

Summary of the Feasibility Study Report on Establishing a Rural Community for Cocagne

September 2013



The Cocagne Local Service District (LSD) advisory committee and a group of community stakeholders have been working to examine the feasibility of forming a rural community since June 2011. Together, we consulted the residents and produced a study. The conclusion was clear and inevitable: setting up a rural community would enable Cocagne to better respond to the needs of the community.

The establishment of a rural community would give Cocagne the tools the community could use to plan for economic, sociocultural and tourism development, and environmental protection. We have determined that this would require only a modest investment on our part—an increase of approximately 8.7 cents per \$100 of assessment in the property tax rate. By becoming an incorporated community, Cocagne will have access to resources which are more accessible to communities with local governance in place, such as the Gas Tax Fund. In other words, the benefits are worth the investment.

Seizing the opportunity to set up a rural community together will give us a stronger voice and allow us to promote development that is respectful of our values. We now have to make an important decision together about the future of Cocagne. We strongly encourage you to vote in the plebiscite, on October 28th, to decide whether or not to establish a rural community for Cocagne. For the members of the advisory committee and the study committee, the choice is clear: we need to take charge and establish a rural community to build the future we want.

Change is inevitable. Together we can choose to take advantage of it.

Roger Després
Chair, LSD of Cocagne



Current Situation

With a population of 2,545 residents, the LSD of Cocagne is dynamic and wants to thrive. Many years of volunteer activity has led to the establishment of recreational and community facilities, improved the lives of residents, and promoted the development of an active community. However, Cocagne is facing numerous challenges:

- ◆ Social challenges such as a decrease in volunteers, departure of residents, and an aging population;
- ◆ Environmental challenges such as pollution, erosion, and development;
- ◆ Economic challenges such as the desire to support local businesses and tourism.

The LSD of Cocagne is not in a position to manage these issues and address these challenges at the present time. Many of the decisions affecting Cocagne at the local level are made by the provincial government. The LSD of Cocagne cannot:

- ◆ Manage its budget;
- ◆ Hire staff and have an administrative office;
- ◆ Own buildings, land, and equipment;
- ◆ Pass municipal by-laws;
- ◆ Manage local services;
- ◆ Develop a local emergency measures plan;
- ◆ Adopt and amend a land use plan.

What Is A Rural Community?

The rural community model is designed to entrust community decisions to the local council, making it possible for communities to plan a future that is respectful of the residents' values and to ensure that local services meet their needs, desires, and financial means.

As in a municipality, the residents of a rural community elect a municipal council every four years. The council has local decision-making powers that it exercises to satisfy the community's local service needs.

Unlike a city, town, or village, a rural community is not responsible for offering all services such as policing, road construction, etc.

Why Establish A Rural Community? What Are The Benefits?

The establishment of a rural community could provide Cocagne residents with several advantages:

- ◆ The power to elect their representatives (mayor and councillors) from community residents who know the community and have its interests at heart. The elected council:
 - ◆ would have the power to manage its annual operating budget and decide on its local property tax rate;
 - ◆ could borrow for capital projects, find savings, and obtain grants for various projects;

- ◆ would be able to acquire land, buildings, and equipment;
- ◆ would see to protecting what the people of Cocagne have built and developed on a volunteer basis;
- ◆ would represent the community's interests when negotiating projects with provincial and federal government representatives and when discussing the sharing of local services with the other communities in the area;
- ◆ in general, would undertake or support projects that meet the community's needs.
- ◆ The establishment and amendment, if necessary, of a land use plan to ensure that different types of development (e.g. residential, commercial, institutional, recreational, and resource-based) would occur in an orderly fashion and in the appropriate locations.
- ◆ The opening of a local office with staff to meet the residents' daily needs;
- ◆ Guaranteed representation on the board of directors of the Kent Regional Service Commission.

Characteristics Of The Proposed Rural Community

What would the name of the rural community be?

The name of the rural community would be "Cocagne."

What would the geographical boundaries of the rural community be?

The rural community of Cocagne would keep the same geographical boundaries as the LSD of Cocagne.

Would the addresses of residents of the LSD of Cocagne change?

The current civic and postal addresses in the LSD of Cocagne would not change.

What would the composition of the council be?

The new council would be composed of five (5) members, including the mayor elected at large and four (4) councillors elected in the two (2) wards – two councillors per ward.

Where would the rural community's office be located?

The committee recommends that the council lease office space in the arena for the first few years.

What staff members would be hired by the rural community?

The committee recommends hiring a full-time general manager to see to the proper management of the new rural community. The general manager would assume responsibility for all services provided by the community and the duties of clerk/treasurer.

What services would the rural community be responsible for offering?

The rural community council would be responsible for the following services immediately upon incorporation:

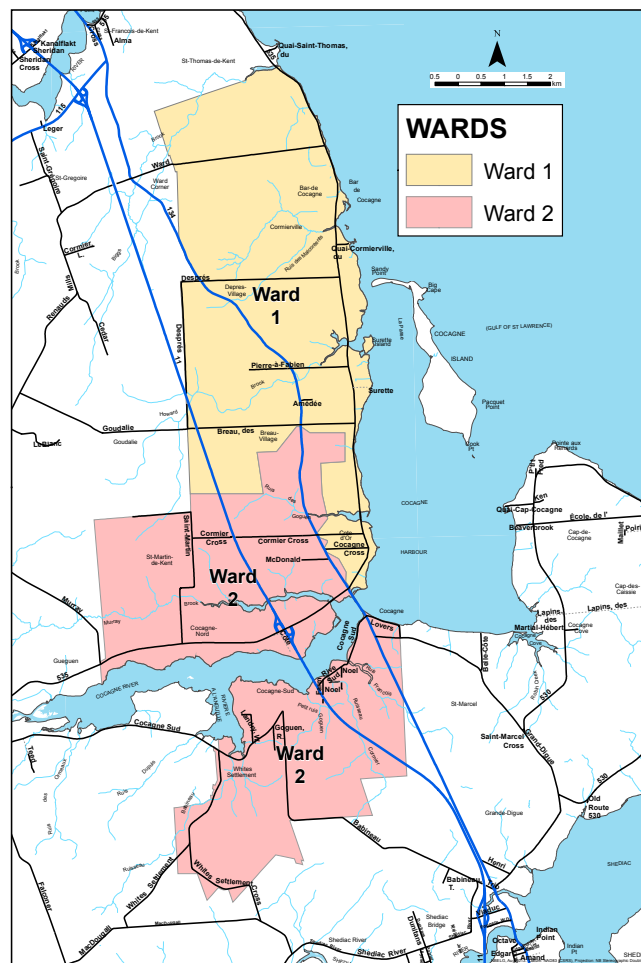
- ◆ Land use plan;
 - ◆ Development and subdivision approvals;
 - ◆ Building permits;
 - ◆ Building inspection.
- ◆ Local emergency measures plan;
- ◆ Office and administrative staff.

The provincial government would continue to provide delivery and financial management of other local services:

- ◆ Policing services;
- ◆ Road construction services;
- ◆ Fire protection services;
- ◆ Street lighting;
- ◆ Recreational and community facilities;
- ◆ Animal control;
- ◆ Waste collection and disposal.

The rural community could take charge of these other local services if it considers this to be of advantage.

Geographical map with identification of wards for the proposed rural community of Cocagne



What Changes Are Planned In The Local Property Tax Rate When The Rural Community Is Established?

The following table shows the planned changes in the local property tax rate when the rural community of Cocagne is established. It should be noted that these changes would only be effective as of 2015.

Property type	Property tax rate per \$100 of assessment		Increase or decrease in the property tax rate	Net increase for a property valued at:	
	2014 rate	2015 rate		\$100 000	\$200 000
Residential property occupied by owner	\$1.0610	\$1.1485	+ \$0.087	+ \$87	+ \$174
Residential property not occupied by owner	\$1.8768	\$1.9593	+ \$0.0825	+ \$82	+ \$165
Non-residential property	\$2.8302	\$2.9615	+ \$0.1313	+ \$131	+ \$262

Definitions:

- ◆ **Residential property occupied by owner** includes houses occupied by the owner.
- ◆ **Residential property not occupied by owner** includes cottages, blueberry fields, woodlots, farmland, vacant land, apartments, and secondary residences.
- ◆ **Non-residential property** takes in all commercial buildings.

Plebiscite

A plebiscite (vote for or against) will be organized in the Local Service District of Cocagne on October 28, 2013. The date and time of advance and regular polls will be mailed to you by [Elections New Brunswick](#).

All residents qualified to vote will be asked to respond to the following question:

Are you in favour of the local service district of Cocagne becoming a rural community?

The support of the local population will be considered sufficient if the majority (50% + 1) of the people voting in the plebiscite are in favour of establishing a rural community.

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