

# **THE GEOGRAPHY OF GOVERNANCE: An Overview of Boundaries Powers and Responsibilities on Prince Edward Island**

March 1999

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## **Preface**

In administrative terms, Prince Edward Island has been described as "big engine, little body," because of the large amount of government that it devotes to a small, compact population of only 140,000 citizens. Behind the flippancy of that statement lies an intimidating reality: there are many, many layers to both governance and the provision of services in the province. An embarrassment of administrative units, each with its own set of boundaries, responsibilities, and powers, divide up the landscape and the populace. In many instances, these units grew up independently of one another, with little regard for the possibilities of overlap or duplication. The amount and variety of governance fuels a perception that Prince Edward Island is "over-governed." Whether or not the perception is accurate, the multiplicity of administrative units do complicate the business of governing.

In the spring of 1998, the Institute of Island Studies at the University of Prince Edward Island engaged the Federation of Prince Edward Island Municipalities and the Department of Community Affairs (and Attorney General's Office) as partners in a project to map "the geography of governance" in the province. Together, we employed Andrew Cousins as a research associate. His mission was to compile a basic directory of the boundaries, powers, and responsibilities of each unit of local governance on Prince Edward Island, as well as how federal and provincial services are delivered at the local level. To provide a comparative framework, Mr. Cousins has also prepared brief overviews of local government structures elsewhere in Atlantic Canada and in the island nation of Iceland.

The report gathers together a comprehensive dossier that describes in some detail the local governance structures in the province. Although it is essentially descriptive in nature, one or two conclusions present themselves. The findings reveal the hydra-headed nature of local governance on the Island, the profusion of administrative structures in place here. They also underscore the present incapacity of many local governing authorities -- in terms of both human and fiscal resources -- to provide any significant level of services to their communities. Put another way, "local" government is in most cases not strong enough to generate a critical mass of "local" authority, the necessary prerequisite for bringing an assortment of services and functions more closely under "local" control. This has obvious implications for local democracy on Prince Edward Island. Of course, the current incapacity masks a very real potential for providing effective government at a local level.

In its compilation of data and its descriptive sections, "The Geography of Governance" charts the changing nature of "community" on this Island. The fact of change also presents an opportunity to shape it. We hope this report will serve as a tool to assess the relevance and effectiveness of existing programs and in the formulation of new policy initiatives at both the provincial and the municipal levels.

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## **Introduction**

### The Province of Prince Edward Island: A Brief Profile Population and Geography

Prince Edward Island is Canada's smallest province, in both physical area and population, with an estimated population of 134,557 spread over an area of 5,660 square kilometres in 1996. It is the most densely populated province, with 23.8 residents per square kilometre. The population grew by 3.7 per cent between 1991 and 1996 (from 129,765), compared to a national growth percentage of 5.7 per cent. Statistics Canada has predicted population growth for PEI to between 138,900 and 160,700 by 2016.<sup>1</sup>

The Island is 224 kilometres long and crescent shaped, with the crescent's width varying from 6 to 64 kilometres. It lies in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, separated from Nova Scotia and New Brunswick by the Northumberland Strait. It is connected to the mainland by the Confederation Bridge, which connects Borden, P.E.I. with Cape Tormentine, N.B.

## Politics

Prince Edward Island joined Confederation in 1873. Federally, it is represented by four members of parliament in the elective House of Commons, and the same number of senators in the appointed Senate.

Provincially, the Island is governed by a 27-member provincial legislature, as well as a diverse range of municipal governments. The capital and largest city is Charlottetown; the Island's "second city" is Summerside.

## Economy

The Prince Edward Island economy has traditionally been resource-based, reliant on farming and fishing. In recent decades the importance of primary industry has been complemented by growth in other sectors, notably tourism and manufacturing.

## **I The History of Local Government on Prince Edward Island**

### I.1. The 18th Century

The earliest official division of the territory in what is now Prince Edward Island was Captain Samuel Holland's survey for the British government in 1765,<sup>2</sup> conducted shortly after "St. John's Island" (or "Île St. Jean") passed from French to British imperial rule.

Holland divided the Island into 67 townships, or "lots," most of about 20,000 acres. There were three counties, Prince, Queens, and Kings, each of about 500,000 acres, which were, in turn, subdivided into parishes for the Established Church (of England). Holland also selected one town site to serve as a capital for each county.

As well as creating the basic geographical division of Prince Edward Island, Holland's survey gave it the common "grain" of many of its later dividing lines, 15 1/2 degrees off true north. As historical geographer A.H. Clark wrote in 1959, "the grain of that survey ... is deeply impressed on the cultural geography of the island to this day."<sup>3</sup>

The counties went on to serve primarily as geographical markers, although representation in the colonial and provincial assemblies, as well as to the Canadian Parliament, has been set along county lines at various times in the Island's history.<sup>4</sup> As a judicial system developed for the colony in the 19th century, it, too, was organized along county lines. The growing imbalance in population, primarily between Kings County and its two counterparts, has made the county division less practical as unit of governance. The parishes had significance primarily for the Anglican Church. The lots, doled out to landlords obligated (but often not inclined) to settle the land, represented a source of significant social and political conflict throughout the 19th century.<sup>5</sup> They also provided a template for the settlement that did occur. Of the county towns, Charlottetown and Georgetown emerged as administrative centres; Princetown (or Malpeque) gave way to St. Eleanors, then Summerside as capital of Prince County.

## I.2. The 19th Century

Rather than with the apportioning of lots in the 18th century, the origins of local government came in the 1850s, with three major developments: the introduction of education legislation, the incorporation of Charlottetown and Summerside's growth into a second major community.

In 1852, the *Free Education Act* created a provincial board of education and a system of land assessment designed to provide tax revenue for education. District boundaries were determined by the distance students needed to walk to school, and, more informally, by ethnic and religious boundaries. The act "established expectations of local control and accessibility to elementary education in the home community .... Along with the church and the general store, the school became an institution central to the Islanders' concept of community."<sup>6</sup>

That concept of community was bound up with the fundamental building blocks of Island life and society: it was a predominately rural and agricultural society, with small communities serving as railroad terminals, ports and market towns. Rural communities centred around church and school.

In August 1855 the colonial government incorporated Charlottetown as Prince Edward Island's first municipality and (until 1995) only city. The 10-member (plus a mayor) council had responsibilities roughly similar to those of a modern island municipality, including "such local functions as police protection, fire control, lighting and the regulation of markets and amusement houses."<sup>7</sup> In 1858 a colonial statute allowed the growing community of Summerside to elect a

Board of Assessors and Firewardens, "the first step towards full municipal government," and one which allowed the collection of local taxes.

The 1870 *Towns and Villages Act* formed the basis for Prince Edward Island's incorporation of municipalities until after the Second World War. In 1873 Summerside gained authorization to make bylaws; it was incorporated in 1875 under the *Towns and Villages Act*.<sup>8</sup> Two years later, a separate act of incorporation was legislated for the town. Over the next half century, a number of other Island towns sought incorporation.

### I.3. The 20th Century

Since the late 1940s, the structure of Prince Edward Island's web of local governments, especially in the smaller communities (the old "villages") has rarely gone more than two decades without a legislative overhaul. In 1948, the *Town Act* standardized the powers and responsibilities of local governments. Hard on its heels came the 1950 *Village Service Act*, which permitted small communities to appoint "commissioners" for local improvements and services, and to make bylaws.

In 1968 the local school boards, slated for abolition under the Island's Development Plan, were partly superseded by prospective Community Improvement Committees (CICs), under the *Community Improvement Act*. The creation of CICs left Prince Edward Island with four types of municipalities: a city, a few towns, and a larger number of villages and community improvement areas.<sup>9</sup>

In 1983 the *Municipalities Act* rationalized the hodgepodge of municipalities, creating two classifications: towns and communities. (In addition, the City of Charlottetown had its own act of incorporation, as did the Town of Summerside). Villages and CICs were, generally speaking, subsumed in the category of communities, although the powers of a municipality were still defined by what it had been before passage of the *Municipalities Act*.

### I.4. The 1990s: Municipal Reform<sup>10</sup>

The provincial government called for municipal government reform in the *White Paper on Municipal Reform* of June 1993.<sup>11</sup> In a subsequent report released in January 1994, municipal reform commissioner Lorne Moase called for the amalgamation of Summerside and surrounding communities into a single town, and the creation of three new municipalities in the Charlottetown area.<sup>12</sup>

In July 1994 the provincial government proclaimed the Charlottetown Area Municipalities Act. The act created three new municipalities: a new city of Charlottetown, comprising Charlottetown, Parkdale, Sherwood, East Royalty, Hillsborough Park, Winsloe, West Royalty and the Queen Elizabeth Hospital grounds; the Town of Charlottetown West, including Cornwall, Eliot River and North River; and the Town of Charlottetown South, including Bunbury, Southport, Cross Roads, Keppoch-Kinlock, Battery Point and part of Alexandra. The resulting municipalities are divided by the North (York) and East (Hillsborough) Rivers. Charlottetown West and South were later renamed Cornwall and Stratford, respectively.

In August 1994 the provincial government proclaimed the City of Summerside Act, creating a new city out of the former Town of Summerside and the communities of Wilmot, St. Eleanor's and the non-agricultural part of Sherbrooke. The resulting municipality straddles the Island at the thinnest point between the North and South Shores.

## II Local Government on Prince Edward Island Today

### II.1. Constitutional status

Local and municipal governments on Prince Edward Island -- as in the rest of Canada -- are a responsibility of, and subordinate to, the provincial government. The provincial government may create or abolish municipalities, as well as prescribe municipal responsibilities from the list of duties ascribed by the constitution to the province.

Most local government authority on Prince Edward Island is in the form of municipal governments, but it should be remembered that our concern is with local government, not simply municipalities.

### II.2. Legislation

Local governments on Prince Edward Island are created, with several exceptions, on the authority of the *Municipalities Act*. The *Act* allows municipalities to spend money on local services and enact local bylaws. Municipal spending powers usually follow the lines of the bylaws in a particular community.<sup>13</sup>

The exceptions to the *Municipalities Act* are the two cities, Charlottetown and Summerside, and the Charlottetown-area towns of Stratford and Cornwall. Summerside is incorporated under the *City of Summerside Act* (1994). The three municipalities in the Charlottetown area are incorporated under the *Charlottetown Area Municipalities Act* (1994).<sup>14</sup>

In addition to the *Municipalities Act* and other acts of incorporation, municipalities have duties and powers set out under other provincial laws, including (among others):

- the *Planning Act*;
- the *Highway Traffic Act*;
- the *Real Property Assessment Act*;
- the *Real Property Tax Act*;
- the *Human Rights Act*.

Supervision of municipalities falls under the jurisdiction of the provincial Department of Community Services and Attorney General (formerly Community Affairs and Attorney General). The Department structure includes a Planning and Inspection Services Division. It, in turn, contains the Provincial Planning and Municipal Affairs Branch. Within the Provincial Planning and Municipal Affairs Branch, the Municipal Affairs Section that administers the Municipal Services Support Grant Program, oversees the formation of new municipalities, deals with the alteration of municipal boundaries, and advises municipal officials on their

responsibilities. The Provincial Planning Section of the Division reviews municipal official plans and development bylaws and amendments.<sup>15</sup>

### II.3. Financing Municipal Governments

Prince Edward Island Municipalities are funded through a combination of municipal property taxes, provincial government grants and miscellaneous fees. Property taxes, providing about 69 per cent of municipal revenue (in 1992), are set on property assessed at commercial, non-commercial or farm realty rates. Provincial equalization grants are the second greatest source of money for most municipalities, providing about 11 per cent of their revenues.<sup>16</sup>

Municipalities are authorized to levy property taxes under the *Real Property Tax Act*; but all property assessment and tax *collection* is done by the province (under the *Real Property Assessment Act*).<sup>17</sup> The province collects municipal property taxes; unlike most provinces, it also collects a *provincial* property tax in both incorporated and unincorporated areas. The provincial collection of property taxes results from the province's assumption in the early 1970s of responsibility for the local school boards' share of primary and secondary education funding (amounting to about 1/3 of all education spending).<sup>18</sup> In 1998-1999 the province forecasts revenues of about \$40 million from provincial property taxes -- about five per cent of government revenue.<sup>5</sup>

Municipal taxation power is limited to setting tax rates for commercial and non-commercial property. The province provides the assessment values and collects the property tax on behalf of the municipalities; it then pays the municipality the municipal tax to which it is entitled at prescribed intervals -- regardless of how much the province has actually managed to collect. Thus, municipalities have "the certainty of funds without the expenses of administering a tax structure and without incurring any revenue instability stemming from collection difficulties."<sup>20</sup>

The province's municipal grant program distributes money to help municipalities pay for police services, highway maintenance and recreation services.<sup>21</sup> It has an equalization component to compensate municipalities with poor tax bases, essentially bringing those municipalities up to a provincial average.<sup>22</sup> There is also a component to the grant formula that attempts to recognize the different responsibilities assumed by different municipalities, compensating those that take on more services. The grant program is currently (as of July 1998) under review by the province, in consultation with the Federation of Prince Edward Island Municipalities. A draft report by the Municipal Support Grant Program Review Committee was prepared by late April 1998.<sup>23</sup>

Municipalities can also collect revenues from license and permit sales, and user fees for municipal services.

### II.4. Types of Municipalities

Prince Edward Island municipalities are classified as cities, towns or communities. These classifications are not determined solely by population size; while the two cities are much larger than any of the towns or communities, some communities are larger than some towns. The rough population breakdown is as follows:<sup>24</sup>

<b>Cities</b>	30,000+	1
	14,000+	1
<b>Towns</b>	5000-6000	1
	4000-5000	1
	3000-4000	0
	2000-3000	0
	1000-2000	4
	700-800	1
<b>Communities</b>	1800-1900	1
	1200-1300	3
	1000-1100	1
	900-1000	0
	800-900	4
	700-800	2
	600-700	6
	500-600	2
	400-500	4
	300-400	17
	200-300	16
	100-200	7
	>100	3

The single largest collection of municipalities, then, is the group of small communities with a population between 100 and 400; 40 of the 66 communities fall into this category. Most of these communities do not have official plans and offer few, if any, local services (*see Appendix 1*).

There is also a cluster of nine towns and communities with populations between 1,000 and 2,000. Since there is no minimum population required for incorporation as a town, this means that Georgetown (pop. 732), the smallest town, has less than half the population of Belfast (pop. 1,839), the largest community.

## II.5. Municipal Powers

Under the *Municipalities Act*, towns have the right to pass bylaws and provide services in a number of local fields, including fire protection, garbage collection, sewage collection and

treatment, recreation services, street lights, police protection and maintenance of local streets. Communities incorporated as Community Improvement Committees (before 1983) are restricted to responsibility over fire protection, garbage collection, street lights, administration and recreation, while communities that were incorporated as villages have the same powers as towns.<sup>25</sup> Thus, while all communities are officially the same animal, in fact the former villages have a greater mandate than former Community Improvement Committees (CICs). The powers and responsibilities of the Summerside and Charlottetown area municipalities are set out in their respective acts of incorporation, but are substantially the same as those of towns.

Section 30 of the *Municipalities Act* specifies areas in which municipal governments may provide services; Section 64 sets out what bylaws they may pass. All municipal bylaws and services are subject to approval by the provincial government.<sup>26</sup>

In practice many municipalities -- 29 communities, to be exact, as of 1997 -- have no bylaws at all. Most of the cities, towns and larger communities have bylaws covering a set of standard areas of local concern: sewage utilities, fire departments, general administration of the municipality and conduct of council business, etc. Many communities, and several of the smaller towns, on the other hand, have only one or two bylaws, sometimes simply dealing with council business.

## II.6. Municipal Government Structure and Procedures

Prince Edward Island local governments are organized as councils responsible for managing municipal budgets, running committees and inaugurating and enforcing local bylaws. Municipal councils are elected in municipal elections, normally held every third year, although the councils elected in 1996 will serve until 2000, not 1999, in order to synchronize all municipal elections in the province (there were elections in the new Summerside and Charlottetown area municipalities in 1997).<sup>27</sup>

The council is headed by a chief executive officer: a mayor in a town or city, a chairperson in a community. The mayor's role is to organize committees and sit as an *ex-officio* member of all standing committees, preside over council meetings and serve as a "figurehead" for the municipal government while managing affairs not falling under some other definite jurisdiction (e.g. of a particular committee).

The council, normally consisting of six councillors plus a mayor or chairperson, must meet at least once per year (once per month in municipalities incorporated under the *Charlottetown Area Municipalities Act*); council meetings are public (although committee meetings may be held *in camera*). Each councillor has one vote, although the CEO only votes as a tie breaker.

Standing committees are appointed by the CEO from among council members and usually deal with regular municipal services (e.g. fire protection). Council can also appoint special committees for particular purposes. A special committee must be chaired by a councillor, but other members of the community can serve.



In addition to its executive responsibilities, each council must appoint a chief administrative officer as the day-to-day manager of the municipality, with duties including record-keeping, accounts management, bylaw registration. The administrator may be referred to as the town manager or town clerk.

## II.7. The Federation of Prince Edward Island Municipalities

The Federation of Prince Edward Island Municipalities (FPEIM) was formed in 1957 to permit more unified action on the part of local authorities in the province. At the time, two related but separate organizations existed: the Village Commissioners Association and the Federation of Mayors and Municipalities.

The FPEIM's stated mission is to represent the interests of municipal governments and to act as a central voice for the membership; to protect the rights and privileges of municipal governments; to act as clearing house for information; to further municipal interests by encouraging co-operation among municipal units; and to provide avenues of training, education, and development for elected and appointed municipal officials.

The FPEIM began with eleven members (Charlottetown, Summerside, Souris, Montague, Kensington, Alberton, Georgetown, Borden, Spring Park, North Rustico, and St. Peter's Bay). Since then, its membership has fluctuated, although the general pattern has been one of growth. Currently, 30 of the Island's 75 municipalities -- but representing roughly 80% of the Island's population -- are members of the Federation.

Membership dues are decided annually on a per capita basis with set minimums; the dues for 1998-99 have been fixed (for the fourth consecutive year) at \$1.22 *per capita*. Those dues provide the bulk of the FPEIM's budget, which is set at \$145,000 for the 1998-99 fiscal year. The FPEIM also receives a modest operating grant from the Provincial Government. For the last several years, it has been fixed at \$13,000. The Federation offices, located in West Royalty, are rented from the City of Charlottetown.

The 12-member Board of the FPEIM is elected annually from a "Cities/Towns Caucus" and a "Communities Caucus." Each "Caucus" elects two members from each of the Island's three Counties for a total of six per Caucus (giving each County four representatives on the Board). The Executive consists of a president, two vice-presidents (one chosen from each Caucus), the past president, and the appointed executive director. Besides the executive director, the FPEIM employs one other staff person, an administrative assistant.

The Board meets monthly. The Annual Meeting each May and the Semiannual Meeting in October involve the full membership.

## III "ABC's" and Local Authorities and Services

### III.1. Introduction

Many of the functions of local government are performed by bodies described as "ABC's" -- agencies, boards and commissions, bodies accountable to some level of government, created to carry out some specific purpose.<sup>28</sup>

### III.2. Education

The Prince Edward Island education system has been reorganized several times over the last forty years. Prior to this period of rapid change, the educational infrastructure had been surprisingly stable. In 1852, Prince Edward Island became the first British North American colony to institute "free education," a government-funded, Island-wide, public school system. By 1877, when new legislation confirmed that the school system would be officially non-denominationally as well, there were roughly 475 school districts in the province, featuring, for the most part, small one-room schools teaching multiple grades. The districts were approximately five square miles in area (since most students walked to school). Control was highly localized: a three-member district school board administered the provincial grant, which was supplemented by local taxation, and ran the individual schools. On a governance level, the school districts constituted the only uniform, Island-wide system of local governance that the province has ever had.

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, a system of regional high schools was established. The process of school consolidation then accelerated during the era of the Development Plan (late 1960s-1970s), which saw the merging of several hundred small school districts into five large "units" and a correspondingly smaller number of larger schools.<sup>29</sup> The system was reorganized again in the early 1990s, with the passage of a new *School Act* in 1993. Now education on Prince Edward Island is overseen by three boards: the Eastern School District, the Western School Board and the French Language School Board. For purposes of electing school trustees, Elections P.E.I. divided the school districts into school zones in 1996.<sup>30</sup> The Eastern School District has an annual budget of more than \$70 million, employs about 1,500 people and serves 16,000 students.<sup>31</sup> The district includes 42 schools in the eastern half of Prince Edward Island, with 11 school zones and 11 trustees.<sup>32</sup> The Western School Board has 21 schools on the western end of the Island, with about 700 employees, 8,000 students and a budget of about \$36 million. The area consists of nine school zones, electing nine trustees.<sup>33</sup> The French Language School Board includes two schools, covers five school zones, and is served by nine trustees.

Prince Edward Island has three post-secondary institutions, the University of Prince Edward Island, a degree-granting university; Holland College, a community college system; and the Francophone Adult Learning Centre.<sup>34</sup>

### III.3. Health and Social Services

The provincial government reforms of the early 1990s also brought reorganization to the health system. Until 1993, the health and community services system included three central agencies and 23 separate boards and divisions. This was changed on the recommendation of the Task Force on Health in 1992. The *Health and Community Services Act* (1993) established five regional boards and two central bodies: the Health Policy Council and the Health and Community Services Agency. The Department of Health and Social Services lost virtually its

entire staff (of over 4,000) to the new bodies, mostly to the Health and Community Services Agency. In 1996, the newly elected provincial government dismantled the Agency, restoring its staff to the Department.

The Regional Health Boards are responsible for delivering and managing health services at the local level and allocating the regional health budgets. They are located in West Prince (lots 1-12), East Prince (lots 13-21, 25-28 and 67), Queens (lots 22-24, 29-39, 48,49 and 65) Southern Kings (lots 50-54, 57-64 and 66) and Eastern Kings (lots 40-47, 55 and 56). The Regional Boards of Directors consist of at least seven community members appointed by the Minister of Health and Social Services.<sup>35</sup>

Under the new legislation, the Department of Health and Social Services has greater authority over the entire system, as was demonstrated when the Department took control of the Queens Regional Health Authority in early 1998, after most of the Board members resigned over a dispute with the minister.

Total health budgets between 1997 and 2001 are projected at between \$280 and \$285 million annually.<sup>36</sup>

#### III.4. Utilities

Prince Edward Island's province-wide utilities include Maritime Electric (power) and Island Tel (telephone). The main regulatory authority over utilities is the Island Regulatory and Appeals Commission (IRAC), established in 1992 (as a successor to the Public Utilities Commission) to administer the *Lands Protection Act*, the *Rental of Residential Property Act*, the *Petroleum Products Act*, the *Electric Power and Telephone Act*, the *Water and Sewerage Act* and the *Maritime Electric Company Ltd. Regulation Act*, with additional duties under other legislation. Under the *Municipalities Act* the commission is responsible for conducting public hearings and making recommendations to the provincial government on municipal boundary extension applications.<sup>37</sup> IRAC's authority does not extend to utilities in the municipalities incorporated under the Charlottetown Area Municipalities and City of Summerside acts of incorporation.

Water and sewer service is a municipal responsibility; accordingly, 29 communities have central wastewater treatment plants. These vary, including primary treatment (discharging into large bodies of water, as in Charlottetown and Summerside), secondary treatment (for instance, waste stabilization ponds, as in Tignish) or other methods, such as aerated lagoons (e.g. Cornwall), activated sludge plant (e.g. Montague) or a Rotating Biological Contactor (as in Hunter River).<sup>38</sup> There are seven municipal water services (without sewer services).<sup>39</sup> Municipal water and sewer services are set up as corporations independent of local governments; they are expected to pay for themselves, generally through user fees.<sup>40</sup>

#### III.5. Waste Management

While many communities continue to use local dumps and landfills for waste disposal, the province plans to implement an Island-wide system based on the Waste Watch system in place in East Prince since 1994. The East Prince Waste Management Commission was established by

order-in-council in that year under the authority of the Environmental Protection Act. In 1997 the provincial government announced plans to expand the system across the province by 2000, with expansion set to begin in late 1997 or 1998.<sup>41</sup> The expansion was delayed in late 1997 by confusion over what firms would be contracted to haul waste.

In July 1998 the Minister of Fisheries and Environment announced that the Department would accept bids in order to select a firm to run the provincial waste management system. The new utility will be a regulated monopoly under the jurisdiction of the Island Regulatory and Appeals Commission.<sup>42</sup>

### III. 6. Police Services

Since the early 1930s, when it replaced a short-lived provincial police force, most policing on Prince Edward Island has been done by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. Currently, "L" Division, one of 14 RCMP divisions across Canada, serves as the provincial police force, and as a municipal police service in Stratford and Montague. "L" Division maintains a staff of about 125 regular members, 13 civilians and 21 public service staff. Headquarters is located in Charlottetown. The province spends about \$7 million per year for RCMP services.<sup>43</sup> Part of the municipal grant from the province is directed at policing costs in the municipalities, most of which depend on the RCMP for police coverage.

Since April 1997 the RCMP has operated a "district policing" system on Prince Edward Island, dividing the province into three zones contiguous with the three counties.<sup>44</sup> District headquarters are located in North Bedeque (Prince), Charlottetown (Queens) and Brudenell (Kings). There are additional detachments in Alberton and Souris.

There are four local police forces on the Island:

- the Borden-Carleton Police Department, with three officers;
- the Charlottetown Police Department, with 53 officers;
- the Kensington Police Department, with two officers; and
- the Summerside Police Service, with 24 officers.<sup>45</sup>

### III.7. Court System

The Prince Edward Island Court system includes the Provincial Supreme Court and the Provincial Court of Prince Edward Island. Court Services are provided by the Judicial Services Division of the Department of Community Services and Attorney General. Formerly there was a system of County Courts, which were essentially civil courts, and county Magistrate's Courts, with jurisdiction over criminal cases.<sup>46</sup>

The Provincial Supreme Court Trial and Appeal Divisions sit in Charlottetown; the Trial Division also regularly sits in Summerside and occasionally in Georgetown. The Supreme Court has jurisdiction over all civil and criminal cases arising in the province, and hears summary conviction appeals from the Provincial Court. The General Section has jurisdiction over all

matters but family, estate and small claims, each of which is a responsibility of a separate section of the court. The Court of Appeal hears appeals from Trial Division cases.

The Provincial Court sits in Charlottetown and Summerside, with circuit courts in Alberton, Georgetown and Souris. The court has jurisdiction over adult criminal matters and youth cases.<sup>47</sup>

### III.8. Fire Services

Fire protection is a municipal responsibility. There are about 37 separate fire departments in the province, not all of them located in municipalities: West Point, for instance, has a fire department.<sup>48</sup> Nor are all fire departments affiliated with municipalities; some are private companies and a few are located in unincorporated areas.<sup>49</sup> Each department services a district, including the community in which it is based. Most fire departments are staffed by volunteer firefighters.

The office of the Provincial Fire Marshal administers the *Fire Prevention Act*. Its duties include building and fire inspection. The office also provides training for firefighters at the P.E.I. Fire Fighters Training School.<sup>50</sup>

## IV Federal and Provincial Government Services

### IV.1. Federal Government Services (HRDC)

Many Federal government services are carried out through a network of Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) sites. These services include Employment Insurance (EI), employment services, income security programs and student employment. HRDC Human Resource Centres are located in:

- Charlottetown, serving Charlottetown and the surrounding area from Hunter River in Queens Co. to Vernon River in Kings Co.;
- Montague, serving Southern Kings and parts of Queens Counties. There is a part-time satellite office in Morell;
- Souris, serving the eastern end of Prince Edward Island;
- Summerside, serving Prince Co. from Tyne Valley east to the Queens Co. line, plus Lot 20 in Queens Co. There is a satellite office in Wellington specializing in bilingual service to the predominately Acadian regions of East Prince;
- O'Leary, serving West Prince.<sup>51</sup>

### IV.2. Provincial Government Services

Many provincial government services are administered through Regional Services Centres, which sometimes share space with Human Resource Centres. RSC's may include offices of Enterprise PEI; the provincial Department of Agriculture and Forestry; Culture, Heritage and Recreation and Child and Family Services, among other functions. Like federal HRDC centres, Regional Services Centres are dispersed across the province in order to give residents access to government offices and services in their own area. Regional Services Centres are located in:

- Charlottetown;
- Montague;
- O'Leary;
- Souris ( Johnny Ross Young Regional Services Centre);
- Summerside (Access PEI);
- Tignish (Tignish and Area Government Services Office), a branch of the Evangeline Regional Services Centre;
- Wellington (Evangeline Regional Services Centre).<sup>52</sup>

### IV.3. Economic Development

Government supported economic development is supported by both the federal and provincial governments through several agencies.

The origins of concerted government-backed economic development efforts can be found in the federal-provincial rural development agreements of the 1960s. These efforts blossomed in 1970 into a full-fledged Comprehensive Development Plan that brought, among other things, reforms in education and the civil service, and development programs in major industries such as agriculture.<sup>53</sup> Although the Development Plan *per se* came to a formal end in the 1980s, it has been succeeded by an array of federal-provincial programs.

In 1997 the federal government and the Prince Edward Island government concluded the Canada/Prince Edward Island Agreement on Regional Economic Development, a federal-provincial agreement negotiated under the auspices of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA) on the federal side, and the provincial Department of Economic Development and Tourism. The program is a five-year deal worth \$32.2 million, aimed at building infrastructure on the Island, fostering new technology and finding new markets for Prince Edward Island products. The federal government will contribute 70 per cent of the funding.<sup>54</sup>

1997 was also the first year for the \$107 million, five-year Canada/P.E.I. Labour Market Development Agreement, projected to last until 2002. The agreement is designed to develop employment programs and to complement provincial economic development programs and to complement provincial economic development efforts in five priority sectors, including tourism, aerospace, small business, information technology and primary industries.<sup>55</sup> Prince Edward Island municipalities also have access to funding under the federal government's annual infrastructure program.

The bodies and agencies involved in economic development include:

- Enterprise PEI, a provincial agency with outlets in most Regional Service Centres, staffed by regional development officers;
- The Canada/Prince Edward Island Business Services Centre, a joint federal-provincial operation, provides information on government business services from five community resource sites;
- The Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA), in cooperation with the provincial Department of Economic Development and Tourism, is responsible for Prince Edward

Island's four community-based development corporation, which are run by local boards. They assist small businesses and prospective entrepreneurs with counselling, mentoring and financial assistance. Prince Edward Island's Community Development Corporations are:

- The Western Development Corporation (Bloomfield, serving West Prince);
- The Central Development Corporation (Central Bedeque, serving East Prince;
- Opportunities East Inc., serving Kings Co.) and;
- The Baie Acadienne Development Corporation (Wellington).<sup>56</sup>

There are also a large number of rural and community development corporations across the province. Economic development came under the jurisdiction of a newly formed Department of Development after a 1998 government reorganization.

#### IV.4. Ports and Marine Navigation

The Canadian Coast Guard (under the jurisdiction of Transport Canada) administers four Prince Edward Island ports, the deep harbors at Summerside, Charlottetown, Georgetown and Souris. The Coast Guard also maintains navigational aids, including lights, buoys and fog signals. There is a senior Canadian Coast Guard Representative in Charlottetown.<sup>57</sup>

Under the federal National Marine Policy (announced in 1995), Transport Canada is divesting itself over 500 ports across Canada, either by transferring them to provincial or local control, or shutting them down. Transport Canada divests its responsibility for public ports by terminating application of the Public Harbours and Port Facilities Act at those harbours.<sup>58</sup> Accordingly, 27 Prince Edward Island ports were "deproclaimed" on June 20, 1996,<sup>59</sup> and more than 20 harbors had established local port authorities by 1998. The federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans runs 56 small craft harbors, some of them fishing ports and others for recreational vessels.<sup>60</sup>

The PEI Ports Commission is considering the future of the ports at Charlottetown, Summerside, Georgetown and Souris after Transport Canada divests itself of responsibility in 2000.<sup>61</sup>

#### IV.5. Airports

A local authority is negotiating the transfer of Charlottetown Airport from federal control to local control (with a lease from Transport Canada). Charlottetown was designated one of 26 airports in the National Airports System (because it serves a provincial capital). Federal financial assistance for National airports will end by March 31, 2000. Transport Canada intends to maintain Charlottetown as part of the National Airports System (on a break-even basis), but the Charlottetown Airport Authority Inc. plans to maintain a higher level of service.

Summerside has a private airport at Slemon Park, formerly the airstrip for CFB Summerside.

### **V Electoral Boundaries**

#### V.1. Federal Electoral Boundaries

Prince Edward Island is divided into four federal (House of Commons) constituencies:

- Egmont: includes Lots 1-17, plus Sherbrooke (including the City of Summerside).
- Malpeque: includes parts of Prince and Queens Counties; roughly, the area east of Summerside and north and west of Charlottetown.
- Cardigan: includes Eastern Prince Edward Island, including all of Kings County and Queens County east of Charlottetown.
- Hillsborough: includes the Charlottetown area, including the city and the Town of Stratford.<sup>62</sup>

Prince Edward Island came into Confederation in 1873 with six seats in the House of Commons, each county serving as a dual constituency electing two MPs. Population decline on the Island -- coupled with a rising population in other provinces -- meant a loss of seats during periodic redistribution. The province was reduced to five seats in 1892, then four in the redistribution of seats that followed the 1901 census. In response to Island alarm about the prospective loss of all representation in the House, the federal government amended the British North America Act in 1914 to guarantee Prince Edward Island four seats. The "Senate Floor" amendment stipulated that no province could have fewer seats in the elected Commons than it possessed in the appointed Senate. Queens County, with Halifax, N.S., was one of the last two dual constituencies in Canada, holding two seats until 1965. Incidentally, the 1965 redistribution eliminated the county lines as dividers for parliamentary ridings; population distribution became the determinant of constituency boundaries instead.<sup>63</sup>

The last realignment of the federal electoral districts on Prince Edward Island was in 1987, when the province's Electoral Boundaries Commission transferred Wilmot, Slemon Park, Sherbrooke and Holman Island from Malpeque to Egmont, and Southport, Bunbury and Keppoch-Kinlock from Cardigan to Hillsborough. In both cases the commission justified the decision on the basis that the communities involved had become integral parts of the larger centres, Summerside in the first case, Charlottetown in the second.

The Electoral Boundaries Commission for the province consists of three members. The chairperson is a judge appointed by the Chief Justice of the provincial Supreme Court, and the two other members are residents of the province appointed by the speaker of the House of Commons.<sup>64</sup>

Prince Edward Island is entitled to four senators (out of the total of 24 from the three Maritime provinces).

## V.2. Provincial Electoral Boundaries

The Prince Edward Island Legislative Assembly has 27 members, from single-member constituencies.

The provincial electoral system of 1856 gave each county eight members elected from dual-member ridings plus two from each of the county towns (Princetown, Charlottetown and Georgetown), for a total of 30 seats in the Assembly. In 1862 the Executive Council became an



elected body, with 13 members (four from each county and one from Charlottetown). The Council and Assembly merged in 1893, with each county returning ten members from five dual constituencies.<sup>65</sup> A shakeup in the 1960s left the legislature with 32 seats from 16 dual constituencies (Charlottetown got an extra constituency).<sup>66</sup>

The 27-seat legislature is the result of reorganization and redistribution of seats beginning in 1992. In that year the Prince Edward Island Supreme Court ruled that the 16-riding, dual-member legislative arrangement violated the constitutional principle of one-person-one-vote because of the wide variance in population between larger and smaller ridings (as high as 180 per cent between the most and least populous constituencies).

In March 1994 a provincially-appointed commission proposed a legislature of 30 single-member ridings. In the event, however, the legislature approved a private member's bill creating a 27-seat assembly that came into being with the 1996 provincial election. The legally allowable variance in population between seats is plus or minus 25 per cent from the average.

### V.3. Municipal Electoral Boundaries

A council may, by bylaw, divide a town into wards for electoral purposes, although many elect councillors "at large," in an open ward system. Stratford is divided into three wards. Both cities are in wards as well: Charlottetown is divided into ten electoral wards, Summerside eight.<sup>67</sup>

## VI Local Government in Other Jurisdictions

### I.1. New Brunswick

New Brunswick has had broad legislation governing municipal incorporation since 1851; the 1877 Municipalities Act made municipal government mandatory throughout the province (counties were incorporated as municipalities). In a novel attempt to integrate urban and rural government, cities and towns were represented on the councils of the counties in which they were located. This system was drastically overhauled beginning in 1967 under the Program for Equal Opportunity, the "most systematic reorganization of local government ever in Canada."<sup>68</sup> A major theme of the reform was deincorporation -- 96 per cent of the province's area, and 35 per cent of its population, lost its municipal government.<sup>69</sup>

New Brunswick's municipal map now consists of 111 incorporated cities, towns and villages, and 274 unincorporated local service districts. These four types of structures are organized under the *Municipalities Act*, which also sets population thresholds for a municipality to reach before it can be classified as a city (population 10,000) or town (population 1,500). Councils are elected for a term of three years. As on Prince Edward Island, property assessment and property tax collection is done by the province, which levies its own provincial property tax in addition to municipal taxes.<sup>70</sup> In rural areas, where municipal-type services are provided by the province, advisory committees assist provincial officials in providing local services.<sup>71</sup>

During the 1990s the New Brunswick government has been examining the province's urban areas and considering amalgamation and regionalization of services, most recently with the creation of a new municipality in the Edmunston-Madawaska region in 1997-1998.<sup>72</sup>

## VI.2. Newfoundland

Newfoundland entered Confederation in 1949 with about 20 municipalities incorporated under individual charters; the *Local Government Act* of 1949 subsequently gave municipal status to areas with a population of 1,000 or more, and to rural districts. By 1975 about 80 per cent of the population lived in cities, towns, rural districts or quasi-municipalities such as Local Government Communities and Local Improvement Districts. Finally, the 1979 Municipalities Act created the framework that persists today.<sup>73</sup>

Newfoundland's 290 municipalities include three cities -- St. John's, Mount Pearl and Corner Brook -- with their own acts of incorporation. The remaining towns and communities are incorporated under the *Municipalities Act*. The *Act* also provides for the creation of regional governments, but none have been formed. Along with the standard forms of municipalities, there are local service districts, quasi-municipal structures that provide limited services in unincorporated areas. Local service districts are expected to fall under the jurisdiction of regional governments, if such are ever formed.<sup>74</sup> Newfoundland municipalities are authorized to levy property taxes to provide services roughly similar to those provided by Prince Edward Island municipalities, although policing is a provincial responsibility throughout Newfoundland.<sup>75</sup>

A new structure for economic development planning and delivery of services was established in 1995, when the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador organized the province into twenty "economic zones," each with its own "democratically selected" Regional Economic Development Board (REDBs). The REDBs are comprised of representatives of business, municipalities, regional development associations, educators, labour, and other stakeholders.<sup>76</sup>

The new administrative arrangement is intended as the primary vehicle for economic development within the various regions. It emphasizes mutually supporting roles and a logical balance of functions between the government and the economic zones. The government is responsible for devising provincial policies and strategies, and for providing support to the Regional Economic Development Boards. Within the economic zones, the individual REDBs take the lead in helping their zones develop "strategic economic plans," and in negotiating the memorandums of agreement with provincial departments through which their plans' initiatives can be implemented.

## VI.3. Nova Scotia

Nova Scotia's first elected municipal government appeared when Halifax was incorporated as a city in 1841. In 1879 the County Incorporation Act created 24 rural municipalities, which remained the basic units of local government (aside from incorporated towns and cities) until 1994. Town incorporation became possible with the Towns Incorporation Act of 1888, and villages and local service commissions became possible in 1923, although they are not incorporated separately from the municipality in which they are located.

The current system of local government in Nova Scotia took form when the provincial government began to create regional municipalities in 1994, amalgamating cities, towns and counties into single municipal units in the Sydney, Halifax and Queens County areas. The *Regional Municipalities Act* of 1996 allows municipalities within a county to request amalgamation and incorporation as a single municipality.

Thus, Nova Scotia's land area is entirely incorporated; of the eighteen counties, three are regional municipalities, nine are rural municipalities and six are divided into two rural municipalities each, for a total of twenty-one rural municipalities. There are thirty-one towns incorporated under the *Towns Act*, independent of the rural municipalities (except in the case of joint expenditures).

There are also agencies, boards and commissions to administer some local services, for instance in villages (there are twenty-two incorporated villages). Municipalities are financed through property and business occupancy taxes, and provincial and federal government grants.<sup>77</sup>

#### VI.4. Iceland

Iceland is a North Atlantic island of 103,000 square kilometres with a population of about 270,000 (i.e. roughly twice that of Prince Edward Island). By comparison with the Canadian federal system and division of powers, Iceland is a unitary state, with no equivalent of the Canadian provincial authority between the national and municipal governments.

Article 76 of the Icelandic constitution states that local authorities' right to govern their own affairs will be determined by law, and there are statutes (8/1986 and 91/1989) defining the responsibilities and financing arrangements for local governments.

Iceland is divided into about 165 geographically-defined municipalities, the largest being the capital, Reykjavik, with about 100,000 people. About half the municipalities have a population of fewer than 200. Municipal councils are elected every four years, and can set property and local income tax rates. Their responsibilities include social services (such as poor relief, employment services and children's welfare), primary education (up to age 16), street maintenance, planning and harbor and fire services.<sup>78</sup> The Icelandic municipality stands somewhere between a Canadian municipality and a province; duties like welfare and poor relief, to say nothing of employment services, have long become the territory of higher levels of government in Canada. By contrast, the two largest areas of expenditure for Icelandic municipalities are education and social services.<sup>79</sup>

Icelandic municipalities are amalgamating, with state encouragement, on the principle that "Small municipalities are generally more expensive to operate than larger ones, on a per capita basis."<sup>80</sup>

### VII Conclusion

In his 1951 book *The Government of Prince Edward Island*, Frank MacKinnon wrote that the "history of municipal government on the Island has been uneventful, for there have been no great

issues of municipal reform and no significant struggles for local democracy."<sup>81</sup> This position is less tenable in the 1990s, when much more is expected of governments, local, provincial and federal, than in the predominately rural society that defined Prince Edward Island in earlier decades. The controversy and discussion that surrounded the amalgamations of municipalities in 1993-1995 certainly qualify as "great issues of municipal reform."

Nevertheless, Prince Edward Island's local governments remain subordinate to senior levels of government and restricted in their responsibilities; even in Charlottetown, the largest city, an issue in recent election campaigns has been whether the mayor should quit his day job. The entire population of the province would fit comfortably into a Toronto neighborhood, and even at its most built-up, it is difficult to conceive of Charlottetown or Summerside as "urban" areas. This simply points to the fallacy of thinking of local and municipal government in terms solely of "urban" government.

At the other end of the scale from the cities, the Island has a large number of tiny municipalities, with populations in the low hundreds, providing few services to residents. The great bulk of the Island's land area has no local government. Unlike neighboring New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, there is no tradition of rural local government on the Island. The counties never developed real county government, serving primarily as geographical markers for electoral districts and court systems.

Along with huge unincorporated areas, Prince Edward Island has large incorporated areas that have no official plan for zoning and land use. The Standing Committee on Agriculture, Forestry and Environment estimated in 1997 that between six and nine per cent of Prince Edward Island's land area falls under a planning and zoning bylaw. The government plans to increase the area covered by official plans to 50 per cent by 2003, including Special Planning Areas (which are not necessarily incorporated).<sup>82</sup>

Keeping in mind the old axiom about Prince Edward Island being "overgoverned," the province faces serious challenges in areas of local concern, such as land use planning, waste disposal, harbor, port and airport administration, local economic development and road maintenance and repair. Given that these are all areas of concern to localities, it would be shortsighted to use the Island's small population and its increasingly "urban" concentration as an excuse to ignore issues of local governance.

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## [APPENDICES](#)

## [REFERENCE MAPS](#)

ISBN 0-919013-38-4

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*This report has been produced with funding and technical assistance from the Department of Community Services and Attorney General and the Prince Edward Island Federation of Municipalities.*