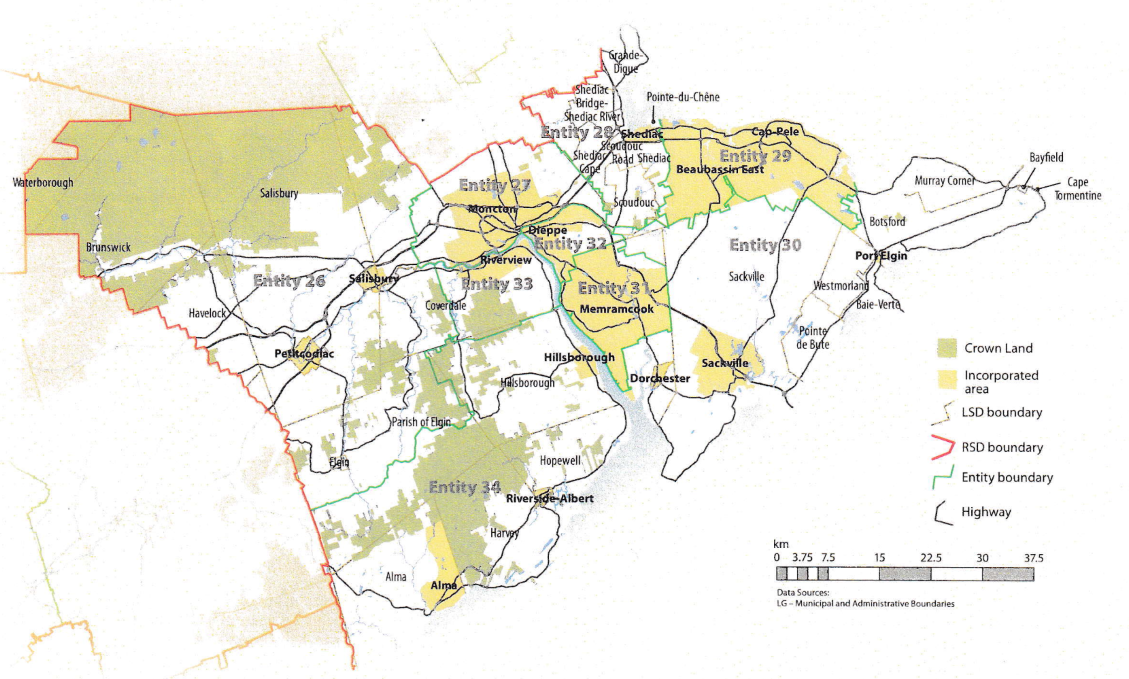
An Image of the Future – Entity 31 and Regional Service District 7

To illustrate the benefits of this new framework, take the example of Entity 31. For the duration of this discussion the municipality shall be referred to as Entity 31, as while the municipality could conceivably adopt the name Memramcook, 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 31 would be comprised of the Village of Memramcook and a portion of the Calhoun Road section subunit of Dorchester LSD. The proposed entity would not include any Crown Lands. As with the other municipal entities contiguous with the greater Moncton area, Entity 31 would be considerably smaller than most of the other proposed municipal entities.

**Demographic Base**

The total population of the municipality would be approximately 4800 people. In accordance with the *Official Languages Act*, Entity 31 would be required to operate bilingually because the Anglophone minority is over 20% of the overall population.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Voter Turnout by Existing Municipality** | | |
| **Municipality** | **Voter Participation 20121** | **Voter Participation 20162** |
| Memramcook | 60.04% | 60.49% |
| 1. Elections NB | | |

Unlike most other proposed entities, Entity 31 would not include many currently unincorporated areas. Rather, the proposed entity would serve first and foremost to expand the boundaries of the existing municipality. As it stands, Memramcook already has admirable voter turnout rates and no immediate concerns of a shrinking potential candidate pool. The incorporated populations of the northern half of the Dorchester LSD will therefore benefit from the example of Memramcook’s healthy democratic institutions and may even serve to benefit voter turnout overall. The incorporation of populations with diverse interests leads to greater competition within the electorate subsequently improving the accountability of elected officials.

**Financial Base**

The primary benefits of the proposed entity for the residents of the existing municipality and LSD would be financial. Entity 31 would 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 31 would qualify as a ‘Group A’ municipality. As Entity 31’s assessment base per capita would be lesser than the group average, it would be entitled to an annual equalization grant of $3,343 to ensure equal opportunity among the 53 municipal entities. Compared with other proposed entities entitled to receive equalization grants, Entity 31’s grant is rather marginal, but this is because of how similar Entity 31’s assessment base per capita is to the group average. With the tax room transfer from the provincial government to municipal governments included in the proposed new framework, Entity 31’s assessment base of $322,165,100 would also 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 31, nor does it indicate that the entire municipality will operate with one uniform property tax rate. Because Entity 31 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. Entity 31 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.

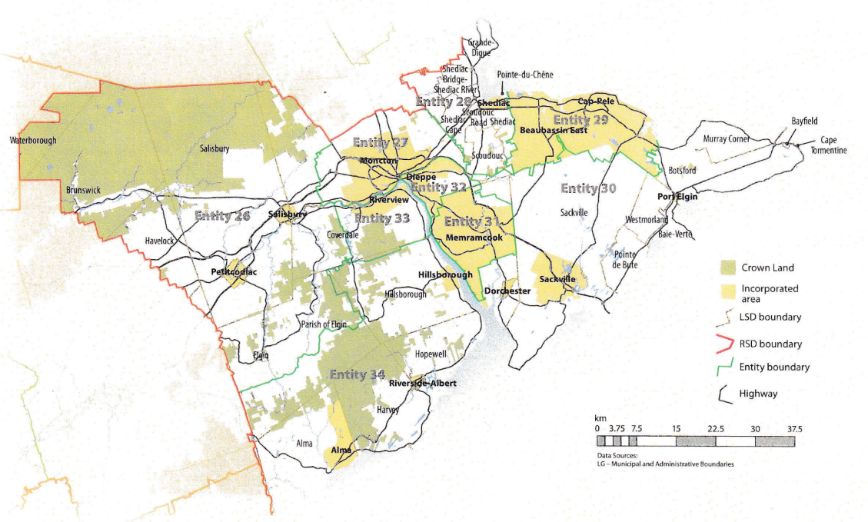
Overall, then, Entity 31 would have a financial base appropriate to its size and population. With such a financial base, the municipal entity could be as ambitious or cautious in its service provision as its residents please.

**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 31, 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 31 would belong to RSD 7 along with its neighbors Entities 26, 27, 28, 30, 32, 33, and 34. As with each municipal entity, RSDs could conceivably be named, but this would be left to each to determine for itself. All 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. RSD 7 covers both the Westmorland and Albert counties, with Moncton as the economic hub. The distribution of commuters in these counties demonstrate the region’s economic interdependence. Not including Moncton proper as a significant majority of the city’s commuters understandably remain within their own community for work, Westmorland county’s municipalities and LSDs report nearly 70% of commuters as leaving their community of origin for work each day while remaining within Westmorland county. Likewise, nearly 60% of Albert county’s commuters travel outside their county of origin in order to work in the economic hub of Moncton. This economic interdependence represents both a need for collaboration in planning and opportunity for collaboration in service provision.

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 31 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)