

Policy: Service Delivery Strategy

Date Originally Approved: May 27, 1993

Motion: “That on recommendation of Council Committee, Council adopt the Service Delivery Strategy and policies contained therein as presented at the May 13, 1993 Council Committee meeting.” Motion carried

This Policy is current as of: December 1, 1997

MUNICIPALITY OF THE COUNTY OF COLCHESTER
SERVICE DELIVERY STRATEGY

PREAMBLE

This Service Delivery Strategy is being prepared as a result of the Municipal Council's interest in addressing issues related to providing services to a vibrant urban core at the centre of Colchester County.

Initial discussions on development of such a strategy started in 1988 when the Municipal Council formed a Service Delivery Strategy Task Force. At the time weaknesses had become evident in the petition process used to establish new services. The use of petitions put council in a reactionary position thus taking away the initiative to properly plan where and at what level various services should be provided. As the number of petitions received increased concerns were also raised over the number of area rates being levied.

The Task Force met on several occasions and discussed a variety of topics with a status report being given to Council in early 1989. At that time the discussions halted largely due to the lack of consensus from the Municipal Council on the need to change the manner in which services were delivered.

Central Colchester has an increasing number of high density residential areas that are demanding services that were traditionally reserved for residents of larger urban communities. This development pattern coupled with the recent discussions relative to reform of local government in Nova Scotia have served to highlight the need to reevaluate how services are provided. The County must be prepared to respond to the new service requests and become pro-active in delivering services to the higher density urban areas in central Colchester.

It is evident that the services that are required in these higher density urban areas in the core of the Municipality are not the same as those being provided to the more traditional "rural" areas of the County. As the types of services provided in these two areas vary it becomes increasingly important to develop both a process for implementing services and an equitable manner of recovering the costs involved in providing them.

INTRODUCTION

Colchester is at the very heartland of Nova Scotia. It boasts extensive natural resources spread over 903,800 acres of countryside. Because of its location all main rail, highway and telephone links in the province pass through the county.

Colchester County has traditionally been a very rural community. The major occupations of residents of the area were in resource based industries like lumbering and farming.

Among the first settlers to the area were the Acadians. They developed extensive farmlands throughout the county. By 1703 the Acadians had established settlements as far south as Stewiacke, as far north as Tatamagouche and as far west as Five Islands.

Following the expulsion of the Acadians in 1755 British settlers came to the area bringing with them a system of “township” organization. This organization allowed for an area roughly 12 miles square to be divided into lots. Each family head received one town lot, a portion of marshland, a fraction of cleared upland and a woodlot. Lots were reserved for a church and a school when these could be erected.

Smaller settlements formed outside these townships. As time passed farmers began to disperse and build homes close to their barns and other buildings on land outside the town. The settlements evolved into long scattered communities.

From these early times through to the 1950's lumbering and farming remained the principal occupations of most rural residents of the County. The early 60's however saw the start of a change in the rural way of life.

During the 1950's it was common for farmers to subsidize their incomes with other employment, a practice which would expand over the next decade. With the transportation links throughout the County being steadily improved, commuting from far to job became the way of life for many.

Farming continued to be the dominant industry throughout Colchester County in the 1960's. During this time however a shift from subsistence farming to commercial farming on a larger scale came about. While the value of farm products steadily increased during this time, the number of agriculture workers declined, largely due to the increase in mechanization.

Population growth in Colchester County from 1961 to the late 70's exceeded the provincial rate and was close to the national increase. Rapid expansion in manufacturing and service industries characterized this period.

The trend for workers to reside in rural areas and commute to work continued. Most of the manufacturing jobs available were in the Truro area thus making it the central point for the commuting workers.

Truro had long been the commercial centre for the area. All major transportation links came through the Town thus making it the access point to markets for products. With the increased tendency for people to commute to work, development of residential properties escalated along the major roads leading into Truro. In particular, extensive residential development was experienced within a five mile radius of the Town in Bible Hill, Salmon River, Truro Heights, North River and Valley.

CENTRAL COLCHESTER SERVICE DELIVERY AREA

Throughout its history the settlement patterns of central Colchester have been largely influenced by transportation links. Bible Hill was initially the centre of activity for the region. This was due in part to the abundance of good farm land in the area and to its geographical location at the convergence of early road networks leading from Halifax to communities along the north shore of the province.

The prosperity of the central area continued with the construction of the Intercolonial Railway and station in Truro in 1872. This established Truro as the focus of activity for central Colchester which has continued to the present day.

Population in the County remained fairly constant from the early 1900's through to the early 1960's at which time the population of the area was 20,844. In the next 30 years the population of the area grew to 34,000 an increase of approximately 60%. As a point of comparison the population of the Town of Truro increased only 10% from 1951 to 1991.

When the County's population growth is examined closer it is important to note that approximately 80% of the increased population resided in the area within a six mile radius of the Town of Truro. From 1966 to 1991 the population of this central area increased from approximately 8300 to just over 18,700.

At the present time approximately 55% of the County's population resides within a six mile radius of the Town of Truro. It is interesting to note that the urban core of the Municipality now has a population well in excess of the population of the Town of Truro.

In terms of electoral districts, the Municipality has three purely urban districts (1, 5 and 13) and four districts that have a significant urban component (2, 6, 9 and 15). The populations in these districts have increased steadily over the past decade.

The development around the Town of Truro is characterized by large residential areas. With the exception of Lower Truro there are no major commercial activities in the area. The residents of these areas work extensively in the Town of Truro or in Bible Hill at the Agricultural College and see the Town of Truro as the centre of many of their leisure and recreational activities.

The Municipality recognized the importance of controlling development around the Town of Truro in the early 70's when it adopted its Subdivision By-law. This By-law designated the area within a six mile radius of the Town as needing a higher level of development control due to the provision of municipal services requiring extensive investments in infrastructure, such as sewer. The By-law allowed for smaller lot sizes and prohibited development of private roads in this area.

The importance of encouraging higher density development within the central area has been emphasized of late due to the plans to construct a regional sewage treatment facility. The cost of this

facility is estimated at approximately 16 million dollars. The more households that can be serviced by the facility the more economical it becomes.

In order to develop policies which will have an impact on the future growth of the central core of the County, it is important to recognize the development patterns of the area. The area designated as the central core should include not only the current developed areas but also a fringe area which will provide for future expansion of the urban area while at the same time providing a means for protecting the rural area from urban encroachment.

The attached map, Schedule A, denotes the area to be identified as the Central Colchester Service Delivery Area. A more detailed map of the area showing specific property lines is on file in the Clerk's Office. Included in this area are the communities of Bible Hill, Salmon River, Lower Truro/Truro Heights, Valley, Hilden, North River and Onslow.

The area contains two distinct elements. First of all there is an area which has experienced high density urban development. This area is, for the most part, contained in the existing defined sewer serviced areas. In addition a large portion of undeveloped land or land which has experienced only low density residential development is included. This area is the fringe area noted earlier.

POLICY SDS - 1

It shall be a policy of Council to designate the area depicted on the attached map, Schedule A, as the Central Colchester Service Delivery Area.

In response to public health concerns raised by the increase in densely populated residential areas the Municipality has established sewer service. The Municipality currently operates ten sewer services. Of these only three are outside a six mile radius of the Town of Truro (Brookfield, Great Village and Tatamagouche). At the present time these sewer areas in the central core have large undeveloped areas. In order to make the provision of municipal services cost effective efforts must be made to encourage development within these existing sewer areas.

POLICY SDS - 2

It shall be a policy of Council to restrict provision of sewer service in the Central Colchester Service Delivery Area to the existing designated sewer areas as depicted on the attached map, Schedule A, until such time as evidence is presented which clearly demonstrates the need to establish more serviced land.

One means of attracting development to the central core is to provide more extensive municipal services to the area. In the past the Municipality has relied upon petitions from area residents to be the mechanism for instituting new services. This has led to a haphazard patchwork

of services being provided in various segments of the central urban core. Proper planning is essential if we are to encourage development in the area and address the needs of the area's residents in a progressive manner.

POLICY SDS - 3

It shall be a policy of Council to encourage and promote development in the existing sewer serviced areas within the Central Colchester Service Delivery Area as depicted on the attached map, Schedule A.

As noted above the Central Colchester Service Delivery Area includes a large fringe area. The intention in including this area is to establish reasonable controls so that high density "urban" type residential development will be discouraged from taking place in close proximity to the existing sewer serviced areas. This will be accomplished through the development of a number of statutory planning documents such as a Municipal Planning Strategy, a Land Use By-law and the inclusion of restrictive provisions within the County's Subdivision By-law.

POLICY SDS - 4

It shall be a policy of Council to establish a municipal planning strategy and land use by-law for the Central Colchester Service Delivery Area.

SERVICE PROVISION

Throughout its history the Municipality has evolved from a very decentralized political entity with individual councillors looking after basic administration of activities in their respective districts to the present very centralized structure.

Councillors over the years have been very cautious about taking on new services as they recognized that there was a limit to the tax base in the County. There has however, been a recognition that all residents of the County are entitled to a basic service level.

The major expenditures for the Municipality over the past decade have been in the area of education and social assistance. These services, although a heavy burden on the tax base of the Municipality, are largely provided on the basis of provincial regulations.

The increased residential development in the Central Colchester Service Delivery Area has placed a demand on the Municipality to provide services that were traditionally reserved for residents of larger urban communities. Such services as sewage systems, street lights, sidewalks, street paving and recreation programming have become an increasing concern for this urban area.

The Municipality has traditionally required that residents of an area must pay for any new service provided to them by way of an area rate. The mechanism used to indicate an interest in the new service and the willingness to pay for the service has been a petition process.

The petition process has been generally accepted in the more rural communities within the Municipality as there is usually a strong organization in the community, such as the Men's Club in Brookfield, to push the petition. In the newer urban areas the sense of community is not as strong. For many of the residents of these areas Truro is the focal point of both their work and leisure activities. In these areas the petition process is prohibitive and has resulted in services being provided in a very haphazard manner.

The petition process has placed the Municipality in a reactionary position in terms of service provision thus taking away the initiative to plan. Given the level of development in the Central Colchester Service Delivery Area this trend must not be allowed to continue.

The Municipality must be prepared to respond to the new service requests and become proactive in delivering services to the designated urban areas.

POLICY SDS - 5

It shall be a policy of Council to regularly review the services that are being provided to the designated sewer areas within the Central Colchester Service Delivery Area and pro-actively plan for the provision of services in these areas that reflect and enhance their urban character.

SERVICE FINANCING - WHO PAYS ?

_____ One of the major consideration points in looking at service provision is the cost implications and the proper assignment of these costs. On the one hand the rural areas do not want to pay for services that they do not receive while on the other hand the urban areas within central Colchester want recognition given to the high proportion of property taxes derived from their area.

The Municipality has traditionally funded the majority of its expenditures by way of a general property tax on all properties in the County. This has proven reasonable over the years as the services being funded through the general tax rate have been of benefit to all or a significant portion of the residents of the County. (i.e. Education, social assistance and environmental services such as solid waste disposal and sewage treatment).

The current funding arrangement has provided a reasonable balance between the demands of rural residents for low taxes and the demands of the central area's urban residents for recognition of their proportionate share of the tax base.

POLICY SDS - 6

It shall be a policy of Council to fund expenditures for services that are for the benefit of all or a significant portion of the residents of the County through the general property tax rate.

The present demands for additional services in the urban areas threatens to displace this balance. The rural areas are not willing to contribute towards the cost of services that they will not receive direct benefit from.

The Municipality has used area rates as a means of paying for certain services. Due to the petition process however, the areas designated for these rates have been small with a variety of rates being charged for the same service.

With the designation of the Central Colchester Service Delivery Area and the acceptance of the need to provide services to this area on a planned basis, it is important to ensure that the costs of providing these services are recovered from area residents in an equitable manner without burdening the residents of areas not receiving benefit from the services.

POLICY SDS - 7

It shall be a policy of Council to fund services that are provided on a planned basis in the designated sewer areas of the Central Colchester Service Delivery Area as depicted on the attached map, Schedule A, by way of a uniform urban service rate levied on all properties within the boundaries of the designated sewer areas.

It is important to recognize that the Central Colchester Service Delivery Area includes a fringe area that is not in the designated sewer areas and also includes the Village of Bible Hill.

As noted earlier the fringe area is included within the Service Delivery Area for control purposes. Properties that are located in this area are not expected to pay the urban service rate as they will not be receiving the services. As the sewer areas are expanded in future years properties in this fringe area will become responsible for paying the urban service rate.

In the case of the Village of Bible Hill, the area has received services over and above those traditionally provided by the Municipality through the efforts of a Village Commission. The Commission imposes an area rate on residents of the Village for these services. In order to avoid a duplication of charges on residents of the Village the area should be exempted from the County's urban service area rate.

POLICY SDS - 8

It shall be a policy of Council to exempt property owners in the fringe area of the Central

Colchester Service Delivery Area and within the boundaries of the Village of Bible Hill from the urban service rate.

COMMUNITY REQUESTED SERVICES

While it is important to focus on the needs of the large urban area in Central Colchester, it is just as important to allow for smaller communities both within the Central Colchester Service Delivery Area and in other parts of the Municipality to acquire municipal services.

In planning services for the central urban core the Municipality will be attempting to address concerns and demands of the entire area. Within this core area however, there may well be a smaller community that would like to have a service that is over and above the services planned by the Municipality. One recent example of this was the request for adult crosswalk supervision at the Valley Elementary School. These requests must be addressed in a responsible manner.

The same holds true for areas of the Municipality that are not within the Central Colchester Service Delivery Area. There are many smaller communities throughout the County that may from time to time request a particular service. The most common example of this is the ongoing requests for street lights.

The services requested are over and above the basic service level provided to the community and as such should be paid for by the property owners in the community. In these cases, once the community is properly defined and an indication is received from the community that a majority of property owners in the community are willing to pay for the service then the Municipality should take action to implement the service.

POLICY SDS - 9

It shall be a policy of Council to provide community requested municipal services on receipt of an indication from the community that they accept full responsibility for paying for the requested service by way of a user fee or area charge.

The Municipal Councillor representing the community will be responsible for bringing these requests to the attention of the Municipality. In substantiating the level of support for the service the councillor should at a minimum hold a public information meeting in the community. As an alternative the Councillor could request that a petition be circulated in the community to support the request.

Date presented: April 15, 1993

MUNICIPAL SERVICES

INTRODUCTION

The provision of municipal services is directly related to the emerging land use pattern of a community. Services such as sewer and water are expensive to install and maintain, but are necessary for the health of the community. Council's rationalization of the extent and quality of services to be provided for a new community is a contributing factor in the attraction of new development to the urban areas of our County. The addressing of municipal services in this strategy will assist in their cost effective delivery, as well as to help ensure that the County will experience new growth in an attractive manner without negative impact on our rural qualities and resource base.

SEWAGE AND SEWAGE TREATMENT

Construction of a public sewer system in Colchester County, excluding Bible Hill where the sewer was constructed by the Village Commission, began in 1965 with the installation of the Tatamagouche system. This led to the adoption of a Sewer By-law in 1966 which has guided the construction of sewer lines in the Municipality.

Currently, sewage produced in serviced areas of the County is discharged into the environment after treatment. The ten existing sewer serviced areas are Tatamagouche, Great Village, Brookfield, Valley, Bible Hill, Salmon River, Lower Truro/Truro Heights, Hilden, North River and Mingo's Corner.

The installation of a sewer system can be divided into two major components, collector lines and treatment. In the case of the sewer systems installed to date, the Municipality, within the general tax rate, has assumed the cost of treatment with the individual areas being responsible for collector lines through area rates and frontage charges. The rationale for this practice has been that environmental issues are a community wide concern. It is in everyone's interest to maintain a clean water system and a healthy environment for future generations.

The Municipality has recently completed the construction of a 1200 mm trunk sewer line which starts in Valley, proceeds through the Town of Truro and ends with an outfall location near Savage's Island in Lower Truro on the Salmon River. Seven of the County's ten existing sewer areas are or will be connected to this trunk line sewer as will the Town of Truro. This trunk line forms an integral part of the treatment process in main streaming all the collector systems into a single pipe line for treatment at the regional sewage treatment facility.

Work is now proceeding on construction of a regional sewage treatment plant in Lower Truro. This new facility will ensure that all municipal sewage generated in the Central Colchester Service Delivery Area is properly treated prior to entering the Cobequid Bay.

POLICY SDS - 10

It shall be a policy of Council to recover the operating and capital costs associated with provision of collector lines for sewage directly from area residents receiving the service.

POLICY SDS - 11

It shall be a policy of Council to require that upon completion of the regional treatment facility, all collected sewage be treated prior to discharge into the environment.

POLICY SDS - 12

It shall be a policy of Council to recover the operating and capital costs related to sewage treatment including the sewer trunk line, from the general property tax rate.

TRANSPORTATION - STREET PAVING

The Nova Scotia Department of Transportation is the transportation authority in Colchester County. It is the Department's responsibility to maintain all public roads and to set policy related to their use and standards of maintenance and construction.

In the past, Municipality has accepted petitions from residents in the County who would like their streets paved. The requests were forwarded to the Department of Transportation each year for consideration of cost sharing. The list was not prioritized, it simply listed the petitions in the order they were received.

If a project was approved by the Department of Transportation the work was cost shared with the Province contributing approximately 75% and the residents of the street being responsible for the balance or approximately 25%. Residents were given up to 10 years to pay the cost of the paving which was billed on a frontage basis.

Over the years very few of the projects on the County's priority list were actually completed. Many of the petitions were so old that the people who originally signed the petition requesting the work were no longer residents of the street. As a result the validity of these petitions was questionable.

In 1990 the Municipality stopped accepting petitions for street paving. The factors discussed above contributed to this decision as well as a policy change within the Department of Transportation. Under the Department's new policy all subdivision streets that have been listed as public roads for 15 years or more are eligible for paving. A number of streets in the County have been paved under this new policy.

Current discussions relative to Municipal Reform have indicated that the Municipality may become responsible for the maintenance of “local” roads. To date no firm decisions have been made and there is considerable disagreement as to what constitutes a “local” road.

POLICY SDS - 13

It shall be a policy of Council to advise county residents of the responsibility of the Nova Scotia Department of Transportation to provide street/road paving and that Council will not accept petitions for street/road paving within the Municipality.

TRANSPORTATION - SIDEWALKS

A number of sidewalk projects have been completed in the Municipality through cost sharing arrangements with the Department of Transportation. The sidewalks were requested by area residents with costs being shared in the same manner as street paving.

For sidewalks installed on subdivision streets residents were billed on a frontage basis for the cost of the work. Two “community” sidewalks have been constructed, one in Valley and one in Hilden, where the cost is being recovered by way of area rates.

In January, 1993 the Council agreed to place emphasis on obtaining Provincial cost sharing for a number of community sidewalks in the Central Colchester Service Delivery Area. These sidewalk projects are for collector roads in the central area and will have a direct benefit to residents of the urban core. In accordance with Policy SDS - 7 the cost will be recovered by way of a uniform urban service rate levied on all properties within the boundaries of the designated sewer areas.

The remaining cost of the two existing community sidewalks will be grandfathered into this new system whereby the cost remaining will be recovered through the uniform area charge.

POLICY SDS - 14

It shall be a policy of Council to designate sidewalk projects on collector streets as community sidewalks with capital and maintenance costs being recovered in accordance with Policy SDS - 7.

TRANSPORTATION - STREET LIGHTING

The Municipality currently provides street lights on an area rate basis to a number of areas within the County. For the most part these street lighting systems have been installed at the request of area residents who have submitted a petition to Council. In two recent cases, Valley and Salmon River, Council has approved the installation of street lights in the entire designated sewer area.

Street lighting should be provided in all urban communities within the Municipality. In these areas the population density is high, resulting in high pedestrian and vehicle traffic. Street lights provide a deterrent to persons contemplating criminal activity and provides fire fighters and other emergency services with better visibility during emergency situations.

As an initial step street lights should be provided in the existing defined sewer areas. This service would be paid for through the uniform urban service rate (See Policy SDS - 7).

There are a number of other urban areas within the Central Colchester Service Delivery Area that should also receive street lights. An initial identification of these areas could be made by County staff with subsequent recommendation to Council. In general these areas would be high density developed areas, typically residential, with at least four dwellings per light placed. Following initial installation, expansion of the street lighting system would be automatic as soon as there are five dwellings per light beyond the last light of an existing street light area and the location of the next light.

POLICY SDS - 15

It shall be a policy of Council to provide street lights to all existing designated sewer areas within the Central Colchester Service Delivery Area to be paid for through the uniform service rate as per Policy SD - 7.

POLICY SDS - 16

It shall be a policy of Council to provide street lights to high density developed areas within the Central Colchester Service Delivery Area that fall outside the existing Designated Sewer Areas provided that these areas meet the following residential density requirements:

- a) initial installation based on four dwellings per light placed.
- b) expansion of existing system automatic when five dwellings per light beyond the last light of existing system and the location of the new light.

_____ POLICY SDS - 17

It shall be a policy of Council to recover the costs of street lights provided under Policy SDS - 16 through a uniform area rate in the street light areas equal to the street light component of the uniform urban service rate.

TRANSPORTATION - Crosswalk Supervision

Crosswalk supervision is a service which is required in areas where a school is in close proximity to a large residential development. In the County most students travel to and from school by way of school buses. Once on the school grounds most of the County schools have rules

prohibiting students from leaving the grounds during school hours.

There are a few areas, particularly in the urban core of the County, where a significant volume of students walk to school. Of these students, crosswalk supervision is required for elementary school students only.

The Village of Bible Hill and Town of Truro have provided crosswalk supervision in critical areas of their communities for many years. The Municipality received its first request for adult supervision in 1992 and currently employs two adult crosswalk supervisors, one in Valley and one in Brookfield.

The Municipality adopted a policy on provision of crosswalk supervision in October of 1992 that set out steps to be followed in evaluating a request and recovering costs. Given the limited number of areas where crosswalk supervision is required, even within the urban core, the service has been identified as a “community requested service” and accordingly the cost of providing the service will be recovered in accordance with Policy SDS - 9.

POLICY SDS - 18

It shall be a policy of Council to designate crosswalk supervision as a community requested service both within and outside the Central Colchester Service Delivery Area with costs to be recovered in accordance with Policy SDS - 9.

PROTECTIVE SERVICES - Fire

The **Municipal Act** recognizes fire service as a discretionary service for rural municipalities. This means that fire service need not be provided by a municipality and can be provided, as in our area, by local community volunteer organizations.

Fire service in the County of Colchester has a long history. At the very core of its initial set-up and ongoing operation is volunteer involvement at the community level. Although there are numerous legal set-ups for the fire brigades in the County all are operated by a core of dedicated volunteers.

In August, 1993 the County adopted a policy on fire protection which sets out the ongoing working relationship between the County and both the Colchester Firefighters Association and individual fire brigades/commissions.

Each area currently serviced by a volunteer fire brigade within the County has the opportunity to decide the level at which the service will be provided. The service is paid for by an area charge levied on the properties falling within each fire service area. The service has been identified as a “community requested service” and accordingly the costs of providing the service are recovered in

accordance with Policy SDS - 9.

POLICY SDS - 19

It shall be a policy of Council to designate fire service as a community requested service both within and outside of the Central Colchester Service Delivery Area with costs to be recovered in accordance with Policy SDS - 9.