



# 2019 PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND VITAL SIGNS

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A collaboration between the  
Community Foundation of Prince Edward Island  
and the University of Prince Edward Island's  
Institute of Island Studies



Atlantic Canada  
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promotion économique  
du Canada atlantique



# WELCOME TO PEI'S VITAL SIGNS REPORT

## Jonathan Ross

PRESIDENT | BOARD OF DIRECTORS  
COMMUNITY FOUNDATION OF PEI

*The Community Foundation of PEI (CFPEI) and the Institute of Island Studies (IIS) are extremely pleased to present PEI's first full Vital Signs® report.*

*Vital Signs is a national program that uses local knowledge to measure and reflect the vitality of communities. Vital Signs reports are unique in that they make data accessible to the general public on issues identified by the community itself as important. The reports serve as a catalyst for residents, communities, governments, organizations, educational institutions, and others to increase civic engagement and public debate.*

*CFPEI has been in operation for over 20 years and currently manages 90 individual charitable funds with a value of over 12 million dollars. The findings in this report will help guide CFPEI's granting efforts and help advance new partnerships with organizations working for the betterment of PEI residents and communities. The Foundation will continue the conversations we had with Islanders to create this report by holding information sessions and forming regional working groups. This report is not an end point but a starting point for CFPEI and others to work together to address issues and enhance the vitality of PEI communities.*

*Please let us know what you like and don't like about this report, and what kind of data and/or information would be most valuable to you or your organization in effecting positive change. We will listen and adapt accordingly!*



## How was the Report Created?

The Community Foundation of PEI and the Institute of Island Studies at UPEI collaborated on the methodology used to create this report. Over seven months, we

- selected ten dimensions or themes of quality of life/well-being used in other studies in Canada and internationally
- invited six groups of community participants from the private, public, and not-for-profit sectors in different regions to participate in Focus Groups
- asked participants to rank their top five themes from the list of ten; these were aggregated and ranked top five for each group
- held focus groups June 17-21 with 46 participants in Alberton, North Rustico, Summerside, Charlottetown, Montague, and Souris
- asked participants to comment on their group's top five issues or themes in regards to their importance, impact, and potential solutions; participants could then speak to any of the remaining issues
- prepared a synthesis document presented at a Validation Session with 25 community leaders to find out if we had missed anything and to solicit advice on secondary data
- circulated draft report to the *Vital Signs* Advisory Committee for their comments and input.

This "triangulation" of approaches is designed to ensure multiple voices are heard, and to allow key messages to emerge.

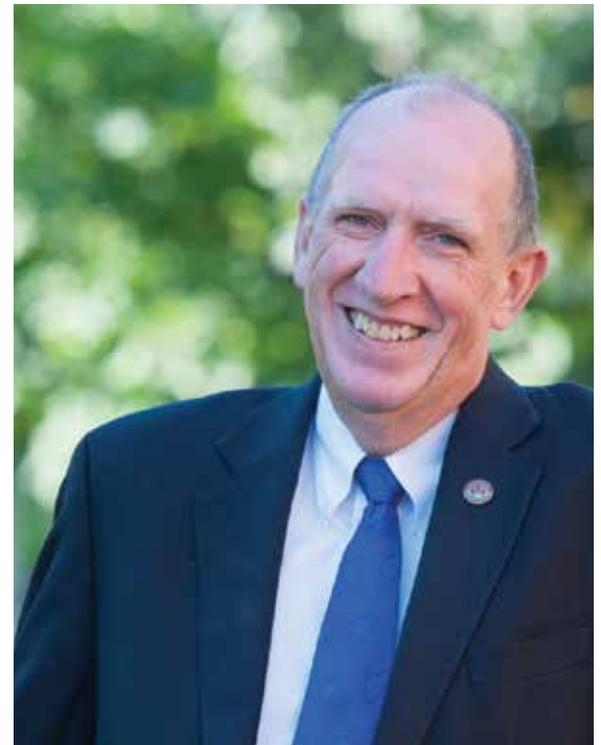
## Jim Randall

CHAIR | INSTITUTE OF ISLAND STUDIES  
UNIVERSITY OF PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

*After more than 30 years, the Institute of Island Studies remains committed to its core mandate of encouraging a deeper understanding of PEI, serving as a bridge between the University and Island communities, and contributing to the formulation of our Island's public policy. Our partnership with the CFPEI in producing this first Vital Signs PEI report fits directly within that mandate. Although it is impossible to capture all of the voices and all of the data we encountered as we pulled these threads together, we hope that this is an accurate reflection of what we heard. It can serve as a roadmap for all of us as individuals and as organizations. After all, many of the best solutions come directly from the communities themselves.*

*At its core, this report is about how Islanders view their own quality of life: what seems to be working and where we need to continue to focus our attention. The IIS is committed to its role as an "honest broker" on the Island; committed to using the skills and experiences from the community and the University to better understand difficult issues; and committed to nudging us into making this a better place for all Islanders.*

*We are pleased to be working with the Community Foundation of Prince Edward Island on this very important initiative.*



## CROSS-CUTTING MESSAGES

In addition to the ten dimensions or themes, it quickly became apparent in our conversations with Islanders that there was something else going on. What you might think of as “cross-cutting messages” started to emerge that were related to, but different from, the ten themes.



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### 1. REACTIVE OR PROACTIVE

Although this came up most often with respect to health care, for example investing in acute care versus addressing the determinants of health, it also emerged with other issues, including Housing (e.g., suspending the normal housing

regulations to address the current rental housing shortage versus planning for demographic changes in communities), Environment (e.g., agricultural companies using large water holding facilities in the absence of deep-water wells versus implementing and enforcing the recommendations from the Water Act), and People and Work (e.g., finding ways to keep temporary migrant workers in rural communities versus matching the services of a community to its specific expressed needs).

### 2. EXPECTATIONS

Islanders may have expectations regarding the kinds of services that can be obtained that do not match the available resources and this may have implications regarding perceptions of relative well-being. The most obvious examples are once again in health, where some believe that everyone should have the same level of, and access to, health care services regardless of location and cost to the system. The other “health” example given was with respect to prescription drugs, where there may be many different kinds of medication for a similar health problem when only one or two might be adequate to address almost all of the problems. An example where participants had a shared expectation was with respect to access to adequate broadband internet service. Without exception, participants felt that this should now be considered a public utility.



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### 3. HOPE VERSUS HOPELESSNESS



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Islanders are known to be hopeful. However, a number of participants suggested that Islanders (and especially younger Islanders) are increasingly losing hope about their future. This sentiment was applied most often to the state of the world’s physical environment (e.g.,

global warming, climate change, sea-level rise), but it was also mentioned in relation to the ability to gain meaningful employment or the likelihood of being able to stay on the Island after graduation.

### 4. LOCAL, PLACE-BASED POLICIES AND ACTIONS

Especially in the consultations outside of Charlottetown and Summerside, there was resentment that plans and policies appear to be imposed upon communities from the outside, such as by consultants and government bureaucrats. We were told repeatedly that the policies and services available to a community need to reflect the needs and aspirations of those living in those communities, rather than being applied in a standardized, “blanket-like” approach across all communities.



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### 5. INTERRELATED AND INTEGRATED



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At every conversation, it became clear that the characteristics associated with one theme are usually linked with most other themes. For example, a lack of public transit means it is more difficult to access centralized public services, work opportunities, or housing. It also puts more pressure on the

pool of volunteers to fill the gaps, e.g., taking people to appointments in the absence of public transit. It can mean that minor beautification of a Main Street can contribute to a renewed sense of community self-worth, increased tourism, and more business opportunities.

## Limitations and Looking Ahead

As with any piece of research, there are limitations to what can be achieved: what you see on these pages is the product of the available data and the perceptions of Islanders at one point in time. For example, although the consequences of climate change came up, it was not as prominent in early June 2019 as it was in October 2019. Also, since we did not canvass all Islanders, what you hear are the voices of those who took part in the focus groups and the validation session. The voices of those who were less well represented, such as youth, may be less prominent. We would especially like to have seen reliable data at the local and regional levels. Unfortunately, developing and maintaining data below the level of the province is expensive. **Although these are limitations, we prefer to think of them as opportunities: in this case, an opportunity to engage more Islanders and hear more about where we should be headed and what kinds of information we need to better understand and address our challenges.**

## HOW TO GET IN TOUCH WITH US

CFPEI would love to hear from you about this report. Please contact us: [info@cfpei.ca](mailto:info@cfpei.ca)  
(902) 892-3440

Do you want to be one of the “Friends of Island Studies”? Receive information on upcoming Island Studies activities, or find out more about this report: [iis@upei.ca](mailto:iis@upei.ca)  
(902) 894-2881

To access PDF versions of this report in both English and French: [cfpei.ca/vital-signs](http://cfpei.ca/vital-signs)  
[islandstudies.com](http://islandstudies.com)

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# A CHANGING POPULATION & WHERE WE LIVE



*...for the past two years, the Island province has had the highest levels of population growth of any province in Canada*

- JIM RANDALL, UPEI

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## A commentary on... Changing Population

JIM RANDALL | ISLAND STUDIES | UNIVERSITY OF PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND



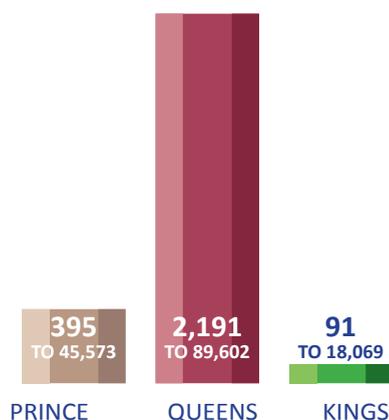
Over the past ten years PEI has had remarkable success in increasing its population, with goals of boosting the economy and encouraging cultural diversity. In fact, for the past two years, the Island province has had the highest levels of population growth of any province in Canada. This growth has been achieved primarily as a result of attracting international (economic) migrants, counteracting consistent net losses of Islanders to other provinces, and a natural increase (births minus deaths) that has remained fairly steady. Despite the fact that a large number of international migrants have moved on to other Canadian provinces, those who have stayed have contributed to the economy and have made the province a more inclusive, culturally diverse place to live.

Although population growth over the past year has taken place in all three counties, it is still highly uneven. Most of the growth continues to take place in Charlottetown and the surrounding communities of Stratford and Cornwall. Very little growth has taken place in the medium to smaller communities of Summerside, Kensington, Alberton, and Montague. When you look at the small rural towns and villages, the long-term trends of population loss have continued. For example, despite some exciting initiatives in places like Georgetown and Souris, the population of these communities has seen an approximately 20% drop since 2001. As we will see later in this report, the share of the “farm” population continues to decline (despite still being the highest in Canada).

Although fewer Islanders appear to be moving “out West,” perhaps because of the downturn in the oil and gas sector, “fly-in, fly-out” employment by rural and urban Islanders to work elsewhere in Canada still takes place. All of these trends have repercussions for the ability of rural towns and regions to retain and attract basic public services, such as health and education, and makes it even more difficult to attract new business and young families in the future. It also puts an added strain on the ability of those remaining in the communities to govern and maintain the high level of volunteerism that has been a symbol of an Island way of life for centuries.

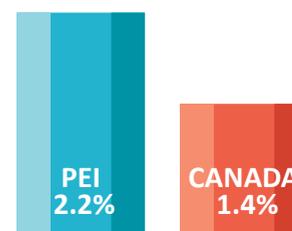
Some might suggest that we appear to have two Prince Edward Islands. There is the more urban PEI with low vacancy rates, rapidly increasing rental prices, a growing population, and greater multiculturalism, and a rural PEI with a declining farm and youth population, challenges in retaining basic public services (including high speed internet), and fewer employment opportunities other than in tourism, agriculture, and fishing.

POPULATION GROWTH 2017–2018  
BY COUNTY



(PEI 45th Annual  
Statistical Review 2018)

POPULATION INCREASE 2018–2019



PEI POPULATION IN 2019

156,947

A commentary on...

## Land Use Planning and Where People Choose to Live

JOHN DEWEY | EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR | FEDERATION OF PEI MUNICIPALITIES



Islanders have a close attachment to the land and depend on it in many ways. Land use planning plays a vital role in protecting our land and water and provides economic, social, and environmental benefits. Unfortunately, only 10% of Prince Edward Island's land is protected by municipal land use plans. One of the most serious and growing problems associated with this absence of plans is sprawl. It often occurs immediately outside municipal boundaries, along the coastline, or as development along rural roads. Sprawl drives up the cost of delivering public services and forces all Islanders to pay the cost of providing those services. PEI's outdated municipal boundaries are largely to blame. Many small municipalities don't have the capacity for planning, while residents of unincorporated areas have no mechanism for planning and little formal input in developments proposed for their area.

Many Islanders depend on the land and our scenic landscapes, directly or indirectly, for their livelihood. Agricultural land is a finite resource, yet it remains largely unprotected. When resource land is developed it is lost indefinitely, not only to potential future uses but also to Island tourists who come here in part because of these landscapes. Planning also helps protect homeowners against incompatible development that could decrease the value of what might be their largest investment: their home and property. It also helps preserve the rural lifestyle that so many Islanders enjoy.

Thoughtful, forward-thinking planning also has environmental benefits, including lowering greenhouse gas emissions by increasing the efficiency of our homes and neighbourhoods. Capturing passive solar energy is one example; designing communities with pedestrians, cyclists, and public transit in mind is another.

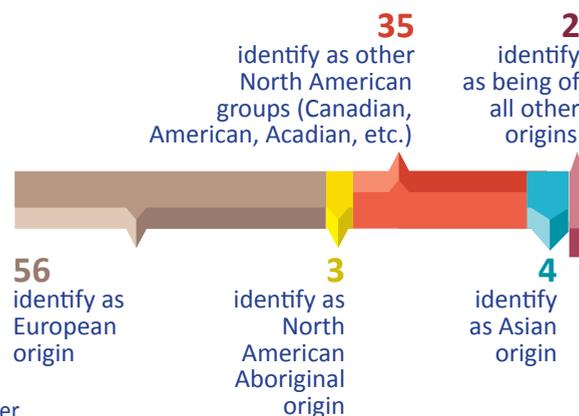
Fortunately, we appear to be moving in a positive direction. The Task Force on Land Use Policy has given us valuable advice on which to proceed. The new Municipal Government Act also makes planning mandatory for all municipalities. This will increase local planning to about one-third of the Island. This is still not enough; but it is much better than 10%.

Recent population and economic growth is putting additional pressure on one of our most precious assets: the land. It is time to embrace Island-wide planning as a valuable tool for protecting the things we cherish about PEI and to plan for a better future for all Islanders.



## IF PEI WERE A COMMUNITY OF 100 PEOPLE

(from the PEI 45th Annual Statistical Review 2018)



# HEALTH & WELL-BEING

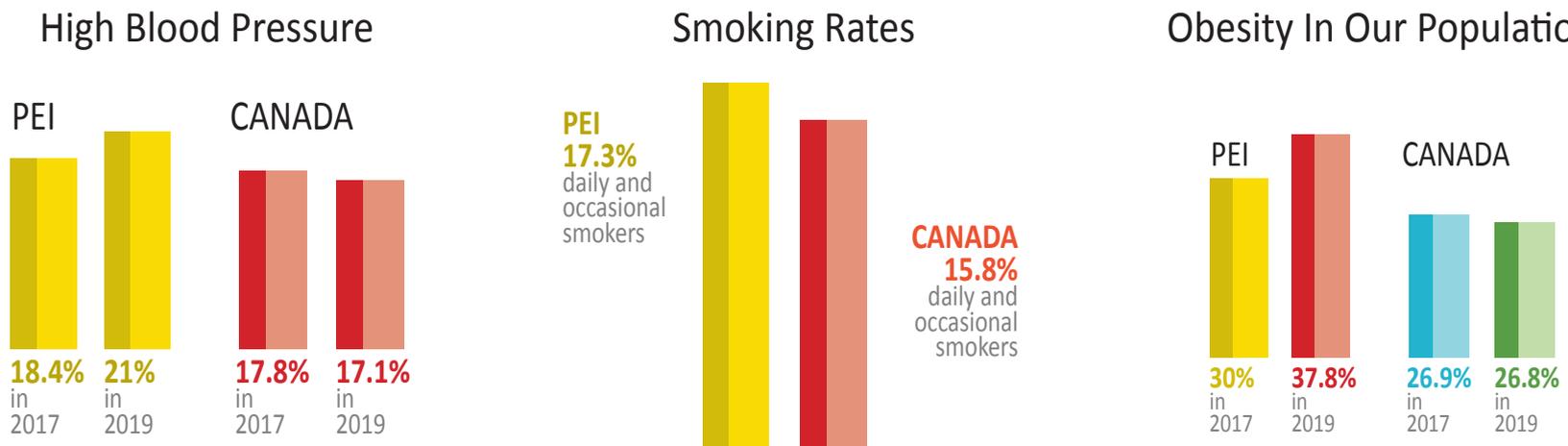
The Prince Edward Island government spends over a third (in FY 2017/18 almost 36%) of its total budget on health care, funding the Island's six hospitals, physicians, drug programs, and wellness programs. And with an aging demographic, these costs may increase in coming years. At the same time, across all six focus groups, health was still the number one issue for participants.

So how do we make the health care system more efficient? How can we address the doctor shortage? What can we do to improve Islanders' mental health? These are some of the questions Islanders are asking. But underlying is the question: Are our expectations realistic? How can we, as individuals, take responsibility for our own health?

Islanders would like to see a more collaborative approach to health care, between government, practitioners, and communities. They would like to see a move away from silos to a more holistic approach, since so many of our health issues—ranging from anxiety and depression to drug and alcohol addiction—are symptoms of something else—like poverty and food insecurity, loneliness, lack of public transportation, low educational levels, childhood trauma. They would like to see more wellness programs for children and adults alike, more community and in-home health care services, and more community partnerships so we can create our own solutions.

*Wellness is everything. It's economy and livelihoods, poverty, food insecurity—they all contribute to health issues.*

- SOUTHERN KINGS PARTICIPANT



(Community Health Survey Statistics, Statistics Canada)



## A commentary on... The Consequences of Obesity

JENNIFER TAYLOR | APPLIED HEALTH SCIENCES | UNIVERSITY OF PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

*We have known for some time about the high levels of obesity among Canadian children and adults. Scientists and health care professionals have repeatedly expressed concern about the number of chronic conditions that are associated with obesity, including heart disease, high blood pressure, Type 2 diabetes, and cancer. Governments and those working in health care worry about the associated high costs of treating the high numbers of people developing these obesity-related chronic conditions.*

*What about PEI? Health surveys tell us that Islanders have significantly higher rates of obesity compared to the rest of Canada. What is worse is that our numbers continue to increase while national rates have remained stable. Why is this the case? Some might say that this is a simple matter of Islanders eating too much and moving too little. While there is evidence that both diet and physical activity patterns do matter, experts agree that the causes of obesity are multiple and complex. For example, factors such as food insecurity, where Islanders don't have enough money to purchase a healthy diet, are associated with poor diets, high stress, and high disease rates. Furthermore, high-calorie foods and sugary drinks are readily available, are often cheaper than healthy choices, and are heavily marketed to both adults and children by multinational food and beverage companies. This makes it too easy for us to make unhealthy choices. Policies aimed at addressing the social determinants of health, including improving household incomes and ensuring affordable housing, are thus critical. We will not see positive changes in obesity rates in PEI until we address these root causes.*



## A commentary on... **Health and One's Sense of Belonging**

PHILIP SMITH | PSYCHOLOGY | UNIVERSITY OF PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

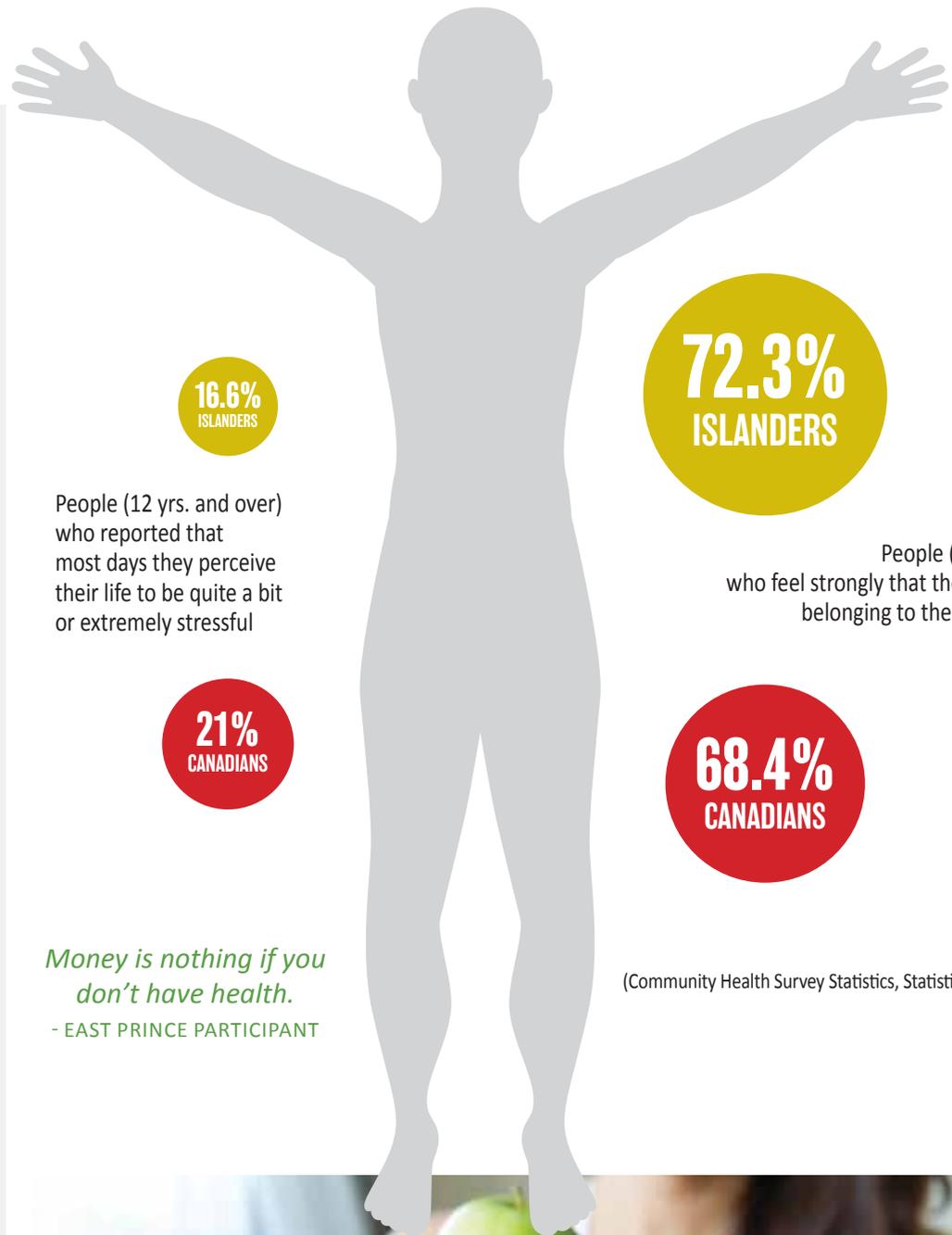
*The precise numbers fluctuate, but Prince Edward Islanders consistently report somewhat less life stress and somewhat more sense of belonging to the local community than do Canadians as a whole. An association of these two factors comes as no surprise. Decades of research have found connections between a person's sense of belonging and reports of enhanced mental and physical health. Correlations by themselves don't tell us what's causing what, but a range of theory and evidence suggests that a sense of belonging—whether through family, friends, neighbours, volunteering, workplace, or community organizations—contributes to wellbeing.*

*Islanders rightly celebrate the repeated examples of neighbours coming together in support, bringing over the welcome or the sympathy casseroles, clearing the driveway after a nor'easter, getting up a ceilidh to support a family in crisis. People connect around their local schools, through community volunteer clubs, religious affiliations, rinks and sporting events, a vibrant arts community, and as social activists. Our small size and social networks can make even the broader community feel intimate.*

*Of course, not all Islanders feel that sense of connection. Is there an even greater burden for the marginalized Islander, when sense of community is celebrated as the norm? Is it even harder for the woman whose family is not a safe haven, for the newcomer not linked with a support network, and for Islanders struggling with the stigmas of poverty or psychological disorder? A sense of belonging is key. We have ongoing opportunities to be a deliberately inclusive and cohesive community.*

*Islanders rightly celebrate the repeated examples of neighbours coming together in support... Of course, not all Islanders feel that sense of connection.*

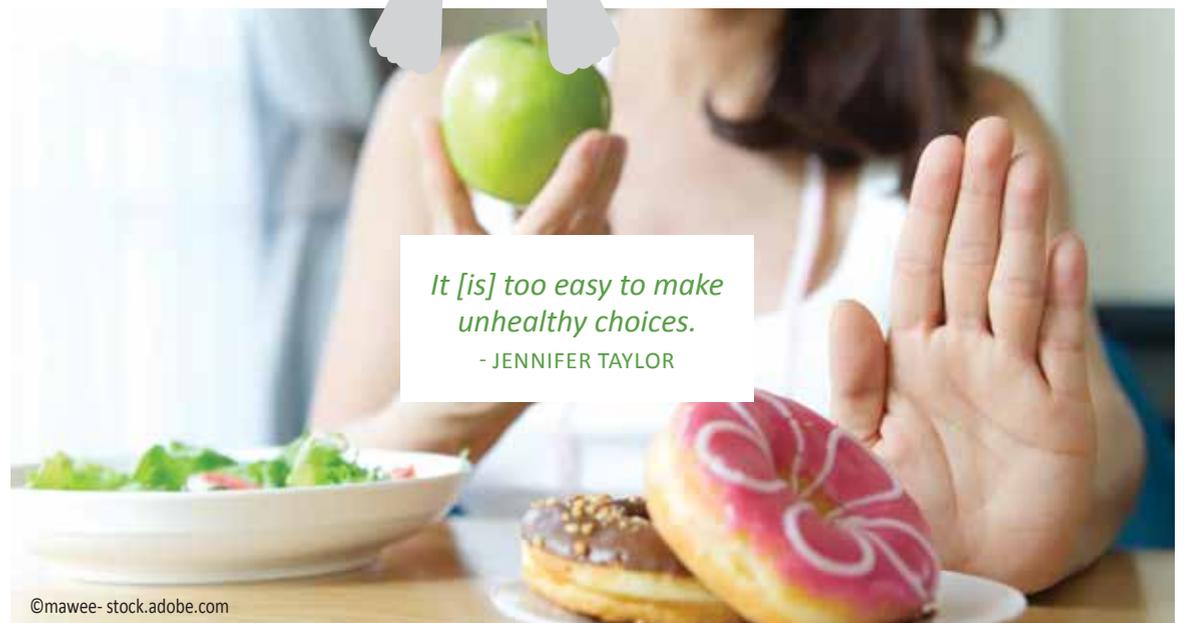
- PHILIP SMITH



*Money is nothing if you don't have health.*

- EAST PRINCE PARTICIPANT

(Community Health Survey Statistics, Statistics Canada)



*It [is] too easy to make unhealthy choices.*

- JENNIFER TAYLOR

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# PEOPLE & WORK

The theme of People and Work was identified as the second most important theme issue for Islanders. As became clear in our focus group discussions, meaningful decent-paying jobs underpin practically everything.

Like in so many other places, our communities are faced with young people leaving to find educational and job opportunities—and not coming back. Too many are graduating college and university under a mountain of debt, making it imperative they find better-paying jobs elsewhere so they can pay back what they owe.

It is often difficult to break out of the generations-old seasonal dependency cycle associated with our fishing, farming, and tourism industries, which is exacerbated by a two-tier Employment Insurance system that is seen as inflexible. Minimum wage has risen, but for most it is still not a livable wage. As one participant said, “There have to be real incentives. You have to give them a hand up, not a hand out. It results in a changed mindset—and it makes a difference.”

*Despite a recent booming economy and recent improvement, if not stability, Prince Edward Island continues to have one of the highest rates of unemployment in the country at almost 10%.*

- JIM SENTANCE

The lack of reliable internet in our rural communities makes it difficult to run businesses. In a world that depends increasingly on the internet, it becomes untenable for many to live without it, so they leave.

When there are fewer people volunteering to keep things going, community vitality suffers, and it becomes a downward spiral.

Fortunately, many of our communities are working hard to turn things around, making them dynamic places to which young people return to set up businesses, raise families, and become involved in the fabric of community living. They often realize that safety and security and a good quality of life outweigh the lure of the big salary. Newcomers, too, are contributing to community vitality, developing their own businesses, working the land, and filling jobs in fish plants, on farms, and in tourist establishments. Their children are settling in to our schools.

Our participants know we could be doing more to maintain the momentum—but it takes political will, government investment, and leadership at the community level. Encourage companies to set up offices in rural areas. Invest in plug-in centres so that people can work remotely. Offer upgrading and retraining while collecting EI. Set up programs where our seniors can mentor the

younger generations—and set up more home care services so that seniors can stay longer in their own homes.

In working toward these goals, we recognize that small and rural communities on PEI have much to offer in creating a dynamic place for all.

## General Unemployment Rates in PEI

### THE GOOD NEWS

PEI's unemployment rate declined for the third straight year.

10.7% in 2016

9.7% in 2017

9.4% in 2018

8.9%  
in 2019

However, PEI still has the **2nd highest** rate of the ten provinces in 2019, exceeded only by NL at 13.1%. The Canadian average unemployment rate is 5.7%.

(August 2019, Labour Force Survey, Statistics Canada)



A commentary on...

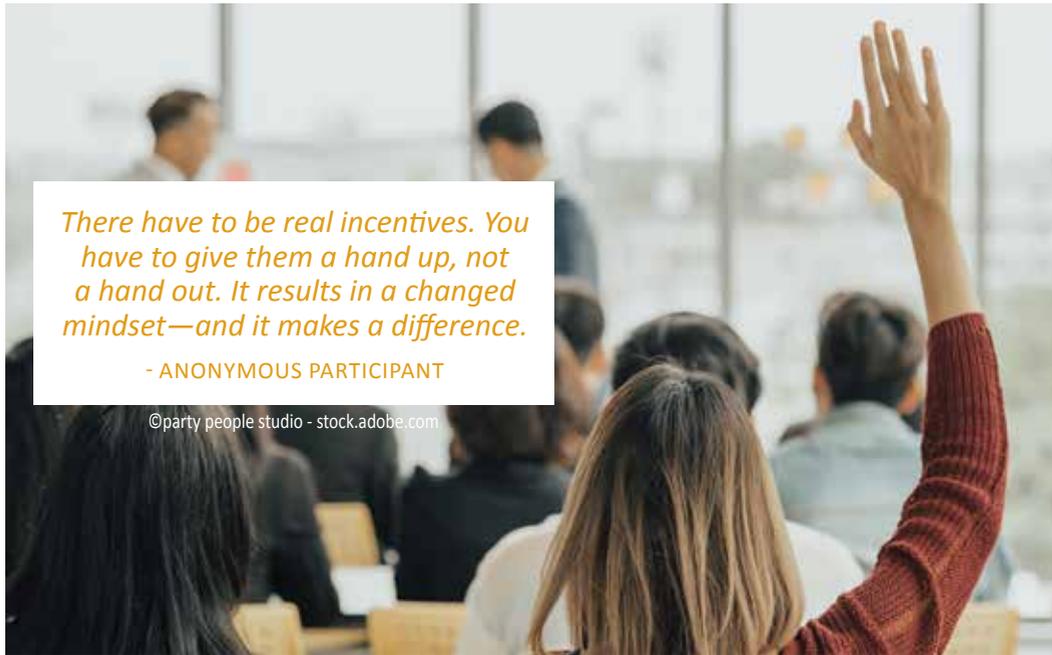
## The Island's Unemployment Rate and Labour Force

JIM SENTANCE | ECONOMICS | UNIVERSITY OF PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

*Despite a recent booming economy and recent improvement, if not stability, Prince Edward Island continues to have one of the highest rates of unemployment in the country at almost 10%. This is largely a reflection of the limited scope of the Island's economy and the reality that opportunity is lacking for some. There may be lots of seasonal, service sector, and public service jobs, but there is still relatively little manufacturing, in particular durable goods manufacturing as opposed to food processing.*

*Women on the Island actually do relatively well, perhaps a reflection of the size of the public service and the number of female-oriented jobs in the labour market. PEI's labour force participation rate and employment levels for women are the highest in the region and compare favourably with the rest of the country. At mid-year 2019, youth were also doing quite well: unemployment rates for those between 15 and 24 years had fallen to less than 9%, the lowest in the country.*

*Unfortunately, males, and in particular men in the rural parts of the province, don't fare as well. This seems to be where the limited range of opportunities in the job market is having an effect, in particular in manufacturing. Some adapt to this situation by seeking work elsewhere, and in fact a fair number of the jobs held by Island men are not in PEI, but are rather in Alberta and other areas of the country and are served by a “fly in, fly out” form of work. A fairly generous Employment Insurance system, the good possibility that a partner has decent paid employment, and a strong connection to family might explain why others don't leave.*



*There have to be real incentives. You have to give them a hand up, not a hand out. It results in a changed mindset—and it makes a difference.*

- ANONYMOUS PARTICIPANT

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*We have to involve our young people. We have to push them, as they are the leaders of tomorrow, doing jobs that are going to be new.*

- WEST PRINCE PARTICIPANT



A commentary on...

## The Changing Farm Population on PEI

EDWARD MACDONALD | HISTORY | UNIVERSITY OF PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

*The apparent continuity in the appearance of the Island's rural landscape masks deep demographic, social, and cultural change. Today's corporate farms are much larger than the 100-acre, family-based operations of Island lore. And there are a lot fewer of them. In 1901, there were 14,000 farms. Today, the number is one-tenth that figure and still falling. Although agriculture remains the most valuable industry, the farm population now represents only a small fraction of a rising population, just 3.1%. In living memory, the figure was 63% (in 1931). A majority of Islanders no longer live in census-defined rural areas, and even there, those who farm are far outnumbered by those who make a living in other ways.*

*The implications of this are enormous, for the customs, values, and attitudes associated with rural agriculture have long been the touchstone of the Island's identity. Today farm populations are anxious, and feel threatened financially and culturally. Their social dominance is long gone, but awareness of its loss is now inescapable. Farming practices are routinely challenged by non-farming populations, rural as well as urban, who may feel attached to the land, but are not rooted in it and don't make a living from it. And yet, it is agriculture that maintains the famous "patchwork quilt" that is intrinsic to Islanders' quality of life. Rural Islanders, but especially farmers sense a widening rift between city and country. They perceive two Islands where once there was only one. And perception will become reality if that distance can't be bridged.*

*It is often difficult to break out of the generations-old seasonal dependency cycle associated with our fishing, farming, and tourism industries.*

- WEST PRINCE PARTICIPANT

*...it is agriculture that maintains the famous "patchwork quilt" that is intrinsic to Islanders' quality of life.*

- EDWARD MACDONALD

### Youth Unemployment Rates In PEI

#### MORE GOOD NEWS

The seasonally adjusted unemployment rate among younger people (15–24 yrs.) has been declining.

**8.5%**

**August  
2019**

This was the **lowest unemployment rate in the country** for this age group. The Canadian average is 11.5%.

(August 2019, Labour Force Survey, Statistics Canada)

### PEI's Farm Population

#### PEI'S FARM POPULATION

continues to decline. In the 2016 census, only 4,390 people reported this designation.

**3.1%**

**in 2016**

As a comparison, in the **1931 census, 63%** of Islanders were part of the farm population—that is, 55,478 people.

(PEI 45th Annual Statistical Review 2018)

# HOUSING



The timing of the *Vital Signs* focus groups coincided with the news that Charlottetown and Summerside were experiencing the lowest vacancy rates on record. Finding a place to live in rural Prince Edward Island was almost as tough. Islanders had much to say about this topic, calling it a “perfect storm” of circumstances. The causes are many, like increased costs to build—and difficulty finding a builder even if you could afford it as there is currently a severe shortage of tradespeople. A fast population growth—5% in five years—mostly from international immigration. No controls on home-sharing platforms such as Airbnb—so what is normally available year-round is being rented out short-term to tourists, who will obviously pay more. People are being “renovicted,” or kicked out of their homes, so landlords can carry out renovations, but then charge more for the improved accommodations.

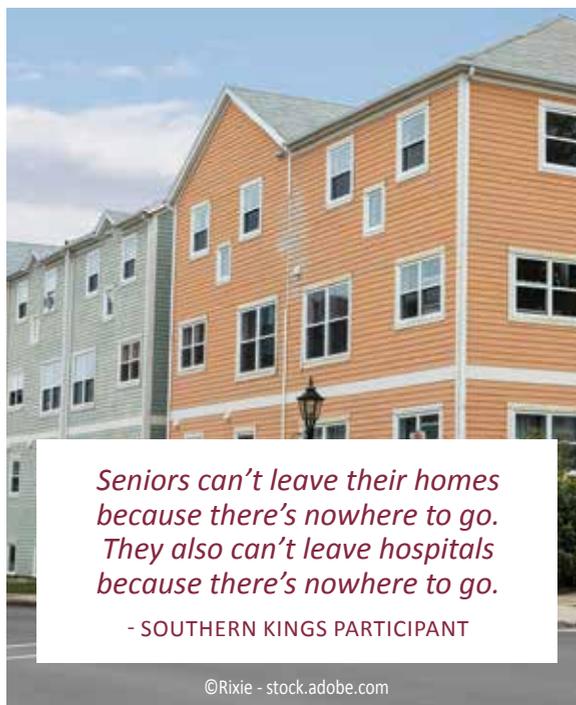
Others talked about the pressure of development on a small island, and our propensity for “ribbon development” instead of planning our communities from the outset. Or when the emptying out of urban centres leads to instability because of a smaller tax base—and decreasing vitality. Or when young people, saddled with student debt, cannot qualify for a mortgage.

But Islanders also had ideas for solutions. They talked about the need for more public-private partnerships in order to build more public housing—with a greater percentage of rental units geared to people’s income. They suggested building more co-operative housing, smaller (micro) units with common spaces, and intergenerational housing for seniors and students. They talked about a need for more creative government housing strategies like temporarily changing the rule book on municipal by-laws, and more collaborative approaches with and between communities. And they suggested creating a database of rental units so that regulators could track landlords who don’t play by the rules.

And, of course, housing is related to public transportation, schools, physical and mental health, and the environment. Islanders urged our leaders to use this opportunity to build more energy-efficient, accessible structures, surrounded by more green space.

*...although people are aware of the affordable housing challenges, moving to non-traditional builds “in my backyard” is difficult to implement.*

- JOHN HORRELT



*Seniors can’t leave their homes because there’s nowhere to go. They also can’t leave hospitals because there’s nowhere to go.*

- SOUTHERN KINGS PARTICIPANT

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## Increase in Housing Starts



Almost all of those increases are attributable to the “apartments and others” category. Very little change is seen in housing starts for single-detached, semi-detached, or row housing.

(PEI 45th Annual Statistical Review 2018)

*We need to change the “rule book” on municipal bylaws that slow down the building permit process—just until we catch up.*

- ANONYMOUS PARTICIPANT

## A commentary on... The PEI Housing Crisis

JOHN HORRELT | FORMER CHAIR | PEI HOUSING ACTION PLAN

The PEI Housing Action Plan was tabled in 2018. The document was the result of nine months of committee, community, and government consultations. The Action Plan defines the many factors that have led to an affordable housing “crisis” on the Island and outlines action items to address the challenges. We have seen numerous items in the plan start to be addressed, such as a substantial increase in new rent supports, historic multi-unit housing starts, and some municipal build incentives.

Despite the strong efforts being made to address PEI’s housing crunch, there is still much work to do—and the situation must have a high priority at all levels of government and must be stringently monitored. The speed at which things are moving forward is an issue, and several factors have created a slower-than-acceptable response. These include a lack of capacity in the construction sector, labour shortages, an over 30% increase in the cost of building materials, and a very successful immigrant investor program that has pushed new housing prices up nearly 40% in less than three years. These factors have also led to substantial rental increases over the same period.

At the same time, a provincial election tends to create a lag in action, from the traditional lead-up to an election call, a subsequent change in government, and an adjustment as a new government gets up to speed. This Fall’s federal election compounded PEI’s and Canada’s housing challenges.

“NIMBY” continues to be a contributing factor limiting a quick response, as communities and their residents struggle to balance the need for change in general with their own personal interests. For example, although people are aware of the affordable housing challenges, moving to non-traditional builds “in my back yard” is difficult to implement. Although municipal governments have made some zoning and incentive concessions, they need to take dramatic steps to alter and amend their bylaws to allow new, innovative, and affordable housing which breaks from the traditional, including allowing variances to height, density, setbacks, and new zoning categories.

PEI has experienced substantial economic growth in many sectors. UPEI and Holland College continue to grow their international student population—all of whom require housing. The Airbnb phenomenon also needs to be addressed legislatively to protect the interests of the tourism industry, building owners, and renters.

There is an opportunity now to review PEI’s Action Plan, evaluate the successes and the areas that require attention, and set real and attainable goals for the short, medium, and long term. For the people struggling with housing needs, all this work needed to be done yesterday. A successful plan will work to ensure that we help the most vulnerable now and that we do not allow ourselves to face further crises.



**0.1%**



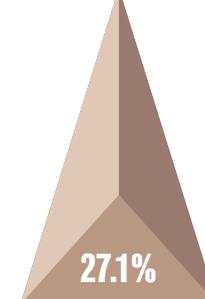
### Vacancy rate in Charlottetown 2018

**0.1%**

The only other year since 2007 when it was below 1.0% was in 2017 at 0.8%. The vacancy rate in Summerside also matched its all-time low in 2018 at 1.1%. The only other time it was this low was in the 2010–2012 period.

(PEI 45th Annual Statistical Review 2018)

### Increase in the value of residential construction in PEI



### Increase in residential construction investment in PEI



(PEI 45th Annual Statistical Review 2018)

# THE ENVIRONMENT



*We'll never get to the point that land is not abused in this province. It's all about money.*

- SOUTHERN KINGS PARTICIPANT

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Islanders are known to be hopeful. However, a number of participants suggested that Islanders—and especially our youth—are increasingly losing hope about their future. This sentiment applied most often to the state of the world's physical environment, such as global warming, climate change, and sea-level rise.

The challenge of small-island living starts with limits: there is only so much land to go around. And how we use that land is crucial. Do we exploit our land and sea resources with no thought for the future? Do we continue to clear-cut our forests, use all our water, mine the soil with chemicals, all in the name of profit? And as climate change takes a toll on the Island—with 100-year storm events becom-

ing 10-year events, with increasing storm surges and coastal erosion taking away our soil—we realize that the Island is particularly vulnerable. But we are also resilient. We can make changes, if the will is there.

Islanders asked: Do personal actions like biking to work, recycling, and sorting our waste have an impact? Or should we be marching against the corporations? If David Suzuki is right, and that in 80

*Living on a small island makes one much more aware of the finite nature of resources and the need to live within boundaries.*

- NINO ANTADZE

years there's only a 50-50 chance we'll still be here, are we putting our energy in the right places?

If we can continue to do our part—like run public transit on alternative fuel from one tip of the Island to the other, institute car-sharing services, make our roads more pedestrian- and bike-friendly, change consumer behaviour away from overconsumption and plastic packaging towards buying local, decrease our water consumption and support the work of our watershed groups, put more land in public trust and enforce the land and water regulations already in place, decrease our dependency on pesticides and educate the public about where our food comes from—then maybe we can convince our youth that there is hope, after all.



A commentary on...

## Islanders' Perceptions of Climate Change

NINO ANTADZE | ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES | UNIVERSITY OF PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

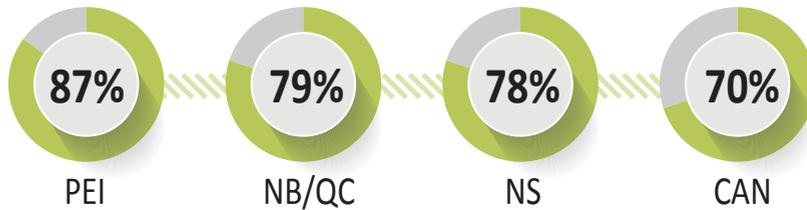
*Seventy-five percent of Islanders believe that climate change will harm people living in Canada within the next ten years, or is harming them already, and 87% think that PEI has already felt the negative effects of climate change. These responses show that on PEI there is very little "psychological distance"—either in time or space—between people's everyday experiences and the impacts of climate change. This should not come as much of a surprise; because of their connection to the sea and the coast, Islanders are witnessing firsthand how their shorelines are being eroded at a much faster rate, how water is warming up around the Island with the potential to disturb the lobster fishery, how changes in seasonal precipitation and average temperature are affecting agricultural practices, and how extreme weather events are becoming more frequent and severe.*

*With the acknowledgement that climate change is happening here and now comes a readiness to act: to adapt to the unfolding impacts and to mitigate climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions, including by imposing a carbon tax.*

*It may be that the high level of awareness of Islanders about climate change and their readiness to actively engage in climate action is also attributable to a deeper understanding of the profound interconnections between social and ecological systems in this limited space. Living on a small island makes one much more aware of the finite nature of resources and the need to live within boundaries. It also fosters a deeper emotional connection with place, making it an inseparable part of one's identity. Once our Island is disturbed, as in the case of the eroded shoreline, there comes a collective urge to protect it.*

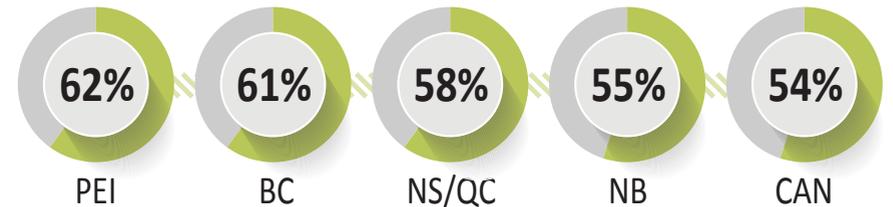
# .....CLIMATE CHANGE ATTITUDES.....

“My province has already felt negative effects from climate change.” (Answered YES)



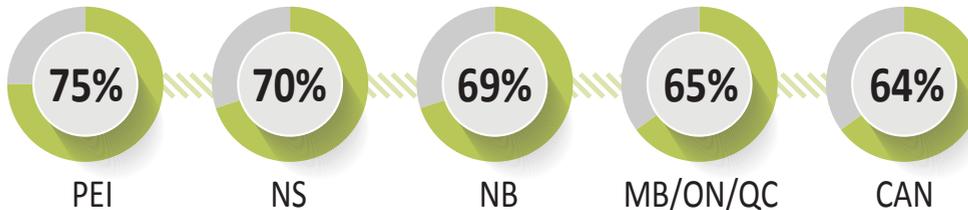
“Another way to lower greenhouse gas emissions is to increase taxes on carbon-based fuels such as coal, oil, gasoline, and natural gas.”

Answered STRONGLY SUPPORT OR SOMEWHAT SUPPORT



“When do you think climate change will start to harm people living in Canada?”

Answered NOW/WITHIN 10 YEARS



*Islanders—and especially our youth—are increasingly losing hope about their future.*

- ANONYMOUS PARTICIPANT

Mildenberger, M., Howe, P.D., Lachapelle, E., Stokes, L.C., Marlon, J., and Gravelle, T. “The distribution of climate change public opinion in Canada.” PLoS ONE 11(8) eo159774. The survey responses are from a data set of more than 9,000 individuals collected between January 2011 and October 2018.



## A commentary on... **Protected Land on PEI**

HON. DIANE GRIFFIN | SENATOR | PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

Protected natural areas provide habitat for native plants and animals, but also give people a place to appreciate nature and soothe their spirits. Prince Edward Island has the smallest share of protected land area of all the Canadian provinces and territories; but this should come as no surprise. After all, it is the smallest province, and there are many other factors that have heavily influenced the amount of land that is protected or is even available to be protected.

About 90% of PEI is privately owned, which is a total reversal of the situation in regions such as the Canadian Territories and Newfoundland and Labrador, where Crown-owned land is dominant. In addition, or perhaps because of its small size, PEI is the most densely settled province, and was settled relatively early in Canada’s history, resulting in most land being used for agriculture or logged for timber. In addition, there has been a widespread impact from invasive weeds that arrived on the Island along with imported agricultural seeds to compete with native species, while plants like Purple Loosestrife escaped from ornamental gardens and have spread to threaten wetlands. While wildlife is using the altered landscape, it is certainly not optimal.

Does this mean that Prince Edward Island is a “basket-case” contributing little to conservation of North American biodiversity? Not necessarily. For example, the Island has major sand dune systems and salt marshes that are distinct within the country. Significant amounts of these ecosystems are protected in land owned by Parks Canada, the Island Nature Trust, the Nature Conservancy of Canada, and the Province. It is only through collaboration among these players, and Islanders themselves, that this protection exists. Continued cooperation will be essential for more land to be protected in the future.

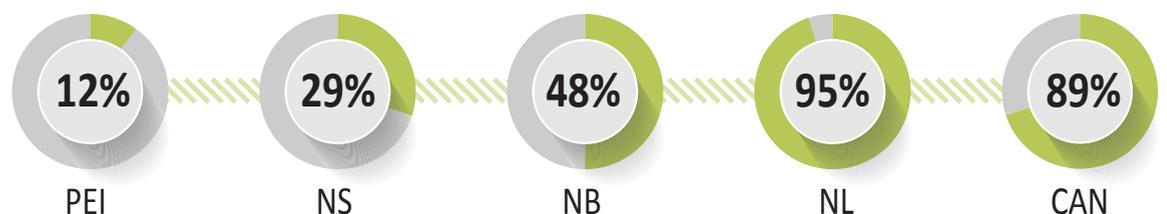
*Progress is burying us alive.*

- CENTRAL QUEENS PARTICIPANT

*Protected natural areas... give people a place to appreciate nature and soothe their spirits.*

- HON. DIANE GRIFFIN

PERCENTAGE OF CROWN LAND OR PROTECTED LAND



# BELONGING & LEADERSHIP

Prince Edward Islanders have long had a reputation of being there to lend a hand when needed, of turning out to vote in droves, and being one of the most generous when it comes to charitable giving. If someone falls on hard times, we're famous for hosting a benefit. Organizations like the Women's Institute and Community Schools, volunteer fire departments and sporting groups, and church groups from one end of the Island to the other—among so many more—are actively engaged in helping to make the Island a better place to live. Yet, with an aging volunteer pool, Islanders are experiencing volunteer burnout like never before. Commuting from the country to work in town is seen to be eroding Islanders' sense of belonging. And cobbling together several seasonal and part-time jobs at typically low wages is eating into people's time and energy.

*Things that bind communities together, being part of family, a larger group that will take care—that's always been special on PEI, but I fear that we're losing it.*

- SOUTHERN KINGS PARTICIPANT

Especially in the focus groups outside of Charlottetown and Summerside there was resentment that plans and policies are often imposed upon communities by consultants and government bureaucrats

from outside, with little meaningful input and participation in the planning by local residents—and regardless of individual community circumstances. The policies and services available to a community need to reflect the needs and aspirations of those living in those communities, rather than being applied in a standardized, blanket-like approach across the Island. This is especially the case in rural PEI.

*There are too many smart people with little sense who have never lived in rural PEI making decisions.*

- EASTERN KINGS PARTICIPANT

It was suggested that engaging our youth in volunteer activities at an earlier age—perhaps through the school system—might be one approach to continue to encourage volunteerism. Offering Islanders a basic income guarantee was another. It was felt that government needed to invest more resources in what is good for the public, especially child care, housing, and public transit—and in the non-profit sector. And making sure that newcomers feel welcome—recognizing the richness and diversity they bring to our communities—would go a long way toward ensuring that everyone feels like they belong.

Percentage of eligible Islanders who turned out to vote on electoral reform:

33%

2005

36%

2016

*Islanders... are motivated by their personal connections with the people they vote for.*

- DON DESSERUD



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## .....VOTER TURNOUT.....

In both 2011 and 2015, PEI had the highest voter turnout in the country, and second was Quebec

### 2011



### 2015



*Islanders believe that they have an influence on government decisions, and that their politicians are people they know and interact with regularly.*

- DON DESSERUD

A commentary on...

## Voter Turnout on PEI

DON DESSERUD | POLITICAL SCIENCE | UNIVERSITY OF PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

PEI regularly tops the other provinces in voting turnout. The province's turnout in provincial elections has averaged 83% since Elections PEI started recording turnout numbers in 1966; Quebec has the next highest average turnout at 76%. In federal elections, PEI's turnout average since 2006 is 73%. New Brunswick comes second, tied with the Yukon at 68%.

High rates of voting turnout are often considered signs of civic engagement. Islanders, then, must be very engaged. However, PEI ranks low on other measures of civic engagement, such as recognizing the ideological differences among parties. As well, when asked to vote on issues, rather than for candidates, Islander turnout is low. For example, PEI has now held three votes on electoral reform. The first, held in 2005, had a turnout of just 33%. The second, in 2016, attracted only 36%. A referendum on electoral reform was also held in conjunction with the 2019 provincial election. That election and referendum did achieve a respectable 76% voting turnout, but that was also the lowest turnout ever recorded for an election on PEI.

Nevertheless, there are other factors which might help explain what seems to be a disconnect between PEI's voting turnout and political engagement. Islanders score well on polls that survey people's sense of the effectiveness of their elected representatives. A high percentage of Islanders believe that they have an influence on government decisions, and that their politicians are people they know and interact with regularly.

Islanders' sense of community and belonging is also quite strong. With this sense of community comes strong loyalties to political parties and, more important, to the people who populate them. This in turn translates into high levels of electoral participation. PEI voters might not be motivated by policy or ideological concerns, but they are motivated by their personal connections with the people they vote for.



# POVERTY

We know that poverty is the first determinant of health. We know it is the result of various causes, such as lack of education, lack of employment, or poor physical or mental health. We know that our most vulnerable—our children and our seniors—are the ones most at risk of living in poverty. As one of our East Prince participants put it, “The poverty gap exists between people who are making it and people who are not. I tell my kids we are rich in love. Not everything is monetary value. Quality of life is based on income as well as wellness.”

We know it is often cyclical: you can’t get an education because you can’t afford to pay for it; or you need transportation to get to work but you can’t afford a car. And often it’s systemic: if you grew up in poverty, you might end up that way, too.

It’s not enough to offer school breakfast programs to feed hungry kids, or run food banks so that our working poor don’t have to choose between food and heat. It was recognized that a basic income guarantee or a

livable wage would go a long way to alleviating poverty on our Island. Fixing our tax structure to make it fairer for lower-income Islanders. Tying housing costs to income. Ensuring quality daycare and early childhood education programs are available to all. But so would providing more support for life skills programs in schools and parenting programs in community centres. Community kitchens where you can learn more about preparing nutritious meals. Resource-sharing hubs so you can borrow what you need instead of buying.

We need a more holistic, grassroots approach to solving the poverty issue: one that listens to people’s voices, one that sees how poverty and housing, education and employment, transportation and health are all interrelated. And we need the will to make it happen now rather than continue to study the problem. As a Central Queens participant stated, “We’ve been studying it to death and nothing’s happened.”

*Where there are people on disability who can’t afford to eat, or put oil in their tanks—we lose our sense of community. They all relate, they are all intertwined.*

- SOUTHERN KINGS PARTICIPANT



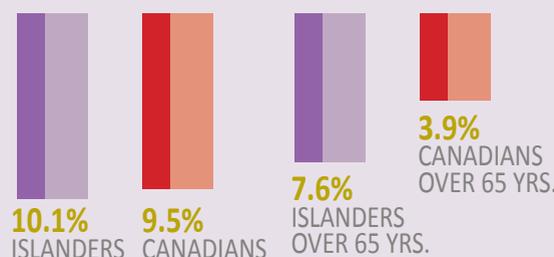
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*In North America, estimates are that less than 20% of seniors are financially ready for retirement.*

- JUDY-LYNN RICHARDS

## HIGHER PERCENTAGE OF SENIOR ISLANDERS FALL BELOW THE POVERTY LINE

(PEI 45th Annual Statistical Review 2018)



*I tell my kids we are rich in love. Not everything is monetary value.*

- EAST PRINCE PARTICIPANT

## A commentary on... Seniors Living in Poverty

JUDY-LYNN RICHARDS | SOCIOLOGY & ANTHROPOLOGY | UNIVERSITY OF PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

*As the proportion of Island (and Canadian) seniors continues to rise beyond 1 in 5 over age 65, the focus on issues of aging facing Island seniors moves to the forefront. One of the most concerning issues facing seniors is poverty.*

*Seniors across Canada are at risk of living in poverty. Oh, the media paints a picture of seniors in RVs cresting the hill of a bright comfortable future of open roads, checking items off a bucket list. However, in North America, estimates are that less than 20% of seniors are financially ready for retirement, leaving about 80% who are not.*

*There are several reasons why Island seniors are even more at risk. Seasonal work has left a large portion of current seniors with salaries less than the current standard of living. Also, in PEI’s largely traditional society, gendered norms saw women not working, working less, and securing substantially lower-paying jobs and pension payouts than males. Even among women with higher-paying jobs, they did not invest in financial nests, such as RRSPs, until 20 years ago.*

*Still, seniors may plan for retirement to ensure their ability to pay rent and buy groceries, but have not tended to plan for other changes, such as buying a car, changes in health, and the need to change residences due to functional changes. Finally, Atlantic Canada seniors experience being “house poor,” meaning that they may own homes (perhaps family homesteads), but do not have the income to run them, pay for meds, food, and clothing. Thus, they make choices, such as between eating and heating.*

*There has been some movement to confront these issues. Both The Public Health Agency of Canada and the World Health Organization are promoting age-friendly initiatives, which build on the strengths of seniors and their community contributions. The Federal Government, through the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, has made \$17 million available for affordable housing to assist with the housing crisis across Canada. Using such resources, in 2018, PEI put forward its own Housing Action Plan to assist specific groups of Islanders, including seniors.*



# LEARNING & EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

Around the world, education is recognized as basic to mental health and well-being. Low education levels are linked with poor health, more stress, and lower self-confidence. Higher education levels are linked with higher incomes and better quality of life. Education is also seen as an economic development tool, especially when the education programs are linked to what a community needs: certain skills are needed depending on where you are. For instance, PEI is currently suffering from a shortage of tradespeople. Matching up the programs with what a community requires would go a long way to alleviating that shortage and helping Islanders prosper. Supporting youth at a young age would help them explore their interests and talents. After all, not everyone is suited to go to college or university. For those going on to college and university, cost is often a barrier: graduating owing several thousand dollars is not a good way to begin the next stage of one's life. Free tuition for all is one way of addressing this.

And what schools themselves offer should not be tied to location. For instance, International Baccalaureate programs are only offered in city schools; kids in rural areas miss out. Not every school has an art or music program. Yet, our small schools are community hubs, and they make it attractive for families to live there—so closing our small rural schools may not be the answer either.

*International Baccalaureate programs are only offered in city schools; kids in rural areas miss out.*

- ANONYMOUS PARTICIPANT

Learning lasts a lifetime. It is important that we offer continuous opportunity for training and skills development even after leaving school. Building on our Community Schools and Seniors College programs, or creating Makers' Places where seniors can mentor youth, are ways to ensure lifelong learning.

## SCORES

PEI had the **highest score** (11/15) of any province or territory in Canada in a 2017 profile that evaluated the quality of early years services in Canada (using 19 benchmarks).

(Atkinson Centre for Society and Child Development)

## ATTENDANCE

The percentage of children aged 2-4 years attending ECEC (Early Childhood Education and Care) Programs was 55%, the **third highest** of any province or territory.

*Access to ECE programs is improving, yet affordability continues to be a challenge for many families.*

- BILL WHELAN

*Learning isn't just about school: it starts at birth and continues until we die.*

- ANONYMOUS PARTICIPANT

## READING

91% of students in PEI achieved at least the baseline or expected level for reading proficiency in Grade 8. This is the **highest in Canada**. For Canada as a whole, it was 88%.

(Pan-Canadian Assessment Program Report, Council of Ministers of Education Canada for 2016, 2018)

## DAYCARE

On PEI, 6,003 children (aged 0-5) are in daycare. That represents 65.6% of children, compared with 59.9% in Canada, the **second highest** in Canada, behind Quebec at 78.2%.

(Survey on Early Learning and Child Care Arrangements, 2019, Statistics Canada)

A commentary on...

## Early Childhood Education & Standardized Testing

BILL WHELAN | FORMER PRESIDENT | PEI HOME AND SCHOOL FEDERATION

*On the education governance front, PEI's new government recently established the Department of Education and Lifelong Learning, bringing under one portfolio early childhood education, K-12 schooling, post-secondary education, employment and skills development, and workplace training. This direction amplifies the importance of lifelong learning for Island citizens, and signals the opportunity for improved cooperation among education sectors, to better support learners throughout one's lifespan.*

*Early Childhood Education (ECE) in PEI has been recognized nationally, most recently by a Report coming out of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (PEI ranked #1 on the Atkinson Centre's 15-point index). This recognition is due in large part to PEI's publicly managed, community-based approach to ECE. In 2016, 55% of children aged 2-4 were enrolled in an ECE program (3rd in Canada). Access to ECE programs is improving, yet affordability continues to be a challenge for many families. Other current challenges include the need for more infant spaces and a shortage of ECE educators.*

*Every three years, students in grade 8 across Canada write national standardized tests in reading, math, and science through the Pan Canadian Assessment Program (PCAP). In PEI, student scores on PCAP tests have been trending upwards over the past three cycles, starting from below the national average in 2010, to now at and above the national average. The PCAP data also shows 91% of grade 8 students performing at or above Level 2 in reading, the level required to learn well in school and participate in everyday life. The PCAP test results are not about student performance, but rather system performance, and, as such, should be viewed as an evaluation of the integrated learning services and supports received by Island youth from birth to 14 years of age.*

*Ongoing measurement and evaluation of learning services, combined with community partnerships, is the only way to continuously improve on the quality and impact of these services. With many of these learning services now inside one government Department, the opportunity exists in PEI to take a more holistic view of learning, as a continuous interconnected learning ecosystem from birth to the senior years.*



# ARTS & CULTURE

Music and storytelling are part of the fabric of the Island. As one Islander said, “I can’t overstate how much it contributes to health. It’s not just the icing on the cake.”

And it’s not just about tourism either: creative outlets such as writing and painting and performing contribute immeasurably to Islanders’ quality of life—both for the artist and the Islanders who enjoy it. For many, it’s a way to make a living or supplement their income, and all this artistic activity keeps money on the Island. Sustainable funding for our creative industries would go a long way toward helping the industry thrive.

But having over a million tourists a year doesn’t hurt: cultural tourism is on the rise globally, and Prince Edward Island has much to offer our visitors through its theatre and music offerings, its literary scene through books and readings, the galleries and gift shops that offer up arts and crafts, and a burgeoning film industry.

Islanders noted the uneven emphasis on arts training in

schools, how music often is given more importance (and resources) than the performing and visual arts, including crafts. Needed are more teachers trained in these areas, and more resources put into professional-level training, too.

*PEI’s creative industries’ GDP per capita is 34% of Canada’s.*

*PEI is a hotbed of arts and creativity.*

- MARK SANDIFORD

Culinary arts, too, is thriving, with the Culinary Institute of Canada located in Charlottetown, and many of its graduates staying put to serve up the bounty of the Island’s land and sea.

The importance of preserving our built heritage was mentioned, as was the lack of a provincial museum. And ensuring that our culture reflects the diversity of our Island was also noted. First Nations identity and reconciliation are critical to ensuring that all voices are heard and respected. As a participant from East Prince said, “Our history, the story of the residential schools, are all something that we would chalk a bit higher.”

A strong culture and identity ensure that people come to the Island—and stay.

*Artisans on Main has had a halo effect. It started off small when the buildings on Main were given a fresh coat of paint. Since then it has impacted on tourism, as well as residents, in terms of self-image.*

- SOUTHERN KINGS PARTICIPANT



*All this artistic activity keeps money on the Island... but having over a million tourists a year doesn’t hurt.*

- ANONYMOUS PARTICIPANT

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A commentary on...

## Creative Industries on PEI

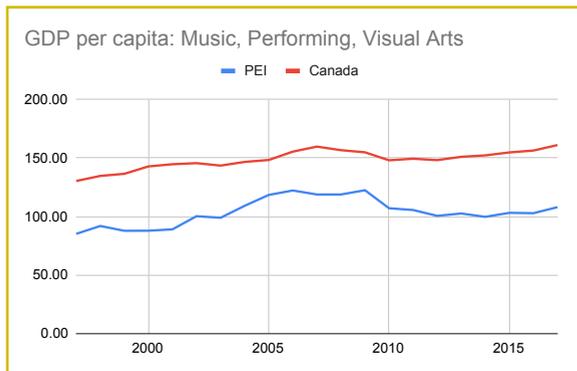
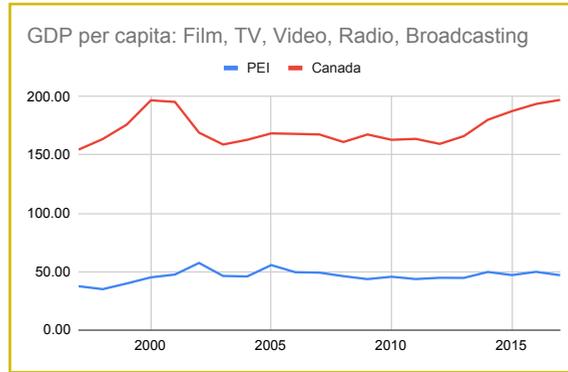
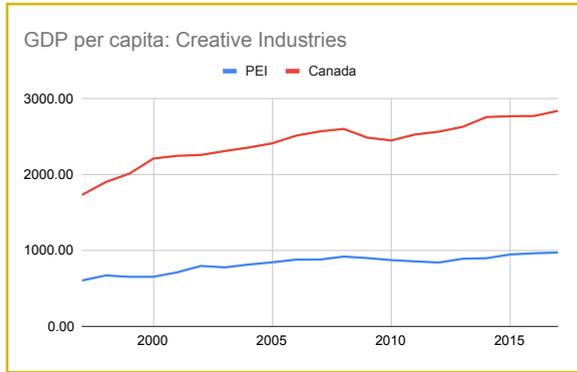
MARK SANDIFORD | EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR | CREATIVE PEI

*PEI is a hotbed of arts and creativity. Our live performance scene is a major tourism draw. The Confederation Centre of the Arts is a national treasure. Our musicians tour the world. We have a cutting-edge visual arts community. And our videogames industry is thriving. Visiting in summer, one could easily conclude that PEI has Canada’s hottest creative sector. But the numbers tell a different story.*

*PEI’s creative industries’ GDP per capita is 34% of Canada’s. This has been the case for at least 20 years and this persistent gap is the major challenge facing PEI’s creative sector. One reason for this gap is the longstanding absence of a significant film industry in the province. In 2017, the film industry was exploding in Canada, but in PEI it was running at 24% of the national average. Another big factor is seasonality. PEI’s cultural season is effectively four months long. But this creates a significant growth opportunity. For example, Music, Performing and Visual Arts are among our most productive industries tracking at 67% of Canada. If these industries were as successful for twelve months as they are for four, they would significantly outperform the national average.*

*Change is afoot. In late 2017, the province of PEI published Cultivating Growth: A Five Year Action Plan for Culture and Creative Industries. The impact has been dramatic. The film industry, in particular, is in a steep growth phase. There is a new optimism across the creative sector that PEI will be able to build on the strength of its seasonal success to become a year-round creative powerhouse.*

## Gross Domestic Product per capita: Arts & Culture Sectors, PEI



(geopoliticeconomy.org)

*We are so very proud of each and every one of our youth from Lennox Island, Rocky Point, and Scotchfort, and our off-reserve community members. It was an amazing summer for our youth to connect to their culture and theatre!*

- JULIE PELLISSIER-LUSH



A commentary on...

## Mi'kmaq Legends Programming

JULIE PELLISSIER-LUSH | POET LAUREATE OF PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

*My name is Julie Pellissier-Lush and since February 2019 I have been the Poet Laureate of Prince Edward Island. I have done a lot of writing: novels, poetry, newspaper writing, and promotional writing, but one of my favourite things is my writing for Mi'kmaq Legends, a play that started with only eight traditional Mi'kmaq legends that are acted out on the stage with music, drumming, dancing, and theatre. The very first show of Mi'kmaq Legends was in 2011, and every year it has grown and gotten better. About two years ago we split the production into Mi'kmaq Legends, our older group, and a younger set of actors we call the Mi'kmaq Heritage Actors. Our new group did the openings, closings, schools, and many no-fee presentations. This worked well because our older actors could not always afford to take time off work and it was a great learning opportunity for our younger ones.*

*This year we created another group under Mi'kmaq Legends called The Next Generation of Legends. This group has 19 young people who all came together to learn about acting, traditional dance, Mi'kmaq songs and chants, and theatre. We were given the opportunity to perform at The Guild in Charlottetown every Wednesday evening all summer. So for eight weeks we worked with young 4- to 18-year-olds, many of whom were first-time actors. Some just wanted to dance: traditional dancing like jingle and fancy shawl. We spent our time teaching, rehearsing and working on-script, and in the end we had a wonderful youth-driven show that many people came to see. We are so very proud of each and every one of our youth from Lennox Island, Rocky Point, and Scotchfort, and our off-reserve community members. It was an amazing summer for our youth to connect to their culture and theatre!*



The Next Generation of Legends | photo by Rick Lush

# DIVERSITY & GETTING STARTED



Prince Edward Island boasted the highest rate of immigration in the Atlantic Provinces in 2018—and no wonder: the Island is an attractive and safe place to live, with clean air and water, with access to amenities only a capital city has—and all at a small, manageable scale.

This immigration rate bodes well for maintaining the Island's vitality. Without big industry to support our economy, our people are our greatest resource. With an aging demographic, we need more people to keep things running smoothly.

But as a newcomer, getting started can be difficult. While there are supports for newcomers—such as the office of the PEI Association for Newcomers to Canada and many, many church groups—much more is needed to ensure that our immigrants feel welcome enough that they choose to stay. We need to remember that we were all immigrants at one time or another—even the Paleo-Indians who populated the Gulf Region up to 13,000 years ago.

We need to ensure that there's adequate housing, schools, and health services for all. We need a higher rate of credential recognition to ensure that newcomer doctors and nurses, educators and engineers can fill the labour shortages sooner. We need to work together—government departments and community leaders—to plan ahead, to make sure we are ready with translation services and

settlement workers, English-language training for adults and more EAL teachers in the schools—in our urban and rural communities.

But diversity is not just about how long you have lived in this province. It is about embracing and learning from different cultures, genders, sexual orientations, ages, and experiences. It is about recognizing that diversity makes for a stronger society, that there is richness in differing opinions, ideas, and experiences, and that we need to fight fear, racism, and bigotry with facts.

And we need to remember and acknowledge that we are on unceded territory, and that the Mi'kmaq welcomed us from the beginning.

*Never before have so many people from so many different places called PEI their home.*

- CHARLOTTETOWN PARTICIPANT

*There is richness in differing opinions, ideas, and experiences, and... we need to fight fear, racism, and bigotry with facts.*

- ANONYMOUS PARTICIPANT

**\$92 MILLION**

In 2016, 2,700 immigrants and international students generated labour income of over...

**\$150 MILLION**

The impact on the province's Gross Domestic Product was almost...

**\$233 MILLION**

Employment rose to almost 4,000 with \$135 million in wages and GDP of...

**\$40 MILLION**

There was also increased tax revenue for the Province of nearly ...

(Jupia Consultants Inc., based on 2016 Statistics Canada data)



A commentary on...

## Economic Impact of Immigration

CRAIG MACKIE | EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR | PEI ASSOCIATION FOR NEWCOMERS TO CANADA

*Never before have so many people come from so many different places around the world. Over the past several years, we have seen an average of 2,000 newcomers a year from more than 70 countries choosing PEI as their home.*

*Immigration is having a significant impact on PEI's economy. Data from Stats Canada for 2016 shows there were almost 2,700 immigrants and international students who generated labour income of over \$92 million. The impact on the province's Gross Domestic Product was almost \$150 million. Adding in indirect and induced effects, employment rose to almost 4,000 with \$135 million in wages and GDP of \$233 million. There was also increased tax revenue for the province of nearly \$40 million. These figures do not include the federal government's investment in settlement services or the increased transfer payments because PEI has a larger population. These numbers demonstrate that immigration increases employment. Jobs are created by all these new people earning and spending money, causing suppliers to purchase more goods and hire more people for services. The provincial government has more money to provide additional services and to pay down the debt.*

*Immigration has created pressures on the province in terms of housing, education, healthcare, and more, but immigration needs to be recognized for its positive contributions as well. Beyond dollars, immigration has brought us diversity in terms of people, culture, languages, and especially food. Immigration has also given us a broader global view that has connected PEI to the rest of the world.*

*Immigration has also given us a broader global view that has connected PEI to the rest of the world.*

- CRAIG MACKIE



2017-18

Between 2017 and 2018, PEI had a net gain of **2,867** immigrants from outside of Canada. This is the 2nd highest net increase since 2002.



2016-17

The previous year (2016-17) was the highest net increase.

(PEI 45th Annual Statistical Review 2018)



*For our [West Prince] schools, health facilities, and local services to remain open and available, we need to look to immigration.*

- SCOTT SMITH

A commentary on...

## West Prince Navigator Program

SCOTT SMITH | WEST PRINCE COMMUNITY NAVIGATOR

*This is a new pilot project, established in May 2019. Our job is to welcome every new resident to West Prince (including the areas of Tignish, Alberton, O'Leary, and Tyne Valley) as we work towards sustainable population growth for the region.*

*Over the past few years, residents have been moving to western PEI in record numbers—as international temporary foreign workers (TFWs), workers on skilled worker visas, or even new residents from other parts of Canada who are choosing to retire, volunteer their time, or continue to work full- or part-time. The majority of the people from abroad are from the Philippines, Mexico, and India, but we're welcoming others from Brazil, Sweden, The Netherlands, the UK, South Africa, Iran, Vietnam, and China—and other places, too.*

*Our goal is to help people feel integrated into their new communities, listen about their experiences with moving and living here, and identify and respond to gaps in services. Some examples include helping to navigate local health care services or getting a PEI health card or social insurance number. We can assist with banking, housing, and finding translation services, and help navigate the employment field and immigration services. We look into solutions for rural transportation gaps, identify social activities of interest, and most recently we've been educating new residents on the Island's waste management system. The initial project inquiries have been plentiful and constant.*

*We also work with local businesses to identify labour shortages and assist to help fill those needs. When it comes to employment, TFWs have filled a large labour force gap by accepting jobs in the fish processing facilities in the western region, as well as within the agricultural (strawberries, potatoes), construction, welding/manufacturing, and customer service call centre industries to name just a few.*

*For our schools, health facilities, and local services to remain open and available, we need to look to immigration to address population deficits and labour shortage needs, keeping our rural communities growing and vibrant for many years to come. As Community Navigator, we hope to help smooth the way!*

*You can find Scott at CBDC West Prince Ventures Limited in the Rural Action Centre, 455 Main Street, Alberton.*

# SAFETY & SECURITY

Safety and security encompasses a lot of territory: from crime to food security to knowing you have a place to live or will weather a hurricane. The Island is known for being a relatively safe place to live, but we need to work harder at ensuring that it is safe for everyone.

*Building connections in community makes for a safer community.*

- ANONYMOUS PARTICIPANT

Islanders recognize the need to look out for the most vulnerable in our society, including those made vulnerable by youth or age, by being a veteran, by immigration status or race, by disability, by being a young lone-parent mother, or by gender identity and expression or sexual orientation. Creating community consultative groups with the RCMP and City Police would go a long way toward building stronger relationships with the police. The newspaper pages are filled with court news of impaired drivers, assaults, and crimes where drug abuse is the motivator. We need to work harder at changing attitudes—at a young age—toward violence against women and drinking and driving. And we need more shelters for victims of domestic violence and the homeless.

We need to ensure that our children don't go to school hungry, and that the food we eat is nutritious and the water we drink is safe.

The Island's security with increased extreme weather events was also flagged. As one participant noted, "In the winter of 2015, when the Bridge closed for two-and-a-half days, grocery stores emptied out and we ran out of gas at the service station. If a storm knocked out the Bridge, within 30 days they'd have to move us off the Island. It is not a great position to be in." Our Emergency Measures Organization is doing a good job to prepare us for storms and hurricanes, but we can always be doing more.



*Islanders recognize the need to look out for the most vulnerable in our society...*

- ANONYMOUS PARTICIPANT

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**720** VICTIMS PER **100,000** POPULATION  
Represented the lowest rate among the provinces & territories.

(Statistics Canada 2016)



A commentary on...

## Reported Sexual Violence Statistics

JANE LEDWELL | EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR | PEI ADVISORY COUNCIL ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

*Few statistics require as much work to unpack as statistics related to sexual violence. Just five years ago, in 2014, the General Social Survey found only 5% of sexual assaults were reported to police. Survivors cite so many reasons not to report: shame, stigma, victim-blaming, rape myths. The violations of intimacy and privacy during an investigation of sexual violence add to the original violation. There are also drastically low conviction rates for the few sexual violence cases that do go to trial.*

*PEI's small population means year-to-year percentage swings in sexual violence reporting are common, based on a dozen or two dozen more or fewer reports in any given year. But recent increases in reporting are so significant that they must be a clue to a larger cultural trend. What has inspired some of those 95% of sexual violence survivors to break their silence with police?*

*Reporting is increasing across Canada as survivors take their stories forward and ask for accountability of those who harmed them. Awareness of sexual violence has increased with the #MeToo movement giving survivors new courage to tell their stories of sexual exploitation, harassment, and assault. National investigative reporting on sexual violence reports filed as "unfounded" (baseless) and high-profile acquittals in court cases related to sexual assault have galvanized outcry and silence-breaking protests. People are demanding better of justice and medical systems, demanding that survivors be taken seriously and have access to justice and healing from trauma.*

*Small islands sometimes experience the effects of a breaking wave first. May this be the case for PEI's recent wave of sexual violence reporting trends.*



*Awareness of sexual violence  
has increased with the  
#MeToo movement giving  
survivors new courage  
to tell their stories...*

- JANE LEDWELL

Number of police-reported family  
violence incidents in PEI in 2016

**199**

Number of police-reported family  
violence incidents in PEI in 2017  
—an increase of 49%



(Family Violence in Canada: A Statistical Profile, various years)



*I and the Village* | photo by Bao Le

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## THANK YOU

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### FUNDING PARTNERS



Rotarians across the province, and our partners in high school and post-secondary clubs, are people of action who share ideas and create lasting change here and across the globe. We use our passion and integrity to solve problems that have an impact on improving our communities. We are thrilled to work in partnership with the Community Foundation of PEI on this *Vital Signs* project!



*Vital Signs*® is a community check-up conducted by community foundations across Canada that measures the vitality of our communities and identifies significant trends in a range of areas critical to quality of life. *Vital Signs* is coordinated nationally by Community Foundations of Canada.

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