

Seven Eastern PEI communities will continue to examine the potential of a single regional government. This decision was approved during a recent joint session of Brudenell, Cardigan, Georgetown, Lorne Valley, Lower Montague, Montague and Valleyfield councils.

The decision is a continuation of a process undertaken more than a year ago. In that time, the councils commissioned a study examining the potential benefits of a regional approach to governance and have sought and received provincial government clarification on tax and funding policies vital to the sustainability of any cooperative initiative.

Montague Mayor Richard Collins said "The Woods Study is a starting point. Now we can start to drill down into all of the issues and see if a deal that benefits all communities is attainable."

Lower Montague Chair Scott Annear said that "this is just the first step in what we hope will become a positive working relationship for all the communities in this area" and Cardigan Chair Dalene Stewart stated "We know our communities face challenges going into the future. We believe it is important for our elected councils to take the lead in finding solutions."

In the spirit of full disclosure, the group is releasing the Phil Woods and Associates and Derek French's Study but emphasizes that the real work is now just beginning. A Working Group consisting of elected representatives from each community will be struck to develop a potential governance, taxation and service model that benefits all communities. It will meet in January. The Working Group is currently looking at ways to include some representation from the unincorporated areas in a fair manner, and are willing to look at suggestions from the public.

Councils view the study as a working document and in no way a final report. Further study and negotiation is required before any final proposal is brought forward. Public meetings will be held in 2016 to hear from all residents once more details are known.

The Working Group welcomes feedback from the public at 7communities@gmail.com or you can send your written comments to Georgetown Town Hall, PO Box 89, 36 Kent Street, Georgetown, PE COA 1L0 – or via phone at [\(902\) 652-2924](tel:9026522924) and we can forward your information to the Working Group.

The Study can be downloaded from: www.georgetown.ca or www.montaguepei.ca.