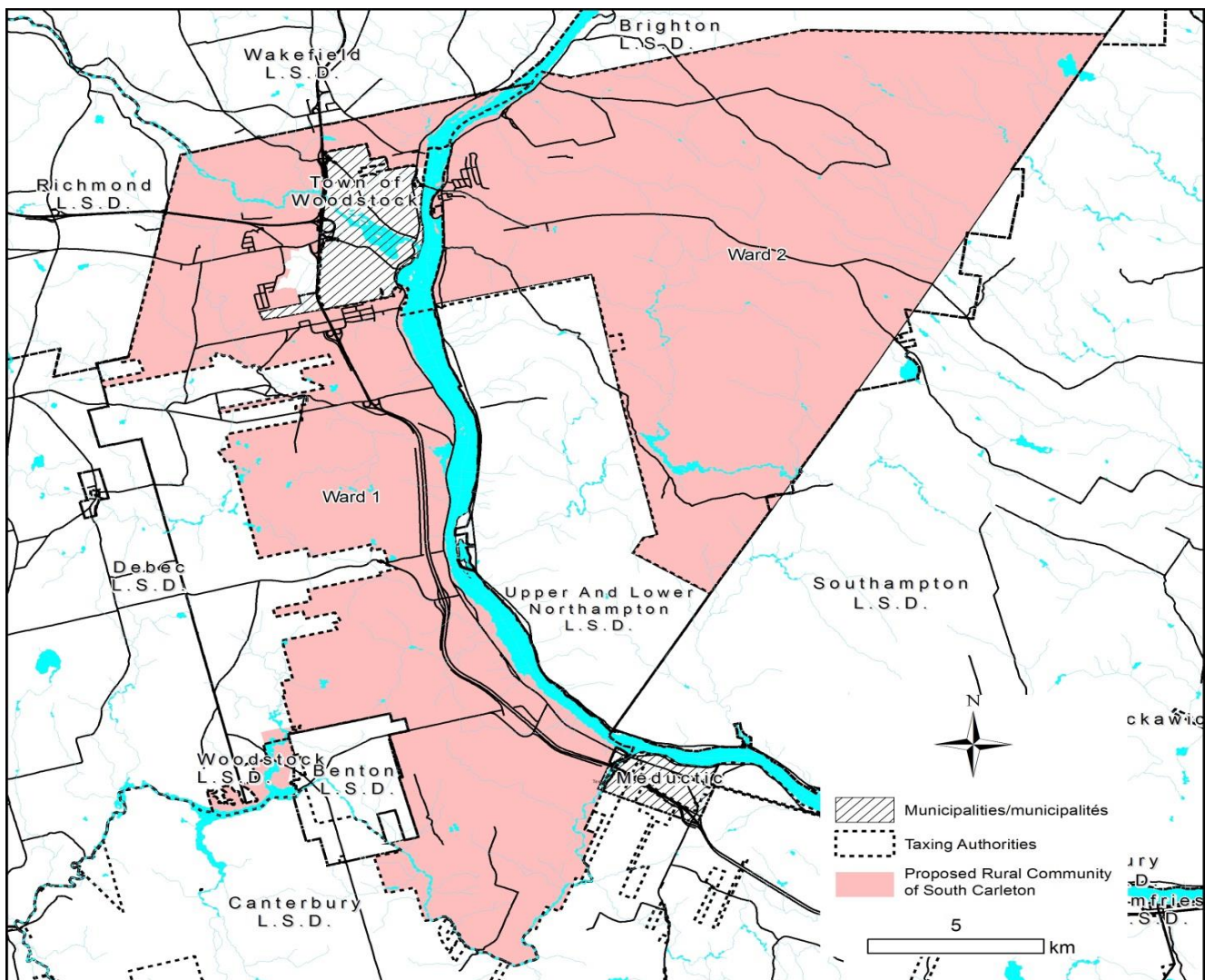


The Rural Community of South Carleton

Spring 2014

Final Feasibility Study Report



DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT
Proposed Rural Community for the area known as South Carleton
Feasibility Study Report

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1. How the Rural Community (RC) proposal was initiated

The Local Service District (LSD) of Woodstock has been exploring the concept of forming a rural community with neighbouring partner communities and LSDs since 2003; the previous initiatives had been postponed or delayed for various reasons until the present project was revitalized in the summer of 2013. Subsequent to discussions at meetings held in February of 2014, the Steering Committee decided that the present project would be comprised of the LSDs of Woodstock and Northampton with the option of looking at possible annexations of additional areas if this rural community project was successful. The two LSDs have many varied connections and ties including sharing of the environment surrounding the Saint John River which flows through both Northampton and Woodstock LSDs. They also share ties through most service organizations, schools, churches, they are closely connected to the town of Woodstock for employment and shopping, and both communities contribute to the Carleton Civic Center. The LSDs of Woodstock and Northampton are members of the Western Valley Regional Service Commission.

2. Steps taken by the Local Service Districts of Northampton and Woodstock

February 2014 -- Decision was made to accept previous project information as the initial assessment data needed to obtain required petitions to move to the feasibility study.

February 2014-- Petitions were submitted with signatures of over 25 eligible voters from each of the LSDs of Northampton, Wakefield and Woodstock requesting the Department of Environment and Local Government undertake a Feasibility Study for their respective LSDs.

February 19, 2014- Meeting held with representatives of LSDs of Debec, Richmond, Northampton, Wakefield and Woodstock. Debec and Richmond LSD representatives indicated their preference was to abstain from this project at this time. Wakefield LSD representative indicated that he would confer with his Committee and inform Local Government staff by Friday, Feb. 21 if they wanted to remain in project; Wakefield decided to abstain as well.

February 24, 2014- A Steering Committee comprised of representatives of the two LSDs of Northampton and Woodstock was formed, Brian Hayden was chosen as Chairperson and Eugene Anderson as Secretary. David Whiting, Executive Director of Western Valley Regional Service Commission submitted a quote on supplying Administrative services for the proposed rural community. Mr. Whiting also indicated there would be substantial costs savings in rural planning because of a difference in costing between LSDs versus municipalities.

February 27, 2014-Steering Committee decided the name of the proposed rural community would be “South Carleton”. Other decisions were made on the number of wards and Council composition

March 3, 2014- A summary of the draft Feasibility Study was written and will be made available to all residents of the two LSDs during the week of March 17th. The Steering Committee decided that three public information sessions should be held as part of the Feasibility Study.

March 10, 2014 – Public Information session dates confirmed for March 25, 26 and 27th. In addition to the summary being distributed, the Steering Committee requested ads promoting the information sessions be published in local print media.

March 2014- Final Feasibility Report submitted to the Minister of Environment and Local Government with the recommendation to determine if sufficient local support exists for the establishment of South Carleton as a Rural Community, by way of a plebiscite (a vote) of all eligible voters in the two LSDs.

April 2014—Public Information Sessions to be held prior to plebiscite voting date

May 12, 2014- plebiscite

3. Current situation in the area of South Carleton

Proposed Boundary of South Carleton:

- The entire local service district of Northampton
- The entire local service district of Woodstock

Population:

- According to the 2011 census, there are 1,442 residents in Northampton LSD and 2,108 residents in Woodstock LSD for a total of 3,550 residents in South Carleton – an increase of approx. 3% over the previous census.
- In the current situation there are 10 representatives for all 26 of the LSDs in the Western Valley Regional Service Commission. Of these 10 representatives, 1 is from the LSD of Woodstock. If the area remains unincorporated, it is possible that none of the representatives would be from these two LSDs in the future whereas as a rural community the area would have a Mayor as their representative on the Commission.
- The total area of South Carleton is estimated at 363 sq. km. In this area there is a population density of approximately 9.3 persons per sq. km., making it predominately a rural area with some exceptions adjacent to the town of Woodstock.

2014 Property Tax Base and Tax Rate:

The following table shows the property tax base and property tax rates being paid in **2014** broken down by LSD

LSD	Residential Owner Occupied Properties	Non- Residential Properties	Total Property Tax Base	Property Tax Rate
Northampton	68,968,048	2,171,852	71,139,900	0.9383
Woodstock	110,813,244	29,161,806	139,975,050	0.9576
TOTAL	\$179,781,292	\$31,333,658	\$211,114,950	

The 2014 property tax base for South Carleton is approx. \$211.1 million, of which \$179.8 million is residential (e.g. primary residences, apartments, cottages, etc.), and \$31.3 million is non-residential, or commercial.

Unmet needs and goals of the LSDs of Northampton and Woodstock:

- The LSDs want to have control of and responsibility for local taxation, local services and local public decision making.
- The LSDs want to be able to regulate the use of land with a rural plan (including zoning) and subdivision by-laws.
- The LSDs want local decision making authority for future restructuring requests such as annexations.
- The LSDs want to be able to create its own budget as a rural community and set its own local property tax rate.
- LSDs would like to be able to receive federal and provincial grants to fund local infrastructure, economic development and recreation projects.
- The Steering Committee sees advantages in having a unified voice to negotiate when dealing with services that affect most residents such as recreation, fire protection and solid waste.

4. Objectives for the establishment of a Rural Community

Political Objectives

- Provide residents with the opportunity to elect their own council members to represent them and make by-laws and taxation decisions that reflect and respond to residents, businesses and community organizations needs
- Allow local decisions to be made by community members
- Have decision-making power on service sharing arrangements with other communities

Fiscal/Financial Objectives

- Provide some local control over property taxes
- Achieve cost savings, especially in planning, because the 2 LSDs will no longer be included with the other LSDs in the Regional Service Commission as a result of equalization.
- Better access to funding programs from federal and provincial governments.

Economic Objectives

- Attract more businesses by being an incorporated area outside of the town
- Better concentration of farms and agricultural areas.

Social Objectives

- Continue to support and sustain local volunteer efforts
- Strengthen communication and collaboration amongst community residents and volunteers
- Preserve the farming territory

Environmental Objectives

- Better plan the use of land to protect environmentally sensitive areas and maintain the integrity of productive agricultural and forest lands
- Be empowered to address issues such as unsightly premises

Service and Administrative Objectives

- Better plan the use of land to ensure that development takes place where adequate services and related infrastructure exist or can be provided in a timely, economic and efficient manner
- Employ trained and qualified staff to serve council and the community, especially when dealing with other governments (municipal, provincial and federal)

5. Pros and Cons of Creating the Rural Community of South Carleton

Benefits of incorporation as South Carleton:

- A rural community would have the power and ability to speak with one voice on community issues and the power to decide upon action which would best meet the needs of the whole community. As a result common services can be delivered more efficiently and potentially at a lower cost.
- The elected rural community council could deal directly with Provincial and Federal Officials, and speak to governments with the authority of an elected body on issues of government policy, legislation and programs.
- The identity of individual communities within the rural community would be maintained.
- There would be a rural community council made up of elected local community representatives based upon a ward system.
- As an incorporated community South Carleton would have direct access to federal and provincial development grants and other assistance programs, which are not readily available to the local service districts.
- The council would be responsible for developing a land use plan to guide the development of the rural community, preserve its unique character, its environment and quality of life. For the first two years the rural community must use the planning services of Western Valley Regional Service Commission.
- The council would employ the services of the Western Valley Regional Service Commission during its first year of incorporation to fulfill administrative and clerk responsibilities and carry out council decisions.

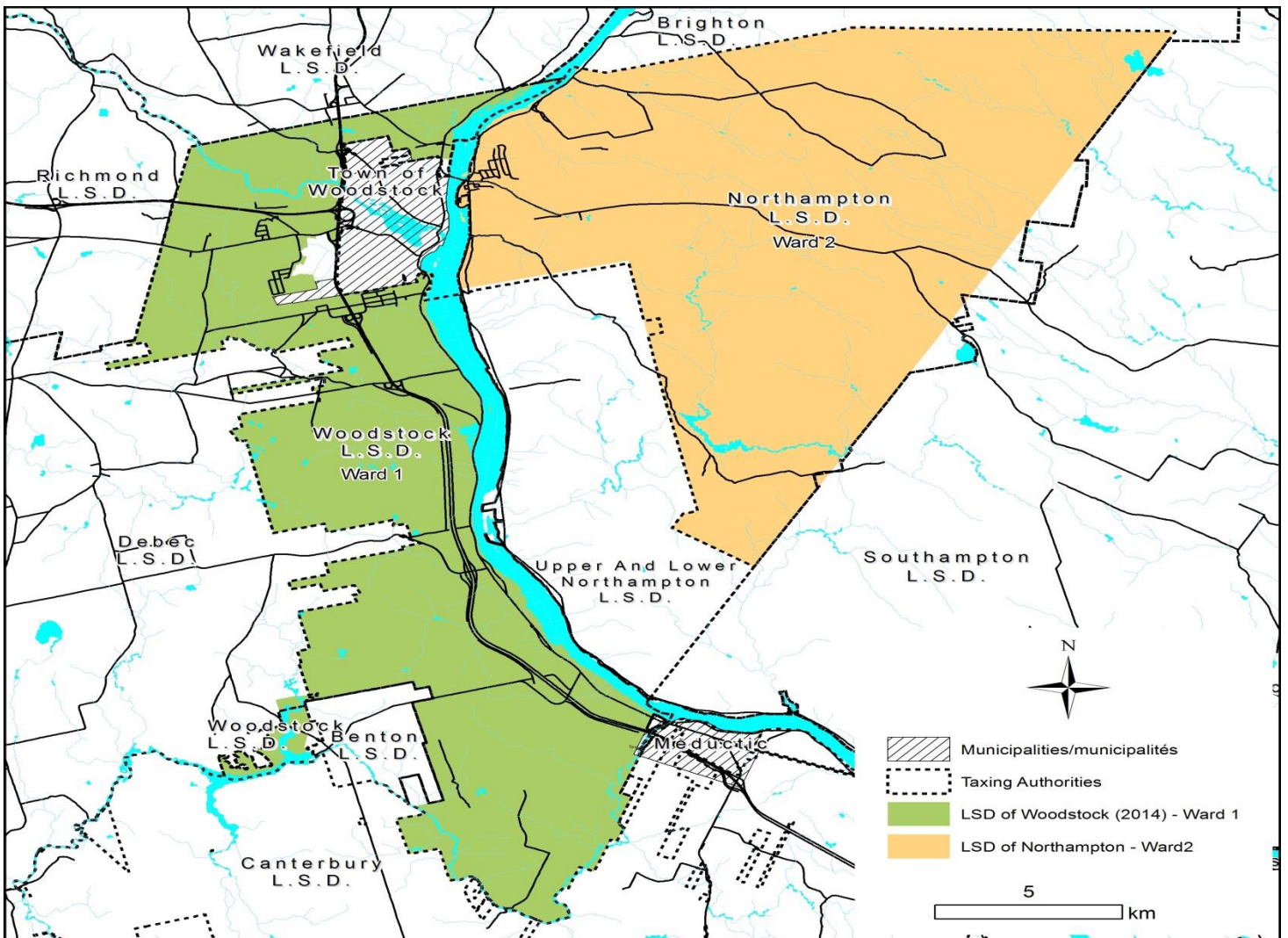
Concerns about the Creation of a Rural Community:

- People may fear and think that council has full say and will do anything they wish. However, all council meetings are open to the public, and Council will be sensitive to the needs of the residents. Council's role is to mediate among the diverse interests, to build consensus where possible, and to make choices on municipal matters.
- Fear might exist over equal influence or say in how the rural community is run. There will be two (2) Wards, based on the current Provincial Electoral polls, and each ward will have an elected representative for that region; in addition there will be one Councillor and the Mayor elected at large; total votes from both wards. All residents of voting age will be able to vote for the Councillor in their Ward. Each Councillor should make decisions that will benefit the entire rural community. Wards do give people of the area someone familiar with whom to discuss issues. It is the responsibility of each councillor to bring local issues forward so that the entire council can deal with them.
- Some people may have the fear that they will lose their identity. Local names will continue to be used for civic addresses, 911 identity, etc. The name of the rural community will only be used when referring to the group as a whole.

6. Composition of the Rural Community Council

With the creation of a rural community, the existing LSD Advisory Committees would be dissolved. To replace these committees, the Steering Committee is recommending a rural community council composed of a Mayor (elected at large) and three Councillors (one per defined ward/region and one elected at large) elected every four years at the time of the province-wide municipal elections, beginning with the December 8, 2014 by-election: (see ward map below)

- **Mayor** to be elected at large
- **One Councillor** to be elected at large
- **One Councillor** for Ward 1 covering all or portions of the communities of Upper Woodstock, Jacksonville, Plymouth, Bedell, Beardsley, Mapledale, Teeds Mills, Flemington, Hartford, Speerville, Hay Settlement, Riceville, Lower Woodstock and Bulls Creek in the Woodstock LSD
- **One Councillor** for Ward 2 covering all or portions the communities of Grafton, Pembroke, Newburg, Newbridge, East Newbridge and Kilmarnock in the Northampton LSD.



7. Delivery of Local Services

Upon incorporation the rural community council would assume responsibility for the services of land use planning, emergency measures and administration of the rural community. The mayor would represent the rural community Council as a member on the Western Valley Regional Service Commission.

The province would continue to assume responsibility for fire protection services, policing services, recreation services, dog control and road maintenance services. If, at a later time the rural community council determined that it was beneficial to take on any these services and others, it could to do so at that time.

8. The Name of the Rural Community

Since the area represents a portion of the southern part of Carleton County and due to the fact that the name has a history in the area, the Steering Committee members have recommended the name: **South Carleton**.

9. Location of the Rural Community Office and Staffing Requirements

The Steering Committee recommends that the rural community utilize the services and office space offered by the Western Valley Regional Services Commission; the rural community council could make an alternate decision once in place.

10. Expected Effect on the Tax Rate if the Residents Vote for a Rural Community Versus Staying as LSDs

As can be seen in the attached table, the anticipated savings in rural planning costs would offset a major portion of the new community administration costs (e.g. council, staff and building costs, etc.). The projected 2015 budget estimates are made assuming that no enhancements are made to any services. This is done so that the tax rate can be compared between a rural community and the LSDs. The rural community budget was completed with the assumption that the costs of the services will be shared equitably between all the LSDs.

Rural Community Property Tax Rate Increase

- The projected annual increase in expenditures were calculated based on the past 5 year average increases in LSD expenditures; as well the projected annual increase of the property tax base, was calculated based on the past 5 year average increases in LSD tax bases.
- The first full year budget as a rural community would be 2015.

Projected Property Tax Rates Increase as a Rural Community

The following table shows the planned changes in the local property tax rate and the net effect on sample tax bills if the rural community of South Carleton were to be established. It should be noted that these changes are

only those attributed to the addition of administration costs and the savings from planning costs. The changes noted would only be effective as of 2015.

Note: All comparisons are made with previous year's taxes and also include changes as a result of the province's changes to the *Real Property Tax Act*. Increases indicated in this table are based only on the additional costs of a rural community and do not speculate on tax increases or decreases that are not known at this time.

	Property tax rate per \$100 of assessment		Increase in the property tax rate Per \$ 100 of assessed property value	Net increase for a property valued at:	
	2014 rate	2015 rate with RC additional costs		\$100,000	\$ 200,000
Residential property occupied by owner					
Woodstock LSD	\$0.9576	\$0.9756	1.8 cents	+\$18	+ \$36
Northampton LSD	\$0.9383	\$0.9563			
Residential property not occupied by owner					
Woodstock LSD	\$1.7734	\$1.7914	1.8 cents	+ \$18	+ \$36
Northampton LSD	\$1.7541	\$1.7721			
Non-residential property(commercial)					
Woodstock LSD	\$2.6583	\$2.6953	2.7 cents	+ \$27	+ \$54
Northampton LSD	\$2.6462	\$2.6832			

The detailed budget calculations as a rural community can be found in **Appendix A** with backup calculations for administration (e.g. council, staff and building costs, etc.), distribution of grant, LSM office costs and the calculation for percentage increases in expenditures and tax bases. It should also be noted that these calculations are also based on the removal of the tax base associated with the recent annexation of a portion of the Woodstock LSD by the town of Woodstock.

11. Public Consultation

Following the completion of the first draft of the feasibility study the results were presented at 3 public information sessions in the LSDs:

LSD of Northampton—Tuesday--7 PM, March 25, 2014 at the Pembroke Community Hall, 4 Newburg Road, Pembroke, NB

LSD of Woodstock--Wednesday--7 PM, March 26, 2014 at Meductic Community Center, 320 Route 165, Meductic, NB

LSD of Woodstock--Thursday--7 PM, March 27, 2014 at Canada's Best Value Inn, 168 Route 555, Bedell, NB

The second meeting in Meductic was cancelled because of a snow storm but the attendance at the two meetings in Pembroke and Bedell averaged about 40 people per session.

The feedback from all these meetings was varied but it was clear that the majority (estimated 70-75%+) were in support of this project going to a plebiscite to allow the LSD residents to decide whether to form a rural community.

At these public sessions some residents saw some real advantages to the creation of a rural community; such as:

- Having a council that would not only speak on their behalf, but also have the authority to make decisions on their behalf
- Having the ability and option of providing their own services and setting their own tax rate,
- Having the ability to apply to government; both provincial and federal, for various grants and funds .

Some attendees expressed some concerns with the creation of a rural community; such as:

- Concern that council would not be transparent, but would make decisions without considering the wants of the public and without consulting them—this was addressed by the Chairperson/Presenter Mr. Hayden who stated all decisions would be made at an open meeting of Council
- Belief that a rural community was just the creation of another layer of government—again the Chair reaffirmed that this is another layer of government, similar to other municipalities
- Concerns that planning restrictions would be imposed on them similar to the Town of Woodstock, and that these restrictions would prevent them from carrying out their wishes on their own land—Chair stated that the plan would be their plan developed through consultations with the residents

Should it be decided that this project will go to a plebiscite vote on May 12, 2014; the Steering Committee will host further information sessions during the month of April to further inform and educate the public on the rural community proposal.

12. Recommendations

- It is recommended that a plebiscite be held in the LSDs Northampton and Woodstock on May 12th, 2014. This vote will be one vote for the entire area, not held separately in each LSD. If the vote is positive, i.e. 50%+1 of the people who vote want a rural community, it is recommended that the Rural Community be incorporated in August of 2014.
- A positive vote from the plebiscite will also result in the council being elected in the Dec. 8, 2014 municipal by-election.
- It is recommended that the rural community council utilize administrative services including office space from the Western Valley Regional Service Commission for the first few years after incorporation.
- Currently there is a difference in the tax rate of approximately 2 ¢ per \$100 of assessment between the two LSDs in South Carleton. It was agreed among all members of the Steering Committee that the tax rate should not become the same in the first few years as a rural community. Therefore, it is recommended that the tax rates of the two LSDs of the rural community not be unified at the time of incorporation. If, in the future, council wanted to create a uniform tax rate with the LSDs, it is recommended that they negotiate with Environment and Local Government and do so with a graduated approach.