

Statement by Councillor Matt Estabrooks at Sackville Town Council, Dec. 6, 2021

In regards to the recently released White paper on local governance reform I would like to state that I am in favour of the report, I believe this will be a positive, much needed change for our Town. I see this white paper and it's suggested reforms as a continuation of the visions laid out by Louis Robichaud with his "Equal Opportunity reforms" of the 1960's and followed by Jean Guy Finn with his "Building Stronger Local Governments report" released in 2008. These changes are necessary to move us forward toward a more equitable, democratic, responsive and efficient local government structure in New Brunswick. I would urge everyone to read both of these previous reports in entirety, followed then by the recently released White Paper, I believe this will shed different light onto the decisions made.

Our local population consists of folks who live in Dorchester or Pointe de Bute and work in Sackville, they also travel here for shopping, recreation, entertainment events etc. We also drive from Midgic or Aulac to West Sackville to visit with family on the weekends, our larger community already encompasses all of the areas identified in "Entity 40" in the report. Entity 40 is who WE are and it captures everyone who currently resides and uses the services The Town of Sackville provides. The "entity" groupings in the white paper make sense to me, I do recognize that our Council objected to any forced amalgamation in a letter to the Deputy Minister back in July, however, I believe it quite naïve to think this would have stopped Sackville and Dorchester from being amalgamated when given a more detailed look. Logistically, geographically and financially long term this amalgamation makes sense. To continue to suggest that it should not be carried out is far too parochial in thought, we need to have a greater, longer term vision than that for our community.

Some folks have made the statement that our Council should only be looking out for the interests of the residents of Sackville, the people who voted us in as Councillors.....and I agree with that statement, that is who I am standing up for, standing behind changes that I believe will be in the best interest of the current residents of The Town of Sackville going forward. This change is substantial, and, it will have substantial positive effects on the people who voted for us, that is why I am in favour of it. Sackville is not the victim of the government by being amalgamated with Dorchester and I believe that messaging needs to stop, there are 23 small local governments undergoing amalgamation because those amalgamations make sense, as the report says there were a lot of criteria which were considered behind the amalgamations, such as; population, tax base, current boundary alignments, natural boundaries, linguistic profiles, school catchment areas, community interests, service reach and population movement patterns. Granted, there are a lot of uncertain details as of yet, but, change is necessary, we are all well aware that our status quo is not sustainable .

I have watched our business community slowly fade over the years and the last two extremely hard years have become the end of the line for many of them, it is not my vision to see Sackville left as a Town with only one major employer and a few small local businesses that surround it,

this reform is an opportunity to enact some positive change to ensure this does not happen. The default human reaction to change is defensiveness, but, we need to look past that to what will make us sustainable long term. I believe a newly defined area, maybe with a name derived from “TanTama”, the original Mi’kmaw name for our area, is going to be good for Sackville.

Places will not lose their specific identities, Dorchester will always be Dorchester, Pt de Bute will always be Pt de Bute and Sackville will always be Sackville. This restructure is no different than changes that have affected Sackville in the past, for example the boundary reset which brought Middle and Upper Sackville into the Municipality of Sackville some many years ago..... I am still from Middle Sackville by the way..... These changes made it better for our “area” as a whole and this current reform process will as well. A larger consolidated voice for our region (8352 residents) and a more diverse group of representatives (council restructure) is a necessity as we work towards making our community vibrant and sustainable for the next generation.