Municipalities
Newfoundland and Labrador

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Municipal Self-Assessment Tool Kit

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A tool kit through which municipalities can evaluate the status of their financial and operational positions and determine for themselves their ability to effectively and efficiently deliver municipal services.

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Introduction

The Municipal Sustainability Self-Assessment (MSSA) project was one of Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador's (MNL) tent pole projects of the first decade of the new millennium. Constructed and conducted over a four-year period (2005-2009), it was the first time municipalities in Newfoundland and Labrador sat down with an outside representative to assess their capacity, assets, and weaknesses.

To provide a true assessment of the state of municipalities in the Province, MNL thought it prudent to establish a self-assessment project with a wide scope. The questionnaire, which composed the bulk of the toolkit, prodded all areas of municipal government from service delivery, to staff, to municipal democracy, and inter-municipal cooperation. We were cognizant of the fact that these questions may make some municipal leaders uneasy and that the results may be depressing, but we also expected that many municipalities would be thankful to be given the opportunity for self-reflection.

The MSSA project was an unqualified success. Of the 281 municipalities in Newfoundland and Labrador, 250 of them participated in the project, each meeting with a project team member to go question by question through the toolkit. As was expected, the results showed mixed results with municipalities providing positive results in the areas of governing and administration, but were largely weak in the realm of financial viability and infrastructure maintenance and improvement. Regardless of the results, the MSSA project is a success because municipalities now have a better understanding of their sustainability, assets, and needs; the information garnered from this project can serve as a baseline against which each municipality can gauge their progress. From an organizational perspective, MNL is now in possession of this information and it will help us better serve our members. The information from the MSSA project, in combination with the results from the Municipal Census and Councillor Survey conducted by MNL in 2007, has made MNL the preeminent repository for knowledge of municipal government in Newfoundland and Labrador. The MSSA represents MNL's largest, but by no means last, attempt to lead purposeful research on municipal government in the province.

The MSSA project also benefited from fortunate timing. As a required component of the Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Gas Tax Agreement, every municipality in Newfoundland and Labrador is required to complete and Integrated Community Sustainability Plan (ICSP) by the end of March 2010. Given that most municipalities in the province operate with one full-time staff member, the ability for municipalities to create an in-depth sustainability plan seemed remote; most municipalities would not even know where to begin. To assist municipalities, the provincial government and MNL touted the MSSA as being the first step in the ICSP process. In the countdown to March 2010, scores of municipalities and consultants have contacted MNL over the past months seeking their MSSA reports and spreadsheets containing answers.

Attaching the MSSA project to the ICSP process made this large project feasible. MNL had to almost double its paid staff for several months in 2008 to conduct the survey. Without generous funding from the provincial government this extra staffing could never happen. Newfoundland and Labrador is a large province with hundreds of small, geographically remote municipalities. As a result, achieving community cooperation and arranging meeting times with councilors and staff is a difficult and time-consuming process. It is a credit to the MSSA staff that they were able to solicit cooperation and meet with 90% of the province's municipalities.

The information garnered from the toolkit that follows is, and will be, a tremendous benefit to Newfoundland and Labrador. As well, the MSSA will serve as a template for all future assessment guides and a model for how municipal consultations should be pursued.

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1 Introduction to the Self-Assessment Process

Background

Under the direction of Past-President of Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador (MNL, formerly NLFM), Deputy Mayor Herb Brett, released the President's Task Force on Municipal Governance in Newfoundland and Labrador in 2005. The Task Force identified challenges municipalities are currently being forced to address and identified specific options available to them.

The Task Force report identified the need for the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to make legislative amendments, for expanded municipal revenue-generating options and greater emphasis on regional cooperation. The Task Force also recommended that communities conduct sustainability self-assessments and that the MNL's CCRC develop and assist member municipalities to deliver their self-assessments.

Following on this mandate, members of the Community Cooperation Resource Center (CCRC) Advisory Committee and staff have developed a process through which municipalities can evaluate the status of their financial and operational positions and determine for themselves their ability to effectively and efficiently deliver municipal services.

Municipal Sustainability

It is recognized that under the current structure, many municipalities in this province are unable to deliver an acceptable level of service at a cost affordable to the service user or as effectively and efficiently as they could be. Over many generations, Newfoundland and Labrador evolved into a province of many widely scattered communities with small populations. These characteristics have made it difficult for some municipalities to provide quality municipal services. This challenge became increasingly difficult with the closure of the ground fishery in the early 1990s.

Since that time, all levels of government have struggled

with the challenge of how to address the deterioration of the economic and social environment in many of our communities, particularly smaller rural communities. It is believed that the restoration of the social and economic status enjoyed by residents for generations will only be achieved through the development of strong local government structures. The CCRC believes a strong local government structure will only be achieved by having in place self-sustaining local government administrations.

In addition, municipalities are more than service delivery agents. They are a voice for their communities at higher levels of government and according to Dr.. Peter Boswell, Head of the Department of Political Science at Memorial University, they are widely considered to be the basis for democracy. Increasingly, local governments are taking on leadership roles in a broad range of areas extending beyond basic municipal service delivery that impact the current and future sustainability of their communities and the quality of life of their citizens, including economic and community development and environmental protection.

Considering these important roles and responsibilities the CCRC's goal in facilitating the self-assessment process is "to be a catalyst for establishing a self-sustaining local government administration that is an essential component of, and pro actively supports, the development of viable and sustainable communities throughout the province of Newfoundland and Labrador". Our vision is one of sustainable communities in Newfoundland and Labrador served by municipal governments with a healthy democratic tradition, effective regulations, a strong tax base, quality services provided at a reasonable cost and with minimal impact on the natural environment, strong administrative and financial management systems, a willingness to contribute to and support economic, social and cultural development in their communities and to cooperate with others for the well-being of their communities, regions and the province.

In order to achieve this goal, the CCRC has developed

criteria by which municipal authorities can evaluate their current status and determine their ability to be sustainable municipalities in the long term.

The CCRC has determined that a sustainable municipality is able to:

- Govern and democratically represent the interests of its community with significant community support and involvement

- Satisfy the responsibilities for municipal administration, services and infrastructure in accord with legislation, including the Municipalities Act and Acts governing services such as waste management and water supply

- Provide the necessary services and infrastructure at a cost residents are willing and able to pay

- Fund services from local financial resources or through partnerships with other agencies

- Actively contribute to the demographic, social, cultural, environmental and economic well-being of its community

Applying Assessment Results

The long-term sustainability of many municipalities is questionable given the many challenges they are facing. In an effort to create a future with only viable, self-sustaining local government structures in Newfoundland and Labrador, the President's Task Force proposed that there be three types of local government administrations, covering all areas of the province, including the traditional towns, cities, and regional municipal councils.

Regional Municipal Councils (RMCs)

The Regional Municipal Council would be comprised of unincorporated communities, areas currently within the jurisdiction of local service district committees (LSD), between communities and any municipality unable to meet minimum sustainability criteria. Creation of RMC's may require legislative change. Both the cities and the towns would fit the existing definition as in the Municipalities Act 1999.

It was further proposed that municipal councils undertake a self-assessment to determine the sustainability of their municipality according to a range of sustainability criteria, which are presented within this toolkit and particularly the self-assessment questionnaire. It is recognized, however, that communities may have their own sustainability criteria to add based on their unique histories, cultures and values. They may also have assets (strengths) that can be drawn upon to enhance their sustainability. Dialogue on community-specific assets and sustainability criteria is therefore also part of the recommended process. Through this self-evaluation, municipalities will identify their strengths and weaknesses and take action to address both opportunities and challenges.

Under the Task Force recommendations municipalities that determine they are not sustainable would be first provided the opportunity to consider ways they might attain sustainability status through the sharing of services with other municipalities. If this is not an option, or if the effort is not successful, municipalities may then be required to merge with adjacent municipalities or disincorporate and become part of an RMC. Sustainable municipalities may wish to consider these options as well.

In summary, the three steps for non-sustainable municipalities recommended by the President's Task Force were:

1. Share services with an adjacent community

2. Enter into a formal merger with another municipality

3. Disincorporate and have municipal services administered by a RMC

A fourth option has since emerged – Integrated Community Sustainability Planning (ICSP). ICSPs may include one of these options but are broader in scope than governance structure alone.
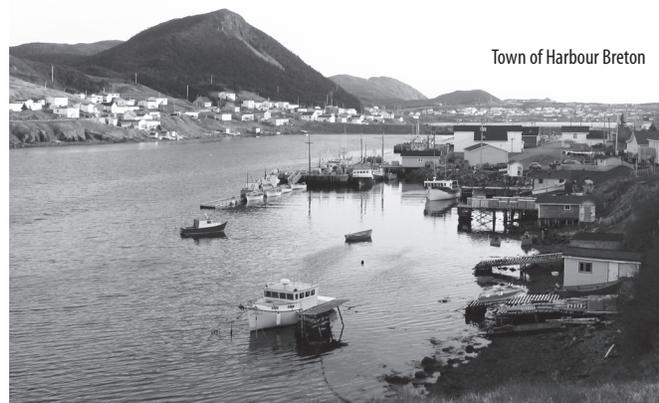
Town of Harbour Breton

Integrated Community Sustainability Plans

The 2005 "The New Deal for Cities and Communities" and subsequent signing of the Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Agreement on the Transfer of Federal Gas Tax Revenues provided a fourth option for addressing non-sustainable municipalities and an opportunity to plan for a transition to sustainability.

Included within the agreements signed with all provinces is a requirement for Integrated Community Sustainability Plans (ICSP) to be prepared by each municipality in Canada. The definition of an ICSP is "a long-term plan, developed in consultation with community members, for the community to realize sustainability objectives it has for the environmental, cultural, social and economic dimensions of its identity".

Managed and implemented by Infrastructure Canada, the Agreements will provide $5 billion in gas tax funds over 5 years, including $82.3 million in Newfoundland and Labrador. The funding is to be spent on environmentally sustainable municipal infrastructure and is intended to achieve three outcomes: reduced greenhouse gas emissions, cleaner air, and cleaner water. Eligible projects include: water and wastewater systems, solid waste management, public transit, roads and bridges, community energy systems, and community capacity building to help communities plan for sustainability. While holistic in approach the environmental aspects of sustainability are stressed.

The Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Agreement also includes a commitment by the Government of Canada to encourage inter-municipal and municipal-First Nations reserve collaborations on Eligible Projects. The Province's obligations include a requirement to ensure, through funding agreements, the development of ICSPs at the municipal level. While following principles and holistic approach of sustainability planning we believe that the approach to ICSPs in Newfoundland and Labrador must be tailored to the serious challenges faced in the province in the area of local governance and municipal service provision as well as addressing the identified need for enhanced regional cooperation.

The CCRC and MNL propose that the sustainability self-assessment process outlined in this package provides an appropriate basis for launching the ICSP process (Phase II) in communities and regions. Investigation of opportunities for sharing services or alternative governance arrangements (options 1 to 3 above) will become part of the overall sustainability self-assessment and ICSP planning process. In Newfoundland and Labrador ICSPs will include planning for the sustainability of municipal government as well as the community as a whole, with a focus on governance, administration and service delivery as well as infrastructure and community sustainability. There will also be greater emphasis on regional cooperation, allowing regional sustainability plans where communities choose to plan on a regional basis while incorporating the unique needs and visions of communities within regions. Existing community plans will be incorporated into the ICSP process, particularly comprehensive long-term municipal or community development plans completed within the past three to five years. Municipal sustainability self-assessment is an integral component and, for many, a starting point for the ICSP process. Using the results of this self-assessment, ICSPs will establish objectives and targets in each of the seven key areas of municipal sustainability outlined below, strategies for reaching them and monitoring progress.

In the past there has been no requirement in Newfoundland and Labrador for communities to undertake comprehensive community or regional plans. Further the majority of the province's municipalities are home to less than 1000 residents and have limited planning capacity, therefore the development of ICSPs throughout the province will require significant support and assistance. The CCRC is committed to working with communities, the Department Municipal Affairs and other partners to facilitate this process.

Seven Categories of Municipal Sustainability

It is proposed that self-assessment by municipalities be undertaken in seven categories, covering the major roles and responsibilities of incorporated municipalities, indicators of community sustainability more broadly as well as the state of and opportunities for regional cooperation.

The seven categories are:

1. **GOVERNANCE** - This is an evaluation of the elected municipal body in an effort to determine if council is complying with the requirements of the Municipalities Act and practicing principles of good governance, including strategic, long-term planning. It is now widely recognized around the world that good governance is a requirement for sustainability.

2. **ADMINISTRATION** – A significant part of determining the sustainability of municipalities is associated with the administrative capacity of the employees of council and their resulting ability to provide council with accurate and reliable information. The second component of the evaluation pertains to the ability of the hired staff and their compliance with legislated requirements.

3. **FINANCE AND FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT** – Good financial management is one of the cornerstones of the success and continuity of any organization. It ensures that resources are properly managed and funds are spent in accordance with the stated priorities and mission of the organization. This segment of the assessment reflects on whether the municipality is following principles of fiscal responsibility as well as best practices in cost accounting, budgeting, preparation and presentation of financial statements, and the development of financial resources.

4. **SERVICE DELIVERY** – Providing basic services such as garbage collection and disposal, fire protection, clean water supply, sewage collection and treatment, street lighting and an adequate road network are fundamental municipal responsibilities. Determining whether your municipality is able to provide these services in a manner that meets both public demands and existing standards and legislative requirements is an important indication of municipal sustainability.

5. **INFRASTRUCTURE** – While many residents in incorporated municipalities receive services through infrastructure provided by the town, many other areas of these municipalities are unable to provide these services for various reasons including lack of the necessary infrastructure. In addition, much of the infrastructure that does exist is aging and will have to be replaced in the near future or is inadequate to meet current standards. An assessment of the infrastructure capacity of a municipality provides an indication of its sustainability.

6. **COMMUNITY WELL-BEING** – The closure of the ground fishery created new challenges for municipalities and for communities, compounding the problems of already troubled fishing economies. The economic and social bases of many communities have been negatively affected and will never recover to their pre-moratorium status. Municipalities have to recognize the impact of a declining and aging population on its eroding tax base, overall economic position and volunteer contributions, and seek alternative methods of service delivery where necessary. The status of ecological and cultural resources and health and education services also impact long-term community viability. Indicators of community well-being are considered, therefore, as indicators of long-term municipal and community sustainability.

7. **REGIONAL COOPERATION** – Regional cooperation is increasingly recognized as an essential component of community sustainability. This component of the assessment will consider current regional cooperation initiatives and their contributions to sustainability as well as opportunities for enhancing regional cooperation in the future.

2 Answers to Common Questions

1. Who Should be Involved in the Self-Assessment?

Mayor and Council must be supportive and involved in the self-assessment process, along with senior administrative and operations staff, in order to make it meaningful and truly reflective of the opinions of those involved in municipal governance. Commitment is key. Leaders must be willing to invest the necessary time and resources, conduct an honest self-assessment and act on results to maximize the benefits of this process for your community. The intent of the self-assessment is to allow municipal leaders to begin with an internally-focused reflection on the sustainability of your local government, a key component of a sustainable community overall. Who is involved is your decision. CCRC representatives are available to attend a planning meeting with your community to discuss alternative approaches.

2. What Preparation is Needed?

The first step is to discuss the idea of doing a self-assessment with each member of Council and senior staff member. Securing commitment to an honest self-assessment upfront and to taking action to address results if required is an essential first step. The CCRC is available to conduct a presentation/training session on sustainability and sustainability assessment to help you decide whether to proceed and build that commitment if required. While many of the questions in the self-assessment questionnaire are opinion questions that can be discussed as a group others are "fact-based" and will require someone to pull together the statistics and documentation in advance of your self-assessment workshop session. The results of your self-assessment will become public as part of the ICSP planning process. For this reason and to make the most of the process as a municipal organization, it is best to be prepared to back up your results with documentation where available. A form has been provided for you to record available supporting documentation, including indicators for key documents that must be in hand for the assessment process. Examples of supporting documentation are also provided.

3. How Does it Work?

The self-assessment process is a combination of preparation and a workshop discussion including council and senior staff. Once you have decided as a council to proceed with the self-assessment and discussed this with your senior staff someone must be assigned to pull together the answers to questions for which background documentation is available. It is best to have this information assembled before you meet as a group. You may appoint one person such as your Clerk/Manager to prepare this information or split the responsibility up among different individuals.

Completion of the Municipal Sustainability Self-Assessment Questionnaire is the core component of the self-assessment process, along with a short series of discussion questions about missing indicators that may be particularly important given your community's unique characteristics, values and assets that can be drawn upon to enhance sustainability. To do the self-assessment, after the necessary background documentation has been gathered, you will need to get together as a group (with Mayor, council and senior staff present) to work through the self-assessment questionnaire and discussion questions. Answers to the questions in the questionnaire should be decided by group consensus and recorded by the recorder. Time must be allotted to discuss the immediate results and the implications

4. How Long will it Take?

Using primarily your own in-house expertise municipalities with strong records management and ready access to all of the required information can complete the self-assessment process within one month, including agreeing to proceed, setting a meeting date and holding the self-assessment session. After the background documentation has been gathered, the self-assessment workshop session itself is expected to take 3-4 hours.

3 Conducting the Self Assessment Process

Getting Started

Steps for getting started with the self-assessment process include:

- Establish the need for sustainability self-assessment and desired outcomes
- Confirm serious commitment from your municipal council and assign responsibility to one or more members for moving the process forward
- Decide who will be involved in the self-assessment process
- Select a date and location for the self-assessment session and invite participants
- Gather necessary background information
- Determine if the majority of those invited are available on the date proposed
- Proceed with the self-assessment session, select a recorder who will be responsible for recording responses
- Submit assessment results to the CCRC
- Once summery results and recommendations are presented back from the CCRC they must be tabled and passed at a council meeting
- Establish an action plan for how to proceed with an ICSP or other next steps if required

Resources required and available to assist you:

- Staff time to assist with data collection and participate in assessment activities
- Assessment session costs
- Outside/neutral facilitator – may be helpful to help mediate interests, clarify questions and assumptions and assist in developing future options/next steps

Ten self-assessment toolkits will be provided to each municipality by the CCRC. Additional photocopying will be required if a decision is made to include participants beyond Mayor, council and senior staff members.

4 Record of Events and Participants in the Assessment Process

Name of Municipality: _____

Contact person responsible for the self-assessment process:

Name:_____   Title/position: _____

Contact information for inquiries: _____

Person(s) responsible for gathering background documentation:

Name:_____   Title/position: _____

Record of self-assessment meeting/session:

Date:_____   Location: _____

Names of those present:

_____   _____

_____   _____

_____   _____

_____   _____

_____   _____

_____   _____

_____   _____

5 Municipal Sustainability Self-Assessment Questionnaire

This questionnaire is being provided to municipalities for use in a self-assessment of their sustainability. It is to be used as one segment of a complete evaluation of the municipality's ability to continue to govern and provide municipal services effectively and, for communities conducting an ICSP, as a component of assessing the sustainability of the community as a whole.

It is recognized that many municipalities are experiencing fiscal and administrative difficulties in maintaining service levels and it is the intent of this process to have municipalities recognize for themselves where current methods of service delivery may be problematic or insufficient and, in some cases, that new, possibly structural solutions may be required.

Through self-assessment the Community Cooperation Resource Center (CCRC) seeks to foster an environment which results in self-sustaining local government administration in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

It is the opinion of the CCRC Advisory Committee that the strength of a variety of aspects of local government is being threatened today, as they have not been in the past. Many municipalities are being challenged in the areas of governance, administration, services, infrastructure, and demographic, environmental and economic trends.

Through the completion of this questionnaire and the self-reflection it requires, municipalities will gain a better appreciation for issues affecting the sustainability of their municipal status but also of their community and surrounding region.

A. GOVERNANCE

In this context, governance refers to issues pertaining to the elected council. It includes elements from the initial election of council, the specific functioning of council, and the degree of support council receives from the community. This evaluation will indicate the level of commitment of the elected councillors, their compliance with legislated requirements, and the degree of community support being expressed for council.

Please circle the appropriate response for each question.

Be honest about your responses and provide specific examples and/or backup documentation wherever possible. List these documents on the attached supporting documentation form.

Elections

A1.   Did your council have a contested election for the last Municipal General Election?
　　　Yes (contested)　　　　　　No (acclaimed)　　　To some degree
　　　(This does not apply to a separate mayoral race)

A2.   Was the voter turnout in the last municipal general Election satisfactory?
　　　Yes (50%+)　　　　　　　No (<35%)　　　　To some degree (35-49%)

A3.   Are council vacancies filled within 90 days or with Ministerial approval as per the Municipalities Act 1999?
　　　 Yes　　　　　　　　　No　　　　　　　To some degree

Council meetings and procedures

A4.   Does your council hold at least one regular public council meeting per month?
　　　Yes　　　　　　　　　No　　　　　　　To some degree

A5.   Does each councillor regularly attend council meetings (e.g. rarely misses more than two consecutive meetings)?
Yes   No   To some degree

A6.   Does your council make the dates and times of public meetings known to residents?
Yes   No   To some degree

A7.   Has your council adopted 'Rules of Procedure' for council meetings? (e.g. Roberts Rules of Order, other)
Yes   No   To some degree

A8.   Does your council have a Policy & Procedures Manual? (Including for example council travel policy, media communications, responding to citizens, contact with Government, etc)
Yes   No   To some degree

Committees of Council

A9.   Does your council have standing committees of Council in place?
Yes   No   To some degree

A10.   Do your standing committees report to council on a regular basis either through their council liaison/representative(s) or other methods?
Yes   No   To some degree

A11.   Does your council have any advisory committees that involve volunteers from outside council?
Yes   No   To some degree

Training and Qualifications

A12.   Does each of your councillors have a copy of the Municipalities Act, 1999?
Yes   No   To some degree (if only some do)

A13.   Is your council aware of the legislative requirements of the Municipalities Act, 1999? (For example: conflict of interest, disclosure statements)
Yes   No   To some degree

A14.   Does your council regularly update their knowledge of municipal government through participation in Municipal Affairs, Municipal Training and Development Corp (MTDC), Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador (MNL), Newfoundland and Labrador Association of Municipal Administrators (NLAMA) or other training opportunities?
Yes   No   To some degree

A15.   Does your council provide any professional development funding for Councillors (e.g. training, travel to conferences, etc…)
Yes   No   To some degree

A16.   Has your council taken advantage of the MTDC training subsidy?
Yes   No   To some degree

<u>Planning</u>

A17.   Does your municipality have a land use/zoning (municipal) plan that is less than ten years old?
      Yes   No   To some degree

A18.   Does your municipality have a capital works plan for the next five or more years?
      Yes   No   To some degree

A19.   Does your municipality have an economic development plan?
      Yes   No   To some degree

A20.   Does your municipality have a comprehensive sustainability plan?
      Yes   No   To some degree

A21.   Did your council play a key role in creating these plans?
      Yes   No   To some degree

A22.   Does your municipality have a formal process to monitor the sustainability of your community and progress in implementing development plans (e.g. Quality of Life, State of the Economy/ Environment reports)
      Yes   No   To some degree

A23.   Does your municipality have an emergency preparedness plan (EPP)?
      Yes   No

A24.   If yes is your EPP updated regularly? *(requirement yearly or at council discretion)*
      Yes   No   To some degree   N/A

A25.   Have you identified your Emergency Measures Coordinator?
      Yes   No

A26.   Is your council familiar with the content of existing community plans (municipal plans, land use plans, community or economic development and EP plans)
      Yes   No   To some degree

A27.   Are there formal avenues for active citizen involvement in local planning and decision-making processes?
      Yes   No   To some degree

B. ADMINISTRATION

Employees of council carry a significant responsibility for the delivery of local municipal services. They have daily contact with the public and advise council on the development of policy. They are also responsible for implementation of the adopted policies, plans, regulations, and directions of council. They also submit to council proposals, recommendations and plans, including long range plans, for the efficient and orderly running and development of the town, provide an enforcement and regulatory service, financial accounting of assets and liabilities as well as engineering, planning, public works, recreation, emergency measures and fire protection programs in accordance with the goals and objectives of council. This section evaluates the abilities and performance of the administrative employees of council.

B1.   Does your council employ qualified administrative staff?
      Yes   No   To some degree

B2.   Has your senior administrative staff member supplemented their education with a post-secondary level diploma or certificate in Business and/or Municipal Administration? (e.g. College of North Atlantic Local Government Management)
Yes   No   To some degree

B3.   Does your municipality take minutes for each council meeting?
Yes   No   To some degree

B4.   Does your municipality take minutes for committees of council?
Yes   No   To some degree

B5.   Does your council have a records management Policy? (i.e. that specifies how long various records are kept)
Yes   No   To some degree

B6.   Has your council identified its Access to Information Policy (ATIP) Coordinator?
Yes   No   To some degree

B7.   Do administrative staff (clerks and/or managers) regularly update their knowledge of municipal government through participation in Municipal Affairs, Municipal Training and Development Corp (MTDC), Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador (MNL), Newfoundland and Labrador Association of Municipal Administrators (NLAMA) or other training opportunities?
Yes   No   To some degree

B8.   Does your council provide any professional development funding for staff? (e.g. training, travel to conferences, etc…)
Yes   No   To some degree

B9.   Is the senior staff familiar with the content of existing community plans? (municipal, land use, community, economic development or emergency preparedness plans)
Yes   No   To some degree

B10.   Within the past year has your council met deadlines for submitting financial, and other reports to the provincial government?
Yes   No   To some degree

B11.   Does your council have job descriptions for all positions in your municipality?
Yes   No   To some degree

B12.   Is your council office computerized?
Yes   No   To some degree

B13.   Are office staff members adequately trained to use all software programs required for their jobs?
Yes   No   To some degree

B14.   Does your council office have Internet access?
Yes   No   To some degree

B15.   Does your municipality have a contact email address?
Yes   No   To some degree

B16.   Are your council office hours sufficient to administer the municipality's business?
Yes   No   To some degree

B17.   Are your council office hours sufficient to provide public access?
Yes   No   To some degree

C. FINANCE AND FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

The long-term viability of a municipal government is dependent on sound financial management, the ability to raise sufficient revenue to meet the legislative obligations of a municipality as well as citizen expectations for service delivery. Infrastructure provision also requires the ability to acquire debt financing and effectively manage the resulting debt load. The following section examines issues of financial management, borrowing and revenue.

Budgeting

C1.   Does the council adopt an annual budget?
Yes   No

C2.   Does your council follow its annual budget?
Yes   No   To some degree

C3.   Did your council submit your balanced budget to the Department of Municipal Affairs by December 31st?
Yes   No   To some degree

C4.   Do you monitor your actual vs. budgeted revenues and expenditures on a minimum of a quarterly basis?
Yes   No   To some degree

C5.   Did you balance your annual revenues and expenditures (i.e. avoid an operating deficit) in at least two of the last three years?
Yes   No   To some degree

Borrowing and Debt

C6.   Is your debt servicing level within the provincial benchmark?
Yes (less than 30%)   No (30% or greater)   To some degree

C7.   Is your municipality currently able to meet its debt payments without special government assistance?
Yes   No   To some degree

C8.   Does your municipality have the fiscal capacity to take on additional debt?
Yes   No   To some degree

Taxation

C9.   Does your existing revenue finance your municipal services to meet the needs of residents?
Yes   No   To some degree

C10.   Have your local revenue sources been stable or increasing?
Yes (increasing)   No (stable)   To some degree

C11.   Is the percentage of your taxes in arrears at year-end less than 10%?
Yes   No

C12.   Has the percent of taxes in arrears in your municipality been decreasing over the past five years?
Yes (decreasing)   No (increasing)   To some degree

Accounting and Financial Management - Other

C13.   Was your municipality's 2006/07 audit complete and adopted (as reflected in council minutes) by June 1 2007?

Yes   No   To some degree

C14.   Is your municipality able to establish and maintain a capital works fund that addresses your infrastructure needs?
Yes   No   To some degree

C15.   Are accounts payable paid within the discount or interest-free period?
Yes   No   To some degree

C16.   Are plans in place to meet the gas tax requirement to adopt and use the Public Sector Accounting Board accounting rules by March 31, 2009? (If your municipality already uses these rules circle "Yes")
Yes   No   To some degree

D. SERVICE DELIVERY

The following section reviews the major areas of municipal service delivery in the province.

Fire Protection and Emergency Response

D1.   Does your municipality have a fire protection service that can provide a fire response time of fourteen minutes or less throughout your community?
Yes (14 min or less)   No (>20)   To some degree   (14-20)

D2.   Is your fire department or fire protection service provider able to ensure six firefighters respond at any time (regardless of time of day or season)?
Yes   No   To some degree

D3.   Does your fire protection service provider have a comprehensive in-house training program that includes both theory and practice components?
Yes   No   To some degree

D4.   Has your Council determined the level of service the Fire Department will provide? (e.g. Water rescue, high angle rescue)
Yes   No   To some degree

Waste Management

D5.   Does your municipality or garbage collection service provide waste collection on a minimum of a weekly basis?
Yes   No   To some degree

D6.   Is your community (or waste provider's) waste disposal site in full compliance with your DOE Certificate of Approval?
Yes   No   To some degree (unsure)   N/A

D7.   Does your municipality have a non-deposit recycling program?
       Yes   No   To some degree

D8.   Does your municipality encourage composting?
       Yes   No   To some degree

D9.   Does your municipality have education programs in place to encourage waste reduction and
       diversion?
       Yes   No   To some degree

D10.   Does your municipality have a program for collecting, handling and safely disposing of hazardous
       waste? (e.g. used batteries, used oil, road salt, light bulbs)
       Yes   No   To some degree

Water and Sewer System

Answer N/A if your community does not provide public drinking water supply.

D11.   Is your water quality index acceptable?
       Yes (index of 80+)   No (less than 45)   To some degree (45-79)   N/A

D12.   Does your municipality have a current Permit to operate its water system?
       Yes   No   N/A

D13.   Do you municipality meet the system operating and maintenance requirements of this Permit?
       Yes (all met)   No (less than 80%)   To some degree (80% or more) N/A

D14.   Is your water system tested daily in two locations?
       Yes   No   N/A

D15.   Does your council have an operations and preventative maintenance schedule/plan for your water
       system?
       Yes (in writing)   No (informal/verbal) To some degree   N/A

D16.   Does your council have an operations and preventative maintenance schedule/plan for your sewer
       system?
       Yes (in writing)   No (informal/verbal) To some degree   N/A

D17.   Does your water operator have adequate training as recommended by the Dept. of Environment
       & Conservation?
       Yes (same level or above)   No (below level of system) To some degree   N/A

D18.   Has council designated a qualified backup operator?
       Yes (official/in writing)   No (informal/verbal) To some degree   N/A

D19.   Do you have a water records management program in place?
       Yes   No   To some degree   N/A

D20.   Is there a plan for the protection of the watershed that provides your drinking water supply?
       Yes   No   To some degree   N/A

D21.   Do your water system operators participate in training provided annually by the Department of
       Environment and Conservation?
       Yes   No   To some degree   N/A

Recreation

D22.   Does your council run a recreation program?
        Yes   No   To some degree

D23.   Do your recreation programs provide activities for residents of all ages?
        Yes   No   To some degree

D24.   Are your recreation staff and volunteers appropriately trained (e.g. first aid, safety)?
        Yes   No   To some degree

Communications

D25.   Does your municipality employ mechanisms for informing and communicating with residents
        about council decisions and priorities on an ongoing basis?
        Yes   No   To some degree

D26.   Does your municipality make council documents and budget information publicly available? (e.g.
        audit, minutes, budget as per the Municipalities Act 1999)
        Yes   No   To some degree

E. EQUIPMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE

The magnitude and condition of a municipality's infrastructure has direct impact on the level and quality of services provided. Much of the water and sewer infrastructure in the province is nearing the end of its expected useful life span and may need to be replaced in the near future. Ability to meet infrastructure requirements is determined in part by fiscal capacity to service debt, reviewed above. This segment is intended to assist municipalities to determine their infrastructure needs.

E1.   Does your council follow a preventative maintenance schedule for its public facilities and
       infrastructure?
       Yes   No   To some degree   N/A

E2.   Are the sewage disposal methods your council provides acceptable to Department of
       Environment and Conservation standards?
       Yes   No   To some degree

E3.   Is your water system less than 20 years old?
       Yes   No   To some degree   N/A

E4.   Is your sewer system less than 20 years old?
       Yes   No   To some degree   N/A

E5.   Is your council able to maintain your streets to an acceptable standard?
       Yes   No   To some degree

E6.   Has the number of complaints about local infrastructure been stable or decreasing?
       Yes   No (increasing)

E7.   Does your municipality have existing greenspace, parks or walking trails?
       Yes   No   To some degree

E8.   Does your municipality provide residents with access to recreation facilities that meet your
       community's needs? (e.g. arena, ballpark, playground, pool or other)
       Yes   No   To some degree

E9. Is your fire department and/or service provider adequately equipped to provide the level of emergency service as determined by your council? (i.e. equipped with self-contained breathing apparatus, fire trucks, "jaws of life", etc.)
Yes   No   To some degree

E10. Are your town hall facilities adequate for public access and meeting standards for public facilities?
Yes   No   To some degree

E11. Are your town hall facilities adequate for conducting council business?
Yes   No   To some degree

F. COMMUNITY WELL-BEING

Municipalities in this province have been revealing an alarming change in demographics. Particularly since the closure of the ground fishery in the early 1990's, many municipalities are experiencing a dramatic decline in population and resulting erosion of the local tax base. Youth out-migration and low birth rates have also resulted in an increase in the average age of residents. All these factors have an impact on a municipality's fiscal and human resource capacity. Citizen commitment to voluntarism and environmental stewardship, engagement in social and cultural activities, and council's involvement and/or support of these activities also contribute significantly to community sustainability. The following section examines the sustainability of the community as a whole because ultimately a municipality cannot be sustainable unless they are part of an economically, environmentally, socially and culturally vibrant and sustainable community.

Demographics

F1. Has the total population remained stable or grown over the past ten years (1996-2006 census period)?
Yes   No (declining >5%)

F2. Has the share of the population over the age of 60 remained stable or decreased (1996-2006)?
Yes   No (declining >5%)

F3. Has the school age population been stable or growing over the past decade (1996-2006)?
Yes   No (declining >5%)

Economics

F4. Is the unemployment rate in your community equal or below the provincial average (14.8% in 2006)?
Yes   No

F5. Has the trend of building permits been stable or growing over the past five years (2001-2006)?
Yes   No   To some degree

F6. Has the trend of business licenses been stable or growing over the past five years (2001-2006)?
Yes   No   To some degree

F7. Is there a range of businesses operating in your municipality? (i.e. variety in size and sectors)
Yes   No   To some degree

F8. Do you expect that these businesses will be providing the same or greater employment in the community in 10 years?
Yes   No

F9. Is the municipality's business tax assessment base stable or growing?
Yes   No

F10. Is the municipality's residential tax assessment base stable or growing (1996-2006)?
Yes   No

F11. Are residents able to participate in subsistence activities such as wood cutting, gardening, hunting, fishing and berry picking?
Yes   No   To some degree

Social Capital, Vitality and Inclusion

F12. Can residents count on support provided by friends and relatives to help meet their needs? (e.g. child or elder care, household duties)
Yes   No   To some degree

F13. Is there a strong sense of pride in the community?
Yes   No   To some degree

F14. Does your council actively lead or support activities to foster community pride and celebrate community?
Yes   No   To some degree

F15. Are there local volunteer organizations that support and/or provide complementary services to the municipality?
Yes   No   To some degree

F16. Is the membership of these volunteer organizations either stable or growing?
Yes   No   To some degree

F17. In general is volunteerism in the municipality stable or growing?
Yes   No   To some degree

F18. Is your council actively involved in, communicating regularly with and/or actively supporting these organizations?
Yes   No   To some degree

F19. Does the municipality have a program established to recognize community volunteers? (e.g. annual dinner, awards, letters of appreciation)
Yes   No   To some degree

F20. Are there public facilities in the community for community meetings and social gatherings?
Yes   No   To some degree

Environment and Resources

F21. Do you have sewage treatment in your community?
Yes (secondary, tertiary)   No (primary)   To some degree (septic)   N/A

F22. Is your council involved taking steps to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in your municipality? (e.g. reducing automobile use through carpooling policies, encouraging transportation alternatives, providing trails/lanes/paths for travel by foot and bike, switching to renewable energy sources)
Yes   No   To some degree

F23. Has your municipality introduced policies or programs to reduce energy consumption within your municipal operations? (e.g. retrofitting street lights and municipal buildings with energy-efficient light bulbs, energy audits and building retrofits, green building design for new municipal buildings)
Yes   No   To some degree

F24.   Has your council introduced policies or programs to encourage reduced energy consumption within the community?
Yes   No   To some degree

F25.   Has your council introduced policies or programs to encourage reduced water consumption within the community?
Yes   No   To some degree

F26.   Does your municipality or waste service provider have a program in place for monitoring leachate and groundwater contamination from your landfill site, or in the case of incinerators airborne emissions and impacts on nearby communities?
Yes   No   To some degree

F27.   Would you rate the status of your natural resources and local ecosystems as healthy or in good condition? (e.g. fish stocks, forests, air and water quality)
Yes   No   To some degree

F28.   Is your council actively involved in or supporting organizations or programs that encourage habitat and natural resource stewardship efforts in the community and surrounding area? (e.g. watershed management, marine protected areas, Eastern Habitat Joint Venture)
Yes   No   To some degree

F29.   Do your residents have access to outdoor recreation opportunities, not provided by council, in your community or within a distance your council considers reasonable?
Yes   No   To some degree

F30.   Does your council have an integrated environmental management plan in place?
Yes   No   To some degree

Health and Education Services

F31.   Are there adequate health care facilities in your community or within a distance your council considers reasonable?
Yes   No   To some degree

F32.   Is there a K-12 school in your community or within a distance your council considers reasonable?
Yes   No   To some degree

F33.   Are there post secondary education facilities in your community or within a distance your council considers reasonable?
Yes   No   To some degree

Arts and Culture

F34.   Are there cultural facilities in your community or within a distance your council considers reasonable? (e.g. art galleries, museums, etc.)
Yes   No   To some degree

F35.   Does your municipality have programs or policies to support arts, culture and heritage in your community (e.g. percentage of building costs set aside for public art, incorporation of local art into public facilities)?
Yes   No   To some degree

G. REGIONAL COOPERATION

The most common form of municipal regionalization in the province today is regional cooperation in service delivery, information sharing, advocacy and to a lesser extent planning through a wide variety of locally-driven arrangements. The vast majority of these partnerships are between neighbouring communities but service sharing partnerships also exist with provincial agencies, local businesses and others. Together municipalities report they have a bigger political voice, improved access to funding and natural resources, the ability to attract speakers and resource people and enjoy mutual support and interaction. Challenges include community rivalries and differences, leadership/participation and balancing local and regional issues. The final section of the self-assessment reviews history with and willingness and potential for regional cooperation in the future.

G1.　　Does your council have the ability to share services with one or more adjacent communities? (considering geography and other factors you feel are relevant)

Yes　　　　　　　　　　No　　　　　　　　　　To some degree

G2.　　Does the municipality presently participate in a service sharing arrangement with an adjacent municipality or LSD?

Yes　　　　　　　　　　No　　　　　　　　　　To some degree

G3.　　Do neighbouring communities in your region meet periodically to discuss issues of common interest?

Yes　　　　　　　　　　No　　　　　　　　　　To some degree

G4.　　Is your council willing to collaborate more in service delivery in the future?

Yes　　　　　　　　　　No　　　　　　　　　　To some degree

G5.　　Is there a history of cooperation among communities in your region? (not necessarily municipal)

Yes　　　　　　　　　　No　　　　　　　　　　To some degree

G6.　　Does your municipality currently share any infrastructure with another municipality or LSD?

Yes　　　　　　　　　　No　　　　　　　　　　To some degree

G7.　　Does your municipality currently share any equipment with another municipality or LSD?

Yes　　　　　　　　　　No　　　　　　　　　　To some degree

G8.　　Is your council officially and actively involved with a regional governance body? (RED Board, Tourism Dev Assoc., CBDC)

Yes　　　　　　　　　　No　　　　　　　　　　To some degree

Special Section: Future Governance Options

Given the current demographic trends in Newfoundland and Labrador larger and more regional forms of local government may be necessary to ensure the sustainability of the rural areas of the province. This section is designed to gauge the general opinion of councils around the province on the issues of regional governments and amalgamation and is **NOT** considered in the sustainability evaluation.

SP1.　　Would your council consider becoming part of a larger regional local government? (e.g. a city or regional municipality)

Yes　　　　　　　　　　No　　　　　　　　　　To some degree

SP2.　　Would your council consider amalgamation or merger with nearby municipalities and/or communities?

Yes　　　　　　　　　　No　　　　　　　　　　To some degree

6 Supporting Documentation Form

This form must be filled out to ensure that the answers are supported by actual documentation where possible. There are sample documents listed as examples and each row matches with the corresponding question. Those example documents highlighted in red are the most important documents and should be on hand or easily accessible during the assessment.

Question	Supporting Documents Available
A. Governance	
A1.	Example: election ballot, Rural Secretariat municipal election maps, 2005 election report
A2.	Example: 2005 returning officer report
A3.	Example: copies of letters from the Minister
A4.	Example: 2006/2007 meeting minutes
A5.	Example: 2006/2007 meeting minutes
A6.	Example: minutes and public announcements
A7.	Example: minutes adopting rules of procedure, documented rules
A8.	Example: Policy & Procedures Manual
A9.	Example: written description of committee structure, minutes
A10.	Example: minutes
A11.	Example: member lists
A12.	
A13.	
A14.	Example: certificates, proof of registration
A15.	Example: budget documents
A16.	Example: approval letters
A17–20.	Example: copies of plans should be available
A21.	Example: documentation of municipal participation (minutes, acknowledgement on plan, committee list)
A22.	Example: election ballot, Rural Secretariat municipal election maps, 2005 election report
A23.	Example: 2005 returning officer report
A24.	Example: copies of letters from the Minister
A25.	Example: 2006/2007 meeting minutes
A26.	Example: 2006/2007 meeting minutes
A27.	Example: minutes and public announcements

Question	Supporting Documents Available
B. Administration	
B1.	
B2.	Example: certificates, diplomas
B3.	Example: minutes
B4.	Example: minutes
B5.	Example: written records management policy
B6.	
B7.	Example: certificates, proof of registration
B8.	Example: budget documents
B9.	
B10.	
B11.	Example: job description
B12.	
B13.	
B14.	
B15.	Example: email address
B16.	
B17.	
C. Finance and Financial Management	
C1.	Example: budget documents
C2.	Example: financial statement
C3.	Example: confirmation letter from Municipal Affairs
C4.	Example: minutes
C5.	Example: audit reports (three years)
C6-12.	Example: audit statement/financial reports
C13.	Example: audit statements and council minutes
C14.	
C15.	Example: invoices, council or finance committee minutes
C16.	Example: council or finance committee minutes
D. Service Delivery	
D1.	
D2.	
D3.	
D4.	Example: minutes
D5.	Example: waste collection schedule
D6.	Example: Certificate of Approval, letters of concern
D7.	Example: recycling pick-up schedule, program documentation

Question	Supporting Documents Available
D. Service Delivery...continued	
D.8	Example: website, composting program documentation
D.9	Example: advertisements, brochures, website, other program documents
D.10	Example: website, advertising, other hazardous waste program documentation
D.11	Example: Department of Environment and Conservation water report
D.12	Example: Permit to Operate
D.13	
D.14	Example: water sampling documentation
D.15	Example: written maintenance schedule
D.16	Example: written maintenance schedule
D.17	Example: certificates, program registration
D.18	
D.19	Example: water management records
D.20	Example: watershed management plans and agreements
D.21	Example: certificates, program registration
D.22-23	Example: recreation program guides, schedules
D.24	Example: training program documentation, registrations
D.25	Example: website, public advertisements, postings, newsletters or mail-outs
D.26	Example: website, public advertisements, postings, newsletters or mail-outs
E. Equipment and Infrastructure	
E. 1	Example: written maintenance schedule
E. 2	
E. 3	
E. 4	
E. 5	
E. 6	
E. 7	
E. 8	
E. 9	Example: equipment list
E. 10	
E. 11	
F. Community Well Being	
F. 1-2	Example: Community Accounts, Statistics Canada profiles
F. 3	Example: NL Census of Registration of Schools for 2005-2006, Community Accounts
F. 4	Example: Community Accounts, Statistics Canada profiles

Question	Supporting Documents Available
F. Community Well Being...continued	
F. 5	Example: permit and licensing records
F.6	Example: permit and licensing records
F.7	Example: permit and licensing records
F.8	
F.9	
F.10	Example: permit and licensing records
F.11	
F.12	Example: Statistics Canada (social support statistics)
F.13	Example: Tidy Towns awards
F.14	Example: documentation of municipal involvement in community celebrations
F.15	Example: inventories/lists of local volunteer organizations
F.16	Example: council and/or committee minutes
F.17	
F.18	
F.19	Example: articles re. award winners and/or appreciation event programs or announcements
F.20	
F.21	
F.22–25	Example: program documents/promotion
F.26	
F.27	
F.28	Example: documents demonstrating participation (e.g. committee member lists) or financial contributions (e.g. financial records)
F.29	
F.30	
F.31	
F.32	
F.33	
F.34	
F.35	Example: documents demonstrating policies, participation (e.g. committee member lists) or financial contributions (e.g. financial records)
G. Regional Cooperation	
G.1	Example: committee/regional corporation minutes and/or terms of reference, service sharing agreements
G.2	
G.3	Example: Joint Council meeting minutes
G.4	
G.5	

7 Quesitons for Dialogue on Community Specific Assets and Sustainability Criteria

What other sustainability indicators are important to your municipality?

The questionnaire has been provided as a template for assessing municipal sustainability. Did it cover all of the issues you think are critical to the current and future sustainability of your municipality? If not, what are some other important indicators and how would they impact your evaluation?

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What municipal and community assets can be drawn upon to enhance sustainability?

"Community assets" is a term that is receiving increasing amounts of attention within the development field (Kretzman and McKnight, 1993). The central idea behind asset-based development is that local development must be based upon the strengths and resources of communities, rather than their deficiencies. Kretzman and McNight (1993) use the term community assets to refer to individual skills, local organizations, and local institutions that can, and do, contribute to community sustainability. Discuss as a group, what are the assets or strengths in your community that have been drawn upon in the past and can be used in the future to enhance community sustainability?

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8 Interpreting your Assessment Results and Creating a Plan of Action

For the pilot phase of the sustainability self-assessment completed questionnaires should be forwarded to the CCRC. A follow-up report will then be prepared and submitted including the results of your questionnaire and related suggestions.

Questions to be discussed with your self-assessment group and CCRC representatives include:
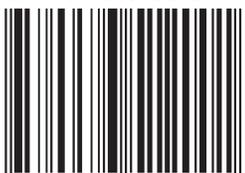
- Looking at your questionnaire do you agree with this assessment?

- What actions can be taken to address areas requiring improvement?

- Could increased regional cooperation be of assistance? If so, how? What form of cooperation?

- How can the community assets and strengths discussed in your self-assessment session be used to improve the current situation?

- Would an ICSP planning process be an appropriate way for your community to create a plan of action?

- What are the next steps you feel should be taken to address the self-assessment results?

**Municipal Sustainability
Self-Assessment Tool Kit**

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