

Our Communities - Our Future!

Empowering New Brunswickers with the ability to make local decisions

With the establishment of a Rural Community comes increased local responsibility and powers. A Rural Community will benefit from a local council, whose purpose will be to work with the community to plan its future development and meet its local service needs.

Who governs a Rural Community and how are they chosen?

A Rural Community Council will administer the affairs of a Rural Community. Through the same process used for municipal elections, citizens will vote to elect the council, which will consist of at least four elected members - a mayor and a minimum of three councilors. Once in place, the council elects a deputy mayor, and appoints a clerk, a treasurer, an auditor, and others, as necessary. Representatives are also appointed to the regional solid waste and planning commissions.

What are the roles and responsibilities of a Rural Community Council?

Representing local interests –

The Rural Community, through its elected council, provides a channel for citizens to identify and address their local concerns. It allows citizens, property owners, businesses and community organizations to provide services that are of common interest.

The local council is a vehicle for expressing and responding to the collective concerns of members of the community. To that end, it must regularly seek to identify the needs and wishes of the local residents, to review the services it is providing, and to align the provision of services with what the community wants, needs and is willing to fund.

Managing the money -

The elected council also manages a Rural Community's finances. The council is responsible for establishing an annual operating budget, local tax rates and any user fees for the services provided by the Rural Community. A council can also borrow for capital projects to support services provided by the Rural Community.

Community planning services –

A Rural Community Council will have to ensure the provision of community planning services, e.g., development approvals, subdivision approvals, building permits and inspections, in a way that best suits the community and its residents.

As such, a Rural Community will be expected to adopt and enforce a rural plan by-law within two years following its establishment. A rural plan will enable the Rural Community to ensure that different types of development (e.g., residential, commercial, institutional, recreational, resource) happen in orderly fashion and take place in appropriate locations.

The Rural Community Council may join a Regional Planning Commission for the delivery of its planning services, or it could choose to provide community planning services by hiring its own planning staff, or contracting a planning consultant.

Gradual addition of other services –

A Rural Community Council also has the option, as the community is ready, of being responsible for the provision of additional local services. Such local services include, but are not limited to, fire protection, street lighting, recreation facilities, and so on. These service responsibilities will be established through the making of by-laws. This process should provide for an assessment of the benefits and costs, and a meaningful opportunity for public input. However, until such time as a Rural Community is ready to take on more or all of these responsibilities, the Province continues to ensure the provision of such services.



Services to former village residents –

Even though a village council is dissolved with the formation of a new Rural Community Council, former village residents will continue to receive, from the new Rural Community, all services that they once obtained prior to incorporation.

Providing services through partnerships –

A council can form relationships with other Rural Community and Municipal Councils, with the goal of creating arrangements for sharing services. Such partnerships can provide the opportunity to offer more, better and/or more economical services to residents across neighbouring communities.

How is a Rural Community funded?

Taxation –

A Rural Community is funded using monies received through local property taxation. The cost of having an elected council and staff will be minimal to taxpayers of a Rural Community with a sufficient population (2,000) and property tax base (\$100 million).

The cost of providing local services will, most of the time, not change as a direct result of establishing a Rural Community. Moreover, the pooling of tax bases, through

the combining of communities, will provide the opportunity to provide more, better and/or more economical services.

It is also important to note that tax rates within a Rural Community may differ between different areas within the same Rural Community in order to reflect varying levels of service. For example, those residents who have street lighting would have a different tax rate than those without street lighting.

Unconditional grant monies –

A new Rural Community can benefit from the preexisting unconditional grant monies received by its former LSDs and/or villages prior to incorporation as a Rural Community. The grants would be distributed according to the extent of responsibilities taken on by the newly formed Rural Community.

As noted earlier, in a situation where a Rural Community is not ready to provide local services other than community planning, the Minister of the Environment and Local Government would continue to ensure the provision of those services. The Minister would recover the funds to support these services through real property taxation and unconditional grant monies. As a Rural Community is ready to take on additional services, it would adjust its local tax rate for providing these services to residents.

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 # 3 - Process for Becoming 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: Department of the Environment and Local Government
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Printed in 2005



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