

## Community Identity

The need to restructure our rural communities has become increasingly evident in recent years. What this change will look like is still to be determined. As conversations take place, a number of very real issues need to be addressed.

It isn't surprising that people have voiced concern around the loss of community identity as discussions about creating larger municipalities gain momentum. There are examples of municipal restructuring, in Canada, where the names of the original communities have disappeared except in the hearts and minds of residents. It can and should be done differently in PEI.

Nova Scotia is a perfect example of how community identity can be preserved. There are 51 municipalities that cover the entire province. Many are very large. In fact, the average size is more than 1000 km<sup>2</sup>. There are many well-known communities across Nova Scotia that are not municipalities. They are part of large county, district or regional municipalities, but have maintained their unique identities.

The City of Charlottetown is another example. After amalgamation, it put up prominent signs displaying the names of the former municipalities that make up neighbourhoods in the new city.

A municipality is a local government. Its role is to provide local services and make local decisions on local matters. Restructuring to create larger rural municipalities that cover the Island does not mean the loss of our communities, their names or their rich traditions and history. Community names live on as part of a newly incorporated area.

Islanders take pride in their communities. For some, this pride drives the desire to stay the same. But we can't and shouldn't stay the same forever. For a growing number of Islanders, caring for their community drives their desire for change. By working together we will keep our rural communities strong as we transition to a modern municipal system across the province. Larger, sustainable municipalities will better serve Island communities, while municipal planning will help preserve the character of the communities we're proud to call home.

I encourage all Islanders to get involved in the conversation. There is a brighter future for PEI if we work together to Build PEI Communities.

Bruce MacDougall  
President  
Federation of PEI Municipalities