

Our Communities - Our Future!

Empowering New Brunswickers with the ability to make local decisions

The aim of the Rural Communities initiative is to provide rural New Brunswickers with the opportunity to choose a local government that is adapted to their reality and that assumes responsibility for local services at a pace they are comfortable with and at a cost they can afford. To that end, a 5-step process has been put in place by the Department of the Environment and Local Government to assist interested rural areas in considering and becoming a Rural Community.

Who can become a Rural Community?

Any group of adjacent LSDs, or a village(s) and an adjacent LSD(s), that support the establishment of a Rural Community and have a sufficient population and property tax base, can become a Rural Community. A population of 2,000 and a tax base of 100 million dollars are the target criteria for establishing a viable Rural Community.

What is the process for becoming a Rural Community?

1. **Letter of Interest to the Minister:** Interested residents of LSDs, or their advisory committees, or a village council (if applicable), must send a Letter of Interest to the Minister of the Environment and Local Government.
2. **Initial Assessment:** Working with those who have expressed an interest, the Department follows up by conducting an initial assessment of the potential of establishing a viable Rural Community by examining a number of factors. These factors include: population, tax base, number of LSDs and villages (if applicable) involved, geographic size of the area, and local services being provided.

If this initial assessment shows that there is potential for a viable Rural Community, the interested LSDs and villages (if applicable) are then encouraged and assisted in making residents aware of the interest in further considering a Rural Community.

3. **Petition for Feasibility Determination:** The interested LSDs and villages (if applicable) then request that a more detailed examination- a 'Feasibility Determination' be carried out.

To request a Feasibility Determination, each participating LSD sends to the Minister a **Petition** (using a form provided by the Department) signed by at least 25 residents qualified to vote from the LSD. In interested villages, a petition for a Feasibility Determination is expressed through a **Resolution of Council** which is submitted to the Minister.

The Petition and Council Resolution demonstrate to the Minister that there is local interest in assessing the potential for forming a Rural Community.

4. **Feasibility Determination:** Once the Petition is received from each LSD and village (if applicable) involved, the **Feasibility Determination** is carried out by the Department with the involvement of LSD Advisory Committees, village councils (if applicable), residents, businesses and community organizations.

The Feasibility Determination is a detailed examination of the potential of establishing a viable Rural Community and serves to define the following elements:

- the geographical boundaries
- local representation / council composition
- community planning services to be provided
- cost of governance and administration
- the name of the Rural Community



The Rural Community model will not be imposed on communities. If communities are not ready, or are not interested, the Provincial Government will not impose change.

If there is local support from LSDs and villages (if applicable) for establishing a Rural Community, the Minister then recommends to Government (the Provincial Cabinet) that the LSDs and villages (if applicable) become incorporated as a Rural Community.

5. **Measure of Local Support:** When the Feasibility Determination has been completed, a Report is submitted to the Community and the Minister. If conditions for forming a Rural Community are seen to be favourable, the Minister will then **measure local support** for the formation of a Rural Community. This will provide opportunities for local participation in the decision-making process.

Following approval from Government, a by-election is held for the new Rural Community to elect its first council (Mayor and Councilors). Following the election of the first council, the Department of the Environment and Local Government provides training assistance to the council so it can be ready to adequately fulfill its responsibilities.

In an LSD, the Minister will order that a plebiscite of the residents of the LSD who are qualified to vote under the *Elections Act* be held to determine the level of local support for the incorporation of a Rural Community. There will be sufficient local support if a majority of those voting at the plebiscite vote in favour.

* *The process outlined above also applies when a LSD and a Municipality wish to consider annexation.*

How long does it take to become a Rural Community?

In a village, local support is demonstrated by providing the Minister with a **Resolution of Council** indicating agreement with the formation of a Rural Community.

The process, from the time the Letter of Interest is received until Government approves a recommendation, may take approximately six months, or longer as needed.

Where to get more information

The Department of the Environment and Local Government is committed to providing information, advice and support to communities interested in the Rural Community model, and to continue building positive relationships with all communities in the province.

Rural Community Model fact sheets:

- Fact Sheet # 1 - Local Governance: Current Structure and New Opportunities
- Fact Sheet # 2 - The Rural Community Model
- Fact Sheet # 4 - Functions of a Rural Community
- Fact Sheet # 5 - Contact Information and Resources

View the fact sheet series on-line by visiting: www.gnb.ca/0009/0376/0004/English/0001-e.asp.

You can also contact your Local Services Advisor at the nearest regional office of the Department of the Environment and Local Government.

For additional fact sheets, contact:

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