

# Regional Governance on a Watershed Basis

Michael R. van den Heuvel  
Director, Canadian Rivers Institute

## Premise

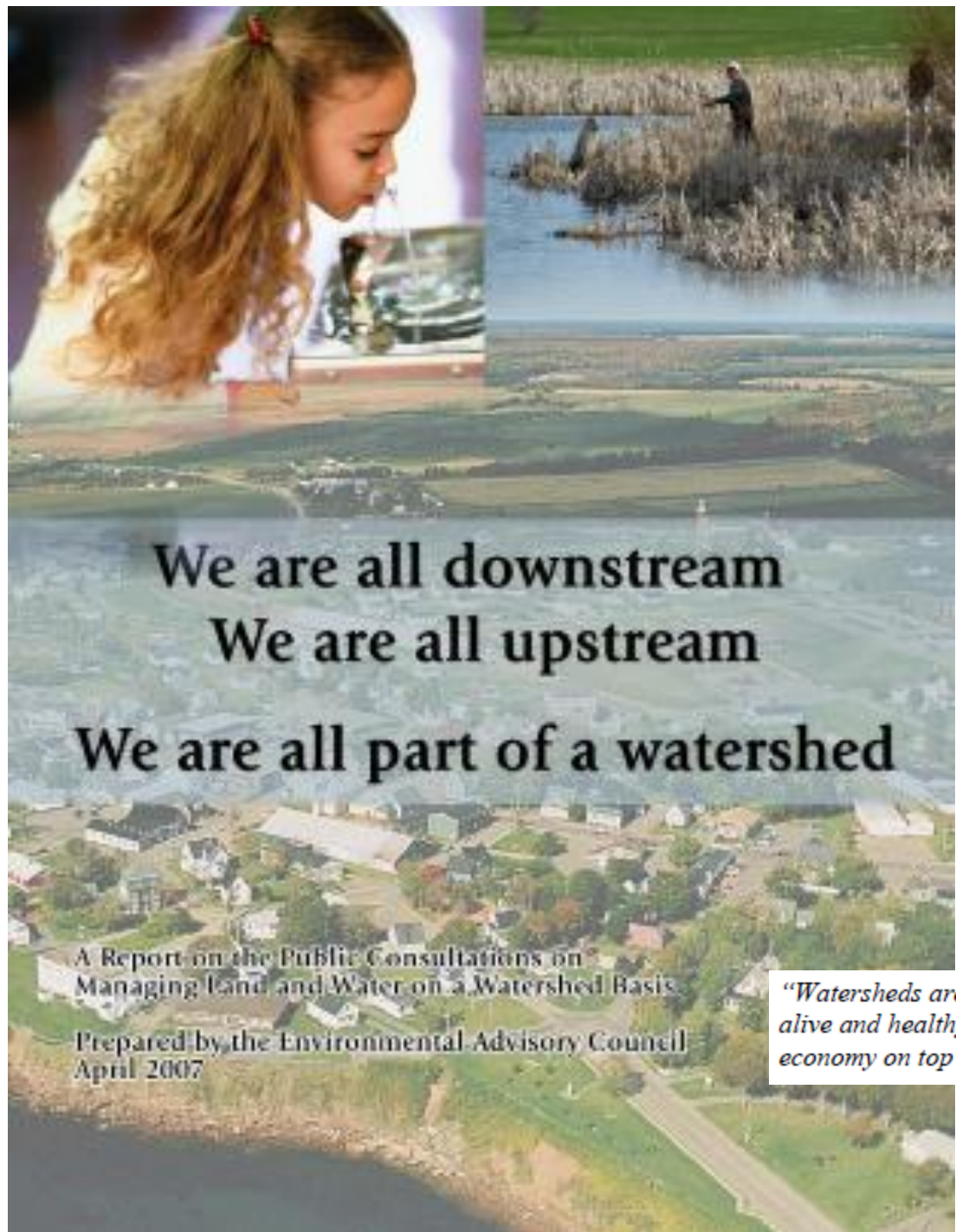
Planning, resource management, and conservation are the most important roles of regional governing authorities and it is only possible to do this effectively on a watershed basis.

### **Watersheds are fundamental to Integrated Water Resource Management**

The Global Water Partnership's definition of IWRM: 'IWRM is a process which promotes the co-ordinated development and management of water, land and related resources, in order to maximize the resultant economic and social welfare in an equitable manner without compromising the sustainability of vital ecosystems.'

- Background - Local Governance/Watershed Management consultation on PEI
- International Example – New Zealand
- Canadian Example – Grand River, Ontario
- What might this look like on PEI?





**We are all downstream  
We are all upstream**

**We are all part of a watershed**

A Report on the Public Consultations on  
Managing Land and Water on a Watershed Basis

Prepared by the Environmental Advisory Council  
April 2007

*"Watersheds are a basic natural unit for understanding what keeps the Island alive and healthy. If they're in good shape, then we can build our human economy on top of them and have a good quality of life."*

In November 2006 the EAC was asked to carry out consultations on managing land and water on a watershed basis

This was to provide recommendations to the Minister of Environment Energy and Forestry

Report completed April 2007

- Government regulations unevenly and sporadically enforced
- Clear lack of land use planning
- Cities major water users and polluters
- Strong support for community-based watershed planning which could play a key role in watershed environmental issues
- AEC noted more of a focus on issues and less on how we manage. Poor understanding of what it means to govern on a watershed basis
- Organizing electoral boundaries on a watershed basis favoured.



- Watershed groups have just enough funding to exist (note, the entire department at the time was only 1% of government spending, watershed currently at \$800K)
- Groups are sustained by their enthusiasm, a great deal of work on their own time, burnout is common
- Frustration that their actions are not having real impact
- Competition for money between groups



# NEW FOUNDATIONS



REPORT OF THE  
COMMISSION ON LAND AND LOCAL GOVERNANCE  
DECEMBER 2009



Latest in a number of initiatives on the topic

We need to question what irreplaceable assets are being lost forever because a comprehensive land use plan is not in place for the entire Island.

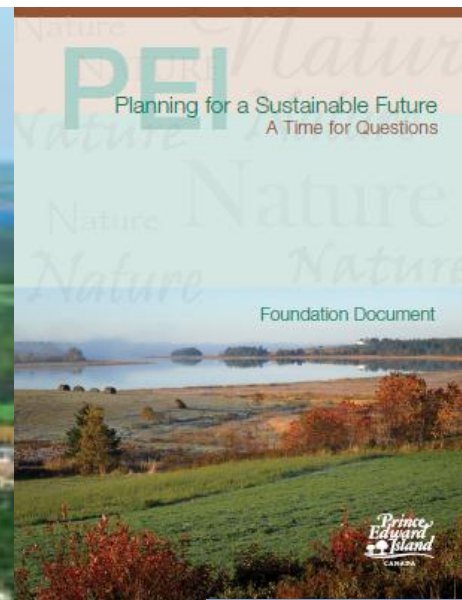
We need to ask ourselves whether local affairs across the Island could not be better administered at the local level by municipal governments.

## Recommendations

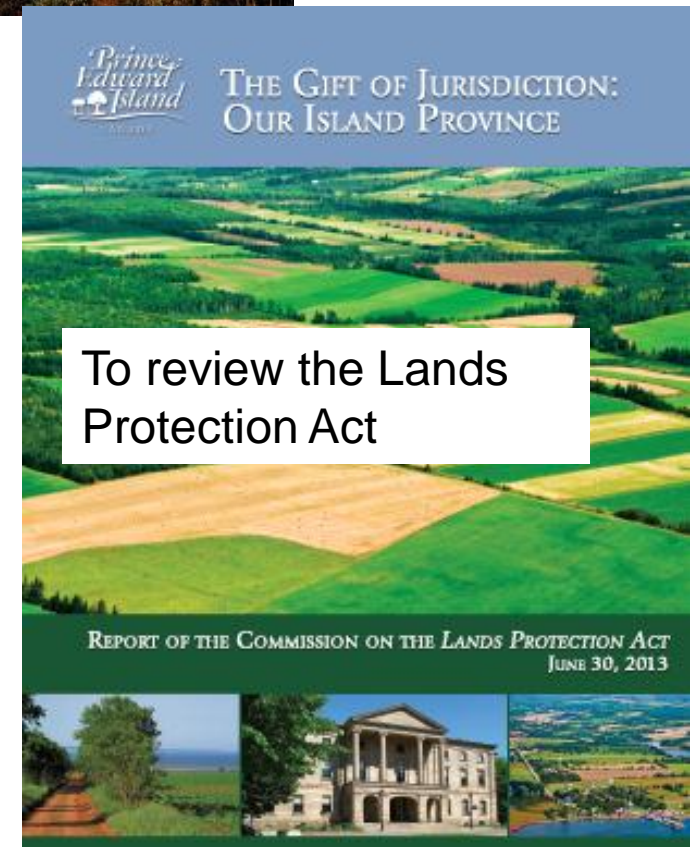
The provincial government to develop and land use management plan and conservation strategy

A new act governing municipalities – transparency, accountability, embodying progressive statues elsewhere in Canada. Determine consensus on including all Islanders in a municipality

To develop recommendations for land use policy



Review of present status of the Island Environment





Stronger Together:  
Building a Sustainable  
Future for the  
Three Rivers Region



49 Federal Street  
P.O. Box 2233, Charlottetown  
PEI, C1A 8C1  
Phone (902) 368-1942  
Fax (902) 368-1642

After reviewing the Commissioner Judge Ralph Thompson's Report, which was released by the Commission on Land and Local Governance and had been prepared for the Government of Prince Edward Island in December 2009, it was clear that smaller municipalities are heading down a path that is not sustainable for future generations. There is a need to look at sharing of services, bylaws, planning and taking a hard look at sustainable populations and boundary changes.

In the case of the PEI *Planning Act Regulations*, there is a serious flaw. Essentially the Regulations exist in a vacuum, without a clear overall Provincial Land Use Policy. There are no clearly stated land use objectives and there is no long term spatial plan for land use. Accordingly there are no land use zones.

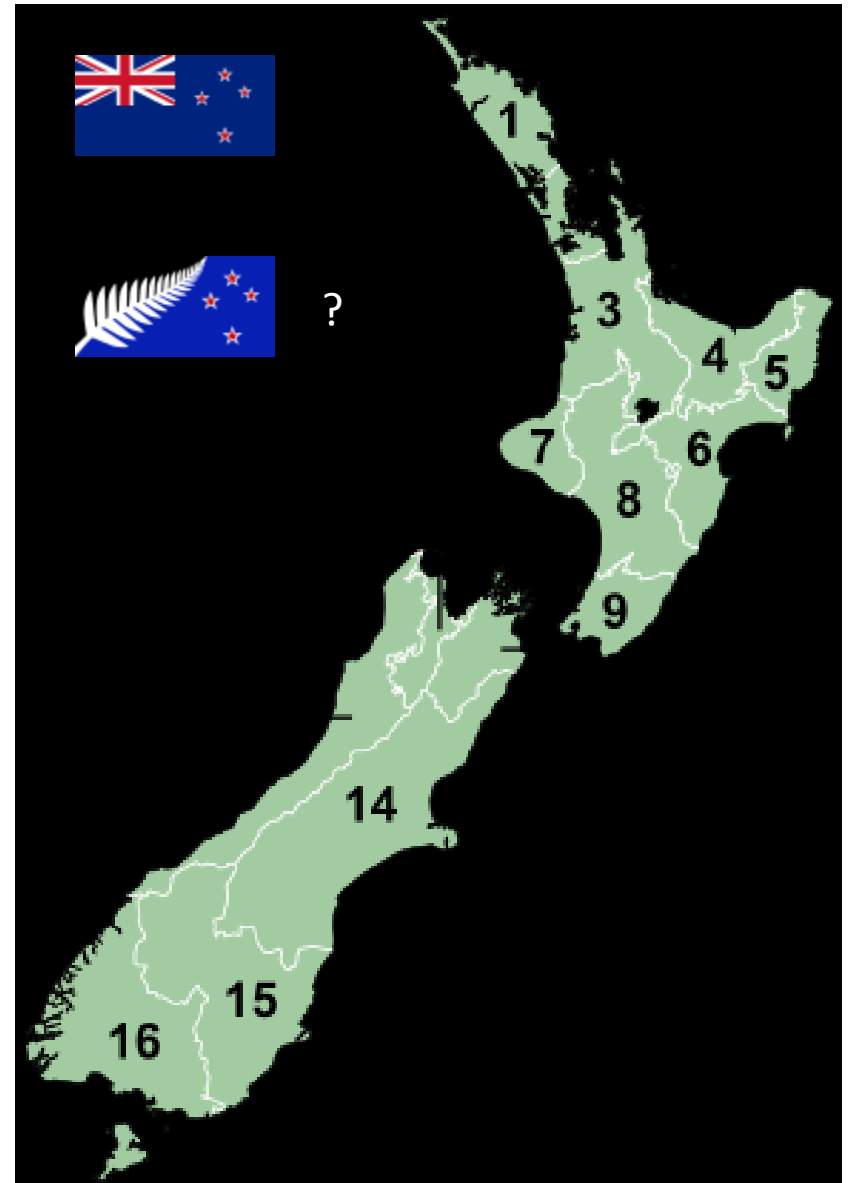
## New Zealand

The extreme in decentralized watershed-based management

NZ, Island State of 5 million (4 million inhabitants).

Regional Councils formed during local government reform in 1989 on watershed boundaries – replaced more than 700 ad hoc bodies

The Local Government Act (2002) requires councils to administer sustainable development and the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of their communities.









Te Moana a Toi-te-Huatahi

Elected Councilors  
Three Maori Seats

21,000 sq km  
267,000 people

Total operating expenditures  
\$85M (\$318 per person)

Property tax, about one third  
Trading revenue, about one third  
Fees, about one sixth  
National government grants, less  
than one sixth

However, Council is 100% owner of  
company that has majority shares  
in the port of Tauranga (\$79M  
operating surplus).





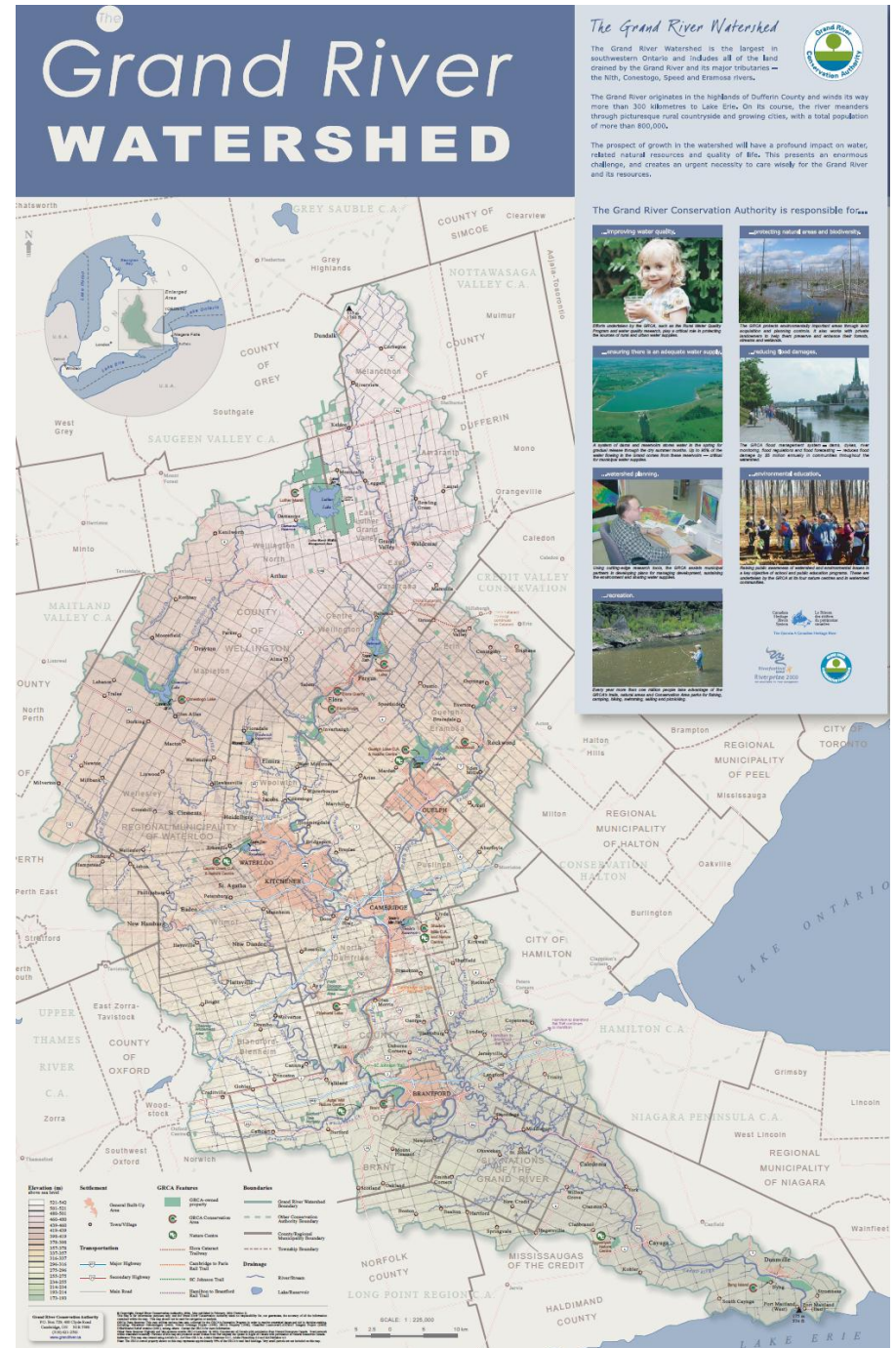


Manages the Grand River Watershed  
 Ontario – Considered the ‘gold standard’ in regional management

6,800 square km  
 (PEI is 5660)

Almost a million people

Extensively ground water Driven, second only to PEI



The Grand River Conservation Authority manages water and other natural resources on behalf of 39 municipalities and close to one million residents of the Grand River watershed.

The GRCA, with headquarters in Cambridge, ON is the oldest water management agency in Canada and one of the oldest in the world.





## **Governance and Funding**

Ontario has an extensive history of management at a watershed level. GRCA is incorporated under the Conservation Authorities Act (1946) and is one of 36 conservation authorities in the province. GRCA authority operates in cooperation with municipalities through a 26-member board of directors, appointed by the member municipalities.

The GRCA board passes a budget each February (29.5 million in 2015, about \$29 per person – PEI is \$1.6B). About one-third of its revenue comes from the municipalities (municipal levy-some add a charge to water bills to accommodate), 10 per cent from the Ontario government, and the remainder from park and camping fees, hydroelectricity generation, fees for service and other sources.



## Planning and Authority

The GRCA works to protect the natural environment through its involvement in planning and development activity. The GRCA has the responsibility, under the **Conservation Authorities Act**, to regulate construction and development in and near rivers, streams, wetlands, steep slopes, wetlands, ponds and the Lake Erie shoreline. Anyone considering a project in those regulated areas has to apply for a permit from the GRCA.

The GRCA provides environmental advice to municipalities on applications under the **Ontario Planning Act**. This includes applications for severances, zoning changes, official plan amendments, plans of subdivision and others.

The GRCA reviews the plans to ensure they meet the environmental policies of the municipality, the provincial government and other agencies. It then provides advice on the application to the municipality.





## What would work on PEI?

Small population/tax base, small municipalities or regional gov't not sustainable  
Multiple >200 small watersheds, not sustainable on individual watersheds  
Therefore need large areas, 10-12 regions has been suggested, but that is probably high given the need for sufficient population base

### ***How would we pay for this? (and not break the bank)***

Current watershed funding ~ \$1M in two years (ask has been \$2M, absorb watershed groups), cannot depend on more than this.

Property tax levy (in the order of \$100 per household)

Water use levy (note Water Act critical in this)

Downloading of some PEI government responsibilities (eg. local roads?)

Enterprise, harbours, tourism (operate provincial parks?), recreation

Agreements with municipalities for provisions of services (eg. water, sewage treatment)

### ***How do we do this?***

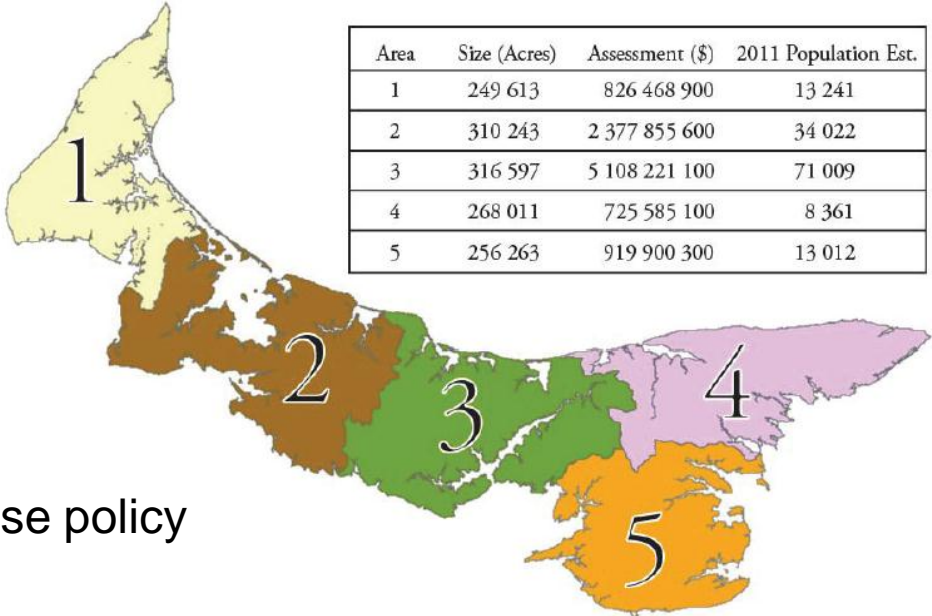
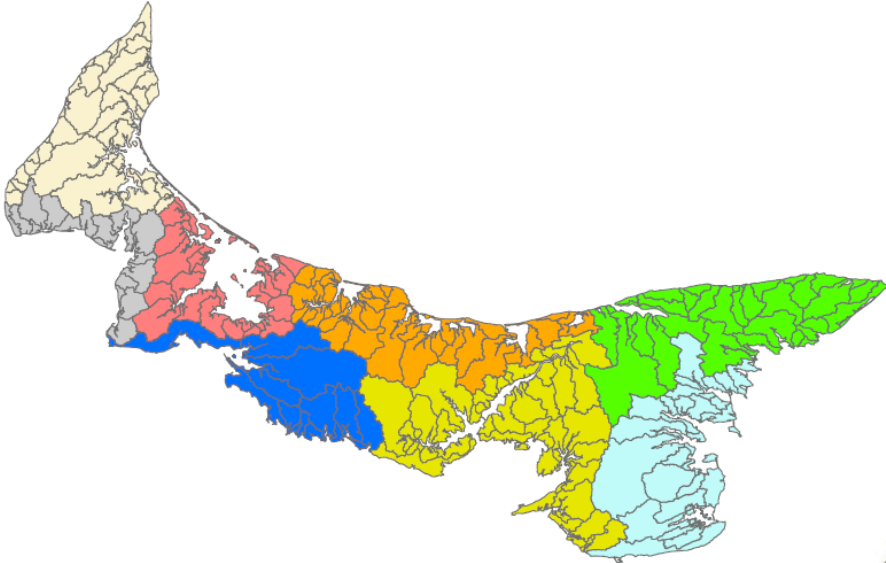
PEI governments sets policy on land and water use etc. Regions deliver, have regional authority over decision making, permitting

Policy has been to let things happen voluntarily on their own....

Nothing happens

Transformative change is required – A new act 'Regional Governance Act'

# Maximum of eight regions based on large drainage basins




Area	Size (Acres)	Assessment (\$)	2011 Population Est.
1	249 613	826 468 900	13 241
2	310 243	2 377 855 600	34 022
3	316 597	5 108 221 100	71 009
4	268 011	725 585 100	8 361
5	256 263	919 900 300	13 012

Report on the task force on land use policy

Map 4: Example of possible planning areas based on watershed boundaries and communities of interest. Each region includes about 50 smaller watersheds.



The importance of planning  
Thank you

A photograph of a wooden dam structure in a forest. The water is very turbid and brown, indicating high sediment levels. The dam is made of wooden planks and is partially submerged. The surrounding area is a dense forest with evergreen and deciduous trees. The water is turbulent as it flows over the dam, creating white foam and rapids.

“I am hopeful that you [Mr. Carver] will be forward thinking in your recommendations. PEI needs someone to envision a future for us that is beyond the imagination of most at the moment.”