

Our Communities – Our Future!
Questions and Answers

1. Why create a new form of local government for rural New Brunswick?

A large portion of rural New Brunswick has been without a form of local government for the last 40 years.

The citizens of several rural areas of the province have voiced their interest in acquiring the ability to make local decisions so they can plan the future of their community and meet their local service needs.

Communities in Rural New Brunswick will now have the opportunity to choose their own form of local government that is adapted to their reality, and assume responsibility for local services at a pace they are comfortable with and at a cost they can afford.

The Rural Community is not another layer of government. It is simply a local government, with characteristics similar to a municipality, but designed to serve the more rural areas of the province.

2. Will change be imposed on communities?

The Rural Community will not be imposed on any community (i.e. if the community does not want it, the provincial government will not impose it).

However, it is likely that several rural areas of the province will want to take a serious look at this form of local government as they seek to take more control over their community's future. This initiative enables communities to explore this new form of local government, as they are ready.

It is also important to note that the Province will continue to ensure the provision of local services in Local Service Districts that do not wish to consider a Rural Community.

3. Why will rural New Brunswickers want to consider becoming a Rural Community?

There are several reasons why rural NBers will want to consider a Rural Community. For example:

- To bring community decisions in the hands of community members. Communities want to take charge of their own destiny.

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- To have greater opportunity to ensure the long-term viability of their community.
- To gain the opportunity to elect local representatives through a formal election process.
- To ensure that the provision of local services is in keeping with the community's needs, wants, and ability to pay.
- To have decision-making authority for the sharing of services with other communities.

4. Who can become a Rural Community?

Any group of Local Service Districts or group of Local Service District(s) and Village(s) with sufficient population and property tax base to create a viable Rural Community (approximately 2,000 population and \$100 million tax base) who wish to be considered.

5. Who will govern a Rural Community and how will they be elected?

A Rural Community Council will govern the affairs of the Rural Community. Through the same process used for municipal elections and by-elections, citizens will elect a mayor and councillors to their Rural Community Council.

6. What will the Rural Community Council be responsible for?

The role of the Rural Community Council will be to ensure that the provision of local services is in keeping with the community's needs, wants, and ability to pay.

While a Rural Community Council will have to ensure the provision of community planning services (e.g. development approvals, subdivision approvals, building permits and inspections), it will only take on the responsibility for additional local services (e.g., fire protection, street lighting, recreational facilities), when it is ready to do so. Such a decision will be made through the making of a by-law, which will provide an opportunity for all community members to have a say.

7. Will the provincial government continue to oversee the provision of some local services in a Rural Community?

The provincial government will continue to ensure the provision of local services, including policing and road maintenance, to former Local Service Districts within a Rural Community until the Rural Community itself chooses to provide them. When a Rural Community has not acquired the responsibility to provide a service, the decision-making process to add or delete a service will be similar to the process currently in place in Local Service Districts.

8. Will a Rural Community employ staff?

A Rural Community Council will be responsible to appoint a Clerk, Treasurer and Auditor. It is likely that one person will be able to carry out the functions of the Clerk and Treasurer on a part-time basis, especially in the early stage of the establishment of a Rural Community, thereby limiting the administrative costs.

The Rural Community Council will also have the ability to appoint other officers as deemed necessary for the administration of the rural community.

9. Why is it important for a Rural Community to provide community planning services?

The lack of community planning in rural areas of the province is resulting in significant social, economic and environmental costs. For example:

- **Social costs:** land use conflicts are occurring when residential developments are located next to farms, and when industrial developments are located next to residential areas;
- **Economic costs:** when development does not take place in designated areas where adequate services and related infrastructure exist or can be provided in a timely, economic manner; and
- **Environmental costs:** when aquifers are overdrawn, groundwater is inadequately recharged and wells are contaminated when too much development is occurring with unsuitable septic systems or in inappropriate locations.

10. What community planning services will a Rural Community be responsible to provide?

A Rural Community will be expected to adopt a rural plan within two years following its establishment. A rural plan will enable a 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.

Community planning services will include plan development and administration, development approvals, subdivision approvals, building permits and inspections, and a planning advisory committee.

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.

11. Will a former Local Service District that is now part of a Rural Community be able to keep its Advisory Committee?

A Local Service District and its Advisory Committee will be dissolved when it becomes part of a Rural Community.

Citizens of each former Local Service District will gain the opportunity to elect their representatives on the Rural Community Council. The feasibility determination process will serve to define the composition of the Rural Community Council and whether councilors will be elected on a ward and/or at large basis.

The Rural Community Council will have the ability to establish citizen advisory committees to work with council on issues of concern to the community and council. The Rural Community Council will also be able to establish a community committee for a geographical area to advise council on the provision of local services in that area.

12. How much will a Rural Community cost and what will be the effect on property taxes?

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 feasibility determination process will serve to define the initial governance and administrative costs associated with the establishment of a Rural Community.

The costs of providing local services will not change as a direct result of establishing a Rural Community. Moreover, the pooling of tax bases will provide the opportunity to provide more, better and/or more economical services.

The former Local Service Districts within a Rural Community may have different tax rates to reflect any differences in services and associated costs among them. For example, the property owners with street lighting services will pay a different rate than those without the service.

13. Who will control the budget of a Rural Community?

A Rural Community will have financial powers in keeping with its responsibilities. The Rural Community Council will establish a budget and set the required tax rate for its governance, administration and the community planning services it is mandated to provide, as well as for any other services it will decide to become responsible to provide.

14. Will a Rural Community receive an unconditional grant?

Yes, the taxpayers of a Rural Community will continue to benefit from the same unconditional grant they received in their former Local Service District or Village.

15. What does this mean for the Beaubassin East Rural Community?

The Department will be working with the Beaubassin East Rural Community in order to prepare them to change their elected structure and assume the responsibilities and powers provided for in the Bill on Rural Communities.

16. How will the relationship between citizens of a Rural Community and their Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) change?

Similar to the citizens of a village, the citizens of a Rural Community will have an elected council to represent their collective interests with their MLA.

17. What is the difference between a Rural Community and a municipality?

A key feature will distinguish a Rural Community from a municipality. A Rural Community will have to provide community planning services while it will be able to gradually assume the responsibility to provide other local services, as it is ready, through the making of a by-law. The provincial government will continue to ensure the provision of local services to former Local Service Districts within a Rural Community until the Rural Community itself chooses to provide them.

On the other hand, a municipality must provide policing services, and is also responsible for all other publicly provided local services (e.g. community planning, fire protection, community services, garbage and refuse collection and disposal, sewerage, water, parks, recreational and sports facilities, street lighting and road maintenance).