

Community Restructuring in New Brunswick FAQs about the proposed York Rural Community (YRC)

1. Why create a new form of local government with the partnering Local Service Districts (LSDs) of Kingsclear, Keswick Ridge, Queensbury, Bright and Douglas?

A large portion of rural New Brunswick has been without a form of local government for the last 40 years. The citizens of several areas of the province have voiced their interest in acquiring the ability to make local decisions so they can plan the future of their communities and meet their local service needs.

Communities in New Brunswick currently have the opportunity to choose their own form of local government so that it is adapted to their needs and so that it allows them to assume responsibility for the delivery of local services at a pace they are comfortable with and at a cost they can afford.

2. Is community restructuring being imposed on residents in the partnering LSDs in the proposed York Rural Community?

The Rural Community form of local government will not be imposed on any area (i.e. if the area does not want it, the provincial government will not impose it). However, it is likely that several rural and suburban 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 decisions that can impact their area's future. This initiative enables areas 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 LSDs that do not wish to consider becoming a Rural Community.

3. Why would residents in the proposed YRC want to consider becoming a Rural Community?

There are several reasons why project area residents may want to consider becoming a Rural Community. A Rural Community:

- puts community decision making back in to the hands of community members so that communities can take charge of their own destiny.
- allows residents to be involved in the long-term viability of their community.
- gives community members the opportunity to elect local representatives through a formal election process.
- ensures that the provision of local services is in keeping with the community's needs, wants, and ability to pay.
- allows communities to have decision-making authority for the sharing of services with other communities.
- allows communities to have dedicated access to Gas Tax Funding.

4. Why are the partnering LSDs in the proposed YRC qualified to become a Rural Community?

A Rural Community is possible when a group of Local Service District(s) and an existing municipality(s) or Rural Community, with sufficient population and property tax base to be viable (4,000 population or \$200 million tax base), wish to collaborate and restructure themselves. The group must make a request to the Minister of Environment and Local Government to begin the process. The YRC Project Steering Committee requested and were granted an exemption from the requirement to include an existing municipality as a partner in the Project.

5. Who would govern the proposed YRC and how would they be elected?

A Council would govern the affairs of the proposed York Rural Community. Through the same process used for municipal elections and by-elections, citizens will elect a mayor and councillors to represent them on Council.

6. What would the YRC Council be responsible for?

The role of the YRC Council would be to ensure that the provision of local services is in keeping with the community's needs, wants, and ability to pay. While the YRC Council would have to ensure the provision of administration, emergency measures and community planning services (e.g. development approvals, subdivision approvals, building permits and inspections), it would only take on the responsibility for additional local services (e.g. fire protection, street lighting, recreational facilities) when it is cost advantageous and the community is ready to do so. Such a decision would be made through the passing of a resolution of council and the making of a by-law, which would provide an opportunity for all community members to have a say.

7. What services will the provincial government continue to oversee in YRC?

The Department of Transportation and Infrastructure of the provincial government will continue to provide road maintenance and upgrades within YRC. The Department of Environment and Local Government will continue to provide the local services until or unless the YRC decides to assume them.

8. Would the YRC hire a staff?

The YRC must appoint a Clerk, Treasurer and Auditor. It is likely that one person would be able to carry out the functions of the Clerk and Treasurer. The YRC would also have the ability to appoint other officers as deemed necessary by Council for the administration of services to its residents.

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

It is important for a Rural Community to provide community planning services for a number of reasons, all of which relate to 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 YRC be responsible for providing?

The YRC must adopt a rural plan within two years of incorporation. A rural plan will enable YRC to ensure that different types of development (e.g. residential, commercial, institutional, recreational, resource) happen in an 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 YRC may contract to Regional Service Commission 11 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.

The LSDs of Kingsclear, Keswick Ridge, Bright and Douglas already have a rural plan in place which will be used to develop the new YRC plan.

11. Will the partnering LSDs in the proposed YRC be able to keep their Advisory Committees?

A LSD and its Advisory Committee is dissolved when it becomes part of a Rural Community. Citizens of each former LSD will gain the opportunity to elect their representatives on the YRC Council. The feasibility study process will serve to define the composition of the YRC Council and whether councillors will be elected on a ward and/or at large basis.

The YRC Council will have the ability to establish citizen advisory committees to work with council to discuss any issue(s) of the community as a whole or part of the community.

12. How much will YRC 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 YRC because it has a sufficient population and tax base and because the area is already paying an administration fee (to the Department of Environment and Local Government) which will be rolled in to the

YRC budget. The feasibility study process will serve to define the initial governance and administrative costs associated with the establishment of YRC. Moreover, the pooling of tax bases will provide the opportunity to provide improved and/or more economical services.

The former LSDs within YRC 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. Those that do not have certain services such as street lighting will not be required to take them on as a result of the creation of YRC.

13. Who will control the budget of YRC?

The YRC will have financial powers in keeping with its responsibilities. The YRC Council will establish a budget and set the required tax rate(s) for the services that it has decided to provide.

14. Will YRC receive the Community Funding and Equalization Grant?

Yes, the taxpayers of YRC will continue to benefit from the same Community Funding and Equalization Grant that they received in their former LSDs. Council will also be able to apply for other forms of provincial and federal funding that are not available to LSDs.

15. How does the Department of Environment and Local Government help?

The Department will work with the new YRC Council to train and prepare them to assume the responsibilities and powers provided by the creation of YRC.

16. How will the relationship between citizens of YRC and their Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) change?

Similar to the citizens of a Municipality, the citizens of YRC will have an elected council to represent their collective interests with their MLAs

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

A key feature distinguishes a Rural Community from a municipality namely that a Rural Community will only have to provide community planning services while it gradually assumes the responsibility of providing other local services. This is of particular importance with regards to providing road maintenance and upgrades which is most cost advantageous to leave with the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure.

In contrast, a municipality is responsible for all 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 and upgrades) as well as policing services.