



## Webinar Series

# Manitoba's amalgamated rural regions: a step forward?

Dec 16, 2014

Bill Ashton, MCIP, PhD  
Director, Rural Development Institute  
Brandon University, Brandon, MB  
204 571-8513 [ashtonw@branondonu.ca](mailto:ashtonw@branondonu.ca)



**RPLC**  
RURAL POLICY LEARNING COMMONS

**CAPR**  
COMMUNAUTÉ D'APPRENTISSAGE  
DES POLITIQUES RURALES

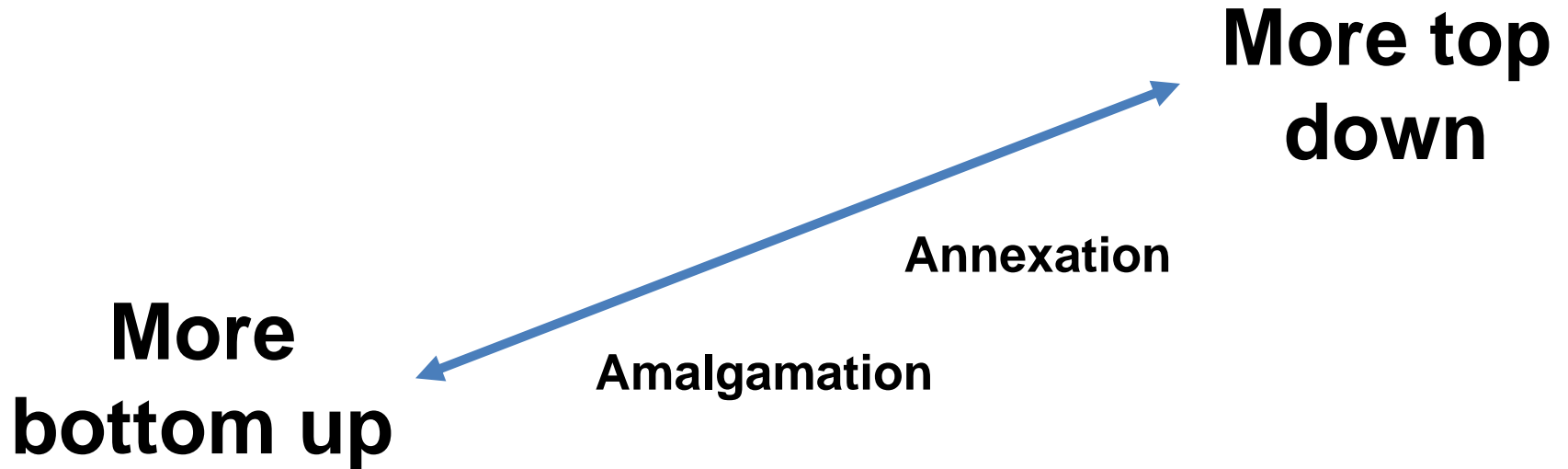


**BRANDON  
UNIVERSITY**



**UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA**  
ALBERTA CENTRE FOR SUSTAINABLE  
RURAL COMMUNITIES

# Key concepts



## Local Partnerships – local autonomy

### Coordination

- Common rec program
- Regional tourism

### Cooperation

- Shared services
- Shared purchases

### Collaboration

- Tax sharing
- Joint development

# Amalgamation Reasons



**Why not**  
amalgamate?

**Why**  
amalgamate?

# Amalgamation Reasons

## Why **not** amalgamate?

- A competitor
- Different service levels
- Unwanted debt
- Unequal - larger population, dominate decisions
- No history of working together

## Why amalgamate?

- Sharing services & activities
- Similar history & future
- Same economic region
- Successfully working together
- Similar benefits and costs

# Overview – Amalgamation in MB

- Aligning territory
- Results to date
- Negotiation chronology
- Aligning partnerships
- Summary

## **Municipal amalgamations**

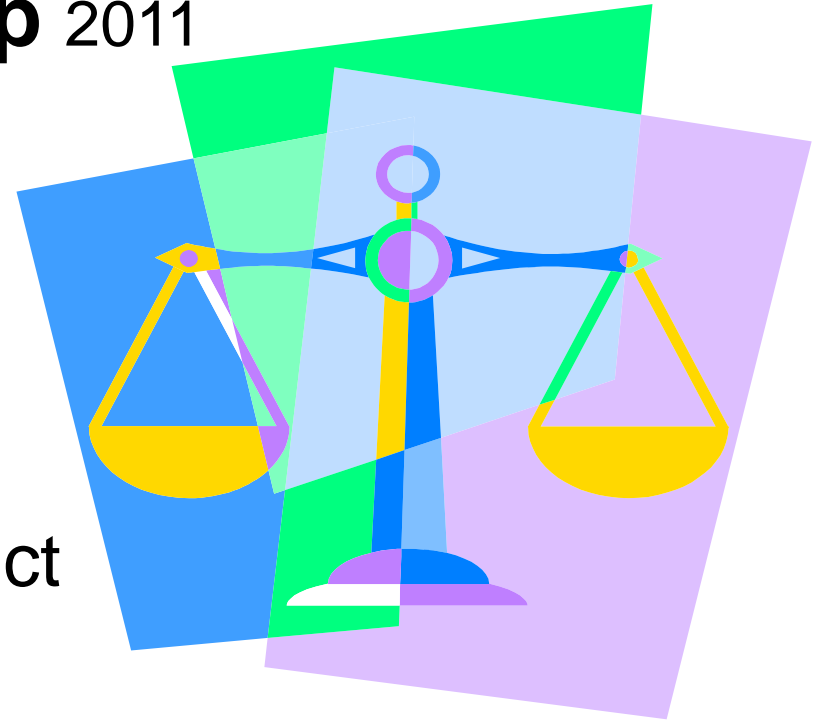
- **Cycle of 15-20 yrs**

# Aligning Territory



# MB municipalities

- **99 MB CSD <1000 pop** 2011
  - 52 Rural municipalities
  - 24 Towns
  - 18 Villages
  - 4 Indian settlements
  - 1 Local government district



# Aligning territory



*What if:* align  
boundaries with  
**Where people  
live & work**

**TODAY!**



# Aligning territory

- Strong municipalities contribute to the economic, social and env'al aspects of MB
- “Strong” municipality is a dynamic concept
  - Ability to serve residents
  - Potential for growth
  - Geographic footprint – territory to govern
- **Strong municipalities**
  - **Indicators**
  - **Boundaries**

# Defining strong municipalities

- **No single definition**
- **Experiences & reports suggest**
  - Capacity to serve people & invest
  - Trajectory of growth
  - Efficiency
- **Key indicators**
  - Population
  - Tax assessment
  - Debt

## Sources

- NB – Building stronger local govts and regions
- MB Municipal health checklist (AMM 2003)
- Functional economic areas (Stabler & Olfert, 2002)

# 30 municipalities tested

Guidepost Approaches	Description
Initial	<b>10</b> municipalities (5 by Govt, 5 by RDI)
AMM Municipal Health Checklist	<b>Top 10</b> municipalities with growth
Administrative Efficiency	<b>Top 10</b> efficient, lowest govt expenditure per resident
<i>New Brunswick Thresholds</i>	<i>4,000 population and \$200M tax assessment + high school</i>

# Test results – strong municipalities

- **3 of 30** ‘Strong’ Manitoba municipalities rank high with all definitions of “Strong”
- **27 of 30** median values
  - 3,126 population
  - \$124 M tax assessment
- **Indicators of Strong municipalities**
  - 3,000 population (vs 4,000 NB)
  - \$130 million tax assessment (vs \$200M NB)

# Defining strong municipalities

- **Strong municipalities**
  - Indicators
  - **Boundaries**



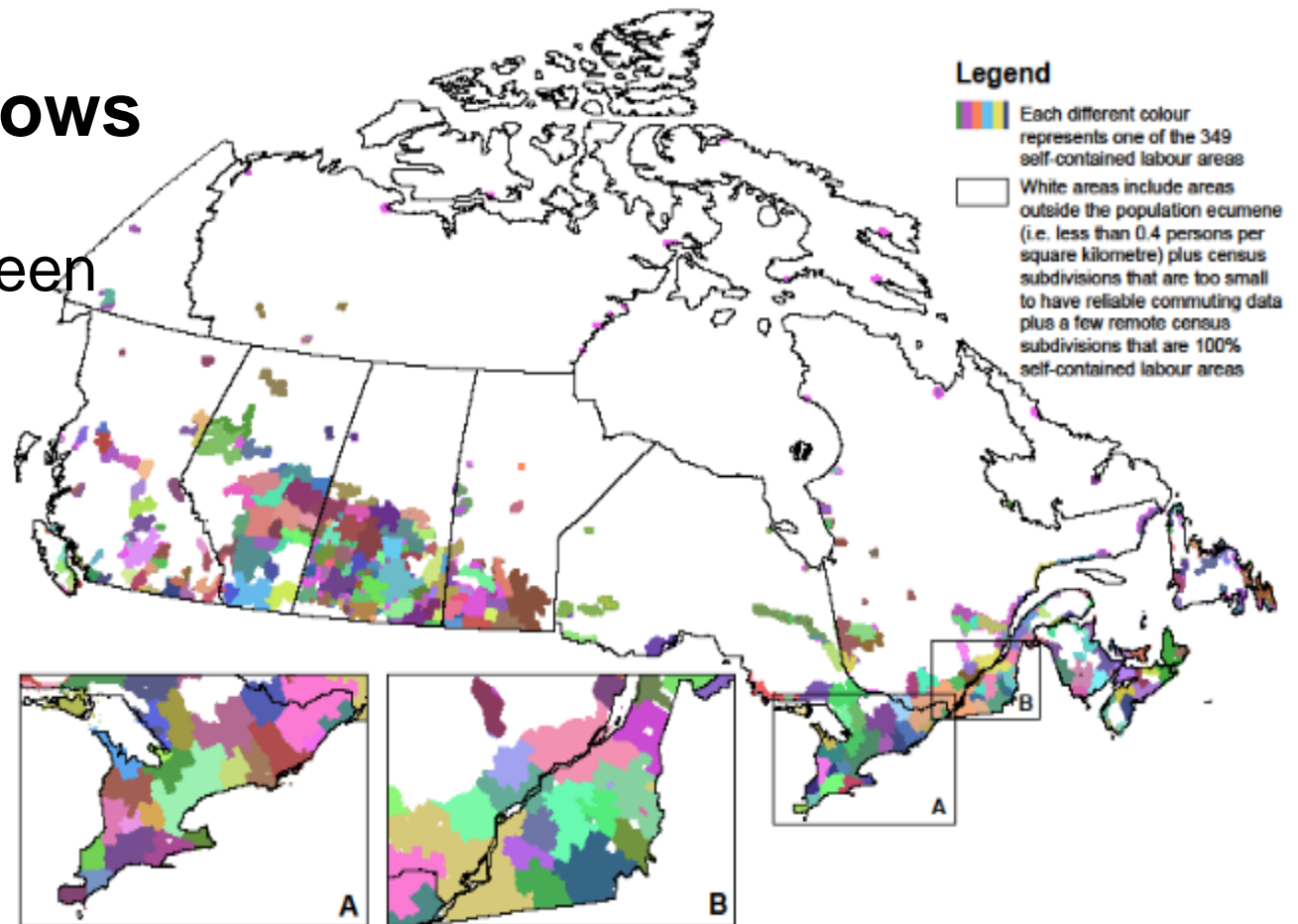
# Functional Economic Rural Region

## Reciprocal commuting flows

based on daily exchanges between CSD of where people live and travel to work: more travel the stronger the relationship

(Munro et al. 2011)

Map 1: Self-contained labour areas, Canada, 2006



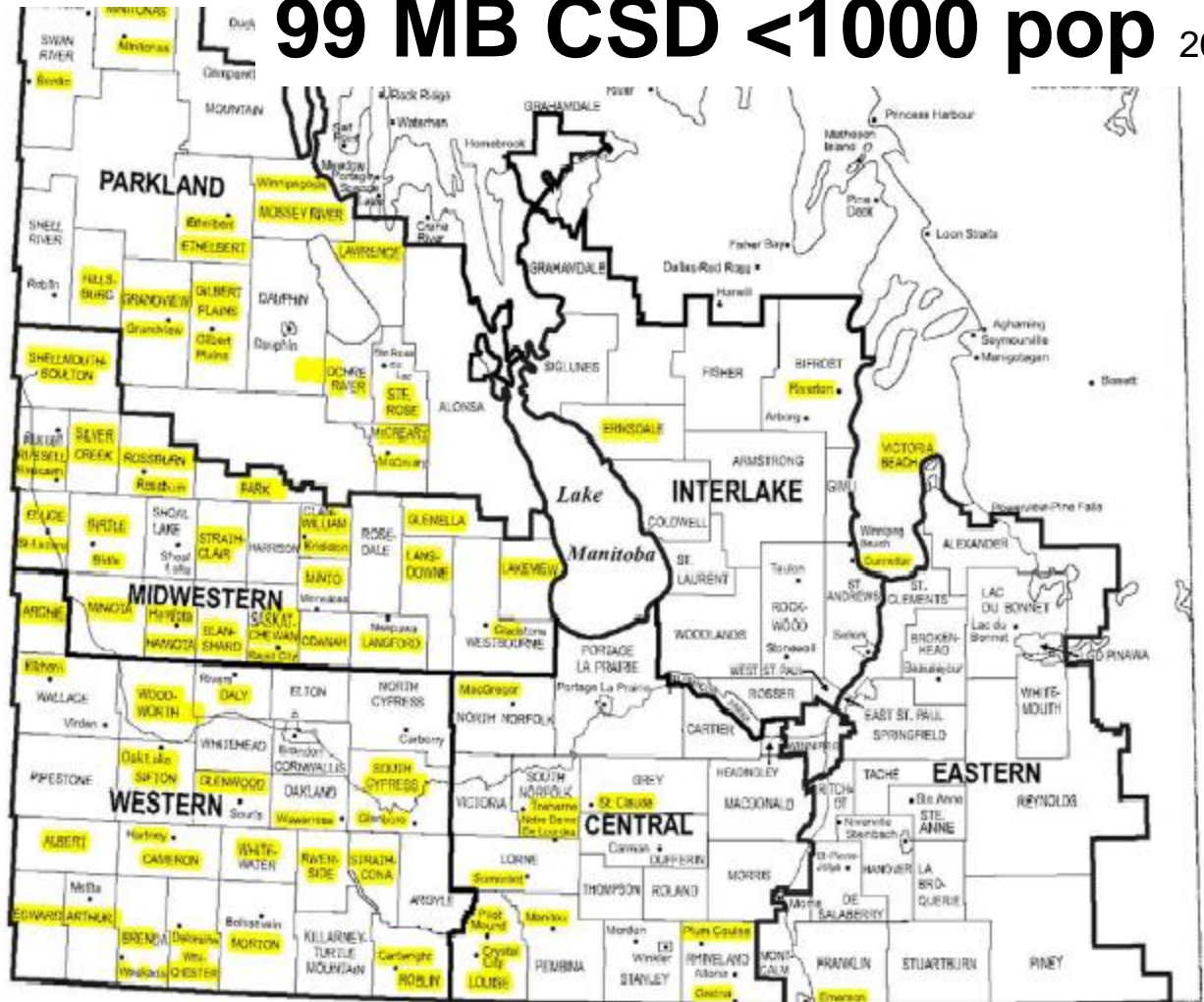
Source: Delineated by author using commuting data from the 2006 Census of Population, Statistics Canada.  
 Map produced by the Remote Sensing and Geospatial Analysis Section (RSGA), Agriculture Division, Statistics Canada, 2010.

# Functional Economic Rural Region

99 MB CSD <1000 pop 2011

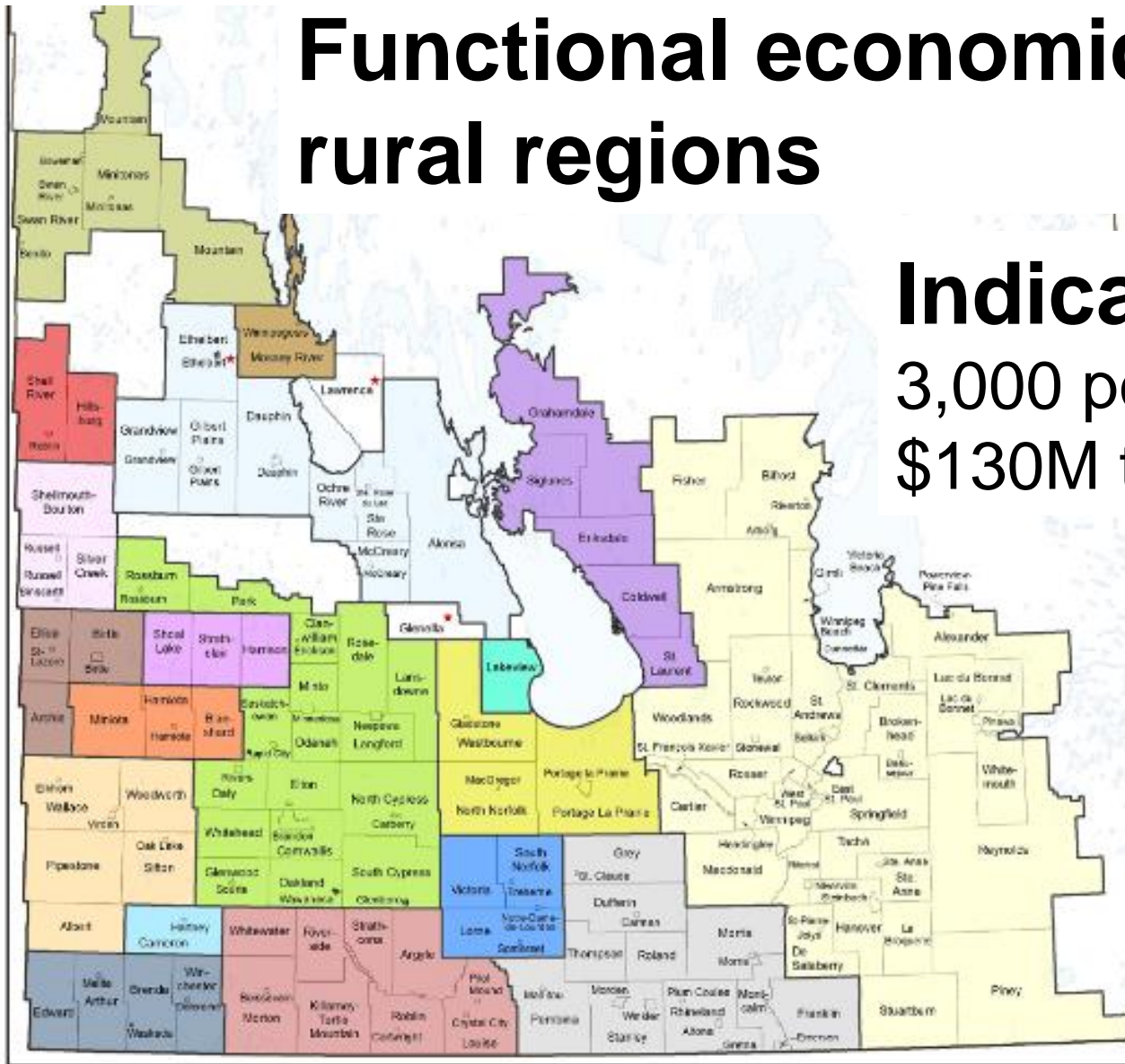


- North Central
- South East
- Interlake
- North
- Parklands
- South Central
- South West
- Winnipeg



Map 1 Manitoba CSDs with less than 1000 in population

# Functional economic rural regions



## Indicators

3,000 population

\$130M tax assessment

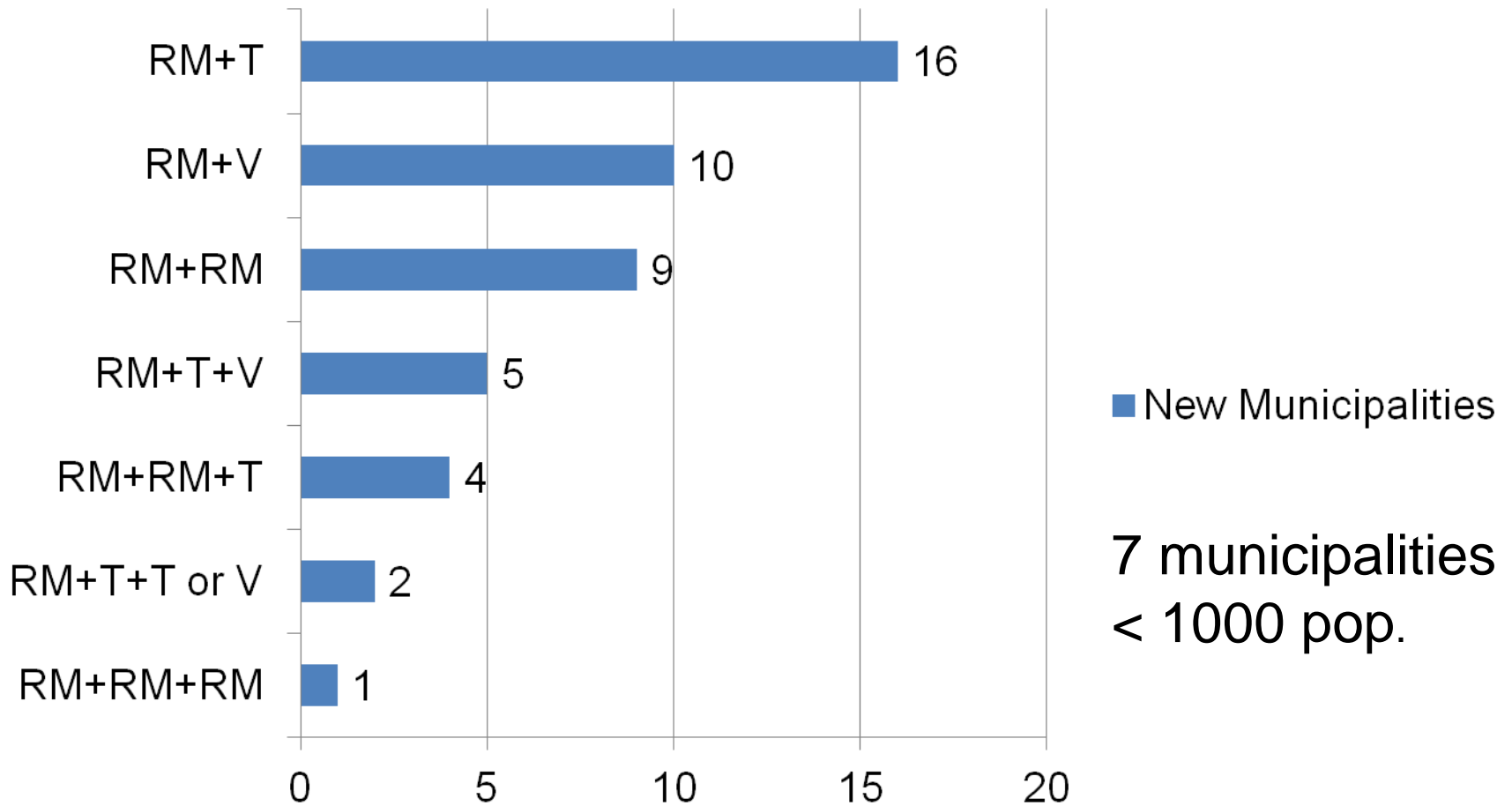


Source: Minro, Anne, Alessandro Alasia and Ray D. Bolman. (2011) "Self-contained labour areas: A proposed delineation and classification by degree of rurality." *Rural and Small Town Canada Analysis Bulletin* Vol 8, No. 8 (Ottawa: Statistics Canada, Catalogue no. 21-006-XIE) ([www.statcan.gc.ca/bsok/vol-ce/vol-cel/cato=21-006-X&CHROPG=1&lang=en](http://www.statcan.gc.ca/bsok/vol-ce/vol-cel/cato=21-006-X&CHROPG=1&lang=en))



# 112 amalgamate to 49 municipalities

New Municipalities (Aug '14)



# 112 amalgamate to 49 municipalities

SLAs (southern Manitoba)	SLAs matched with amalgamated municipal (Aug'14)			2 amalgamated from different SLAs	
	Amalgamation same as SLAs	Amalgamated within an SLA			
Brandon	3	3		3	
Killarney- Boissevain	1	3		3	
Dauphin	0	8		1	
All other SLAs		22		2	
<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>36</b>		<b>9</b>	<b>49</b>

# MB amalgamation chronology

- Rationale
- Resources & materials
- Timeline
- 3 steps

# MB rationale for amalgamation

- More efficient municipalities – 25% municipalities spend 20%+ on adm costs
- Realizing savings and efficiencies via economies of scale
  - Reducing adm costs, investing savings into better services.
  - Sharing facilities, rec centres to reduce operational costs
- Recruiting & retaining staff, share expertise, meet challenges
- Attracting businesses & local development
- Broader pool for elected office, eg succession.
- More effective provincial investment in regional infrastructure

# MB initiative supports

- Learn more
  - [RDI Research on Indicators for Strong Rural Municipalities in Manitoba](#)
  - [Frequently Asked Questions](#)
  - [Manitoba Amalgamation Success Stories](#)
  - [Manitoba Government News](#)
  - [Guide to Municipal Amalgamation](#)
  - [Regional Seminars](#)

# Negotiation Chronology

## **Top-down** (Prov)

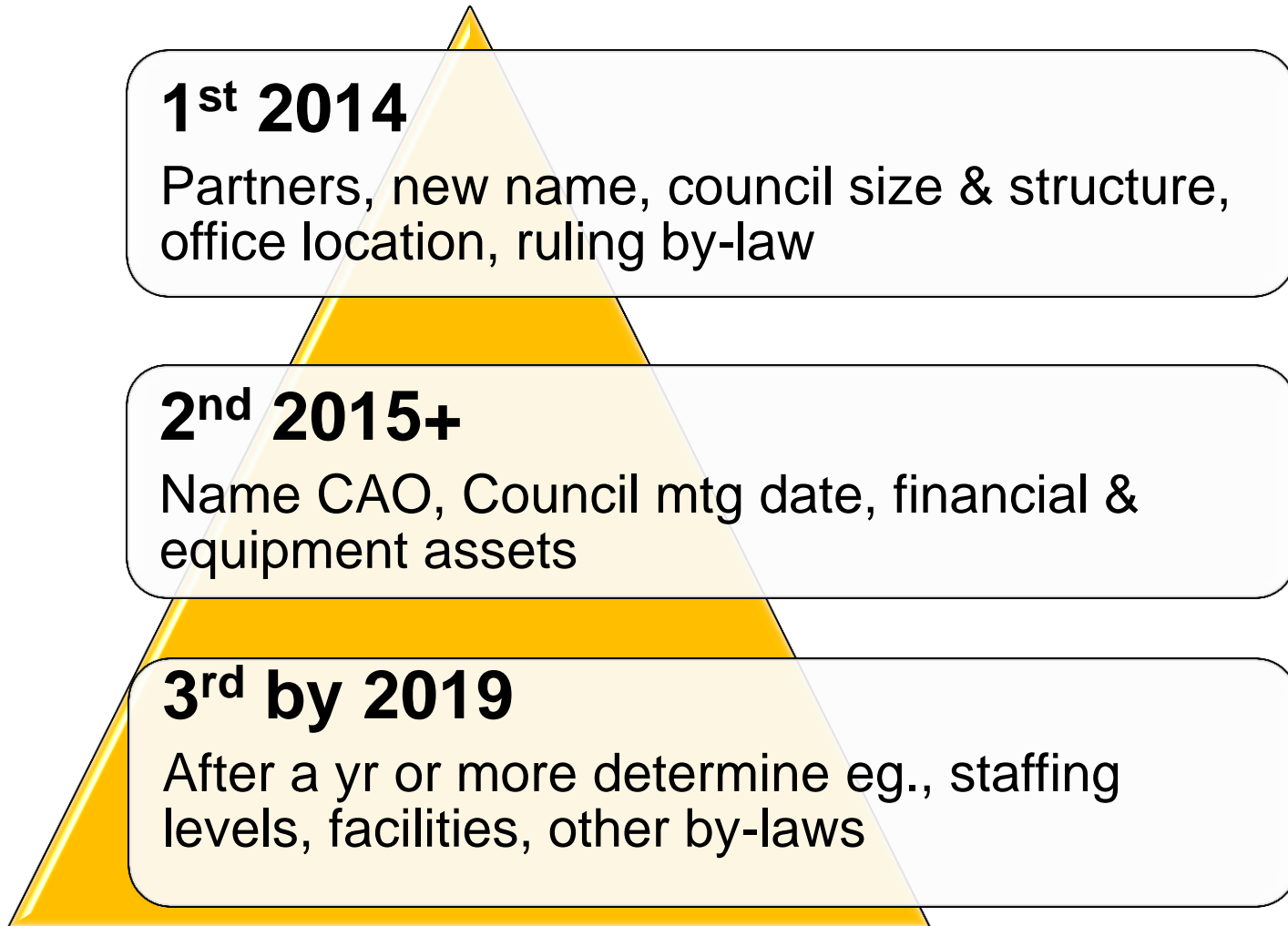
- **Nov '12** Throne speech
- **Dec'12** Minister's letter to Councils, CAOs too
- **Feb-Sept'13** Regional sessions, guide, field consultants, & new law to expedited process
- **Oct '13** Minister advises 32 w/out plan into 11
- **Oct'14** Municipal election

## **Bottom up** (Municipal)

- Voluntary amalgamation
- **Dec'12** AMM says “No”
- **Mar'12** Confirm local partners to Minister, 32 no response
- **Dec'13** Amalgamation plans to Minister
- **Jan'15 -'19** Amalgamation

# Aligning Partnerships

## 3 steps in building municipal partnerships



# Summary



- **Indicators of “strong”**
  - Now & trajectory
- **Functional rural regions**
  - Territory
- **Negotiated processes**
  - Municipal leadership
  - Enabling Prov’al decisions
- **Getting more things right**
  - Top down & bottom up



# References

- Ashton, W., Lightbody, J. 1990. Reforming Alberta's municipalities: possibilities and parameters. Canadian Public Administration. 33(4): 506-525
- Alberta Government. 1991. Summary report of the Slave Lake area local government development study. Edmonton, AB.
- Ashton, W., Bollman, R., & Kelly, W. 2013. Indicators and criteria for strong rural municipalities in Manitoba. Brandon, MB.: Rural Development Institute. <https://www.brandonu.ca/rdi/files/2011/02/Report-2-Indicators-for-Strong-Municipalities-FINAL.pdf>
- Ashton, W., Bollman, R., & Kelly, W. 2013. Identifying and explaining self-contained labour areas in rural Manitoba. Brandon, MB.: Rural Development Institute. <https://www.brandonu.ca/rdi/files/2011/02/Report-1-Identifying-Explaining-SLAs-in-Rural-MB-Final-April-30.pdf>

## Questions?