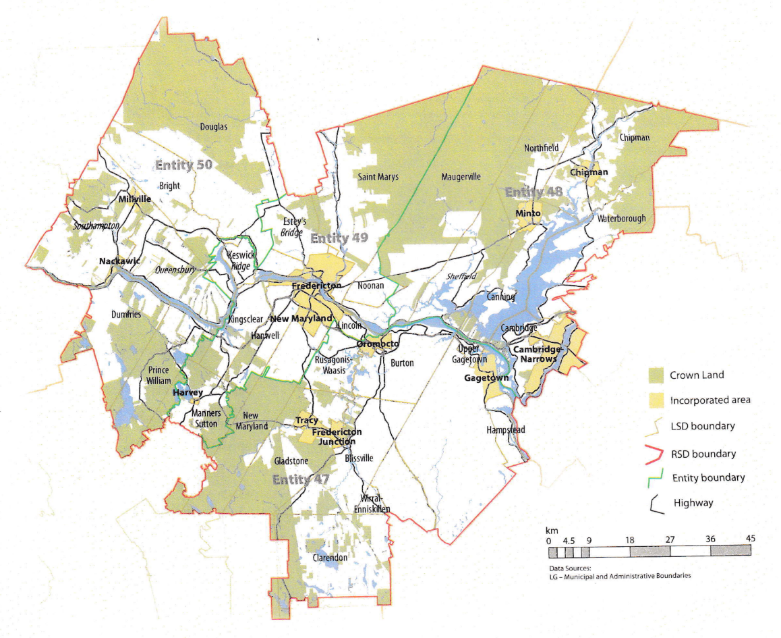
An Image of the Future – Entity 49 and Regional Service District 11

To illustrate the benefits of this new framework, take the example of Entity 49. For the duration of this discussion the municipality shall be referred to as Entity 49, as while the municipality could conceivably adopt the name Fredericton or York, 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 49 would be comprised of the City of Fredericton, the Villages of New Maryland and Harvey, the Rural Community of Hanwell, and the Kingsclear, Estey’s Bridge, Lincoln, Noonan, Evergreen Parrk, Pepper Creek, Nevers Road, Saint Mary’s, and Keswick Ridge LSDs. While the vast majority of the proposed entity is in York county, four LSDs in Sunbury county have been included as well. Lincoln, Nevers Road, Noonan and the portion of Maugerville LSDs up to the Burton bridge represent populations contiguous with the Fredericton population center. In this case especially, the population expansion has disregarded the anachronistic county lines and should be disregarded for the good of administrative efficacy. As well as the contiguous populations of the greater Fredericton area, the entity would include Crown Lands in the Saint Mary’s LSD and the area between Harvey and Hanwell.

**Demographic Base**

The total population of the municipality would be approximately 82500 people – an increase of 3% from 2011. In accordance with the *Official Languages Act*, Entity 49 would not be required to operate bilingually because the Francophone minority is less than 20% of the overall population.

As it stands today, 18% 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 no land use planning to coordinate economic development. Amalgamation into Entity 49 would therefore benefit the residents of the effected LSDs by enabling them to use the resources they possess and control this development through local representative institutions.

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| **Voter Turnout by Existing Municipality** | | |
| **Municipality** | **Voter Participation 20121** | **Voter Participation 2016** |
| Fredericton | 40.1% | 36.8% |
| Hanwell | --- --- | 34.8% |
| New Maryland | 41.4% | 41.1% |
| Harvey | acclaimed | 52.2% |
| 1. Elections NB | | |

In addition, amalgamation would benefit the proposed entity’s four existing municipalities’ democratic institutions. Fredericton, Hanwell, and New Maryland have voter turnout rates lower than the provincial average, but in the cases of Fredericton and New Maryland, these low voter turnouts are actually part of a broader trend. From 2012 to 2016 both communities saw their turnout rates decrease – though admittedly the decrease in New Maryland were quite marginal. As it was not yet incorporated in 2012, Hanwell has held only one quadrennial election so far and so no trends are yet discernable. However, it is notable that while the voter turnout in Rural-Communities is on average higher than turnout province-wide, Hanwell is among the worst performing local governance entity overall and by class. Though Harvey has reported the highest voter turnout rate of the four entities being examined, it has also experienced an election by acclamation in the last decade. Elections by acclamation indicate a degradation in a municipality’s potential candidate pool, as while positions are available, not enough candidates can be found to allow for a competitive election. While less quantifiable than voter participation, the resilience of a community’s potential candidate pool is just as important an indicator of a municipality’s overall democratic health.

The solution for the municipalities of proposed Entity 49 is therefore to expand incorporation and suffrage to contiguous LSDs. Expanding the electorate creates a greater competition of interests, leading to better accountability. As has been witnessed in many Rural Communities, voter turnout among previously unincorporated populations is reasonably high, indicating that the inclusion of contiguous unincorporated populations can improve voter turnouts in existing municipalities. Additionally, the amalgamation of the existing municipalities and incorporation of contiguous populations in LSDs will allow for the development of a more robust candidate pool. Provided that new ward boundaries are designed well, the incorporation of previously excluded populations can have a very beneficial effect on the competitiveness of local elections. 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. Because the population of these LSDs represent just less than half of the proposed entity’s total population, enabling their participation as both voters and candidates will give Entity 49 a better chance at developing healthy and sustainable democratic institutions.

**Financial Base**

Entity 49 would 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 40000, Entity 49 would qualify as a ‘Group C’ municipality. As Entity 49’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 municipalities 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 49’s assessment base of $8,630,319,000 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, the tax room transferred from the provincial government does not necessitate that property tax rates will increase by $1.50 per $100 of valuation across Entity 49, nor does it indicate that the entire municipality will operate with one uniform property tax rate. Because Entity 49 would be composed of urban. 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. Fredericton already operates with a two tiered property tax regime where those inside the urban area and those outside are charged substantially different rates.

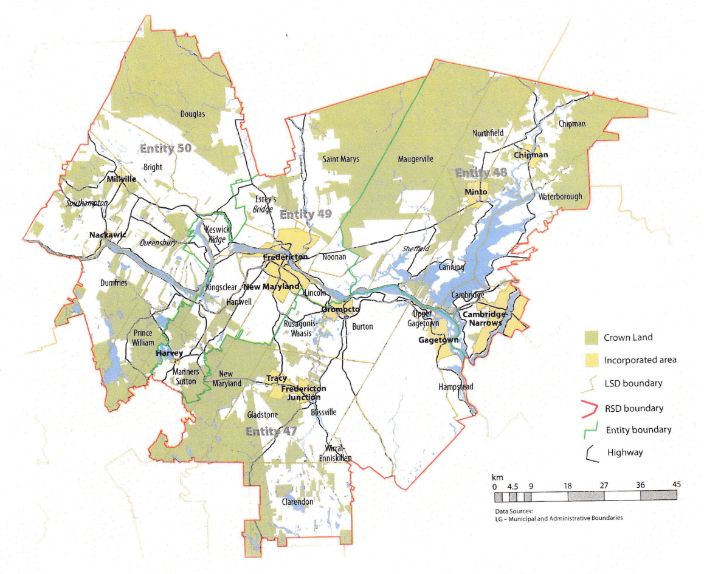
Overall, then, Entity 49 would have a financial base appropriate to its size and population. With such a financial base, the municipal entity could be as ambitious or cautious in its service provision as its residents please.

**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 49, 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 49 would belong to RSD 11 along with Entities 47, 48, and 50. 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 too large to be incorporated into a single municipality, the populations nonetheless have a great deal of shared experiences and challenges. RSD 11 covers portions of York, Queens, and Sunbury counties and the distribution of commuters reflects the economic interdependence within these areas. Entity 50, which is entirely contained within York county, has 77% of its commuters leave their own communities but remain within the county. Likewise, the portions of the other three proposed entities not included in York county travel outside their counties of origins for work. The only exception in this regard is Entity 49 which does support a significant group of commuters who remain within their own communities in Sunbury county. Overall, however, the economies of the four entities of RSD 11 are dependent on the economic hub of Fredericton proper. In addition to lower costs associated with shared regional services, this regional cooperation will therefore also allow for further collaborative economic planning to reflect the interconnected economies of these communities.

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 49 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)