

Sustainability plans help communities prepare for the future 🚗

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Ryan Lane of Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador speaks to the Great Humber Joint Council about integrated community sustainability plans that must be completed as a requirement for gas tax funding. — Star Photo by Cliff Wells

Ryan Lane says the gas tax agreement has made long-range planning part of any municipal council's life, but it's something that should have been there to begin with.

Lane, Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador's community co-operation resource centre program officer, told the Great Humber Joint Council Saturday the requirement for integrated community sustainability plans in order to access gas tax money the federal government is offering to municipalities across the country is an opportunity to get some much-needed reflection done.

"If you don't plan, you get exactly where you're going — and that might not be a good place," Lane told the council.

After the meeting, Lane told The Western Star even though some communities may not be entitled to much funding under the gas tax agreement, working on a plan is well worth the effort.

"It's time to plan for something that's a little farther out than next week," Lane said. "While I realize, in terms of resources, a lot of small places are struggling with the day-to-day stuff — you're worried about your water break, you're worried about your sewer backup, you're worried about your resident complaints about snow clearing and so on — but it's really important to look a little long-term into the future. If you don't you're going to get bogged down in the day-to-day stuff and you're going to end up in a place where you haven't done any long-term planning, so all you can ever do is the day-to-day."

Lane said not only is the plan an obligation, it's an opportunity to look somewhere most communities don't have the luxury to see — the future.

He said the requirements take in the economic, social and cultural landscape of the community.

Lane said the plans are a lot of work, but there are tools that MNL has available for help.

"You're talking about public consultations," he said. "You're talking about setting long-term objectives. You're talking about integrating the existing plans in your area. By default, your town is automatically included in RED (Regional Economic Development) board plans, so you have to try and engage them in the process and include whatever plans they have for the region in your plans. It is a bit of work, no doubt, but it is desperately needed."

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