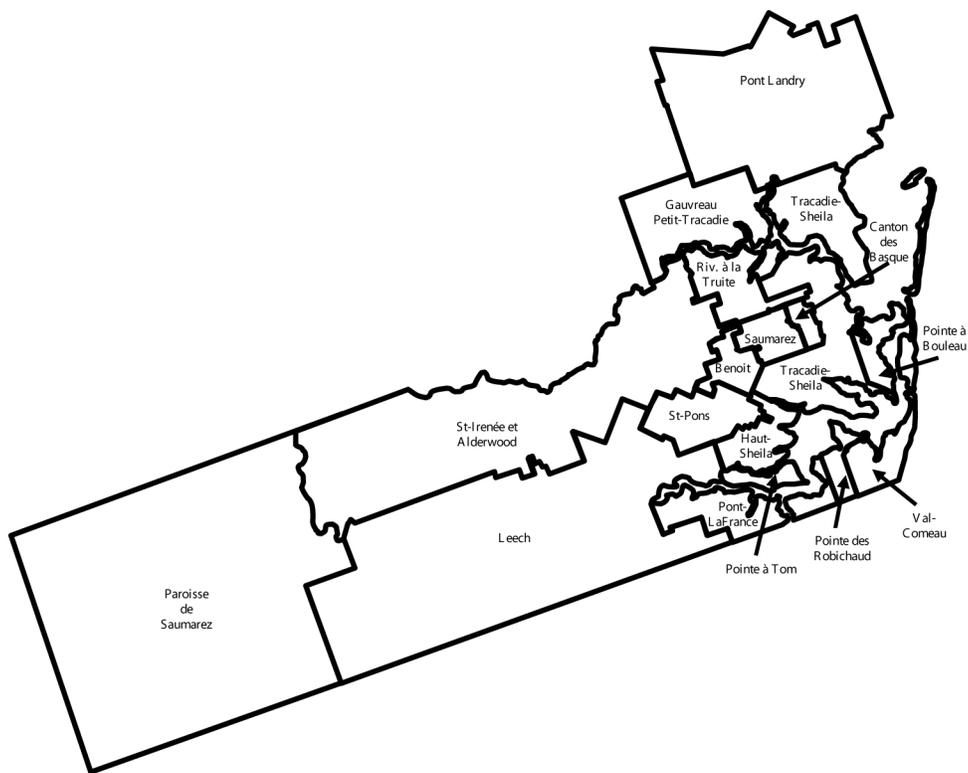


FINAL REPORT

of a study to determine the feasibility of incorporating the Local Service Districts (LSDs) of Benoit, Gauvreau-Petit Tracadie, Haut-Sheila, Leech, Pointe-à-Bouleau, Pont-Lafrance, Pont-Landry, Rivière à la Truite, Saumarez, Saint-Irénée and Alderwood, Saint-Pons, Val-Comeau, and the Parish of Saumarez (Canton des Basques, Pointe-à-Tom, Pointe-des-Robichaud) as a rural community



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New  Nouveau
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In 2003, the advisory committees of the 13 local service districts (LSDs) expressed interest in joining together and forming a local government. Following an initial assessment, at least 25 persons qualified to vote in each LSD asked the Minister of Local Government to carry out a study to determine the feasibility of incorporating the 13 LSDs as a rural community.

The study was therefore undertaken by the Department's staff with the participation of a study committee made up of representatives of the 13 LSDs. When the examination of the potential of establishing a rural community was completed, a draft proposal for the establishment of a rural community for the 13 LSDs was shared in March 2006 with the residents and property owners within the LSDs in order to receive their viewpoints.

This final report was then completed by the Department's staff with the participation of the study committee in the light of the viewpoints expressed by the residents and property owners within the 13 LSDs.

Status of the LSD of Pointe-à-Bouveau

In the fall of 2005, 29 residents of the Local Service District of Pointe-à-Bouveau and the municipal council of Tracadie-Sheila also asked the Minister of Local Government to carry out a study to determine the feasibility of annexing the LSD to the municipality.

Should the LSD of Pointe-à-Bouveau not be part of the rural community, the impact of establishing a rural community with only the 12 other LSDs would be very minimal. The withdrawal of the LSD of Pointe-à-Bouveau would have no effect on the composition of wards, the composition of the council, or the provision of services and would have only a minor impact on the property tax rate.

It is therefore recommended that the Minister first determine the level of local support in the LSD of Pointe-à-Bouveau for annexation to the town of Tracadie-Sheila. Should there not be sufficient local support within the LSD for annexation to the town, the Minister could then determine the level of local support in the LSD for the establishment of a rural community with the 12 other LSDs. The LSD of Pointe-à-Bouveau has a population of 143 residents and a tax base of \$4.3 million.

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CURRENT SITUATION

(POPULATION, TAX BASE AND LOCAL PROPERTY TAX RATES)

In each LSD, with the exception of the LSD of Saumarez Parish, during a public meeting, the residents who are qualified to vote elected an advisory committee composed of no more than five members in order to advise and assist the Minister of Local Government in administering local services within the district. While an LSD advisory committee can exercise some leadership, its power to decide and act for the benefit of the community is limited.

LSD	2006		Property tax rate per \$100 of assessment	
	Population	Tax base	Local rate	Combined rate
Benoit	243	\$4.9 million	32¢	97¢
Gauvreau/Petit Tracadie	334	\$10.1 million	36¢	\$1.01
Haut-Sheila	800	\$16.5 million	34¢	99¢
*Leech	527	\$7.5 million	40¢	\$1.05
Parish of Saumarez	Not available	\$14.2 million	29¢	94¢
Canton des Basques	341	\$6.0 million	34¢	99¢
Pointe-à-Bouleau	143	\$4.3 million	43¢	\$1.08
Pont-Lafrance	754	\$12.5 million	46¢	\$1.11
Pont-Landry	1,342	\$34.5 million	38¢	\$1.03
Rivière à la Truite	431	\$11.5 million	36¢	\$1.01
Saumarez	535	\$10.4 million	32¢	97¢
Saint-Irénée & Alderwood	862	\$16.1 million	40¢	\$1.05
Saint-Pons	358	\$6.0 million	31¢	96¢
*Val-Comeau	715	\$16.4 million	29¢	94¢
Total	7,385	\$171 million		

*The Pointe-à-Tom population is included in the LSD of Leech and the Pointe-des-Robichaud population is included in the LSD of Val-Comeau.

The **local rate** applies only to the costs of local services such as street lighting, solid waste collection, fire protection, land use planning, and community and recreational services.

The **combined rate**, which applies only to owner-occupied residential properties, includes the local rate plus the provincial rate of 65 cents for policing, road maintenance, animal control, and the administration of the LSDs.

COMMON CHARACTERISTICS

The 13 LSDs share many common characteristics. Here are a few examples:

- Coastal and riverside communities
- Presence of numerous cottages
- Cultural, sport, and community activities
- Part of the same community of economic interest

LOCAL CONCERNS

Not only do the 13 LSDs share several common interests, but they often experience the same concerns. Here are a few examples:

- Land use - body shop, scrapyards, storage, unsightly premises, gravel pits, peatlands, coastal protection, agricultural land protection.
- Watercourse protection and management.
- Economic and tourism development of the military range.

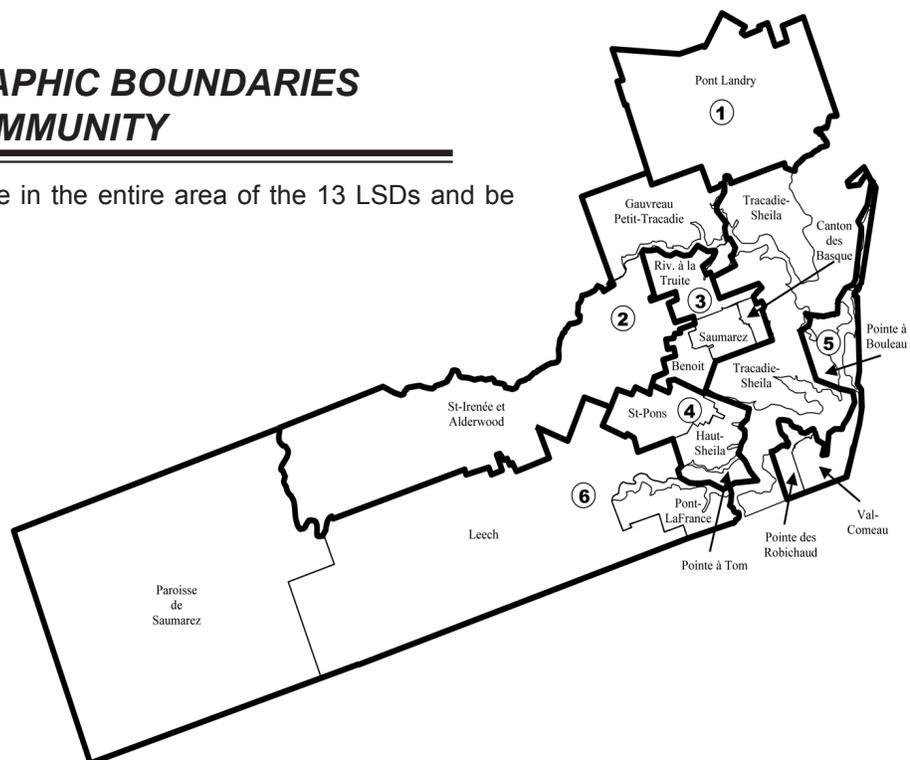
WHY CONSIDER FORMING A RURAL COMMUNITY – WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?

By forming a rural community, the 13 LSDs will enjoy a number of benefits. Here are a few examples:

- **Ability to elect the members of the rural community council** that would represent the entire rural community. The new rural community council would provide a stronger voice to represent the community's interests.
- **The power to draw up a rural plan** in co-operation with the Acadian Peninsula District Planning Commission (CAPA) in order to ensure that the different land uses (e.g., residential, commercial, institutional, recreational, agricultural) are located only in appropriate areas for the desired growth and development of the community.
- The rural community would also have the option of **gradually taking on responsibility for the provision of local services** (e.g., fire protection, street lighting, community and recreational facilities, solid waste collection), at a pace it is comfortable with. The provincial government would continue to ensure the provision of local services, until the rural community chooses to offer them itself.
- The council would be able to **regulate local activities**, such as dangerous or unsightly premises, animals, and noise causing a public nuisance, over the entire area of the rural community.
- The LSD residents could benefit from a **local office and part-time staff** to respond to the needs of the rural community's population.
- The LSD residents, through the council, could obtain **decision-making power over** the annual operating **budget** and the **local property tax rates**, as well as the **power to borrow** for buildings, land, and equipment.
- **Greater financial capacity**, through the pooling of the tax bases of the 13 LSDs, totalling close to \$171 million, with a view to providing more, better, and/or more economical services at the times chosen by the community.
- The rural community would represent **a real strength** when it comes to negotiating projects with the provincial and federal governments (e.g., access to funding programs for infrastructure development) or discussing the sharing of services with municipalities in the region.

PROPOSED GEOGRAPHIC BOUNDARIES FOR THE RURAL COMMUNITY

The rural community would take in the entire area of the 13 LSDs and be divided into six wards.



POPULATION AND TAX BASE (FOLLOWING FORMATION OF A RURAL COMMUNITY)

Population	7,385 residents
Tax base	\$171 million

COMPOSITION OF THE COUNCIL

The LSD advisory committees would no longer exist upon the establishment of the rural community.

The rural community would be divided into six wards, and the council would be made up of seven elected members. The mayor would be elected by the voters of all six wards, and each of the six wards would elect a councillor. Six councillors representing a total of 7,385 voters is comparable to the number of councillors in other municipalities with a similar population. For example, the municipality of Campbellton has six councillors for 7,798 residents, and the municipality of Oromocto, which has 8,843 residents, is also represented by six councillors. The town of Tracadie-Sheila also has six councillors for 4,724 residents.

Since the next quadrennial municipal election will not take place until May 2008, the first rural community council would be elected through a by-election for a term ending in May 2008. The next rural community council would be elected in May 2008 for a four-year term.

The following table shows the approximate population in each of the six wards as well as the number of persons who are qualified to vote.

	Ward	Approximate Population by Ward	Number of Persons Qualified to Vote (2004)
1	Pont Landry	1,342	1,032
2	Gauvreau and Petit Tracadie, Saint-Irénée and Alderwood	1,240	1,066
3	Canton des Basques, Benoit and Saumarez, Rivière à la Truite	1,506	1,084
4	Saint-Pons, Haut-Sheila, and Pointe-à-Tom	1,158	1,051
5	Pointe-des-Robichaud, Val-Comeau, and Pointe-à-Bouleau	858	773
6	Leech and Pont Lafrance	1,281	921
	Average	1,230	988
	Total	7,385	5,927

PROVISION OF LOCAL SERVICES

The rural community council would be responsible for ensuring the provision of land use planning and emergency measures services. As such, the rural community is expected to adopt a rural plan within two years following its establishment. A rural plan would enable the rural community council to ensure that the different land uses (e.g., residential, commercial, institutional, recreational, and agricultural) are located only in appropriate areas for the desired growth and development of the community.

It is expected that land use planning services would be provided with the support of the Acadian Peninsula District Planning Commission (CAPA). For that purpose, the rural community council would appoint two members to CAPA in order to represent the rural community. In return, the Minister of Local Government would appoint four members representing the unincorporated areas participating in CAPA instead of six (since the population of the Acadian Peninsula's unincorporated areas would be reduced by one third following the establishment of a rural community). The role of CAPA will be to guide the council and the community in developing the rural plan. In addition, once the rural plan is adopted by the rural community council, CAPA will ensure its application (e.g., approval of developments and subdivisions, issuing of building permits, building inspection).

The rural community council would also be responsible for developing and adopting an emergency measures plan for the rural community. An emergency measures plan ensures a coordinated intervention in emergency situations so as to protect lives, the environment, and property. The rural community could decide to join the Acadian Peninsula's regional emergency plan, which already applies to the area of the rural community. In that case, the rural community council would appoint a representative to the regional committee.

Under the Municipalities Act, the provincial government would continue to ensure the provision and the financial management of local services within the rural community, including policing, roads, fire protection, street lighting, community and recreational facilities, dog control, and solid waste collection, until the rural community chooses to offer them itself.

The rural community council would appoint a member to the Commission de gestion des déchets solides de la Péninsule acadienne (COGEDES), which would serve the rural community.

NAME OF THE RURAL COMMUNITY

A committee was set up by the study committee in order to propose a choice of names for the rural community. From the names chosen by the committee, the study committee decided on a list of three names for purposes of public consultation.

- La Cadie - goes back to 1603, when Sieur de Mons received a commission from King Henry IV to establish the country of La Cadie.
- Des Grands Pins - Our forests were abundant, and pine was extremely useful to the British navy.
- Terres-Unies - the 13 LSDs are part of the same geographical area.

According to the comments received during the public consultation process, the name **Terres-Unies** was preferred by 25 residents, compared with 11 for **Des Grands Pins** and 9 for **La Cadie**. Other names were suggested as well, including: **Saumarez (2)**, **Grand Tracadie (2)**, **Belle Feuille**, **Terre de nos Ancêtres**, **Splendeur naturelle**, **Soleil levant**, **Paix de campagne**, **Ruisseau ensoleillé**, **Le rassemblement**, **Deux Rivières**, **Beau Pays**, and **Tracadie-Sheila rural**.

The name of the rural community would therefore be the one preferred by the greatest number of participants, i.e., **Terres-Unies**. Furthermore, the establishment of a rural community bearing the name **Terres-Unies** would not result in any change in mailing address for the citizens.

LOCATION OF THE RURAL COMMUNITY OFFICE

The Centre communautaire de Saint-Pons could house the rural community office on a temporary basis once the rural community was established.

However, the decision concerning the location of the rural community office would be made by the elected council.

ANTICIPATED CHANGES TO LOCAL PROPERTY TAX RATES

The following table shows the estimate of the rural community's first annual budget associated with its governance and administration.

First Annual Budget of the Rural Community (Governance and Administration)

Training	\$ 900
Council meetings	\$ 5,300
Office equipment	\$ 2,300
Clerk/Treasurer (part time)	\$15,600
Rental of office	\$ 2,400
Legal fees	\$ 5,000
Auditing	\$ 1,000
Public notices	\$ 2,000
Office supplies	\$ 2,500
Insurance premium	\$ 3,000
Total	\$40,000

As suggested during the public consultation process, certain other expenses, including those that might be required in setting up the rural community office, could raise the estimate of the rural community's first annual budget to more than \$40,000. Although the estimate of the rural community's first annual budget does not provide for an annual salary for the council members, the council could decide otherwise, which would also result in an increase in the first annual budget.

The following table shows the impact of the rural community's first annual budget **associated with the governance and administration of the rural community** on the local property tax rate and bill, by property type and value.

The decision concerning the rural community's first annual budget and subsequent budgets would be made by the rural community council.

	Increase in local property tax rate per \$100 of assessment	Increase in local property tax bill for a property assessed at \$50,000	Increase in local property tax bill for a property assessed at \$100,000
Residential property, occupied by owner or not	2 cents	\$10	\$20
Non-residential property (e.g., business)	3 cents	\$15	\$30

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

In connection with the study, a draft proposal for the establishment of a rural community was prepared and mailed out to all property owners within the 13 LSDs. Three public information sessions concerning the proposal were held on March 13, 2006 in Pont-Landry (125 participants), March 15, 2006 in Pont-Lafrance (210 participants), and March 20, 2006 in Saint-Irénée (225 participants). Those sessions enabled residents and property owners to gain a better understanding of the project and express their viewpoints. Residents and property owners also had the opportunity to share their views in writing from the time of the public meetings to April 30, 2006. A total of 119 persons did so.

Here are the highlights of the various viewpoints expressed in connection with the public consultation.

Proposal Elements	Highlights of the Viewpoints		
1. Name	<p>Preferences:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Terres-Unies (25), Des Grands Pins (11), La Cadie (9) <p>Other suggestions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Saumarez (2), Grand Tracadie (2), Belle Feuille, Terre de nos Ancêtres, Splendeur naturelle, Soleil levant, Paix de campagne, Ruisseau ensoleillé, Le rassemblement, Deux Rivières, Beau Pays and Tracadie-Sheila rural. 		
2. Geographical boundaries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comments generally favourable to the proposed geographical boundaries. 		
3. Composition of the council / Division of wards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include Pointe-à-Tom in Ward 6 with Leech and Pont-Lafrance. • Divide the area into three wards: Ward 1: Pont-Lafrance, Leech, Pointe-à-Tom, Saint-Pons, Saint-Irénée & Alderwood, and Benoit; Ward 2: Haut-Sheila, Pointe-des-Robichaud, Val-Comeau, and Pointe-à-Bouleau; Ward 3: Rivière à la Truite, Canton des Basques, Gauvreau-Petit-Tracadie, and Pont-Landry. • Include Benoit in Ward 4 with Saint-Pons, Haut-Sheila, and Pointe-à-Tom. 		
4. Land use planning services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is the main reason motivating people to favour the establishment of a rural community. • A rural plan developed by the rural community council that would reflect the needs of the entire rural community would be beneficial. 		
5. Local services still provided by the government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The residents fear that the government plans to offload its responsibilities for providing several local services (not only land use planning) against the will of the community. • A rural community would not improve the local services available. 		
6. Initial costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proposed first annual budget would not be sufficient. • Concern regarding a possible significant increase in the local property tax rate. 		
7. Location of the rural community office	<p>Preferences:</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td style="vertical-align: top;"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Saint-Pons (33) • More central location than Saint Pons (5) • Centre de Benoit (2) • Saumarez region (2) </td> <td style="vertical-align: top;"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pont-Lafrance (1) • Val-Comeau (1) • Pont-Landry (1) </td> </tr> </table>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Saint-Pons (33) • More central location than Saint Pons (5) • Centre de Benoit (2) • Saumarez region (2) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pont-Lafrance (1) • Val-Comeau (1) • Pont-Landry (1)
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8. Other comments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The study committee has come up with a wonderful proposal for improving the management of our community's affairs. • The government is giving us a unique opportunity to take charge of our region's economic development. • If we were a rural community, we would have powers that we do not have now. • It would have been better to hold a public meeting in each LSD (instead of only 3 meetings for the 13 LSDs). • A rural community would slow down the development of the town of Tracadie-Sheila. • The process for determining the level of local support was questioned (some would prefer that the objection process be eliminated and that local support be determined solely by plebiscite – yes or no vote). • A number of provincial laws already exist concerning unsightly premises and gravel pits, for instance, but they are not always complied with. 		

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RURAL COMMUNITY

Here is an overview of the main steps necessary to get a rural community up and running:

- Election of the first rural community council.
- Entry into office of the members of the first rural community council.
- The council would officially appoint the rural community staff.
- The council would also appoint a member to the Commission de gestion des déchets solides de la Péninsule acadienne (COGEDES), and two members to the Acadian Peninsula District Planning Commission (CAPA), which would serve the rural community.
- The council would adopt a by-law concerning its meeting procedures.
- The Department of Local Government would hold training sessions for the members of the first council and the rural community staff in order to help them to assume their responsibilities and exercise their powers adequately.
- The council would prepare and adopt:
 - the rural community's first annual budget
 - a rural plan (land use) for the entire rural community, with the support of the Acadian Peninsula District Planning Commission (CAPA).

FOR MORE INFORMATION

To obtain more information about rural communities or to talk with departmental staff about any aspect of the "Our Communities – Our Future!" initiative, please contact one of the following offices:

**Tracadie-Sheila office of the
Department of Local Government**
3518 - 2 rue Main St.
Tracadie-Sheila, N.B. (N.-B.), E1X-1G5
Tel/Tél: 506-394-3868
Fax/Télé: 506-394-3897
E-mail: OCOF-NCNA@gnb.ca

**Local Governance and Community Leadership Branch
Department of Local Government**
Tel.: (506) 453-2434, Fax (506) 457-4933
E-mail: OCOF-NCNA@gnb.ca

OR

Visit the Department's "Our Communities - Our Future" Web site
at: <http://www.gnb.ca/0370/0376/0004>