

CREATING A REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY FOR ENTITY 57

This report is prepared in anticipation of effort which will be required in the event that the Government of New Brunswick should proceed with the municipal reforms contained as outlined in their white paper. [**update: GNB passed the enabling legislation, being Bill 82, in December of 2021**]. This plan contains within it a modification to the municipal authority for the Town of St. Stephen and the rural area immediately adjacent to the current Town boundaries. Given the extent of both the geographic and population changes proposed by the municipal reform plan, it will be necessary for the electoral system to be reviewed to ensure that both the urban and rural areas are properly represented within the governing structure.

In order to evaluate any proposed electoral design on its own merits, it is imperative that evaluation criteria be established prior to preparing potential electoral designs. Given that municipal reforms have taken place in other jurisdictions, it is wise to consider lessons learned by our industry colleagues. Of particular interest to this exercise would be the established principle of “Effective Representation”.

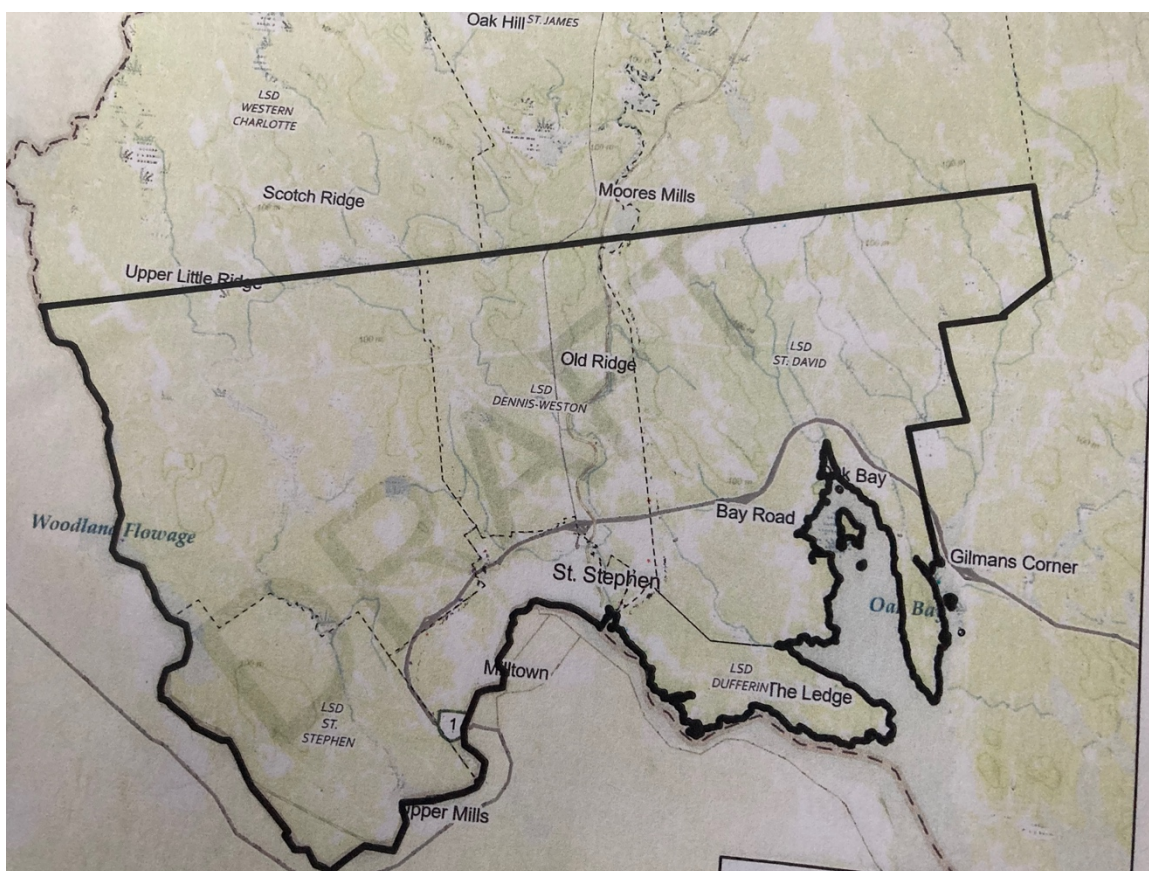
In Ontario, the courts and the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal (LPAT) have established that effective representation is foundational in designing ward systems for municipalities. In Ontario it has been established that the LPAT can reject a ward system that does not meet the test of effective representation. The test for effective representation has 6 components, which are used as criteria to develop the options for a new ward system. They are:

1. Voter Parity—the populations of each ward should be similar (a range of plus or minus 15% is considered ideal)
2. Natural/Physical Boundaries—where appropriate, ward boundaries should recognize physical barriers such as expressways, railways and arterial roads and natural features such as river valleys.
3. Geographic Communities of Interest—ward boundaries should not divide historic communities.
4. Capacity to Represent—the population size of a ward should take into consideration a councillor’s potential workload, the types and breadth of concerns, ongoing growth and development complexity of issues, etc.
5. Geographic Size & Shape of the Ward—ward sizes should reflect that some areas of the town are more densely populated, and some wards may have extensive employment areas and/or more open space.
6. Population Growth—a new ward system should work for the next three elections at a minimum and take into consideration where population growth will occur.

If the Entity 57 Transition Committee were to adopt the principles noted above, they would be well positioned to evaluate any number of governance concepts that may be developed. It would set aside any self-interested agenda that may be held by representatives of the areas that are being amalgamated in favour of neutral criteria. NOTE: Rating charts not filled in to allow users to judge for themselves prior to an expected transition team meeting to discuss preferred option(s)

Potential Ward Boundary Options

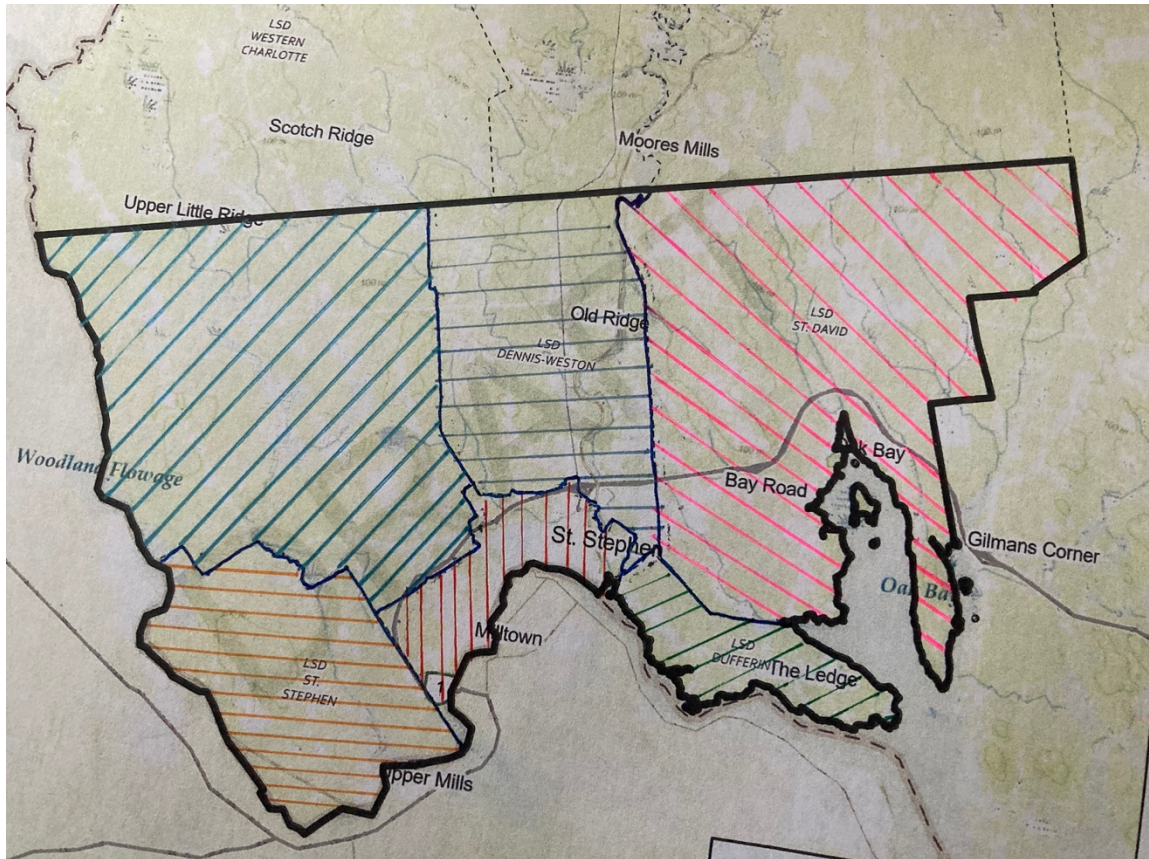
1. **At Large Council (Status Quo)**—In this concept there is no need to undertake and electoral reform process. Council could be comprised of Councillors and Mayor all elected at large within the Entity 57 boundaries.



Voter Parity	Natural/Physical Boundaries	Geographic Communities of Interest	Capacity to Represent	Geographic Size & Shape	Population Growth

Proposed Composition: 8 Councillors (at Large) + Mayor (at large). **TOTAL 9**

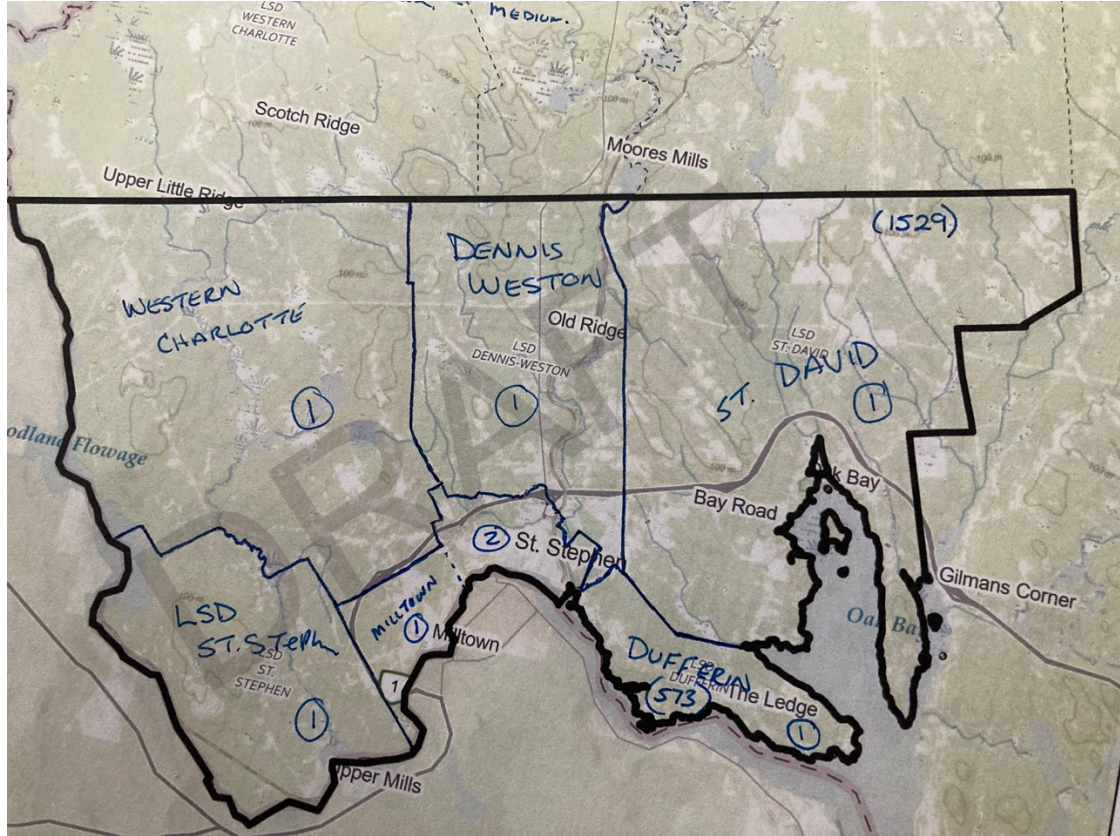
2. **Pre-Amalgamation**—This concept utilizes the current boundaries of the Town of St. Stephen and the five Local Service Districts as they currently exist (adjusted to the entity 57 boundaries). This approach would require a weighted distribution of seats in accordance with the populations of the created wards.



Voter Parity	Natural/Physical Boundaries	Geographic Communities of Interest	Capacity to Represent	Geographic Size & Shape	Population Growth

Proposed Composition: 1 Councillor from each of the “rural” ward (5). 5 Councillors from St. Stephen Ward (5). Mayor at Large. (1). **TOTAL 11**

3. **Pre-Amalgamation 2 (Milltown)**—This concept considers boundaries of the Town of St. Stephen, the former Town of Milltown, and the five Local Service Districts as they currently exist (adjusted to the entity 57 boundaries). This approach would require a weighted distribution of seats in accordance with the populations of the created wards.



Voter Parity	Natural/Physical Boundaries	Geographic Communities of Interest	Capacity to Represent	Geographic Size & Shape	Population Growth

Proposed Composition: 1 each from current LSD regions, 1 from “milltown” ward, 2 from “St. Stephen” ward, Mayor at large. **TOTAL: 11**

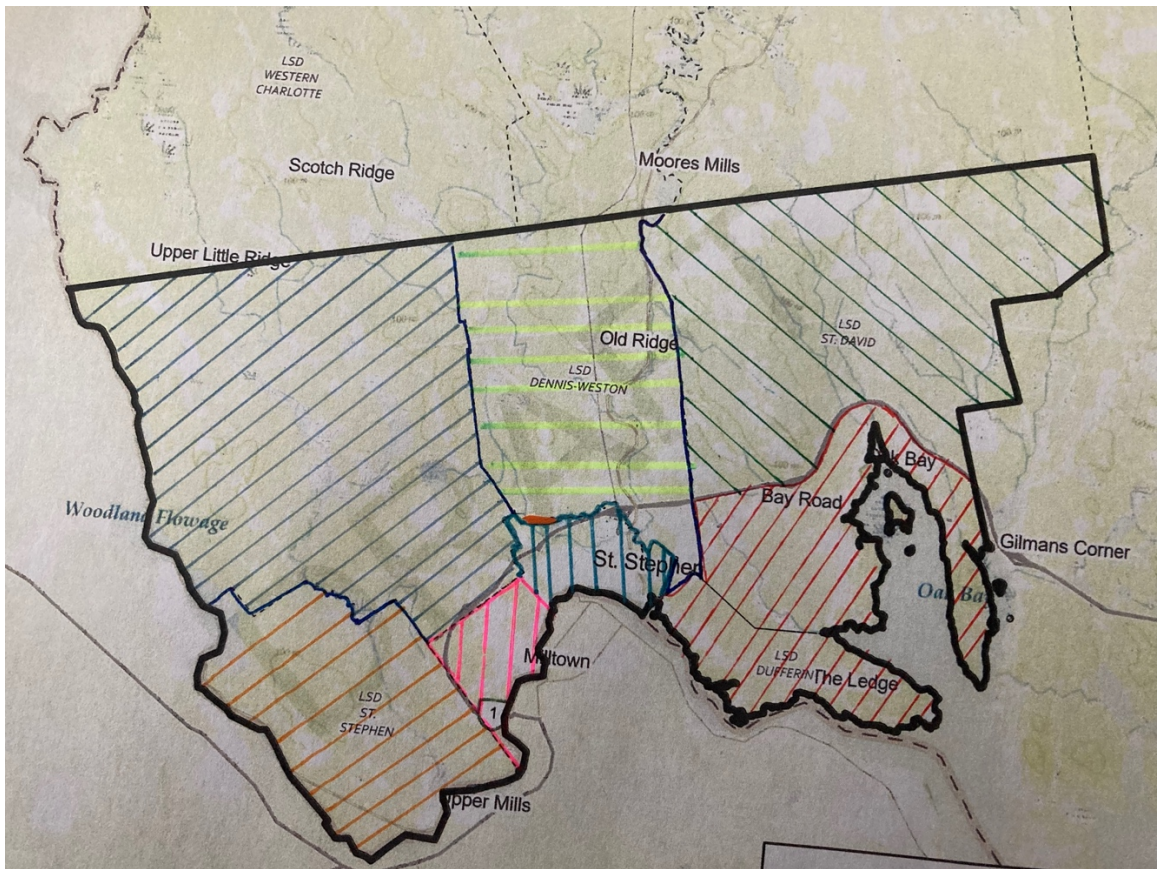
4. **Pre-Amalgamation 3 (expanded Dufferin)**—This concept attempts to adjust the geographical size of the wards by expanding the Dufferin LSD into the St. David LSD. This approach would require a weighted distribution of seats in accordance with the populations of the created wards.



Voter Parity	Natural/Physical Boundaries	Geographic Communities of Interest	Capacity to Represent	Geographic Size & Shape	Population Growth

Proposed Composition: 1 Councillor from each of the “rural” ward (5). 5 Councillors from St. Stephen Ward (5). Mayor at Large. (1). **TOTAL 11**

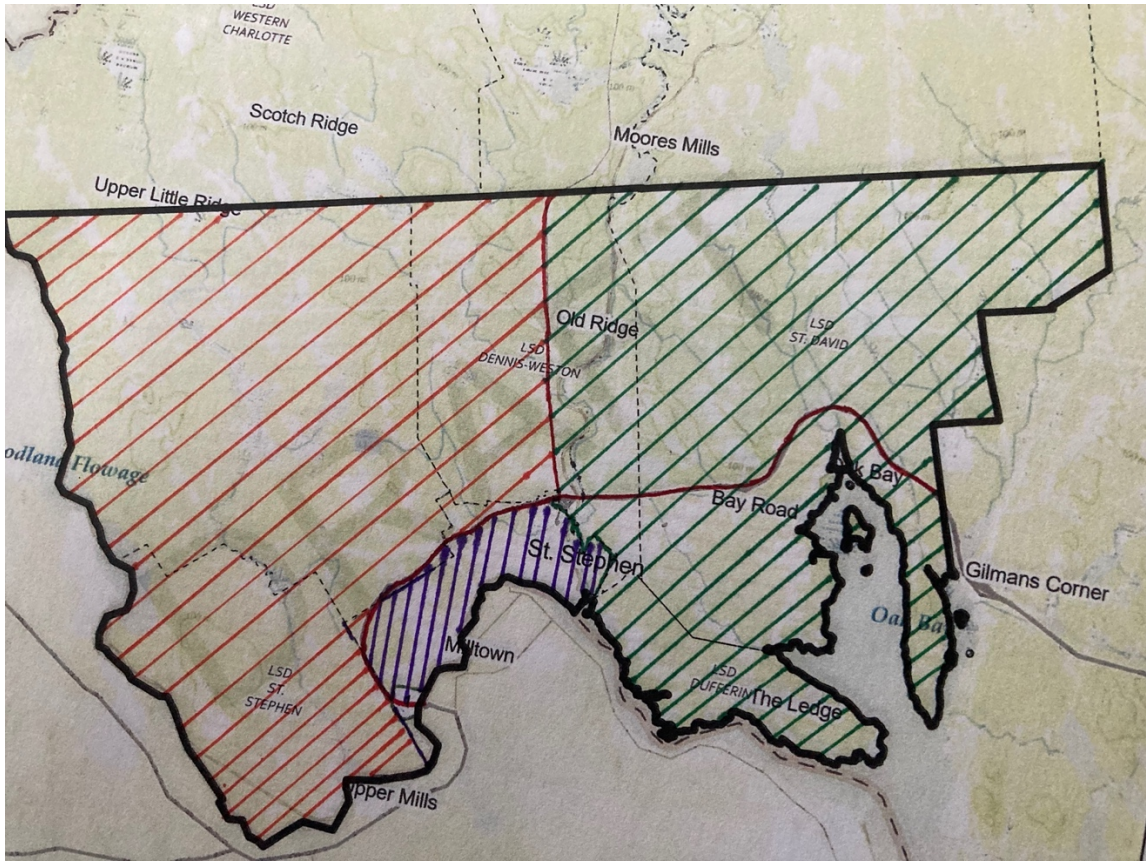
5. **Pre-Amalgamation 4 (Expanded Dufferin & Milltown)**—This concept combines those of options 3 and 4 above. This approach would require a weighted distribution of seats in accordance with the populations of the created wards.



Voter Parity	Natural/Physical Boundaries	Geographic Communities of Interest	Capacity to Represent	Geographic Size & Shape	Population Growth

Proposed Composition: 1 each from current LSD regions, 1 from “milltown” ward, 2 from “St. Stephen” ward, Mayor at large. **TOTAL: 11**

6. **Highways**—This concept proposes to utilize the existing Town of St. Stephen boundaries and Highways #1 and #3.



Voter Parity	Natural/Physical Boundaries	Geographic Communities of Interest	Capacity to Represent	Geographic Size & Shape	Population Growth

Proposed Composition: 2 from the East ward, 2 from the West ward, 4 from St. Stephen ward, Mayor at large. **TOTAL: 9**

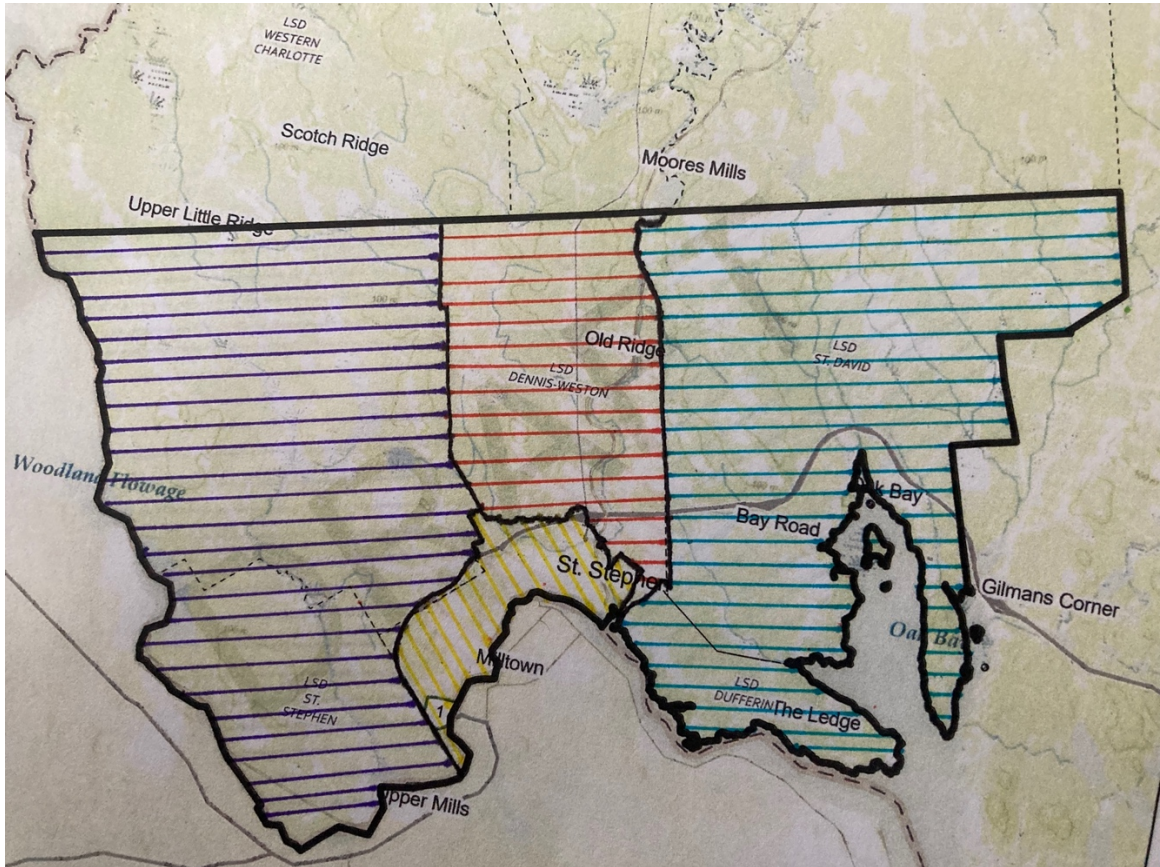
7. Surf and Turf



Voter Parity	Natural/Physical Boundaries	Geographic Communities of Interest	Capacity to Represent	Geographic Size & Shape	Population Growth

Proposed Composition: 2 from the North ward, 2 from the South ward, 4 from St. Stephen ward, Mayor at large. **TOTAL: 9**

8. Tri-Rural



Voter Parity	Natural/Physical Boundaries	Geographic Communities of Interest	Capacity to Represent	Geographic Size & Shape	Population Growth

Proposed Composition: 1 from West ward, 1 from the Central ward, 1 from the East ward, 3 from St. Stephen ward, Mayor at large. **TOTAL: 7**

9. Thirds



Voter Parity	Natural/Physical Boundaries	Geographic Communities of Interest	Capacity to Represent	Geographic Size & Shape	Population Growth

Proposed Composition: 2 from the East ward, 2 from the Central ward, 2 from the West ward, , Mayor at large. **TOTAL: 7**

Council Composition

The discussion of the governance structure for Entity 57 must also include an evaluation of the number of elected officials necessary to effectively represent the population. This discussion cannot be completely independent of the discussion of wards. The ward boundaries, and council composition must each inform the other in order to create a sustainable and supportable governmental structure.

In discussions regarding the number of elected officials appropriate for Entity 57, one must balance the goals of effective representation with the associated costs. Costs attributable to council members include, technology (ipads, emails accounts etc.), honorariums, training, travel, etc.

The Town of St. Stephen has historically operated with 7 elected members of Council. Given the expanded geography and population, it is the recommendation of the author of this brief that the Council for Entity 57 should consist of no less than 7 and nor more than 11. A suggestion that a Council of 9 (eight elected from ward system comprised of 4 rural and 4 urban, Mayor at Large) would be appropriate. Given the population distribution, it would be expected that 50% of the Councillor seats should be representative of the existing Town boundaries, with 50% representing "rural" areas.