

My name is Dan Normandeau. I am a concerned citizen and taxpayer of Dummerston, a recently former long-time school board member, proud parent of two daughters in our elementary school, a realtor and a board member and past president of one of the twelve State Regional Development Corporations.

Let me begin by saying that I believe the stated goals of Act 46 are laudable and I support them. The approach to attaining these goals, as stipulated in Act 46, is admittedly flawed...hence S-122 and other bills. In your work on this matter, I encourage you to place the emphasis on the goals and not on the means and methods of attaining them. Prescribing means and methods is appropriate ONLY when a situation has been thoroughly analyzed and the data fully supports the validity of this prescribed approach. To prescribe without having shown the certainty of delivering the desired outcomes has a very high probability of failure. Without the ridged confines of a prescriptive approach, one allows innovation. Innovation almost always impresses, whereas prescriptive, especially in education, is sure to be unimpressive. Dummerston is one of the best elementary schools in state and has performed very well for decades. In 2015 SBAC performance, Dummerston had five top-10 performances making it fourth in the entire State. In 2016 we had very similar results with four top-10 performances and one 11<sup>th</sup>. Our eighth grade placed BEST in the State for BOTH math and English language arts. My point here is that IF Dummerston is threatened into merging (which has been on-going), or if the State forces us to merge, then Dummerston will lose its greatness. A distant, super-board dominated by one more populated member town will not have the interest or the fortitude to continue this history, let alone promote and foster it, as has our local board. A distant, super-board will be less focused on our children and the educational aspect of our school, and more focused on the operational aspects of running the school "system" – not unlike a large, corporate bean-counter. The students will become more like widgets and we will lose our historic greatness. Harm will have been done.

Section 5 of S-122 was written primarily for one town. Dummerston's "choice" needs protection just as much as that one town's does; certainly, no less! Dummerston's "choice" is to preserve our educational excellence. WHY would you support legislation that is written for a chosen few? If you wish to help a town, please do so in an EQUITABLE manner, and allow all towns that privilege. I keep hearing how Montpelier is better than Washington. It's time to walk the talk.

Instead of one size fits all...or 3 or 4 or 7 sizes fit all...why not modify the Act to allow all towns the flexibility to prepare Alternative Governance Structures that will allow districts to be creative in how they attain the goals of the Act AND be judged on an equal basis to the conventional mergers that have been approved? I encourage you to do so and to do so in an EQUITABLE manner; NOT in a manner whereby one or a select few towns get an off-ramp not allowed to others.

Thank you for listening, I hope that you find this worthy of deliberate reflection and subsequent important action.