



# Rural Districts

New Brunswick's reformed local governance system

A rural district is a new structure for New Brunswick that brings together former local service districts (LSD)—or parts of them—that are outside local government boundaries. Rural districts are unincorporated areas that are sparsely populated. Currently, there are 236 LSDs. With reform, many LSDs have been split and partial or whole LSDs will either join a local government, join together to form a new local government, or become part of a rural district. As of January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023, there will be one rural district in each of New Brunswick's 12 regions.

## WHY DO WE NEED RURAL DISTRICTS?

The vision of local governance reform in New Brunswick is to work together for vibrant and sustainable communities. With reform, as of January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023, approximately 95% of New Brunswick's population will reside in a local government. Rural districts have been established to ensure that residents outside local governments continue to receive important services, such as emergency measures, police and fire services, land use planning, animal control, management of dangerous and unsightly premises, and solid waste management. These services will be coordinated by the provincial government through a rural district manager.

Rural districts will help meet another very important need: elected representation at the local level for all New Brunswickers. During engagement with residents and stakeholders, New Brunswickers said they want elected representatives at the local level for all areas, not just for those living in a local government. To meet this need, each rural district will have duly elected councillors to advise the Minister.

## HOW WILL THE ELECTIONS WORK?

Rural districts will each elect three to six councillors to form an advisory committee to advise the Minister on local matters. The number of councillors depends on the population—approximately one for every 1,500 people. Residents will elect councillors to represent wards, or members at-large, or both.

Elections NB will organize the elections. The first elections will be on November 28, 2022, as part of the special municipal elections for new or restructured local government entities.

## IS THERE A MAYOR OF A RURAL DISTRICT?

As the rural districts will have an advisory committee, a chair will be selected from among the elected councillors rather than a mayor. The committee will hold at least four meetings per year, and councillors will be paid for their work. The Minister will retain the final authority for decision-making in rural districts, but the chair and elected councillors will play an important advisory role to the Minister. The chair will also represent the rural district on the Regional Service Commission board.

## WHAT HAPPENS TO THE CURRENT LOCAL SERVICE DISTRICT ADVISORY COMMITTEES?

On December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2022, all local service district (LSD) advisory committees elected in accordance with the *Local Governance Act* will be dissolved.

## ADVISORY COMMITTEE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- Serve as the locally elected representatives for the constituents of the rural district;
- Build and sustain an effective working relationship with various stakeholders and partners to:
  - Support the preparation of an annual budget and establishment of the rural district tax rates;
  - Advise on services of the rural district;
  - Advise on community planning matters, at the Minister's request;
- Organize and/or chair advisory committee meetings as required, as well as other community meetings announced by the Minister;
- The Chair will sit on the board of the Regional Service Commission (RSC);
- Consult on fire protection matters with the Fire Chiefs.

## WHO PAYS FOR ROADS?

Roads currently in local service districts will remain the responsibility of the provincial government, whether the local service district is merged with a local government or becomes part of a rural district. Rural district advisory committees will work with their rural district manager to communicate their priorities to the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure.

## WILL RURAL DISTRICTS HAVE LAND USE PLANS?

All areas of New Brunswick will soon be covered by a land use plan. In rural districts, the Minister will provide land use planning. Services include the enforcement of zoning regulations, rural plan regulations and rural plan by-laws made or adopted under the *Community Planning Act*. Any current local or rural land use plans carry over into the new entities beyond January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023. Rural districts will have five years to create land use plans.

Northwest rural district
Restigouche rural district
Chaleur rural district
Acadian Peninsula rural district
Greater Miramichi rural district
Kent rural district
Southeast rural district
Kings rural district
Fundy rural district
Southwest rural district
Capital Region rural district
Western Valley rural district

