressive Conservatives "unilaterally downloading" the cost of many essential services onto the new city of Toronto in the late 1990s.²¹⁴ As a similar "downloading" accompanied the 1992 amalgamation of Goulds and Wedgewood Park with St. John's, it would appear that the overall process is a common symptom of amalgamation and not unique to any one city. The increased burdens placed upon local governments by such downloading arrangements have typically been justified by the

²¹³ Ibid, p. 192.

²¹⁴ Ibid, p. 203.

claim that municipal consolidations result in overall cost savings. However, the ability of amalgamations to provide municipalities with such cost savings is questionable at best. It is also difficult to guarantee that any benefits amalgamations provide will be felt equally throughout the new municipality. The centre city benefited at the expense of the fringe in St. John's but the opposite was true in Toronto, as staff from the old city were frozen out of positions of responsibility and various services and programs saw their funding cut dramatically.²¹⁵

In the context of the 1992 amalgamation, the servicing issues experienced in Goulds highlight a number of key issues and themes. One theme that continues to arise with respect to municipal servicing and the amalgamation is equality. While municipal consolidations, including that which joined St. John's with Goulds and Wedgewood Park, are often promoted as a means to achieve equality, the servicing issues experienced by the residents of Goulds suggest that it is not always attainable. Perhaps decision-makers should look beyond this type of reorganization and seek out more effective ways to provide municipal services across existing municipal boundaries.

Environmental access is another important issue that comes to the forefront when discussing equality and the post-amalgamation servicing issues in Goulds. In general, both the provincial government and the city of St. John's wished to reduce the financial burden of extending water lines and improving municipal servicing in the community. The province sought to reduce this burden by eliminating the St. John's Metropolitan Area Board and pushing the amalgamation agenda on municipalities such as Goulds, which has

²¹⁵ Ibid, p. 212.

previously relied heavily on provincial funding for large capital works projects. In fact, it was argued that due to the grant funding structure that existed at that time, municipalities in the province had no incentive to be financially responsible. According to one report commissioned by the provincial government, these municipalities often requested substantial funding from the province while maintaining “very low” property tax rates.²¹⁶ On the other hand, the city has typically attempted to reduce this financial burden by placing the responsibility for installing local water and sewer lines on private developers, who then pass the costs on to their customers. In the case of existing homes, the homeowners themselves are responsible for covering the cost of connecting their homes, with the city paying to extend mains. Government officials must be accountable to taxpayers but, in the case of the 1992 amalgamation, this particular attempt to achieve financial austerity was intimately connected to a series of promises that promoted equality as one of the key virtues of municipal consolidation and the expansion of the city of St. John's. In light of the inaction by elected officials at all levels, Goulds PRIDE took the initiative to petition city hall and fight for improved access to potable water throughout their community. While Goulds PRIDE was more or less successful in their campaign, the issue of environmental access will continue to exist as long as the position of the market is privileged over all others.

The privileged position the market has over environmental access points to larger issues surrounding the ability of elected officials to make decisions that best serve the public. Certainly, the historical record shows that private interests have often received the

²¹⁶ Peckham, D., et al. (1990). *Planning for the Future*. pp. 101-102.

majority of the benefits from projects that were promoted as serving the public good. The 1992 amalgamation of Goulds and Wedgewood Park with St. John's was one such project that was promoted as being in the best interest of the public. However, as this and the previous chapter show, the benefits provided to the public by municipal consolidations are mixed at best. The 1992 consolidation did not privilege private interests outright, but it did create a climate in which new developments within the city's expanded boundaries were given priority over the servicing of older, well-established, communities. Perhaps there are ways in which municipal government on Newfoundland's northeast Avalon Peninsula could have been organized that would have helped to better alleviate the tension between private and public interests. The following chapter will conclude this thesis and reaffirm the core issues and themes that have defined the provision of piped water in St. John's, especially those experienced in the context of the 1992 amalgamation of the city with the towns of Goulds and Wedgewood Park.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

Over the past two decades, the provision of piped water to St. John's rural fringe has not been a simple process. The 1992 amalgamation of St. John's with Wedgewood Park and Goulds was a major juncture in this controversial period. Wedgewood Park entered into the city with municipal services that were on par with those offered in St. John's, while Goulds entered with services that were not up to the standards that one would typically expect in an urban environment. Many parts of Goulds were rural or semi-rural in nature and the level of servicing present would not be unexpected in such an area. Those pushing for the amalgamation promised that it would lead to the improvement and equalization of servicing across the region. As the level of municipal servicing in Wedgewood Park was already at a high level, comparable to other urbanized areas in the region, the promises made by proponents of the amalgamation were less easily applied there. Goulds was in need of improvements but the rate at which they were implemented was much slower than residents of the community had expected. The slow rate of improvement was especially troubling in light of the large increase in municipal taxes that had accompanied the community's amalgamation with St. John's. The debate over extending and improving municipal services in the community continued over the two decades following the amalgamation and came to define its experience with the process.

The amalgamation and the servicing issues that accompanied it are significant in their own right but a number of important issues and themes also come to the surface in

the course of discussing these topics. While this thesis focuses specifically on the city of St. John's, the majority of the issues and themes that arise in relation to this particular case can be applied to broader discussions on the provision of water and processes like municipal consolidation. In particular, discussion of the hydrosocial cycle, uneven power relationships, and municipal governance can be applied beyond this thesis.

While this thesis covers many aspects of the 1992 amalgamation and the provision of piped water throughout the city of St. John's, there is still room for further research on these issues and the broader themes with which they relate. This chapter acknowledges this shortfall and provides recommendations on the direction that future research might take.

The Hydrosocial Cycle

As the concept of the hydrosocial cycle suggests, it makes little sense to separate social processes from flows of water and vice versa.²¹⁷ This concept is clearly exhibited in the city of St. John's. It is easy to overlook the role that the provision of water had in amalgamation on Newfoundland's northeast Avalon Peninsula in 1992, but doing so ignores one of the most important factors influencing development in the region in the years since. If the city of St. John's had not gained control of the water supply at Bay Bulls – Big Pond it is likely that it would not have been able to exert as high a level of control over development in nearby municipalities as it has. By dictating the flow of water out of Bay Bulls – Big Pond the city gained influence well beyond its own

²¹⁷ Linton, J. (2010). *What is water?* p. 231.

boundaries, allowing it to control nearby municipalities without the need for further amalgamations or annexations. While the city is responsible for providing water to its neighbours, St. John's is not liable for any expenses related to the provision of water beyond its own boundaries as municipalities are responsible for directing the flow of water at the local level.²¹⁸ In providing water to its neighbours, the fact that the city holds the majority of the seats on the regional water board ensures that new development in St. John's is not as limited by external obligations as it would be if there were equal representation. This is not to say that the needs of other municipalities are ignored, only that they are limited by the capacity of the system.²¹⁹ By considering the acquisition of Bay Bulls – Big Pond along with the 1992 amalgamation one arrives at a more complete understanding of the control that the city and its politicians have over Newfoundland's northeast Avalon Peninsula.

Within the city itself the flow of water has also been a source of contention, especially in the community of Goulds. Returning to the concept of the hydrosocial cycle, the absence of piped water in the community can be traced to larger social processes. The privilege granted to private developers, who typically receive priority in relation to servicing new housing developments, created a pattern in which piped water often bypassed well-established neighbourhoods in Goulds. The lack of piped water in these areas meant that a significant number of residents had to rely on private wells and septic systems, which was not problematic when these systems worked properly. However,

²¹⁸ Kieley, P. (July 29, 2011). Personal Communication. Water Treatment Plant Manager with the city of St. John's (Retired).

²¹⁹ Cheeseman, A. (Aug. 10, 2011). Personal Communication. Engineer with the city of St. John's (Retired).

some residents of the community experienced difficulties with their private systems, in relation to both supply and quality, putting them in an undesirable situation. In the most serious cases the absence of palatable water in affected areas of Goulds led to public protests demanding better access to piped water. As the average gross personal income per capita in Goulds is currently more than \$5000 lower than the average for St. John's, efforts of many of the community's residents to improve their situation may have been constrained financially.²²⁰

Piped water lines were eventually extended to some previously unserved areas in Goulds but opinion is divided as to whether or not the protests actually helped to facilitate this extension. Local media also followed the debate closely which exerted a great deal of pressure on elected officials at all levels of government. Despite the fact that environmental access eventually improved in Goulds, it will never be entirely equitable until the unfair privileges granted to private interests are eliminated.

Power and Municipal Governance

Ultimately, the balance of power on the northeast Avalon Peninsula is at the heart of this thesis and its discussion of municipal governance. Amalgamations are often based on the principle of equality but the reality of the matter is that such processes typically

²²⁰ Newfoundland and Labrador Community Accounts. (2012). Doyle's Road Profile. Retrieved from http://nl.communityaccounts.ca/profiles.asp?_vb7En4WVgbGhyHiRXmQ ; Newfoundland and Labrador Community Accounts. (2012). Heffernan's Line Profile. Retrieved from http://nl.communityaccounts.ca/profiles.asp?_vb7En4WVgbGhyHiRXmU ; Newfoundland and Labrador Community Accounts. (2012). Meadowbrook Drive Profile. Retrieved from http://nl.communityaccounts.ca/profiles.asp?_vb7En4WVgbGhyHiRXmY ; Newfoundland and Labrador Community Accounts. (2012). Hennessey's Line Profile. Retrieved from http://nl.communityaccounts.ca/profiles.asp?_vb7En4WVgbGhyHiRXmc

consolidate political power by reducing the number of elected officials, distancing citizens from the political decision-making process. Instead of achieving equality, it has been suggested that traditional municipal mergers actually erode the foundations of liberal democracies by undermining notions that there can be forms of self-government that exist outside the institutions of central governments.²²¹

The 1992 amalgamation eliminated the elected positions that had existed in Goulds and Wedgewood Park, effectively replacing them with positions on a reorganized St. John's city council. However, the balance of power in St. John's remained in the hands of the existing council members, which is not surprising based on the population differences that existed between St. John's and the two amalgamated towns. As a result of this imbalance, St. John's quickly gained control over a sizable portion of the northeast Avalon Peninsula.

Better “Regional” Government?

While the 1992 amalgamation successfully achieved some of its goals, other aspects of the process bring into question the overall benefit of municipal amalgamations. Is there a way in which municipal government could have been more effectively organized on the northeast Avalon Peninsula?

Two alternative methods for thinking about how to best organize regional government are “public choice” and “new regionalism”.²²² Public choice favours the

²²¹ Sancton, A. (2000). *Merger Mania*. p. 167.

²²² *Ibid*, p. 167.

existence of more municipal governments within a city-region, rather than fewer, in order to provide property owners with competing bundles of taxes and municipal services.

Public choice is based on the belief that competition will push individual municipalities to provide the best possible bundles in order to attract taxpayers. If such a system had been considered in St. John's, it is possible that Goulds would have been left as it was prior to 1992. Residents of the town would have continued to enjoy lower taxes, in comparison to their neighbours in St. John's, but this benefit would have been contingent on maintaining a reliance on private groundwater wells, septic systems, a volunteer fire department, and other less costly services. On the other hand, this method of reorganizing municipal government would not have provided an immediate solution to the water quality and supply issues faced by many in Goulds. However, public choice would not have coupled these water issues with the massive increase in taxes, and the failed promises of equality, that came with the amalgamation process.

The new regionalist school of thought, which is based on the principles of fairness, equity, and openness, advocates revenue sharing, regional strategic planning, and public-private partnerships as actions that can achieve the goals of amalgamation without the need for the creation of larger municipalities. If it had been adopted in St. John's, this method of organizing regional government would have likely helped to reduce competition between municipalities on the northeast Avalon Peninsula, one of the goals of amalgamation, but it would have also limited the power of the city and its ability to influence development across the region. The city would have had the least to gain from the new regionalist approach while smaller municipalities like Goulds and Wedgewood

Park would have gained a larger voice.

Despite the existence of these methods for organizing local government on a regional scale, no such alternatives were presented during the amalgamation drive on Newfoundland's northeast Avalon Peninsula. Different groupings of municipalities were proposed but, unless it was decided to maintain the status quo, amalgamation was set to take place in the region in some form or another. While the implications for municipal governance throughout the region varied widely with each of these groupings, they were still based upon the same underlying principles that accompany most consolidations. As all of the proposed groupings included the city of St. John's, clearly there was a desire to secure the position of the city as the heart of the region. The city's inclusion would ensure that St. John's held the balance of power in the region. Unlike amalgamation, public choice and new regionalism do not work to consolidate power within a single municipality. In fact, the decentralization of power is central to these alternative options for organizing municipal government. Public choice and new regionalism leave existing municipal governments intact, avoiding the elimination of staff and elected positions that often accompanies consolidations. As a result, residents in the affected municipalities do not see their access to elected officials diminished and they maintain the same level of engagement that they had with the political decision-making processes prior to its reorganization. Amalgamations may or may not improve servicing, or provide savings through economies of scale, but the impact they have on governance is very real.

The ability of the 1992 amalgamation to equalize servicing on the northeast Avalon was limited at best. This failure opens up space for further research on municipal

consolidation and its alternatives, including public choice and new regionalism. It may be the case that no single option is the best and that specific municipalities are more suited to particular options than others but making such a determination is beyond the scope of this thesis.

Recommendations for Future Research

This thesis provides a comprehensive account of water provision in the city of St. John's following its amalgamation with Goulds and Wedgewood Park. The core themes and issues surrounding the 1992 amalgamation are also subject to discussion. However, there is still room for further research on this particular subject and other related issues.

The impact the ongoing agricultural freeze has had on municipal servicing and development in Goulds is one area where further research is needed. However, any research on this topic will have to take into consideration the issue of food security, as there is very little high quality farmland available in Newfoundland and Labrador. It is also important to note that the livelihood of many farmers in the area is reliant on maintaining access to land in Goulds at a rate below market value, which is only possible due to the land freeze halting other uses.²²³ While owners of the frozen land have much to gain by ending the freeze there are those who could lose everything. In fact, between 1996 and 2006, the number of farms in and around St. John's decreased from 168 to 125. This decrease was the result of changing land uses and the closing of smaller, less successful, farms. However, as these smaller farms closed their quotas and land base were

²²³ Dinn, J. (Aug. 18, 2011). Personal Communication. MHA for Kilbride.

taken over by more successful, expanding, farms.²²⁴

Despite the difficulties encountered in relation to the 1992 amalgamation, there has been significant pressure in recent years to amalgamate other cities and towns on the northeast Avalon Peninsula with the city of St. John's. The neighbouring municipalities of Mount Pearl and Paradise are currently at the centre of this debate. St. John's has largely been in favour of such a consolidation, but officials in Mount Pearl and Paradise have expressed concerns about the process and how it might affect the residents of their municipalities. As a result of the pressure from St. John's and the concerns of those outside of the city, there is a need to further study the impact that an amalgamation between these three municipalities would have on the region. Beyond these concerns, cases like the 2004 demerger of Montreal also cast doubt upon the viability of municipal consolidations. Residents of Montreal's suburbs, which had initially merged with Montreal in 2002, felt a loss of control over their own neighbourhoods during the time they were consolidated with the city. The lack of control they felt led these residents to seek a demerger in order to regain "a voice and political representation".²²⁵ Even if amalgamations can successfully cut costs or increase efficiency it is appears that there are many who disagree with the centralization of political power at such a scale.

Piped water would not be a major issue if another amalgamation was to take place on the northeast Avalon as most of the infrastructure in Mount Pearl and Paradise is

²²⁴ Agriculture Development Area Review Commission. (2008). The Report of The St. John's Urban Region (Agriculture) Development Area Review Commission. Retrieved from: http://www.nr.gov.nl.ca/nr/publications/agrifoods/report_development_area_review_commission.pdf

²²⁵ CBC News. (2007). Demergers Disappoint Montreal Suburbs. Retrieved from: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/story/2007/01/02/qc-demergedanniversary20070102.html>

already at the same level as that in St. John's, in much the same way that it was in Wedgewood Park. However, unlike Wedgewood Park, Mount Pearl and Paradise are not completely encapsulated by St. John's and they have substantial population bases of their own. As a result, the arguments in favour of such an amalgamation have focused on the cost of existing municipal services and the notion that they “would be cheaper in the long run if the cost of those services were shared by a greater number of people”.²²⁶ Critics of the plan have noted that much of the research done so far has been “St. John's-centric” and that the city would receive the most benefits if such a consolidation took place, as it would gain access to the lucrative industrial parks that exist in these nearby municipalities.²²⁷ The fact that St. John's has conducted the majority of the research on the subject is reason enough to recommend further study in order to provide another opinion on the situation. As evidence from the 1992 amalgamation shows, it is quite possible that the city of St. John's could receive the bulk of the benefits from such a consolidation.

More recently, the city has switched their position away from amalgamation, due to the continued protests of Mount Pearl and Paradise, and has instead chosen to focus more closely on regional co-operation.²²⁸ Whether or not this co-operation will take the form of something like new regionalism has yet to be determined, but such an approach

²²⁶ CBC News. (2012). Push for St. John's Area Amalgamation Losing Steam. Retrieved from: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/newfoundland-labrador/story/2012/01/06/nl-amalgamation-report-106.html>

²²⁷ MacEachern, D. (2012). St. John's to Stop Pursuing Amalgamation With Mount Pearl, Paradise – For Now. *The Telegram*. Retrieved from: <http://www.thetelegram.com/News/Local/2012-01-07/article-2857091/St.-Johns-to-stop-pursuing-amalgamation-with-Mount-Pearl,-Paradise---for-now/1>

²²⁸ Ibid.

could provide a viable alternative to a traditional municipal consolidation. Once again, more research needs to be conducted in order to determine exactly who would benefit the most from regional co-operation and whether or not it could truly be as fair, equal, and open as the proponents of new regionalism suggest.

As it currently stands, the situation in Goulds is not as contentious as it was at certain times in the past and the level of servicing in the community has improved greatly in many respects. Significant sections of the community that were without piped water prior to 1992 have since had lines extended to them. However, whether or not amalgamation was necessary to achieve these improvements is less certain. Although it was stated as a goal of the 1992 amalgamation, the improvement and equalization of services throughout the region appears to have taken a backseat to other goals, including the reduction of competition between the municipalities on Newfoundland's northeast Avalon Peninsula. The reduction of competition was promoted as a benefit in that it would improve the ability of St. John's to compete with municipalities throughout Atlantic Canada and beyond, but it came with a cost. In particular, the number of elected representatives serving Goulds and Wedgewood Park immediately decreased as a result of the consolidation, distancing residents of these communities from the political decision-making process. Furthermore, the city of St. John's gained control over the water supply at Bay Bulls – Big Pond, allowing it to exert greater influence over development in the region. By consolidating power with the St. John's city council the amalgamation contradicted the principle of equality on which it was based. Did this contradiction occur

because such processes are incapable of delivering equality or is it the case that equality itself is unattainable? Perhaps there are competing understandings of “equality” that alter the way in which particular governance reforms are conceived. In any case, determining whether or not equality itself is attainable is beyond the scope of this thesis but the fact that an unequal level of municipal servicing currently exists across the city of St. John's remains. Until this situation is rectified, the promises made by the proponents of the 1992 amalgamation will never truly be fulfilled, continuing to cast doubt on the value of municipal consolidations.

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Appendix A

Interview Questions for Elected Officials and City Employees

1. Respondent's name:
2. Position with the city of St. John's:
3. How long have you been employed by the city?
4. Do any major gaps currently exist in the system? Have any existed in the past?
5. What major issues is the system facing at this time? How have these issues changed over the years in your experience?
6. How much input do municipalities, other than St. John's, have on the management of the system? What is the role of the provincial government in overseeing the system?
7. How much input do they have on its future development?
8. How have processes of amalgamation impacted the water supply system of St. John's?
9. Is the system in a position to expand to meet future demand? Have any previous planning decisions constrained the system?
10. How common are private wells within the city? Have residents historically had to rely on the use of private wells? Do they represent a viable long-term alternative to piped water?
11. Does the city take any responsibility for the testing or safety of private wells? If yes, when did this begin to happen?
12. What benefits, if any, does the municipal water supply have over private wells?

13. Has the introduction of wastewater treatment had any impact on the water supply system?

Appendix B

Interview Questions for Private Citizens

1. Respondent's name:
2. Organization or group affiliated with (if any):
3. How long have you lived in St. John's and/or the surrounding region?
4. Is your residence currently connected to the municipal water supply system? If not, how do you provide water to your residence? Has this situation changed over time?
5. Do you have property elsewhere that is also connected to the municipal water supply system? Is this a residence, a business, or another type of land holding?
6. Have you personally been impacted by the amalgamation of St. John's with any of the outlying communities that the city now encompasses?
7. Are you currently involved with any organizations or groups that seek to petition the city or the provincial government to alter its plans for the provision of water to the residents of St. John's? Have you been involved in petitioning the government in an individual capacity?
8. If yes, how long have you been active in this movement? If not, have you ever been involved with such a movement in the past? What are, or were, your demands to the city/province?
9. Do you believe that all residents of St. John's are entitled to an equal level of municipal services?
10. Do you feel that city planners are managing water servicing in a sound way?