



Springhill/Cumberland County Transition Newsletter

The Town of Springhill and the Municipality of the County of Cumberland continue to work together to prepare for the possible dissolution of the town in 2015. The intent of the newsletter is to provide a progress report to residents of the town and county, as well as invite comments and questions from residents. **Please see information about a joint Municipal Open House on page 2 of this newsletter.**

Springhill Dissolution Review Process

Springhill Town Council decided earlier this year to seek dissolution and Cumberland County Council has agreed to support the town. The process includes a formal hearing beginning December 15 at the Dr. Carson & Marion Murray Community Centre in Springhill, with evening sessions at the Community Centre on December 16 and at the E.D. Fullerton Municipal Building in Upper Nappan on December 17. The hearing will be conducted by the Nova Scotia Utility and Review Board (NSUARB) and it will include evidence prepared by the town and county, expert reports and input from citizens and other interested parties. Information about the hearing and copies of all reports and evidence provided are available at <http://nsuarb.novascotia.ca> Case # M06158. The NSUARB web site also provides contact information for email and written comments on the proposed dissolution and for requests to speak at the hearing. **The deadline for filing letters of comment with the NSUARB, and requests to speak at the evening hearing sessions is December 8.**

The December public hearing is an important step in the NSUARB decision-making process. It is expected the Board will provide a decision on the possible dissolution of the town early in 2015. If the application is approved, the new governance structure for Springhill will be effective April 1, 2015.

Information in Reports and Analysis

To prepare for the NSUARB hearings, the town and county have partnered to develop a series of reports on a variety of topics, including financial impacts, infrastructure assessment and re-investment, human resources, governance and provision of various municipal services. Following are some of the highlights from these reports.

Financial Impacts: The national auditing firm of Grant Thornton has completed a review of the financial situation facing the town and county over the next five years, both with and without merger. The report concludes that Springhill's current financial situation is overwhelming and that continued operation as a town would require significant property tax increases. This would further undermine the town's competitiveness and ability to attract new residents and businesses. Should the dissolution of the town be approved by the NSUARB, Springhill would become part of the larger Municipality of the County of Cumberland. The larger unit could provide lower tax rates within Springhill without reducing municipal services and, potentially, more support for necessary infrastructure re-investment.

Infrastructure Impacts: The Nova Scotia Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal has provided a detailed assessment of all the streets in Springhill. The assessment concluded that over 90 percent of the streets need repair and preventative maintenance soon or they will require more expensive work to bring them up to provincial standards. A similar assessment of town buildings, water, sewer and related infrastructure by Opus International Consultants (Canada) Limited calls for significant capital work on these facilities. Springhill's financial situation makes it challenging for the town to take advantage of cost-shared programs offered by the provincial and federal governments. Springhill's population, combined with Cumberland County, should provide more opportunity to leverage senior government infrastructure funding programs.

Governance: Town and county councils have reviewed the possible composition of the merged council should dissolution be ordered by the NSUARB. Each council has considered moving to a smaller number of councilors in the larger municipality than the current combined 15 elected positions. More research and public consultation will be required after a decision on possible dissolution is made.

Property Taxes and User Fees: From the beginning Cumberland County Council has taken the position that the municipality would assist Springhill, understanding that this would not have a negative impact on county tax rates and user fees. A new Tax Structure Policy has been developed that outlines the general tax rates for common services, additional rates in Springhill for services unique to that community and adjustments to user fees for sewer and garbage collection to ensure Springhill costs do not directly impact county ratepayers.

Human Resources and Customer Service: The town and county are developing plans for consolidation of municipal services, facilities and staff if dissolution proceeds in 2015. Current employees are engaged in this process and many services currently located in Springhill would continue to be provided there by the same staff. There would also be opportunities to offer services to county residents in Cumberland South from the current Springhill Town Hall, which would reduce travel times and improve access to municipal services. The town is working through the process of switching to RCMP policing in the coming months. Efforts to assist existing staff make the transition to the RCMP or to other opportunities are underway.

[Getting More Information, Providing your Comments](#)

Town and county staff are available at any time to provide information about the available reports and to answer questions. Please contact Reg Ridgley, Interim Chief Administrative Officer in the Town of Springhill at 902-597-2449 or Rennie Bugley, Chief Administrative Officer in the County of Cumberland at 902-667-3492 with any questions or comments. Much of the information submitted to the NSUARB is available on line and staff can provide copies if you drop by the municipal offices. County and town councilors are interested in your opinions and can assist you in finding information.

To provide an opportunity to discuss the analysis and information to date, please drop by to talk with our elected representatives, staff and consultants at a joint Municipal Open House.

**Springhill Dissolution – Municipal Open House
November 13 2:00 - 4:00 pm and 6:00 - 8:00 pm
Dr. Carson & Marion Murray Community Centre, Springhill**

Town of Springhill: 902 597-3751
Mayor Maxwell Snow
www.town.springhill.ns.ca

Cumberland County: 902 667-2313
Warden Keith Hunter
www.cumberlandcounty.ns.ca