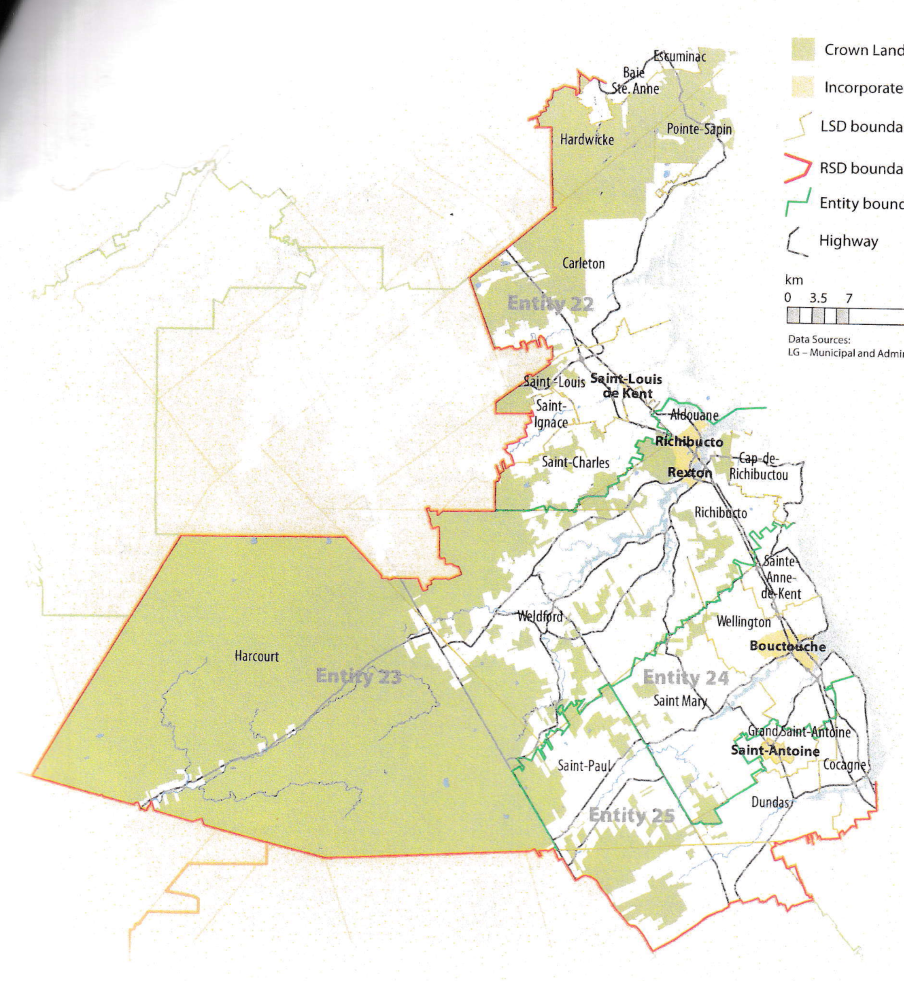
An Image of the Future – Entity 23 and Regional Service District 6

To illustrate the benefits of this new framework, take the example of Entity 23. For the duration of this discussion the municipality shall be referred to as Entity 23, as while the municipality could conceivably adopt Richibucto, Rexton, or any other name, the naming of the 53 municipal entities remains a task for the citizens of each proposed entity.[[1]](#footnote-2) 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 23 would be comprised of the Town of Richibucto, the Village of Rexton, and the Aldouane, Cap-de-Richibucto, Harcourt, Richibucto, and Weldford LSDs. The proposed entity would lie on the coast of the Northumberland Straight, with most of the entity’s Crown Lands concentrated in the Harcourt LSD.

**Demographic Base**

The total population of the municipality would be approximately 6400 people, down from 6500 in 2011. In accordance with the *Official Languages Act*, Entity 23 would be required to operate bilingually because the population is roughly evenly split between Francophones and Anglophones.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Voter Turnout by Existing Municipality** | | |
| **Municipality** | **Voter Participation 20121** | **Voter Participation 2016** |
| Rexton | acclaimed | 64.6% |
| Richibucto | 49.9% | 40.0% |
| 1. Elections NB | | |

As it stands today, 67% of the proposed entity’s population live in unincorporated areas and are accordingly without representative local government. In addition to the lack of democratic institutions, the lack of incorporated municipal entities means that there is almost no land use planning in the area of proposed Entity 23. Entity 23’s Crown Lands are concentrated in the Harcourt area. The rest of the proposed entity has the potential to be developed, but doing so requires proper land use planning. Amalgamation into Entity 23 would therefore benefit the residents of the affected LSDs by enabling them to use the resources they possess and control this development through local representative institutions.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Status of By-Elections for Mayors and/or Councillors** | | | | |
| **Municipality** | **2017 By-Election(s)** | | **2018 By-Election(s)** | |
| **Mayor** | **Councillor** | **Mayor** | **Councillor** |
| Rexton | N/A | Contested | N/A | Acclaimed |
| Richibucto | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| 1. Elections NB | | | | |

Amalgamation would also benefit the proposed entity’s two existing municipalities. While in 2016 Rexton reported a voter participation rate higher than the provincial average, 2012’s quadrennial election was decided by acclamation because not enough candidates were nominated to warrant a contested election. Furthermore, of the two byelections since the 2016 quadrennial election, one was also by acclamation. These recent acclamations and byelections represent a contraction in the community’s pool of potential candidates. While less quantifiable than voter participation, if a community cannot sustain a pool of interested, qualified, and dedicated potential candidates for public office, the community’s democratic institutions will suffer. Richibucto on the other hand simply has low voter turnout. While 2012’s voter turnoutrate was barely higher than the provincial average, in 2016 that turnout rate dropped below that year’s provincial average. Acclamations, resignations and byelections all serve to increase voter apathy which in turn damages public accountability.

The solution for the municipalities of proposed Entity 23 is therefore to expand incorporation and suffrage to contiguous LSDs. Expanding the electorate creates a greater competition of interests, leading to better accountability. However, the more immediate benefit for the proposed municipality is the expansion of the potential candidate pool. An example of such a strategy succeeding can be observed in the Village of Eel River Crossing. In 2014, a number of contiguous LSDs voted to join the nearby village, resulting in a 2015 election which was highly contested. Eel River Crossing’s first election saw 8 candidates compete for 4 at-large councillor positions. Of these 8 candidates, 4 were from previously unincorporated areas. The amalgamation of contiguous local governance entities should therefore be considered by the residents of the entities concerned.

**Financial Base**

Entity 23 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 below 10000, Entity 23 would qualify as a ‘Group A’ municipality. As Entity 23’s assessment base per capita would be greater than the group average, it would not be entitled to an annual equalization grant. Rather, equal opportunity among the 53 municiaplities would be guaranteed by its expanded tax warrant. With the tax room transfer from the provincial government to municipal governments included in the proposed new framework, Entity 23’s assessment base of $294,840,100 would 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 23, nor does it indicate that the entire municipality will operate with one uniform property tax rate. Because Entity 23 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-3)

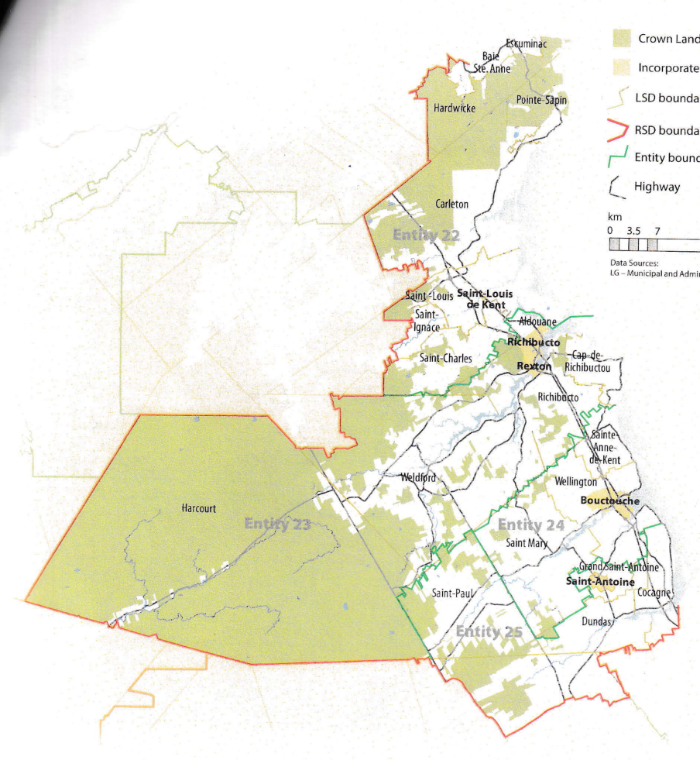
As has been seen in many municipalities around the province, municipalities can adopt differing tax rates for different areas under their jurisdiction. For example, while Eel River Crossing’s property tax rate in 2011 was $1.32 per $100, each former LSD had different, lower property tax rates appropriate 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. 23 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 23 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 23, 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 23 would belong to RSD 6 along with its neighbours Entities 22, 24, and 25 covering Kent and portions of Northumberland and Westmorland counties. As with each municipal entity, RSDs could conceivably be named, but this would be left to each to determine for itself. All 4 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 plurality of commuters in RSD 6 travel outside of their own community each day but remain within Kent county. These commuter behaviours are an indication of the pre-existing economic interdependence in the region. However, unlike most other RSDs, RSD 6 has a comparable amount of commuters who leave the RSD and remain within the RSD. Though the narrow plurality is not ideal, the region would still benefit from collective economic planning and service provision. The proportion of commuters who travel within Kent county is far higher in Entity 23 though. Over 50% of commuters travel outside their own community.

By better enabling municipalities to provide the services their citizens require through cooperation in service provision, 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 23 would allow all 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.

1. Finn, 111. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Finn, 90. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)