

# New Brunswick's Regional Service Commissions



New  Nouveau  
**Brunswick**

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# New Brunswick's Regional Service Commissions



## *Introduction*

The provincial government is undertaking a broad range of actions to create a new Local Governance System in New Brunswick. One of the five objectives outlined in the December 2011 Action Plan supporting this new system, is to increase collaboration, communication and planning between communities. The establishment of 12 Regional Service Commissions will help communities to communicate and collaborate regionally, as well as plan on a regional basis.

These new Commissions will better enable communities across New Brunswick to work together and share services to meet their common needs. The Commissions will serve communities and be governed by them, creating direct accountability to taxpayers in all regions.

## **The challenges in today's service delivery approach**

Citizens in New Brunswick's communities receive services, either from a local government (city, town, village or Rural Community) or the provincial government in the case of Local Service Districts (LSDs). Some services are delivered by Municipalities or Rural Communities themselves, while others are acquired or arranged for from service providers, including commissions, local volunteers, other municipalities, the private sector, and in the case of RCMP services, from the federal government.

There are currently 12 commissions providing planning services and 12 commissions providing solid waste management. There are also a number of mutual aid agreements in place across the Province between Municipalities, Rural Communities and Local Service Districts for the delivery of services such as fire protection, as well as a number of agreements for cost-sharing and managing services such as recreational facilities.

Neighbouring communities often compete for new investments, build infrastructure or acquire equipment which can result in duplication. Many struggle to maintain these assets with limited available revenue. Communities tend to individually purchase or acquire needed expertise to manage or administer services rather than collaborate and pool resources.

Government recognizes that this approach to service delivery is inefficient and doesn't capitalize on the collective strength of neighbouring communities.

One of the primary challenges is that there is no existing structure to enable communities to communicate with one another, to plan and prioritize from a regional perspective, collaborate on projects, cost-share on service delivery, and make mutually-beneficial decisions on investments, or share expertise.

## **Addressing the challenges**

To address these challenges, Regional Service Commissions will be established to enable the needed collaboration and cooperation between communities, ensuring that Municipalities, Rural Communities and Local Service Districts are better positioned to meet the service needs of residents and to benefit from collective efforts to build and sustain stronger regions.

## **The New Regional Services Model**



The following pages provide an outline of the new regional services model. Government will provide additional information as legislation is introduced, and will be working during 2012 with the current service providers, including the Regional Solid Waste and District Planning Commissions, to facilitate the transition (including staffing) to the new multi-purpose Regional Service Commissions.

As the new model is put in place, citizens will not experience a disruption in key services. For example, household waste will continue to be collected each week, and emergency measures personnel will continue to respond to emergencies as required.

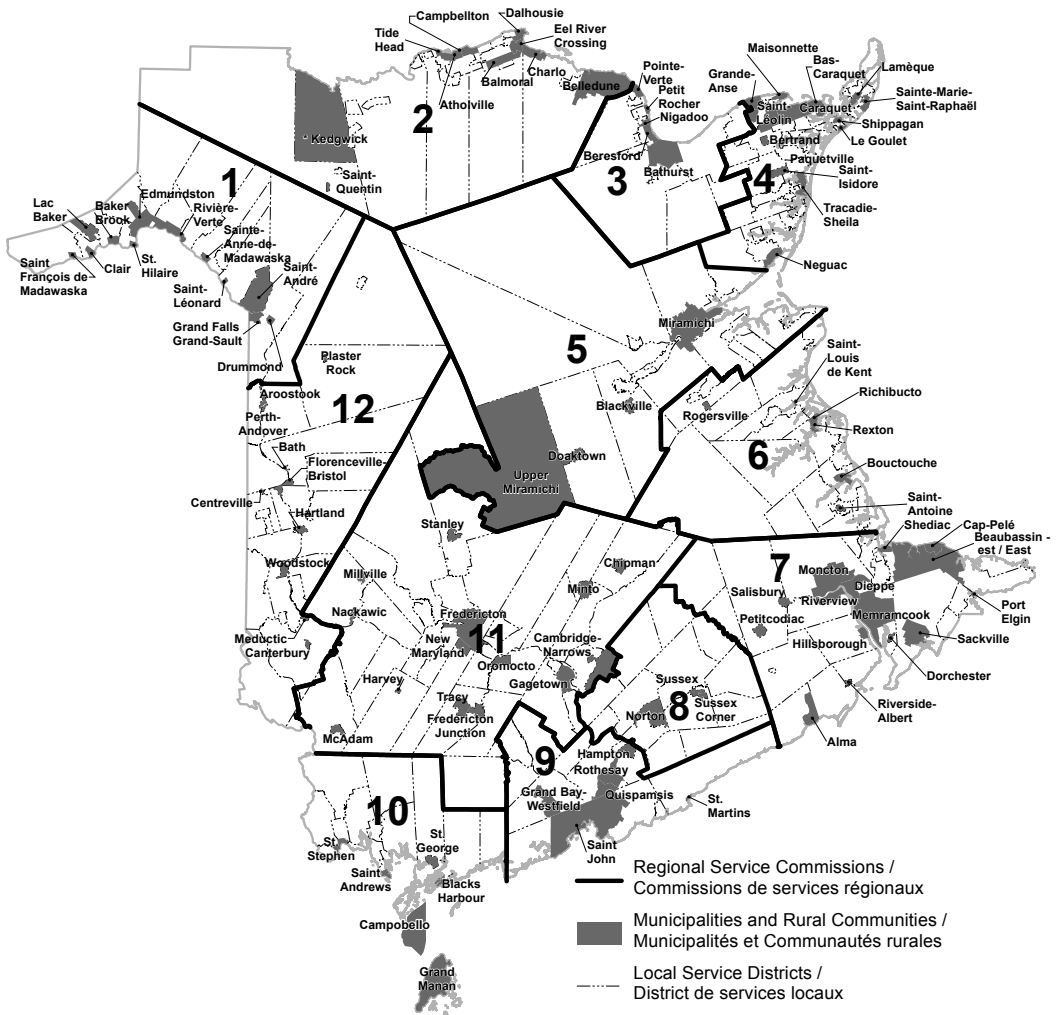
## **The new Regional Service Commission Boundaries**

As part of the process to share information about the new regional services model, the Department of Local Government will be confirming the new regional service boundaries with stakeholders.

- Under the new model, the Province will be divided into 12 regions.

- All Municipalities, Rural Communities, and Local Services Districts which are situated within each region will be served by a Regional Service Commission for that region.
- Boundaries for 12 regions are based on communities and regions of interest (including such factors as regional identity, existing boundaries, language profiles, as well as proximity to and use of facilities such as schools, recreation centres, etc.).

### Regional Service Commission Boundaries



\* It is anticipated that the Rural Community of Kedgwick will be established July 1, 2012. / Il est anticipé que la Communauté rurale de Kedgwick sera établie le 1er juillet 2012.

## Role of the new Regional Service Commissions

Within each region, a new Regional Service Commission will have three main roles:

- Delivering, or facilitating the delivery of mandated services to communities.
- Facilitating voluntary service arrangements among interested communities.
- Acting as a regional forum for collaboration among communities on regional issues.

### Mandated Services

Commissions will be required to provide the following services:

- **Regional Planning**

The Regional Service Commissions will be responsible for the development of a Regional Plan, the aim of which would be to better coordinate and manage development and land use within each of the 12 regions. More specifically, the Regional Plans will focus on strategies that foster sustainable development practices, that encourage coordinated development between communities, that influence and guide the location of significant infrastructure (e.g., major roadways, facilities, trails), and that enhance coordination of commercial / industrial development. Regional Plans will also serve as an important tool in better managing, protecting and harmonizing urban and rural landscapes and resources.

- **Local Planning in Local Service Districts**

The Regional Service Commissions will provide land use planning services to all Local Service Districts. This function includes the development of rural plans, the administration and enforcement of the plans, the issuance of building permits, conducting building inspections, and the approval of subdivisions, etc. The Commissions will encourage Local Service Districts to develop common integrated plans, where possible and appropriate.

All Municipalities and Rural Communities will be able to obtain their local planning services from the Commissions.

- **Solid Waste Management**

The Regional Service Commissions will provide solid waste disposal services to the Municipalities, Rural Communities and Local Service Districts within their respective regions, a role currently performed by the Solid Waste Commissions. This includes the operation of the landfills and transfer stations, as well the coordination of various recycling programs, the handling of hazardous waste and the promotion of composting. The Regional Service Commissions may also become involved in handling the collection of solid waste and in the generation of electricity, as is presently the case in some regions.

- **Regional Policing Collaboration**

The Regional Service Commissions will serve as a forum through which the effectiveness and efficiency of policing services is reviewed and evaluated on a regional basis. In addition, the Commissions will identify issues of common concern within their regions and provide direction on priorities for policing services. The Regional Service Commissions will also identify ways in which police forces within regions can work together to share costs, reduce duplication and generally build stronger linkages with one another. Given the wide variety of policing arrangements currently in place from region to region, the role of the Commissions will not be entirely the same across the Province.

- **Regional Emergency Measures Planning**

The Regional Service Commissions will serve as the vehicle through which Municipalities, Rural Communities and Local Service Districts will plan, coordinate and pool resources on a regional basis in order to enable more effective responses to emergency situations. This will involve the development of regional emergency protocols (specifying mutual assistance agreements between communities), providing assistance in developing and maintaining local emergency measures plans, and facilitating training initiatives for regional and inter-regional emergency responses.

- **Regional Sport, Recreational, and Cultural Infrastructure Planning and Cost-Sharing**

The Regional Service Commissions will be responsible for facilitating the planning and cost-sharing of major sport, recreational and cultural facilities within each of their respective regions.

The Commissions will be the entity through which Municipalities, Rural Communities and Local Service Districts come together to identify and reach consensus on the need, the scope and the financing required for such new facilities (could include the expansion / renovation of existing facilities). Such agreements could be developed by the Commissions on a fully regional or on a sub-regional basis and would cover both initial capital and ongoing operational costs. In order to secure provincial funding, the project proponents will be required to obtain support from those communities expected to benefit from the facilities.

Commissions will be required to meet any provincial or other established standards associated with the services being delivered.

## **Other services**

Regional Service Commissions will also be able to provide other services as agreed to by their member communities on either a regional (all commission members) or sub-regional basis (one or more interested members, depending on the service). These services could include local planning services or corporate services, such as bulk purchasing, or purchasing equipment, for interested Municipalities and Rural Communities. Commissions will also continue to provide various land use planning services to individuals, such as issuing building permits.

## **Service arrangements**

Based on the direction of each Commission's Board, the new Commissions will have the authority to facilitate and oversee arrangements and agreements between communities for cost-sharing on services and infrastructure. For example, there may be a need to build a new, renovate, or repair an existing, sports facility in an area within a given region. The community which is building, renovating or repairing this facility may be interested in having neighbouring communities which use the facility help pay for this facility. In these circumstances, the Commission could facilitate the dialogue between communities to determine interest, would develop any agreements which result from that exercise, and manage those agreements on behalf of, and under the direction of, those affected communities.

## **Collaboration on regional issues**

One of the most important roles of the new Regional Service Commissions will be to collaborate on regional issues and service decisions. This could include:

- Making regional planning decisions on the location of community-based infrastructure or land use which affects more than one community.

- Accessing or applying for provincial and federal funding, where applicable, to benefit region-wide service delivery.
- Working together to seek new investments within a region, including those with economic benefits.

## **Services to First Nations Communities**

The regional services model will enable service provision to those First Nations Communities which choose to purchase services. These arrangements will be developed in consultation with First Nations Communities and the provincial Aboriginal Affairs Secretariat.

## **Structure of the new Regional Service Commissions**

- The Regional Service Commissions will be governed by communities and act as service delivery agents to ensure the communities receive the services they pay for. Commissions will not be another level or tier of government. The decisions taken on financial and service matters will be made by the communities themselves through representatives on the Commission Boards. The Commission will not have the authority to tax for services, but will invoice for the services provided.
- The new Regional Service Commissions will be established in legislation, administered by the provincial department responsible for Local Government. This legislation will set out the requirements for the Commissions, including mandate, structure and key operating guidelines.
- The Minister responsible for Local Government will not govern the day-to-day activities or decision-making of the new Commissions, but will be responsible to ensure that the Commissions are reporting to the people of New Brunswick on their activities.
- Each Regional Service Commission Board will be accountable to their member Municipal and Rural Community councils. Those councils are in turn, accountable to their taxpayers. For Local Service Districts, the Commission will be accountable to the Province which, as administrator of services in LSDs, is accountable to LSD taxpayers.
- Each Regional Service Commission will have a Board of community representation which sets direction and makes decisions for the overall Commission.

- Day-to-day decisions and responsibilities will be carried out by those employed by the Commission to manage services, either directly, or through external service-providers.

## **Governance of the new Regional Service Commissions**

### **Board Membership**

- A Board for each Commission will be made up of all Municipal and Rural Community mayors within each region. Unincorporated area representation will be based on population and tax base ratios. LSD Advisory Committee Chairs in each region would nominate representatives, from among all Chairs in the region, to be appointed by the Minister responsible for Local Government. In an instance where there is an insufficient number of Advisory Committee Chairs, the Minister may appoint LSD representation under the Government's Agencies, Boards and Commissions appointment process.
- Provincial Local Services Managers, assigned to each region, will provide support to the unincorporated area representatives on the Board, by virtue of their role as administrators of the LSDs. This support would be similar to the support provided to Municipal and Rural Community representatives by the staff of their administrations.
- The Board will have the authority to establish ongoing 'standing committees', made up of Board members, to support the development of ongoing initiatives and the resolution of issues prior to review and/or decision-making by the full Board or affected members of a Board.
- The Board will also be authorized to establish 'ad hoc committees' to examine issues of a more temporary nature.
- The Board will have the authority to establish or recognize external bodies which can act as 'advisory committees' to the Board and Commission. Members of these committees will not have voting privileges, but can serve as beneficial advisors on specific issues.
- The Board will be responsible for establishing by-laws which govern the activities of the Board, and the operations of the Commission, including any administrative requirements.

## Staffing

- Each Regional Service Commission will have an Executive Director position which is hired by, and reports to the Board. This position will act as the liaison between the Board and staff members who manage the various services provided, and will have responsibility for the overall administrative management of the Commission. The Executive Directors will also be the primary point of liaison with external partners and the provincial government.
- The Executive Director will be supported by staff responsible for managing the day-to-day operations of each service, and the financial administration and operation of the Commission.

## Voting Procedures

- The legislation which sets out requirements for each Board will include voting procedures to ensure fairness, accountability and equity in decision-making processes.
- One of the key objectives of all voting procedures will be to ensure that no single member is able to impose decisions on an entire region.

## Funding and Financial Management

- Under the new Regional Service Commission model, each community will continue to pay for the services they receive, but through one service provider, rather than a range of providers.
- As noted above, Regional Service Commissions will not have the authority to tax service users. Municipalities and Rural Communities would be invoiced directly by each Commission for the services they receive, and the Province would be invoiced for the services provided to LSDs in each region.
- Every service provided by a Regional Service Commission will be accounted for separately, including a portion of general overhead. A key principle of the regional services model will be that taxpayers “pay for what they get”.
- Transitional provisions will be developed with respect to surpluses, deficits and reserves to ensure fairness and continuity.

## Official Languages

Regional Service Commissions will be required to meet the requirements of the *Official Languages Act*. Specifically, if there is an English or French minority population of at least 20% region-wide, if one of its member municipalities has an English or French minority population of at least 20%, or one of its member municipalities is a city, the Commission must provide services in both Official Languages.

## Corporate Status

The Regional Service Commissions will be corporate bodies under the enabling legislation. Their authority will include the ability to:

- buy, hold and sell capital assets;
- submit applications for borrowing to the Municipal Capital Borrowing Board;
- receive or apply for funding under various federal/provincial funding programs;
- collect fees for specific services, such as issuing a building permit;
- continue to generate and sell electricity, as is currently the case with regional solid waste commissions.

Any additional corporate authorities will be determined and identified during the development of legislation.

## Conclusion

The regional service model is one of the key features of the New Local Government System. This model will support the needed connectivity and cooperation between communities to ensure that both individual local governments and Local Service Districts are better positioned to meet the service needs of residents and to benefit from collective efforts to build and sustain stronger regions.

For more information about the new Local Governance System in New Brunswick, including the Action Plan and regional services model, please visit:

[www.gnb.ca/localgovernment](http://www.gnb.ca/localgovernment)