



UNE COMMUNAUTÉ,
UN AVENIR!

FEASIBILITY STUDY – RURAL COMMUNITY OF ROGERSVILLE

Final Feasibility Study Report on the Incorporation of a Rural
Community in the Greater Region of Rogersville

Prepared by:

Regional Study Committee

For:

Minister of the Environment and Local Government

Drafted by the Kent Regional Service Commission

February 2019

Notice to Readers

This document is the final version of the feasibility study report on the proposed incorporation of a rural community for the Village of Rogersville; the LSD of Acadieville; the LSD of Rogersville; the LSD of Collette; sections of the LSDs of Weldford (Kent Junction), Harcourt (Crown lands west of Kent Junction and a small parcel on Pleasant Ridge Road), and Nelson (Murray Settlement); the LSD of Saint-Louis (Noinville), and the LSD of Blackville (commonly referred to Upper Ridge). The final report outlines the various aspects of the proposed establishment of a rural community, as well as the different steps that have been taken and the actions that will be carried out until the plebiscite is held.

This report was requested by the regional committee on the proposed rural community. It was completed in accordance with the committee's terms of reference. The committee supports all of the content in the report. The report does not represent the views of the Kent Regional Service Commission or its staff. The conclusions and recommendations are those of the regional committee and are approved by it.

Acknowledgements

This study is the result of the efforts of a working committee that was made up of several members of the community. Those individuals were involved in the committees set up to oversee this feasibility study on the establishment of a rural community for the Greater Region of Rogersville. We wish to thank the members of both groups (the regional committee and the working committee) for their dedication to this project that is so important to the future of the region. The activities of the study committee members represent hundreds of hours of volunteer work, much travel, and many meetings.



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1.0 Executive Summary

The communities that make up the Greater Region of Rogersville have been working together for many years. A wide range of public services and community organizations serve the region proposed for a rural community. After the ice storm that hit the region hard in January 2017, the chairpersons of the advisory committees of the LSDs of Acadieville, Collette, and Rogersville and the mayor of the Village of Rogersville got together to see how the region could work together even more closely. That was when the idea of creating a rural community came up.

A number of public consultations were held in the communities in the target region. Many residents attended the public meetings and called on the Minister to conduct a feasibility study. The initial assessment report was deemed satisfactory and, despite the Department's requirements for becoming a rural community (population of 4,000 and tax base of \$200 million), the Minister approved the conducting of a feasibility study in January 2018.

In January 2019, the regional study committee completed the feasibility study, which provides details about the different components of the proposed amalgamation of the LSDs and the village to form a rural community. It is now up to the Minister to determine whether a plebiscite can be held for this proposed restructuring project.

The feasibility study takes into account the existing and future needs of this large community. As a result of the many public and sectoral meetings, the study identifies several major initiatives the public would like to explore. Also, the document describes the elements required for the public to make an informed choice. These include local governance (mayor and councillors), impact on the property tax bill and budget estimates, demographic profile, presentation of additional services such as land use planning and emergency measures management, as well as any other service that may meet the needs of the public.

The purpose of the proposed amalgamation that the regional study committee is exploring is to strengthen existing ties in the Greater Region of Rogersville and put in place an administrative structure to address the challenges that may lie ahead. The three LSDs and the village have informally come up with a shared vision of their development, and an administrative structure like a rural community would help to strengthen this vision of the community.

The Greater Region of Rogersville is unique in New Brunswick, as was so aptly expressed by Marc Richard, a teacher at École l'Étoile de l'Acadie and a former student at École W.F. Boisvert, when the elementary school closed in June 2018: *[Translation]* "We have a sense of belonging here in Rogersville that can't be explained. You really have to experience it." (Radio-Canada, *Tout un samedi*, June 16, 2018).

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2.0 Comments by Regional Study Committee Members

The regional study committee is proud to present this feasibility study on the establishment of a rural community in the Greater Region of Rogersville. From the start of the project, the committee was committed to meeting with as many community members as possible to present the project to them. Residents answered the call, with many attending the dozens of public meetings. This aim of this approach that involved many public meetings was to provide the public with ample information about the project. We are certain that the results of our work were appreciated by the public.

The communities that make up the proposed rural community are already part of a larger community of interest. Our residents share a common history and, more specifically, a unique community life. Being a mostly French-speaking inland region, our community has become resilient and very cooperative in an effort to ensure its development. The feasibility study will demonstrate this regional collaboration, which has been well established for generations.

The committee would like to thank all those involved in organizing the public meetings and the feasibility study for their work. It also wishes to thank those residents who travelled in great numbers and have taken an interest in the development of their community.

Thank you!

Roger Richard

Chair, Regional Study Committee



3.0 Methodology

The regional study committee shaped the feasibility study in accordance with a community development and citizen participation perspective. The design of the public consultations, the communication tools, and the participative approach used at the public events enabled the population to gain an understanding of the proposed restructuring project.

Throughout the process, the regional study committee stressed the importance of connecting with the public using the various means available. Knowing that residents are not always all that interested in participating in public meetings, various consultation and guidance methods were used to ensure that they fully understood the proposed project. Also, the committee recognizes that this proposal could have an impact on the lives of citizens and that it is essential for the public to be fully informed about all aspects of a rural community.

Below is a list of the different methods used to consult and communicate with the public regarding the proposed rural community.

- Public meetings
- Open houses
- Booths at community events
- Sectoral meetings
- Individual meetings
- Presentations to target groups
- Financial analysis with working committee
- Preparation of maps and tools for governance purposes
- Mail-outs
- Community newsletter
- Social media

3.1 Background

The Greater Region of Rogersville has a history of collaboration among its communities. Its geographic isolation has meant that this region with more than 3,000 inhabitants has been collaborating for many years. Here is a timeline of that cooperation: In 1949, the Rogersville Chamber of Commerce acquired its first fire truck and its first fire brigade, which serves the communities targeted by the proposed amalgamation. In 1957, a high school was built, and students in the region were united under one roof for their secondary education. In the 1960s, an arena was built to serve a growing clientele for ice sports. A second arena was built after the first one was demolished, and it serves as an important community centre in the region. It is still managed by a sports association made up of people from all the communities proposed for the amalgamation. In 1966, the Village of Rogersville was incorporated following recommendations in the Byrne report, which encouraged the formation of local governments in the province. In the 1970s, the region established a cooperative of brussels sprouts farmers and became one of the largest producers of this vegetable in the country. In the 2000s, the three religious parishes amalgamated to become a pastoral unit. Then, in the 2010s, the Rogersville Chamber of Commerce repositioned itself and became a regional chamber of commerce that included

the LSD of Acadieville in its coverage area. The Chamber of Commerce itself remains in place for administration purposes.

In the winter of 2017, eastern New Brunswick experienced one of the biggest ice storms in its history. Hundreds of thousands of NB Power customers were without power because of the massive damage caused by the ice. The Rogersville area was right in the middle of the storm, and all of its NB Power customers were left in the dark. The municipal building of the Village of Rogersville became a popular destination for the residents of the municipality and those of the neighbouring local service districts. The municipality implemented its emergency measures plan and was able to help people who wanted to warm up, get water, or even recharge their cellphone batteries. Volunteer firefighters from Rogersville knocked on more than 1,400 doors to make sure people were still safe. The power came back on in homes in the municipality after three days and in more isolated areas after a week.

This weather event was an important point in the thinking about establishing a local governance structure for the region as a whole. The chairs of the LSD advisory committees realized that their communities were vulnerable to such weather events and, despite the best intentions of employees of the departments of Public Safety and the Environment and Local Government, the advisory committee chairs had to find ways to empower themselves and become more resilient. It was after the ice storm that the chairs of the LSD advisory committees met with the mayor of the Village of Rogersville to look at opportunities for establishing partnerships and building capacity at the local level, not only with respect to emergency measures but also with respect to economic development, recreation, culture, natural resources development, and so forth. The four leaders agreed that the best option for further collaboration was to establish an administrative structure like a rural community.

At that point, the chairs of the advisory committees of the LSDs of Acadieville, Rogersville, and Collette and the Village of Rogersville asked the Executive Director of the Kent RSC to support them in the initial study process to determine whether it would be viable to establish a rural community for the region currently served by the Rogersville fire department. At the same time, a working group and a committee of community leaders were set up to validate the information that came out of the initial study.

In the fall of 2017, the committee called upon the residents of each community. Public meetings were held in Collette, Pleasant Ridge, Rosaireville, Rogersville, and Acadieville to explain to the public the study process under way and to ask them to support a more rigorous process, i.e., a feasibility study. Residents turned up at the public meetings in droves, and most of them signed a petition to be sent to the Minister of the Environment and Local Government, informing her that the community supported a feasibility study.

In January 2018, the Minister of the Environment and Local Government agreed to go ahead with a feasibility study for the region served by the Rogersville fire department. In addition to the LSDs of Acadieville, Collette, and Rogersville, the committee was hoping to include sections of the LSDs of Harcourt, Weldford, Saint-Louis, Blackville, Glenelg, and Nelson in its plans. These LSD sections are part of the natural community of the Greater Region of Rogersville. The Minister also agreed to the committee's recommendation to hire the Kent Regional Service Commission as the lead consultant on the feasibility study.

The winter and spring of 2018 were very busy. The committee met with a number of groups and individuals, including the chamber of commerce, seniors' clubs, foresters, farmers, high school students, young families, artists, and people interested in public safety, to get a better idea of their

needs and expectations, if a rural community was to be established in 2020. People responded to the call, and the meetings were very well attended by the public. In addition, five open houses were held to present to the public the governance model suggested by the regional study committee. Residents were able to see that the region would be divided into four wards, with one elected official per ward, and that the communities of interest had been respected as much as possible. In summer 2018, the committee members took turns manning a booth at community events in order to continue the dialogue with the public about the proposed rural community in the region.

To sum up, the goal of the feasibility study was to do an in-depth analysis of the proposed rural community in order to identify certain considerations, including the following:

- Local needs, opportunities, and aspirations as identified by the public;
- Geographical boundaries;
- Name of the rural community;
- Ways of preserving and strengthening community identity;
- Composition of the rural community council;
- Division of the rural community into wards;
- Municipal services that the rural community plans to provide;
- Staffing needs;
- Estimated annual expenditures and revenues, including different tax rates by sector so as to take into account differences in service delivery.

3.2 Regional Study Committee

The study committee was made up of members of the municipal council of Rogersville, the LSDs of Acadieville, Collette, and Rogersville, and local engaged citizens. It was responsible for ensuring that the feasibility study and communications with the public were carried out properly. In other words, it was supposed to validate the work of the sub-committees. Here is a list of the study committee members:

- Kevin Arseneau, chair of the Rogersville advisory committee and spokesperson for the proposed rural community from September 2017 to September 2018;
- Roger Richard, chair of the advisory committee of the LSD of Acadieville and spokesperson for the proposed rural community from October 2018 to today;
- Bruno Doucette, chair of the advisory committee of the LSD of Collette;
- Pierrette Robichaud, Mayor of Rogersville;
- Gérald Fournier, councillor for the Village of Rogersville;
- Edward Gallant, member of the advisory committee of the LSD of Collette;
- Gaston Richard, member of the Acadieville advisory committee;
- Alain Lamarre, vice-chair of the Greater Rogersville Chamber of Commerce;
- Tara McGraw, resident of the LSD of Rogersville;
- Lise McCaie, resident of the LSD of Rogersville;
- Émile Poirier, resident of the LSD of Collette.

3.3 Working Committee

The objective of the working committee was to collaborate with the Department of the Environment and Local Government and the Kent Regional Service Commission on preparing a feasibility study for the proposed rural community. Here is a list of the working committee members:

- Kevin Arseneau, chair of the Rogersville advisory committee and spokesperson for the proposed rural community from September 2017 to September 2018;
- Pierrette Robichaud, Mayor of Rogersville;
- Gérald Fournier, councillor for the Village of Rogersville;
- Émile Poirier, resident of the LSD of Collette;
- Angèle McCaie, Manager, Village of Rogersville;
- Daniel Goguen, Local Services Manager, Department of the Environment and Local Government;
- Jean Goguen, Planning Director, Kent Regional Service Commission;
- Mike LeBlanc, Regional Emergency Measures Coordinator;
- Roger Pitre, Regional Emergency Measures Coordinator;
- Jean-Paul Hébert, Assessment Services Manager, Service New Brunswick.

Communication tools were developed to structure the promotional efforts for the initiative. To be transparent in its efforts, the regional study committee set up a Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/Grande-région-de-Rogersville-Une-communauté-un-avenir-1632164446847766/>) so residents of the Greater Region of Rogersville could express their thoughts about the project. Also, the municipality included a column on the project in its small community newspaper sent out each month. Texts included interviews, the public meeting schedule, and questions/answers. At public events, a booth was set up, and a committee member was put in charge of answering questions about the project. Through each of these tools, residents of the Greater Region of Rogersville will be able to ask questions and make comments responded to by members of the regional study committee until the plebiscite is held.

In addition to ensuring the transparency of the working committee, the goal of these efforts was mainly to provide the public with correct information. Also, with these various communications tools, the committee was promoting and encouraging the active participation of all citizens.

4.0 Citizen Participation

4.1 Sectoral Meetings

As was mentioned above, the regional study committee held about 10 sectoral meetings with various community groups. Below, we provide an outline of those meetings and the key points that were raised.

4.1.1 – Agriculture

The Planning Director for the Kent RSC provided a short description of the impact of rural planning on agricultural development in the region.

The purpose of developing a rural plan was to ensure that people were listened to and had some control over development. The rural plan included principles and proposals, and the community could adopt a vision, e.g., that it values agriculture. It could go even further and promote organic farming.

During the development of a rural plan, the community could identify farmland that should be preserved, the best land for increasing agricultural capacity, and land better suited to certain crops than others. It was recommended that a committee appointed by council provide land use planning staff at the Kent RSC with guidance on the best local land use practices that they wish to promote. The committee can ask experts for help in identifying criteria for determining agricultural potential in the region.

It was suggested that an agricultural zone be established in the region because of the past and the region's agricultural potential. The land use planning director for the Kent RSC recognizes that people in the region feel strongly about agricultural development, particularly smaller and mixed farms. The farmers in attendance recognized that the next generation of farmers needs to be encouraged because some of the old guard will be retiring soon. Mention was made of the fact that a number of agricultural school graduates are looking for farmland and that there is tremendous potential in the Rogersville area because of its fertile land available at a good price.

Also mentioned was the importance of supporting local agriculture, particularly young farmers who want to contribute to food sovereignty and sustainable development in the region. Because local agriculture is not one of the provincial government's top priorities, it is essential to get the community behind local farmers so they can continue to produce fresh, inexpensive products. The region must look into acquiring a brand image since it already has a reputation for being the agricultural cradle of Acadia.

4.1.2 – Seniors

Seniors in the region were consulted at two meetings. One meeting was held in Acadieville and the other, in Rogersville. Seniors were very open and receptive to the idea of becoming a rural community. They all felt that the region was a good place to live and that seniors were actively involved in organizing activities for their peers. Seniors have a considerable amount of time to invest in the community and they valued the fact that they were being asked to contribute to the development of the village and the LSDs.

However, seniors realize that the region faces demographic issues and challenges related to maintaining community services. They recognize that the solutions to these challenges are complicated and that it would be wise to consider the possibility of becoming a larger community in order to have greater political weight and perhaps attract new services, particularly health-related ones. Some wondered why the idea of establishing a rural community had not come up during equal opportunity reform and the establishment of multiple towns and villages in the province.

Seniors recognize that such a plan for becoming a rural community could lead to an increase in property taxes. However, they believe this increase would enable unincorporated communities to

have a voice on a municipal council and would enable the community to access additional funds such as the gas tax rebate.

4.1.3 – Arts and Culture

The Rogersville area is famous for its multidisciplinary artists. Some are known internationally, others nationally. Each family has some, and they are known for providing local entertainment.

One of the activities that people enjoy the most is P'tit Frolic. This summer activity is very popular with residents and visitors. It brings life to the village centre. Residents certainly want this event to continue. People really appreciated the addition of activities at the Monument National de l'Assomption site. This green space of several acres located right in the heart of the village of Rogersville has lots of potential. There is already a very successful craft market, and many people use it for activities like yoga and walking.

Everyone believes there is very good community participation in cultural activities. Festivals are well attended by tourists, but the region must do more to promote these events and keep people longer in the region. Some say that Rogersville is just starting to open up to the world and that having better territorial organization would contribute to cultural development. International artists like the Hay Babies and Lisa LeBlanc give back to the community, and being better organized culturally would help to develop even more talent. With this great interest in arts and culture, adding human resources to organize activities is essential. Physical locations and organization are also necessary for holding events. Human resources and promotional tools are already being shared, but the region could do even more.

Arts and culture may help to keep people in the Greater Region of Rogersville. These are necessary tools for connecting the generations, and they enable all generations to share and contribute to the community. Establishing a cultural society would help to connect more with the different generations. More use could be made of the train station since it offers an intimate setting where small groups could get together. The proposed rural community might enable people to work together more to increase arts and culture activities.

4.1.4 – Business Community

Business people see that the region has potential. It has an abundance of natural, tourism, and heritage resources, as well as a dedicated workforce. Also, residents of the region are great supporters of buying locally and have a sense of belonging to the community. With a regional chamber of commerce and a business community that gets together regularly, it would be easy to encourage local networking and partnerships. Businesses have close ties with the municipality.

Locally owned businesses are there during difficult times but also during good times. Unlike large companies, even if times may be hard occasionally, locally owned businesses want to stay in the community. The concept of cooperation is anchored in the region. There is a great deal of support at the community level for community projects. Businesses are interested in contributing to the community, and a perfect example of this is the community garden in which everyone lends a hand.

Entrepreneurs are proud of being able to stay in the community and not leaving to work elsewhere. Seeing young people come back to their place of birth is something that they value considerably. There is potential and business opportunities, and people feel confident about the region and lead very

comfortable lives. Land is very accessible and affordable compared with other regions. The Greater Region of Rogersville is close to large urban centres, making it easier to transport goods. Route 126 is an asset for local businesses.

Businesses take a favourable view of the proposed rural community. One entrepreneur said that, *[Translation]* “The bigger we are, the better our chances of further development. With our small communities, this is one way for everyone to have an opportunity to be involved in a larger community.” With one administration, this might enable the community to keep its services and possibly increase the level of services. Working together is the only way to make progress. With an elected council, there is a better chance of public accountability.

Entrepreneurs recognize that establishing a rural community could lead to greater control over land use management as well as an increase in property taxes. There are some concerns about tax increases. However, entrepreneurs are still open to dialogue. According to some entrepreneurs, the benefits of having a shared administration in the region outweigh the inconvenience of a higher tax rate.

Also, entrepreneurs communicated their vision of the community: *[Translation]* “As a rural community, if the proposal is approved by the public, we will have to encourage young people to get into business and recognize that we are not at a disadvantage. We have to find ways to communicate with the government to encourage economic development in our region and show that we are in fact a dynamic community! But to achieve our purposes, we also need tools to determine what we have in terms of labour and identify projects that would benefit local residents” (Alain Lamarre, Greater Rogersville Chamber of Commerce, 2018).

“We need to give the community a brand. The region is seen as a community well suited to agriculture and one that works together. Why not focus on this excellent reputation? With an abundance of natural resources, it is our duty to look at what we can do with them. We’ll all be winners! It’s important that we continue to promote our businesses and support local entrepreneurship. We need to take advantage of the local talents of the local people to encourage new business” (Kevin Arseneau and Rébéka Frazer-Chiasson, 2018).

To ensure that this vision of economic development is implemented, entrepreneurs suggested that a community economic development corporation be set up to oversee the various initiatives resulting from the vision.

4.1.5 – Families

Many families turned up for the session organized for them. This group is the one most in favour of the proposed rural community. These young adults want to keep what the community already has, while adding services. Because of the geographical isolation of the community of Rogersville in relation to other communities in the Kent and Miramichi areas, people have developed a great sense of community spirit, and this is highly valued. This is a region where residents really work together and it is based on volunteering. However, it needs a little boost at the administrative level in order to maintain what is already has.

People in the Rogersville region are very friendly and inclusive. They feel safe and they can trust their neighbours and the population. Young families stand behind the expression, “It takes a village to raise

a child.” They believe that their community is an excellent model for raising a family and that, with a community spirit, it is possible to make a difference in the lives of people and youth.

Young adults in the community do not distinguish among the administrative borders that were established more than 50 years ago. They recognize that it is already a large community and that they need to find ways to move forward on issues. They believe that establishing a rural community would be a good way to advance collective projects. Young people see this in only a positive light, despite a small increase in property taxes.

In addition, these young families identified projects for improving quality of life in the community. These infrastructures and programs would include construction of a pool or water park, the development of more parks and trails, a wider diversity of family activities, a program for revitalizing buildings on Main Street, and the development of a multidisciplinary health centre that would offer services like massage therapy, optometry, and dentistry. These young families already recognize and appreciate the fact that there is a health centre that provides access to a physician. The last consideration is the importance of having a wider range of jobs in the region in order to retain, attract, and encourage people to come back.

4.1.6 – Forestry

Residents involved in the forest industry had many questions about the role of a rural community and about the different ways in which such a structure would be involved in the delivery of services to residents and the impact on property taxes. They have a greater understanding of the role of a rural community but felt it unfortunate that it would not have more control over the management of Crown lands.

The session was facilitated by an expert in forest land management, and he was able to pique the curiosity of forest land owners about how a rural community could lead to development opportunities. The expert explained that a rural community might get people thinking about land management. It could also enter into a partnership with woodlot owners and have a comprehensive study done of forest land and its potential. He gave the example of Gussing, Germany, a community similar to Rogersville that has transformed itself thanks to a unique way of managing forest land.

Establishing a rural community would require the development of a rural plan and could be beneficial for the community because the land use service does not have much information about the region’s forestry biomass. With this information, the land use department could support the development of the forest industry and encourage better management of private lands. The residents in attendance believed in the region’s potential, including more opportunities than are currently available and a better price for wood.

4.1.7 – High School Students

The regional study committee met with students from École Étoile de l’Acadie because a number of them will vote in the May 2019 plebiscite and become engaged citizens in the near future. Most of

these students had heard of the proposed amalgamation and did not understand why the LSD and the municipality were not already a community. Even though most were from the neighboring LSDs, they identified with Rogersville first and then with their LSD. They had also heard about the impacts on property taxes that this amalgamation could have. Although none of the students owned land or buildings, they were aware that today's choices will have impact on the future, and they wanted to be part of this decision-making process.

A number of young people wanted to come back to the region after completing their post-secondary education, if jobs were available. They valued the region's peace and tranquility and said that the countryside is an ideal place to settle down in. Young people saw enormous potential in the agricultural sector and said that much of the land that was left fallow could be transformed into farms. They had big dreams and referred to existing assets that could be transformed into opportunities, and they noted the importance of not limiting themselves because of experiences that did not work in the past. The ideas presented included opening a rustic restaurant that would use local products and building recreational facilities like a water park and a venue that would promote the development of arts and culture, particularly music. These young people recognized that the region has always been creative when it comes to developing programs and infrastructures. They just needed to continue to draw on this community creativity.

4.1.8 – Recreation

The committee met with recreation stakeholders in the region. These people, who are involved in the delivery of programs and the development of recreational infrastructure and equipment, regularly ask the municipality for help in moving their projects forward. They had good things to say about their community, and they recognized that recreation is part of the lives of local residents. Because the region has a good community spirit, it is easy for organizations to enter into partnerships to offer more recreational programs and services, using available infrastructures. Big projects are not necessary to have a significant impact in the community. People are very generous and truly believe in the potential of youth.

However, there are challenges. Because of the region's demographic situation, it is becoming more and more difficult to set up sports teams such as hockey teams. The community needs to equip itself better to communicate to families that community life is very present and that the region is an excellent place to raise a family. The projects that were mentioned include the development of trails, increased use of the national monument site, and the organization of youth summer camps (survival, agriculture, etc.).

4.2 Public Consultations

The regional study committee held nearly 30 public consultations, not including the ones that took place before the Minister approved the feasibility study. The committee decided to hold meetings in each of the communities in the region to give the public the opportunity to participate in greater

numbers. The committee recognized that certain issues were more local in nature, and these meetings in the communities enabled this population to talk with committee members on a more personal basis than in a group.

Public meetings were held in the community centres in Collette, Pleasant Ridge, and Acadieville; the Rosaireville church; the Rogersville seniors' club; the Royal Canadian Legion; École secondaire Assomption; and the village's municipal building.

To start off with, about 10 sectoral consultations were held (see Section 4.1). These sectoral consultations enabled nearly 175 residents to express their views on what they saw as opportunities and constraints associated with having a new local governance structure.

Five open houses were then held to present to the public the two governance model options. These open houses were less well attended. Residents who did attend agreed with the proposed models.

In fall 2018, public consultations on finances were held. There were five presentations in the communities of Acadieville, Collette, Pleasant Ridge, Rosaireville, and Rogersville. More than 100 individuals came to learn about the proposal's impact on property taxes. The consultations also gave residents the opportunity to ask questions, express their concerns, share their views, and comment on the proposal. In all, more than 350 persons attended the public meetings. Also, nearly 250 people "liked" the regional study committee's Facebook page.

5.0 Profile of the Region

5.1 Current Situation of the Greater Region of Rogersville

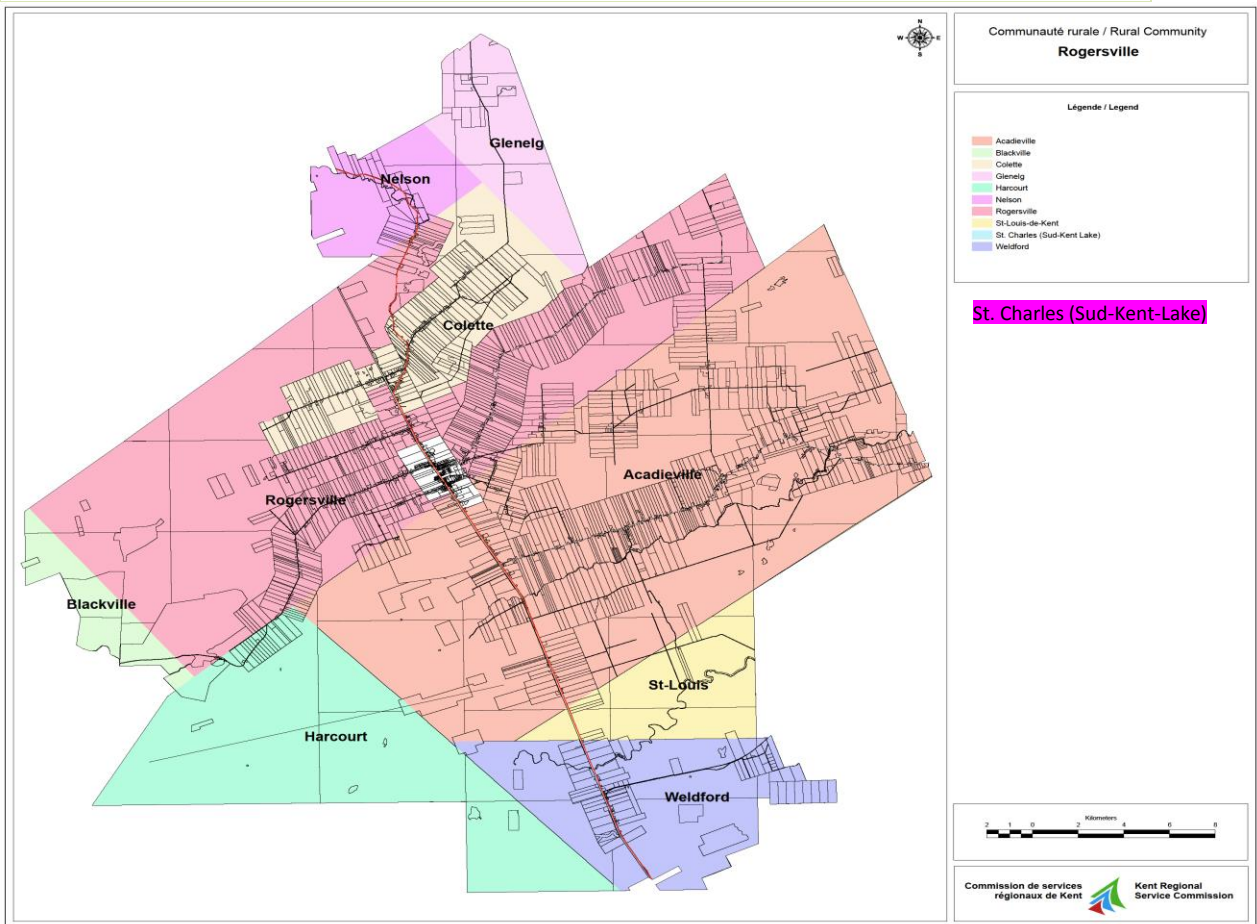
The Greater Region of Rogersville has had close ties for more than a century. This community located partly in Northumberland County and partly in Kent County is geographically isolated from the other communities in the region. The predominantly English-speaking city of Miramichi is 35 kilometres away. The City of Moncton is 80 kilometres to the south, and it has no impact on the community other than in terms of employment and a few specialized services. The Village of Saint-Louis-de-Kent is located about 30 kilometres away, but Rogersville residents have never really identified with it as a community other than during a few years when they could opt to complete high school in Saint-Louis instead of in Rogersville. This geographical isolation has meant that people have developed some level of resiliency and a desire to work together to further their development.

The geographical boundaries of the new community would be the territory served by the Rogersville fire department, the post office, and École Étoile de l'Acadie. This includes the LSDs of Rogersville, Acadieville, and Collette. The rural community would also take in Kent Junction, which is part of the

LSD of Weldford, the end of Pleasant Ridge Road, and Lac Després, which is part of the LSD of Harcourt and Blackville, the northern section of Murray Settlement, which is part of the LSD of Nelson, a few small sections of the LSD of Glenelg (Weldfield-Collette), the LSD of Saint-Charles (forest zone), and Desherbiers (LSD of Saint-Louis). The geographical area is approximately 800 km² in size, with a population of 3,000. This rural community would be the largest French-speaking community in New Brunswick geographically and the largest community in the Kent region demographically.

Mother Tongue		Total (%)
English	330	11.30%
French	2510	86.30%
Unofficial language	30	1.0%
English and French	40	1.4%
Total	2910	100%

Source: Statistics Canada (2016)



St. Charles (Sud-Kent-Lake) **Saint-Charles (Kent Lake South)**

Municipality and LSD	Property tax assessments (2018)	Population (2016)
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Rogersville (Village)	56,026,500	1,166
Rogersville (LSD)	26,437,150	646
Acadieville	27,187,050	709
Collette	15,755,650	456
Other LSDs (7)	Approx. 4,390,700	Approx. 50
Total	129,795,050	3027
Source: Department of the Environment and Local Government, 2018		

5.1.1 Businesses/Organizations/Infrastructures

The Greater Region of Rogersville is very active and dynamic. As evidence of this, it has a number of organizations/community committees and businesses, as well as a number of infrastructures and a common history.

Sociopolitical

- The region was settled during the same period that Msgr. Marcel François Richard was setting up parishes in Kent and Northumberland counties. Construction of the railway, forestry, and the clearing of agricultural land are all part of the community’s history.
- Most residents of the Greater Region of Rogersville have Acadian roots, and French is spoken in more than 90% of households (Statistics Canada, 2016).
- There is one parish unit for the greater region, and the three parishes share the same priest. Also, parishioners from Collette attend mass in Rogersville during the winter.
- Most children go to École Étoile de l’Acadie. The parent committee is made up of people who live throughout the greater region.
- The Rogersville health clinic serves the target region. The community has a provincial nursing home, as well as community and private nursing homes, the largest of which is named ARC (Acadieville, Rogersville, Collette) to represent the region as a whole.
- All the communities are part of the same provincial and federal riding.
- The vast majority of social clubs have members from all the communities.
- The Rogersville fire department serves the entire region targeted by this study.

Geographical

- Inland region with an economy based mostly on agriculture and forestry.
- Relatively flat land with marshy areas. The best farmlands are located on ridges.
- People identify strongly with the only lake in the region – Després Lake.
- Three main highways, Routes 126, 440, and 480, two linking west to east and one linking north to south.
- 30 minutes from Miramichi, one hour from Moncton, and two hours from Fredericton.
- A railway that goes through the geographical centre of the region.

Economic

- **Farm businesses:**

- The region is returning to its agricultural roots. Long known for the production of brussels sprouts, after the cooperative closed, the region saw a decline in agriculture. However, the Greater Region is rethinking agriculture, and the region’s fertile land is starting to be used again. Also, Ocean Spray has set up one of the largest cranberry operations in North America at Pleasant Ridge.

- **Forestry operations:**

- One sawmill
- Several entrepreneurs with contracts in the forest industry

Businesses:

- Food store (grocery store)
- Hardware store
- Pharmacy
- Three convenience stores
- Six restaurants
- Motel
- Two bars
- Funeral home
- Half a dozen service stations and garages
- Several beauty and hair salons
- Recycling centre
- Two businesses in the heavy equipment sector
- Several entrepreneurs in various sectors
- Two dog grooming services

- **Financial institutions:**

- Charter bank
- Caisse populaire

- **Provincial, federal, municipal, and community institutions:**

- Level-III nursing home
- Post office
- K-12 school
- RCMP satellite office
- Passenger train station
- GED classes
- Service Canada (once a week)
- Community hall
- Fire department



- Resource centre
- Child care co-op
- Visitor information centre

- **Sports and recreation:**
- Fitness centre
- Arena (sport club)
- 3 community centres
- Bowling alley
- Tennis court
- 2 ballfields (1 with lights)
- 2 seniors' clubs
- Numerous festivals (Brussels Sprouts, country, bluegrass, Folk Fraise, parish picnics, 2 winter carnivals, Canada Day, National Acadian Day, and P'tit Frolic – every Wednesday during the summer)
- Canadian Legion
- 50 or so social clubs
- Walking club
- Outdoor programming
- Minor soccer
- Minor hockey

- **Culture:**
- Assumption national monument
- 2 monasteries (Trappist and Trappistine)
- Library
- Cultural society
- P'tit Frolic committee
- Le Cercle de chanson

- **Community support services:**
- Chamber of commerce
- Saint-Vincent-de-Paul
- Food bank
- Collective garden
- 2 parks for children (Acadieville and Rogersville)
- Scouts
- Air Cadets
- Dance classes
- Support program for girls and women in the region (Femmes Fortes)

5.1.2 Existing Services

Although Greater Rogersville has a population of only 3,000, it has the vitality and desire to prosper through its many activities for improving the quality of life of its residents and promoting an active community.

As was mentioned previously, being located between Moncton and Miramichi, but still isolated from them, the Greater Region of Rogersville must offer a wide range of services to its residents because of this isolation. In order to continue to grow and improve quality of life for its residents, the region is seeking new ways to make itself known and more resources to invest in its infrastructures, businesses, and services.

Rogersville residents currently pay for the following services:

- Administration
- Dog control
- Streetlights (LSD of Collette and Village of Rogersville)
- Solid waste management (managed by the Kent RSC)
- Fire department
- Sport and recreation (Village of Rogersville and LSD of Acadieville)
- Police protection services (RCMP)
- Transportation services (highways, roads, etc.) (Department of Transportation and Infrastructure in the LSDs)
- Land use planning (managed by Kent RSC)
- Emergency measures.

5.2 Limitations of LSDs in the Region

Here are a few limitations and challenges facing the LSDs in the Greater Region:

- LSD residents cannot readily participate in the development of economic development strategies affecting their own community.
- The LSDs are not incorporated.
- LSDs just have advisory committees that advise the Minister.
- Decisions are made by the provincial government.
- LSDs have no power to:
 - provide and manage services;
 - hire staff;
 - own public property;
 - pass bylaws;
 - manage land use and finances (budget, property tax rates, loans, etc.).

- Adequate drinking water protection and drinking water supply in the short and long terms are already threatened in some locations.
- No land use plan 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.

6.0 Rural Community

6.1 Why establish a rural community?

We noted earlier that establishing a rural community for the LSDs in the Rogersville region might contribute a great deal to the community. The proposed incorporation would provide the Greater Region with access to more financial resources that could go towards its economic, tourism, and cultural development. These new financial resources would also enable the community to improve and develop its infrastructures.

In addition, establishing a rural community could lead to improvements to and the addition of municipal services, which would help to enhance quality of life for residents and, at the same time, reduce the youth exodus and encourage young families to come to the region. With these new services, the rural community of Rogersville would promote the region's economic development and be able to attract new businesses and encourage job creation.

Since Rogersville has very good potential when it comes to agriculture and forestry, it is important for residents to ensure better management of land use planning, which would be possible with the establishment of a rural community. The Greater Region would be able to make regulations and take other measures that might help to protect its territory.

Last of all, the rural community would give the community a stronger voice, local decision-making power, a council, and representation before provincial and federal government authorities. Residents of the Greater Region of Rogersville would then be in a better position to look out for their interests and the well-being of their community.

6.2 Name of the New Rural Community

A name would be given to the incorporated rural community in accordance with the *Municipalities Act*. The proposed name for the rural community would be "Rogersville." If residents want to change

the proposed name, they will be able to submit a request to the elected council of the rural community. The council will decide whether to keep the name or to suggest another one.

6.3 Governance

6.3.1 Rural Community Council

If the result of the plebiscite supports establishing a rural community, the advisory committees of the existing LSDs and the municipal council of Rogersville would be dissolved when the rural community is established and a new council would be elected. With this new entity, LSD residents would obtain what they do not currently have – real decision-making power in collaboration the residents of the former municipality. They would have a say when it comes to economic, social, and environmental development and issues facing their community. The committee therefore recommends the following governance structure:

- The rural community would be divided into five wards.
- Council would consist of six persons to facilitate decision making (voting), i.e.:
 - A mayor elected by the population as a whole
 - Five councillors:
 - One councillor elected in each of the five wards.
- The first election would be held in May 2020.
- The council would start sitting in June 2020.
- It is recommended that all municipal council meetings be public; residents of the new rural community would therefore be invited to attend the meetings.
- It is also recommended that council sessions take place in French.

The Rural Community of Rogersville would enable the residents of the former village and the LSDs to elect a council every four years.

The rural community would have financial powers in keeping with its responsibilities. The rural community council would establish a budget and the tax rate required for its governance, determine the services it would be responsible for and how it would be administered, and implement an emergency measures plan and land use plan. The taxpayers of the rural community would continue to benefit from the community funding and equalization from the provincial government that they received in their LSD. The deputy mayor would be chosen from among the four elected councillors.

6.4 Map of the Five Wards

The wards were divided up in such a way as to ensure the best representation possible for the population of the Greater Region of Rogersville in each of the wards. We followed Elections NB guidelines, which stipulate about 500 electors per ward. Also, to represent the existing communities of interest, the committee took into consideration existing geographic boundaries.

	Polling offices	Number of electors	Total electors per ward
Ward 1	1	180	413
	2	233	
Ward 2	2	91	543
	3	202	
	7	157	
	8	93	
Ward 3	5	364	464
	6	100	
Ward 4	3	16	511
	4	345	
	6	146	
	8	4	
Ward 5	8	171	558
	10	347	
	38	40	
TOTAL		2489	2489

6.4.1 Remuneration of Council

It is recommended that council members receive an annual salary and additional allowances for costs incurred while carrying out their official duties, although it would be up to council to make such a decision by way of a by-law.

For the members of the municipal council, the following annual remuneration is recommended:

Mayor: \$10,000



Deputy mayor: \$6,500
Councillors: \$5,500.

6.5 Delivery of Municipal Services

The rural community council would be responsible for developing a land use plan and an emergency measures plan and for overseeing the administration of the community. It would also be responsible for administering street lighting services in the LSD of Collette and for managing the recreational services budget for the LSD of Acadieville. All other services currently offered by the Village of Rogersville would continue to be offered.

Because of costs, the provincial government would continue to ensure the delivery of services such as policing, highways, and garbage collection and disposal.

It is recommended that the new entity adopt a brand image for the new rural community by developing a logo and some basic communication tools (website, business cards, letterhead, newsletter, signage, etc.). It is very important to develop an image because it would appear on all promotional and communication tools, including official documents.

6.5.1 Emergency Measures Plan

Once in place, the new rural community would have the following responsibilities:

- Expanding the emergency measures committee to include the former LSDs;
- Rewriting the emergency measures plan to include the former LSDs and having it approved;
- Entering into agreements with persons and organizations for the provision of services during the development and implementation of the emergency measures plan.

The emergency measures plan is a service and a responsibility that the rural community council will have to implement in the event of a disaster. In the LSDs, this service is currently provided by the provincial government.

6.5.2 Land Use Plan

The provincial government, through the Kent Regional Service Commission, is currently responsible for land use services in the LSDs. However, the LSDs do not have land use plans, so these communities have little control over the various land uses. Once in place, the rural community council would be responsible for offering this service throughout the region. The rural community would have to adopt and apply the land use planning by-law within two years following its establishment. This land use plan

would enable the rural community to ensure that different types of land uses are established in an orderly manner and in appropriate locations. A subdivision by-law and a building by-law could also eventually be adopted for the entire rural community. It is recommended that the Kent Regional Services Commission be responsible for guiding the rural community in the development of the rural plan.

The current rural plan in the Village of Rogersville would remain in effect only for the former village until a new rural plan is adopted by the rural community council.

6.5.3 Additional Services

It is recommended that some of the services currently provided by or paid for by the Department of the Environment and Local Government be transferred to the new rural community. The services recommended for transfer are as follows:

- Dog control
- Street lighting in Collette
- Community services in Acadieville
- Fire department services
- Assessment costs
- General administration.

The following services would remain the responsibility of the Department of the Environment and Local Government:

- Policing
- Solid waste collection and disposal.

6.5.4 Municipal By-laws

The *Local Governance Act* does not allow an LSD or its advisory committee to pass by-laws regulating, for example, dog control and dangerous or unsightly premises. The new rural community would have local by-laws (e.g., procedures for council meeting, land use plan, subdivisions, building, noise that becomes a public nuisance, outdoor concerts, and dangerous or unsightly premises).

6.6 Budget Estimates

Table 6.6 – 2020 Provisional Budget

Rural Community of Rogersville		
Anticipated revenue	2020	
Property taxes	\$1,090,838	71.58%
Community funding and equalization grant	\$389,155	25.54%
Non-tax revenue	<u>\$43,923</u>	<u>2.88%</u>
Total revenue	\$1,523,916	100.00%
Anticipated expenditures		
General administration	\$279,425	18.34%
Property assessment costs	\$25,758	1.69%
Policing (former village only)	\$218,510	14.34%
Fire protection	\$181,030	11.88%

Transportation (former village only)	\$378,063	24.81%
Street lighting (former LSD of Collette only)	\$24,970	1.64%
Community planning	\$78,771	5.17%
Recreation and culture	\$82,305	5.40%
Solid waste (former village only)	\$76,990	5.05%
Debt servicing and bank charges (former village only)	<u>\$178,096</u>	11.69%
Total expenditures	\$1,523,916	100.00%

6.7 Proposed Taxes

The rural community would have financial powers in keeping with its responsibilities. Council would establish an annual budget and an annual property tax rate required for its governance and administration, land use planning and emergency measures services, and any other recommended services.

Table 6.7.1 – Tax Rate in the Community, 2018-2020

Anticipated Combined Rate – 2018 to 2020 with the Rural Community of Rogersville				
Municipality/LSD	2018	2019 - status quo	2020 – RC	Change from 2019 to 2020
Village of Rogersville	\$1.4848	\$1.5048	\$1.4888	\$0.0000
Acadieville	\$1.0617	\$1.0817	\$1.1117	\$0.0300
Acadieville - Acadie Siding	\$1.0604	\$1.0804	\$1.1104	\$0.0300
Blackville	\$1.0409	\$1.0609	\$1.1078	\$0.0469
Collette	\$1.2172	\$1.2372	\$1.2672	\$0.0300
Glenelg	\$0.9840	\$1.0040	\$1.0340	\$0.0300
Harcourt	\$1.3016	\$1.3216	\$1.1078	-\$0.2138
Nelson	\$0.9842	\$1.0042	\$1.0340	\$0.0298
Rogersville	\$1.0578	\$1.0778	\$1.1078	\$0.0300
Saint-Louis	\$1.0262	\$1.0462	\$1.1104	\$0.0642
Weldford	<u>\$1.2117</u>	<u>\$1.2317</u>	<u>\$1.1104</u>	<u>-\$0.1213</u>
LSD (average)	\$1.0946	\$1.1146	\$1.1102	-\$0.0044

The above table shows the anticipated changes in the property tax rate in the LSDs and the village between 2018 and 2020. It should be noted that the rate increase of 3 cents per \$100 of assessment would occur between 2019 and 2020 for the LSDs in the region. The increase in the LSDs of Blackville and Saint-Louis would be greater than 3 cents; however, these two areas do not have any permanent housing and very few properties. Residents of the LSD of Weldford (Kent Junction) would see their rate decrease by about 12 cents because they currently pay for the Beersville fire service and the operating costs of the Imperial Kent North Centre. Residents of Kent Junction would pay the rural community for fire services. Residents of the LSD of Harcourt (above Pleasant Ridge) would see a decrease of 21 cents because they are currently paying for the Harcourt fire service even though they receive the service from Rogersville. The former Village of Rogersville would not see its rate go up because it already increased by 2 cents in 2019 and residents are already paying administration costs for their community.

The following table shows the impact of the initial costs associated with the governance and administration of the rural community on the local property tax rate and the local property tax bill, by property type and value.

Table 6.7.2 - Impact of the Increased Property Tax Rate on the Property Tax Bill in the Rural Community (2020 Forecast)

Property value	Impact on bill
\$30,000	\$9 more
\$50,000	\$15 more
\$75,000	\$22.50 more
\$100,000	\$30 more
\$125,000	\$37.50 more
\$150,000	\$45 more

7.0 Potential Advantages and Disadvantages of Establishing a Rural Community

Advantages

Here are the potential advantages of the proposed rural community:

Economic development

- Access to funding programs (federal and provincial), so more investment in the community (e.g., gas tax funds);
 - The Rural Community of Rogersville could have access to gas tax funds, enabling it to carry out projects in the following areas (Department of the Environment and Local Government, 2018):
 - Wastewater, solid waste, community energy system, public transportation.
 - Collaboration (partnerships and strategic alliances).
 - Knowledge (new technologies, research, monitoring and assessment).
 - Integration (planning, policy development and implementation).
 - Water resource management (exploration, sampling, and action plan for a sustainable drinking water supply).
- Opportunity to attract new families.
- Opportunity to attract and develop new businesses to promote job creation.
- Opportunity to ensure economic, tourism, community, cultural, and other development.
- The rural community could adopt a medium-and long-term vision for the development of its territory in accordance with a strategic plan. The community would set its own priorities.
- Population of 3,027 and an area of 800 km² would represent the largest community in the Kent region.
- The increase in the financial capacity of the local government would make it possible to offer better services, new services, or more affordable services at times chosen by the community.

Governance

- Ability to elect a council for the rural community, i.e., a mayor and five councillors, made up of citizens from the Greater Region who would manage the community instead of decisions being made outside the area with no consideration given to the values, opinions, and wishes of the population of the LSDs.
- Obtain decision-making power over a portion of the annual operating budget, local property tax rates for services provided by the rural community.
- Adapt to desired change rather than imposed change.

Facilities

- Improvement of existing infrastructures.
- The new rural community could develop facilities that meet everyone's needs.
- Protection of property and assets that the residents of the Greater Region of Rogersville have built and developed with the help of volunteers: fire service, arena, seniors' club, community centres, sports fields, etc.

- Financially, the new rural community would be able to invest in infrastructures in the LSDs and improve their services in order to better meet the expectations of local residents.

Cultural and social development

- Better communication within the community such that the entire community is informed about activities, events, services, and businesses available in the community.
- Development of culture, arts, sport, and education and strengthening of the economy.
- Protection and improvement of the quality of life of community residents.

Environment/Land use planning

- Existing facilities in the community would still be there, but they could be regulated (e.g., blueberry fields, junkyards, quarries).
- Implementation of a land use plan to ensure that the various land uses (e.g., residential, commercial, institutional, recreational, and agricultural) take place only in locations suited to the growth and development wanted for the community.
 - Avoid development at the expense of the environment and the community.
 - Protection of ecologically sensitive areas and maintaining the integrity of forest lands and productive farmland.
- Short- and long-term protection and supply of drinking water.
- Improving quality of life by improving services and land use planning.
- Greater flexibility when it comes to future economic expansion.
- Assurance that the environment and land use planning sectors meet the needs of future generations.

*It is important to note that these are only **potential advantages** and that it may take time for them to take effect.*

Concerns

- The 3-cent increase in property taxes per \$100 of assessment is a concern for some residents.
- Some residents fear that adopting a land use plan will restrict the activities and projects they have planned for their property.
- Some residents are skeptical about what can be done in the community after an amalgamation.
- Some residents are afraid of having a Council that does not agree and having elected officials in the wards who do not sufficiently defend the interests of the community.

Disadvantages of status quo

Here the potential disadvantages if the LSDs and the village decide not to incorporate:

Financial/economic

- The LSD would not have the authority to manage a budget.
- The LSDs would still have difficulty accessing additional funding sources, such as the gas tax rebate, for the development of their region.

- A number of projects that the community cares about could be difficult to carry out, including the following:
 - Repairs to the community centres;
 - Addition of recreational infrastructures;
 - Increase in the delivery of public programming.

Taxes

- The LSDs would not have the authority to make decisions about the tax rate or how funds are used.

Community and youth development

- The LSDs would still have very limited access to government funding programs for community development.
- The LSDs would still not have sufficient financial resources to repair and improve existing facilities. These would continue to deteriorate, and it would be difficult to get new ones.
- Volunteer burnout could jeopardize some community services.
- Without development, the youth exodus would continue to increase.

Services and quality of life

- Without additional funding sources, the LSDs would continue to have difficulty implementing new projects that could improve quality of life.
- The LSDs would not see any change and/or improvement in the services they provide.

Governance

- The LSDs would continue to be governed by the province.
- The LSDs would still have no decision-making power.
- The LSDs would no longer have any sway with government.
- The LSDs would not be able to get more involved and would be under-represented in local decision making.
- The LSDs would no longer have any decision-making power over the management of their own territory.
- Residents would not have a forum for providing feedback and expressing their values and views concerning the development of projects for the community.

8.0 Next Steps

Here is an overview of the key steps required to establish and implement the Rural Community of Rogersville:

February 2019

- Present the final feasibility study report to the Minister of the Environment and Local Government.

March 2019

Feasibility Study

Proposed Establishment of Rogersville Rural Community

- When the summary of the final feasibility study report is completed, it will be made available to the public so everyone will have all the necessary information.
- The Minister of Local Government will order that the Chief Electoral Officer hold a plebiscite.
- The Rogersville municipal council will pass a resolution to proceed with the dissolution of the municipality if the plebiscite supports a rural community. On behalf of the residents of the Village of Rogersville, the municipal council will be responsible for choosing whether or not to be part of a rural community.

May 2019

- Process for determining local support (plebiscite).

After a favourable plebiscite

Summer 2019

- Approval of the rural community proposed by Cabinet (Order in Council), following the recommendation of the Minister of the Environment and Local Government.

May 2020

- First council election.
- Taking of the oath of office and first meeting of the first council.

8.1 Plebiscite

A plebiscite (yes or no vote) could be held in the LSDs affected, in accordance with the *Local Governance Act*. Elections NB will notify the LSDs by mail of the date and time of the advance polls and regular polls.

There will be deemed to be sufficient local support if a majority of those voting (50% + 1) in the plebiscite vote in favour of establishing a rural community.

9.0 Conclusion and Recommendation

From the results of this study, we can see that the residents of the Greater Region of Rogersville are very proactive and very involved in the development of their community. In fact, they hope to leave a strong and prosperous community to future generations. We would also note all the work that has been done and the progress made since this new project got under way.

The residents of the community realize that they are facing numerous challenges in terms of economic, socio-cultural, and tourism development, as well as in terms of local governance, land use planning, and emergency measures. The study has shown that the rural community proposed for the Greater Region of Rogersville would be helpful in overcoming the challenges encountered. After consulting

with the public, the committee has concluded that residents are ready to move forward and that they support the proposed rural community.

We therefore strongly recommend that the Minister of the Environment and Local Government support this project and hold a plebiscite in the spring of 2019.