

Process for becoming a Rural Community

Empowering New Brunswickers with the ability to make local decisions



The Rural Community model provides rural New Brunswickers with the opportunity to have a local government that is adapted to their reality and that makes it possible for them to assume 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 Environment and Local Government (DELG) to assist interested rural areas in considering and becoming a Rural Community.

Who can become a Rural Community?

One or more adjacent local service districts (LSDs), or a town or village and an adjacent LSD(s), that support the establishment of a Rural Community and have sufficient population and property tax base, can become a Rural Community. A minimum population of 3,000 and a property tax base of 200 million dollars are targeted to provide sufficient human and financial capacity for establishing a viable Rural Community.

What is the process for becoming a Rural Community?

1. Letter of Interest to the Minister: To begin the process, interested residents of an LSD, the Advisory Committee of an LSD, or a town or village council send a Letter of Interest to the Minister of Environment and Local Government (ELG) to consider a Rural Community.

2. Initial Assessment: Working with those who have expressed interest, as well as with other community stakeholders, ELG staff follows up by conducting an initial assessment of the potential of establishing a viable Rural Community. This is done by examining a number of factors amongst the LSD(s), town or village involved, including:

- population;
- property tax base;
- social, economic, environmental and service relationships (shared interests);
- potential benefits of a Rural Community;
- level of interest from community leaders and residents.

3. Petition for a feasibility study: If the initial assessment reveals that it would be possible to establish a viable Rural Community and community leaders and residents are interested, the request can be made by the interested LSDs, town or village for a more detailed examination through a feasibility study.

To request a feasibility study, 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 their LSD. In an interested town and village, a petition for a feasibility study is expressed through a **Resolution of Council** submitted to the Minister.

The Minister may pursue a feasibility study for the establishment of a Rural Community without receiving a petition to that end from the residents of the affected LSD(s), town or village.

4. Feasibility study: A **feasibility study** is carried out by the Department with the involvement of each LSD Advisory Committee and town or village council (if applicable), and with other community stakeholders.

The feasibility study is a thorough analysis of the proposed Rural Community, and provides information on a variety of relevant topics, including if and how a Rural Community could better serve the needs and aspirations

of the communities; the geographical boundaries; the name of the Rural Community; the means to maintain and strengthen community identity; the composition of council and staffing needs; the division of the Rural Community into wards; the planned provision of local services; the projections of expenditures and revenues, including different tax rates for different areas to reflect variances in services.

Public consultation is also held as part of the feasibility study, providing an opportunity for residents, property owners, businesses, and community organizations to be informed of the proposal, ask related questions and provide their viewpoints. The final feasibility study report is then completed in light of the views provided by all stakeholders.

Funding is available from the Department to assist interested communities in conducting a study into the feasibility of a Rural Community, which can cover up to 75 % of total eligible costs to a maximum amount of \$15,000.

5. Measure of Local Support: When the feasibility study report has been completed, it is submitted to the Minister.

If the results of the feasibility study are positive, and the proposal receives strong support from community leaders and residents, the Minister then determines if there is sufficient local support by holding a plebiscite (vote) for those qualified to vote in the LSDs involved.

Local support is determined to be sufficient for the proposed Rural Community if a majority of those voting in the plebiscite vote in favour of the proposal, and if a town or village council (if applicable) passes a resolution supporting the proposal.

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

Following approval from Government, an election is held for the new Rural Community to elect its first council (Mayor and Councillors). Following the election of the first council, ELG provides training assistance to the council and staff so they can be ready to adequately fulfill their responsibilities.

** The 5-step process outlined above also applies when LSDs wish to consider becoming a village.*

How long does it take to become a Rural Community?

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

For 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.

For information, contact your Local Services Manager at the nearest regional office of the Department of the Environment and Local Government.

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