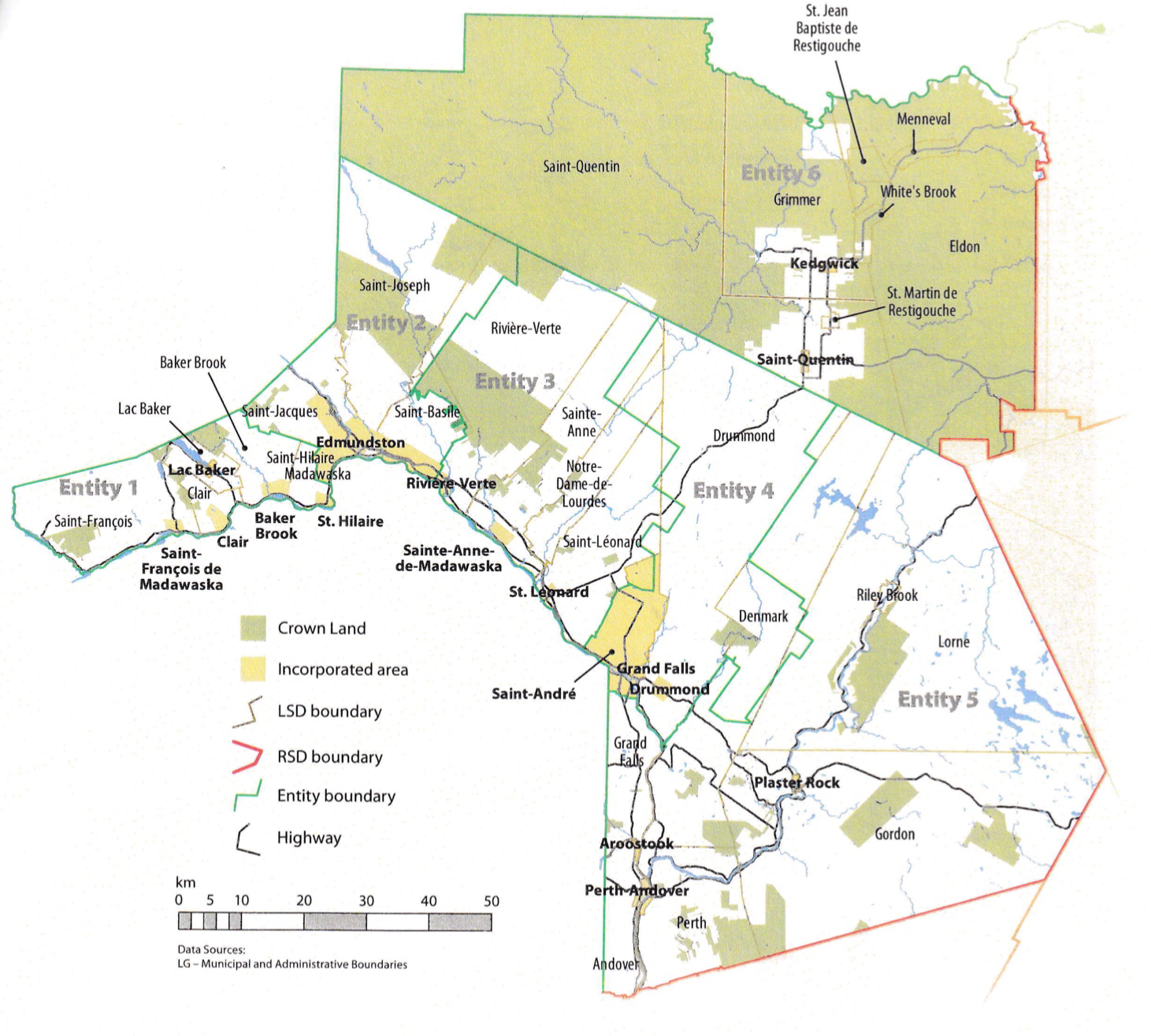
An Image of the Future – Entity 2 and Regional Service District 1

To illustrate the benefits of this new framework, take the example of Entity 2. For the duration of this discussion the municipality shall be referred to as Entity 2, as while the municipality could conceivably adopt Edmundston, the naming of the 53 municipal entities remains a task for the citizens of each entity.[[1]](#footnote-1) Leaving the name of each entity undetermined is an important measure for the development of sustainable new municipal identities to compliment those of the existing towns, villages, and LSDs.

**Geographic Boundaries**

Entity 2 would be comprised of City of Edmundston and the Saint Jacques, Saint-Basile, and Saint-Joseph LSDs. The municipal entity would extend to the province’s northern border with Quebec, but turn south-east to follow the Restigouche county line. The eastern boundary would not follow traditional parish lines, but Crown lands.

**Demographic Base**

The total population of the municipality would be approximately 20300 people, down from 20500 in 2011. While Edmundston has seen some population growth in this period, the proposed entity’s overall population decline can be attributed to significant decreases in Saint-Basile and Saint-Joseph.

In accordance with the *Official Languages Act*, Entity 2 would not be required to operate bilingually because nearly 94% of the residents are Francophones.

As it stands today, the vast majority of the proposed entity’s landmass has no representative local government. The unification of the region’s population would improve the state of local democratic institutions. Incorporating the entire proposed entity would allow for more cohesive economic development and potentially stem the population decreases in the entity’s peripheral communities, but most importantly it would create a robust voting population invested in the future of their community.

Edmundston does have a significantly higher voter turnout than other cities in the province, but the change in voter participation rates between the 2012 and 2016 quadrennial elections is a cause of concern. While the voter participation rate in 2016 was still nearly 60%, that 2016 rate represented a 10-point drop from the previous election cycle. While there is no indication that the 2021 elections will report a further 10-point drop, there is still cause for suspicion about the sustainability of Edmundston’s voter participation rate as the city moves forward.

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| **Voter Turnout by Existing Municipality** | | |
| **Municipality** | **Voter Participation 20121** | **Voter Participation 2016** |
| Edmundston | 67.6% | 57.9% |
| 1. Elections NB | | |

Incorporating the surrounding LSDs would increase the diversity of interests in the electorate, bring rural perspectives to an otherwise fairly urban electorate. These conflicting interests incentivize voter participation and may prevent Edmundston’s participation rates from dropping to the level of other larger cities in the province. Other jurisdictions such as Rural Communities which include formerly unincorporated areas demonstrate higher than average voter turnout. The average rate across all 7 communities was 55.42%, but the highest among the class, Kedgwick, had a turnout rate of 73.69%! To ensure that Edmundston continues to grow not only economically, but democratically, the same recommendations given to smaller communities are also recommended to the Edmundston area

**Financial Base**

Entity 2 will also have a financial base capable of service provision beyond a simple aggregation of the assessed value of each constituent municipality and LSD. Under the new framework, municipal revenues will come from a combination of equalization payments from the provincial government, municipal property taxes, and other user fees related to services like water and wastewater usage.

Because its population is above 10,000, Entity 2 would qualify as a ‘Group B’ municipality. Entity 2’s assessment base per capita would be lesser than the group average though, entitling the entity to an annual equalization grant of $278,757. With the tax room transfer from the provincial government to municipal governments included in the proposed new framework, Entity 2’s assessment base of $1,558,040,300 will be able to yield more revenue than it could under the current local governance regime. Equal Opportunity among municipalities remains a priority in the new framework, but the primary guarantor of said equality is now tax warrants rather than equalization payments.

Of course, this tax room transfer does not necessitate that property tax rates will increase by $1.50 per $100 of valuation across Entity 2, nor does it indicate that the entire municipality will operate with one uniform property tax rate. Because Entity 2 would be composed of suburban and rural populations and since the level of local services may vary considerably within the same municipality, existing provisions regarding differentiated tax rates within the same municipality would need to be used. Residents within each municipality should be taxed for the level of services they receive.[[2]](#footnote-2)

As has been seen in many municipalities around the province, municipalities can adopt differing tax rates for different areas under their jurisdiction. For example, while Eel River Crossing’s property tax rate in 2011 was $1.32 per $100, each former LSD had different, lower property tax rates appropriate to their circumstances. Similar situations can be found across the province, with some cities even imposing different tax rates for those inside and outside the urban center. Edmundston currently has a single property tax rate, but if the proposed entity was created, Entity 2 could easily implement a two tiered property tax regime similar to Fredericton and Dieppe where those inside the urban area and those outside are charged substantially different rates.

Overall, then, Entity 2 would have a financial base appropriate to its size and population. With such a financial base, the municipal entity could be as ambitious or cautious in its service provision as its residents please.

**Division of Municipal and Provincial Responsibilities**

In addition to policing, emergency measures planning, fire prevention and suppression, roads, and garbage disposal, a municipality may choose to enlarge its role and provide a great number of other services. Many municipalities also take responsibility for local arts and culture, parks and recreation, public transportation, and more. Whether or not this sort of expansion is done is entirely up to the residents of Entity 2, and the tax rates of the entity would reflect this level of service.

Many of these services, however, would be better served being provided at the regional rather than local level. Rather than leaving some services in the care of the province, the new framework provides Regional Service Districts within which municipalities can collaborate on such basic services as policing, waste management, economic development, and land-use planning. Collaboration on these issues will further reduce cost for services, allowing property tax rates to remain at a reasonable rate.

Entity 2 would belong to RSD 1 along with its neighbours Entities 1 to 6, covering Madawaska, Victoria, and a portion of Restigouche county. As with each municipal entity, RSDs could conceivably be named, but this would be left to each community to determine for itself. All 6 entities would be partners in the provision of regional services, with each contributing in accordance with their respective demographic and tax bases.

While this region is far too large to be incorporated into a single municipality, the populations nonetheless have a great deal of shared experiences and challenges.

The commuting population of RSD 1 is relatively evenly split between those who commute to work within their own community (46%) and those who commute to a different community within the same county (40%). Furthermore, 10% of the population commute to a different county entirely. The proposed entities with the highest proportion of their commuting populations travelling to different counties are Entities 3 & 4, indicating that the Madawaska and Victoria counties are particularly suited to collaborative economic planning.

While 70% of Entity 2’s own commuters work within their own communities, the area is nonetheless dependent on the region’s economic interconnection. Accordingly, the residents of Entity 2 would benefit from collaboration in land use planning and economic development policy as much as those in the RSD’s other five municipal partners. It is clear, therefore, that economic hubs such as Edmundston and Grand Falls are important sources of employment for the region as a whole, and such economic interconnection requires collaboration in land use planning and economic development policy.

The new framework would therefor clarify the distinction between municipal and provincial responsibilities. While today the service provision of roads, animal control, and policing is dependent on whether or not you live in an incorporated or unincorporated local governance entity, in the new framework, all of these services will be provided by the municipal government. When the residents know exactly who is accountable for what, services will improve.

**Summation**

Overall, Entity 2 would allow its residents to enjoy a comparable level of service in correlation with their level of taxation, to feel represented at a local level and have a real say in how their property tax dollars are being spent, and create a municipal entity that is sustainable enough to navigate the demographic and economic challenges of the 21st century.

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| **Entity 2 : Regional Service District 1** | | | | | | | | | |
| **Communities** | **Entity Type** | **2020 Residential Property Assessment1** | **2020 Non-Residential Property Assessment** | **2020 Total Assessment Base** | **Population 20162** | **Population 2011** | **% Change** | **Anglophones** | **Francophones** |
| Edmunston | City | $1,102,055,500 | $232,484,800 | $1,334,540,300 | 16580 | 16032 | 3.42% | 925 | 15215 |
| Saint Jacques | LSD | $100,708,300 | $2,430,400 | $103,138,700 | 1596 | 1599 | -0.19% | 60 | 1530 |
| Saint-Basile | LSD | $35,395,900 | $563,400 | $35,959,300 | 592 | 717 | -17.43% | 10 | 585 |
| Saint-Joseph | LSD | $81,397,500 | $3,004,500 | $84,402,000 | 1538 | 2171 | -29.16% | 35 | 1480 |
| **Totals** |  | $1,319,557,200 | $238,483,100 | $1,558,040,300 | 20306 | 20519 | -1.04% | 1030 | 18810 |

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| **Regional Service District 1** | | | | | | | |
| **Entity** | **Group Type** | **2020 Total Assessment Base** | **Population 20162** | **Population 2011** | **% Change** | **Anglophones** | **Francophones** |
| Entity 1 | Group A | $320,212,400 | 4404 | 4706 | -6.42% | 245 | 3985 |
| Entity 2 | Group B | $1,558,040,300 | 20306 | 20519 | -1.04% | 1030 | 18810 |
| Entity 3 | Group A | $328,755,200 | 5906 | 6039 | -2.20% | 255 | 5480 |
| Entity 4 | Group A | $870,714,800 | 8992 | 9550 | -5.84% | 1385 | 7430 |
| Entity 5 | Group A | $556,189,500 | 9429 | 10151 | -7.11% | 8115 | 1600 |
| Entity 6 | Group A | $385,385,800 | 6403 | 6433 | -0.47% | 445 | 6205 |
| **Totals** | | $4,019,298,000 | 55440 | 57398 | -3.41% | 11475 | 43510 |

1. Finn, 111. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Finn, 90. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)