

## **PRESS RELEASE**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE** - Thursday, November 16th, 2023

### **Maple Hills Rural Community Council Adopts Its First Budget**

**Irishtown, NB** – The newly incorporated local government of Maple Hills has adopted its first budget as a council for the new rural community. The \$ 3.895 million general operating budget was adopted at the November 15th Regular Meeting for 2024. The sum of \$ 3,895,687 will be the total operating budget and the sum of \$ 3,627,320 will be the Warrant of the local government for the ensuing year. The shared tax rate for the different taxing authorities will be \$ 0.3372 for every \$100 of evaluation (*rates may differ for the regions that have streetlights*). The local government's tax assessment stands at \$ 1,026,730,900, representing a 13.5% increase from the last year.

Following the municipal election in November 2022, the newly elected officials completed an exercise to create priorities to use as a guide during the first few years of incorporation. Among the objectives discussed, Council highlighted three key priority areas: communication, enhancing/maintaining services, and preserving the rural lifestyle. In 2024, Council will undertake a more complete strategic planning exercise to help with long-term priorities for the newly created rural community. Details of public consultation sessions for the elaboration of the plan will be shared on the rural community's website when information becomes available.

As a rural community, a Special Provincial Levy is paid by residents for services provided by the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure. This rate for 2024 will remain the same at \$0.4115 per \$100 of assessed property value. Other services, including the cost of policing, have an estimated rate of \$0.1688 per \$100 of assessed property value. These two rates are added to the rate set by the local government of Maple Hills to establish the total local government tax rate.

To avoid a reduction in the level of service, an increase to the tax rate is necessary to maintain the same level of service delivery. The average tax rate increase to residents will be approximately \$0.0100. Services offered by Maple Hills include fire protection, emergency measures, animal control, planning, garbage collection, streetlights, as well as the new provincially mandated services provided by the Southeast Regional Service Commission. Several services have seen a significant increase in cost of living (CPI) during the last year, which greatly impacts budget decisions made by Council. For example, cost of garbage collection saw a 32% increase which represents an additional \$167,000.00 compared to the previous year, and fire protection has increased by 11% bringing it up by over \$107,000.00 for the 2024 budget. The council did not feel that reducing the level of service of fire protection or garbage collection was a responsible way to save money.

"I am very proud of Council for exercising its due diligence in determining next year's operational budget. Although we were facing larger than normal cost of living increases, Council was still able to find a few items to eliminate or reduce in an effort to keep rates as low as possible. It is very encouraging that the adopted rate increase is significantly lower than nearby local governments former LSD areas." states Erica Warren, Mayor of Maple Hills.

Additionally, the Maple Hills Rural Community Council was approached by the Irishtown Community Center board to take over the construction of the new recreational hub project due to a funding shortfall. The federal and provincial governments have already invested \$ 4.2 million in

the new building. While this investment will increase expenses, Council believes it will greatly contribute to the development and growth of the new local government.

“Council felt that this new building was an opportunity for Maple Hills to have a place for residents to congregate, and enjoy recreation, sports, and cultural events. Council is aligned in the need to support its community through community engagement, kids in sports and healthy living anywhere that we can,” says Erica Warren, Mayor of Maple Hills.

The decision to acquire the facility came after months of deliberation by Council along with a complete detailed analysis to study the financial considerations of the acquisition. Maple Hills will be completing the structure, which will include the new local government offices, community meeting spaces, a community gym / high-end performance basketball courts, and eventually a fitness center. This acquisition will allow the rural community to deliver its services through its own assets. The Irishtown Community Centre and its board will continue to operate the existing facility and offer events and community programming for the region.

You will find the details of the 2024 budget on the website [maplehills.ca](http://maplehills.ca) under the *Budget* section.

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**About the Maple Hills Rural Community**

Following the New Brunswick Local Governance Reform, Maple Hills was incorporated on January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023. The rural community has a population of nearly 8500 residents over an area of 522 km<sup>2</sup> and is comprised of a portion of the former local service district (LSD) of Dundas, LSD of Saint-Paul, LSD of Moncton, LSD of Shediac. As a result, it is one of the largest local government entities in the southeastern part of the province.