

# **Fostering Belonging, Inclusivity and Vitality on PEI**

## **Analysis of Factors Influencing Population Retention and Out-Migration**

**University of Prince Edward Island**

**Institute of Island Studies**

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**Theme Summary**  
**Retention challenges and strategies**

**Theme 1: Belonging**

Belonging challenges	Belonging strategies
<i>Sense of not belonging</i>	<i>Focus on immigrant and newcomer assets</i>
<i>Need for longer-term welcoming supports</i>	<i>Foster and support welcoming communities and encourage local coordination of retention initiatives</i>

**Theme 2: Inclusivity**

Inclusivity challenges	Inclusivity strategies
<i>Lack of diversity and representation in leadership</i>	<i>Broaden the term Islander and ensure diversity in leadership and Islander profiles</i>
<i>Discrimination and racism</i>	<i>Stop discrimination and racism and make Islander an inclusive term</i>

**Theme 3: Vitality**

Vitality challenges	Vitality strategies
<i>Affordability and cost of living pressures</i>	<i>Confront affordability issues</i>
<i>Inadequate health services</i>	<i>Improve health services, determinants and regional cooperation measures</i>
<i>Limited career and workplace training opportunities</i>	<i>Provide workplace training and PLAR opportunities</i>
<i>Climate concerns and island living</i>	<i>Profile climate change adaptations and green economy lifestyles</i>

## Retention strategy ideas

**Belonging: Ensure a vibrant, long-term welcoming process**

Belonging strategy ideas
<p><b>Focus on immigrant and newcomer assets</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Use asset-based language</li><li>• Develop and monitor initiatives for a long-term welcoming community process</li></ul>
<p><b>Foster and support welcoming communities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provide school age and youth cultural awareness programs</li><li>• Engage longtime residents in multicultural learning activities</li><li>• Link immigrant and newcomer integration activities to existing community projects</li></ul>
<p><b>Safeguard staffing and encourage local coordination of retention initiatives</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ensure adequate staffing for immigrant and newcomer services</li><li>• Encourage local coordination</li><li>• Link immigration to local rural population strategies</li></ul>

**Inclusivity: Foster a broader perspective on Islander and ensure diverse leadership**

Inclusivity strategy ideas
<p><b>Broaden the term Islander</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Profile “I’m a proud Islander” to broaden understandings</li></ul>
<p><b>Ensure diversity in leadership and Islander profiles</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Profile and engage immigrant entrepreneurs</li><li>• Highlight local success initiatives</li><li>• Provide citizenship and civic engagement opportunities</li></ul>
<p><b>Stop discrimination and racism and make Islander an inclusive term</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Recognize Islander privilege and bias</li><li>• Support and expand province-wide anti-racism and anti-discrimination initiatives</li></ul>

## Vitality: Develop social capital and infrastructure supports

Vitality strategy ideas
<p><b><i>Confront affordability issues</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Provide incentives for post-secondary students, apprentices, employers</i></li><li>• <i>Highlight PEI businesses and communities that have employment opportunities for immigrants and expats</i></li><li>• <i>Broaden residency concepts</i></li><li>• <i>Focus on immigrant classes that hold the most potential for retention</i></li></ul>
<p><b><i>Improve health services, determinants and regional cooperation measures</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Nurture and promote healthy communities</i></li><li>• <i>Draw attention to regional cooperation on health issues</i></li></ul>
<p><b><i>Provide workplace training and PLAR opportunities</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Encourage workplace training</i></li><li>• <i>Provide prior learning and assessment and recognition (PLAR) services</i></li></ul>
<p><b><i>Profile climate change adaptations and green economy lifestyles</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Share community vitality stories</i></li><li>• <i>Profile green economy lifestyles and opportunities</i></li></ul>

## Fostering belonging, inclusivity and vitality on PEI

### Introduction

*It took a long time to get that 'sense of belonging' (we moved here in 2004), but we made the effort to get involved. We made many meaningful connections through being involved in our children's sports, schools, as well as our church. But it does take a while to connect with Islanders (Survey participant).*

*As an immigrant and visible person of colour, it's hard feeling a strong sense of belonging when you clearly stand out/look different from everyone else. Cultural differences, traditions, and holidays that are not celebrated within the community also make it harder to belong. Despite that, my family, friends and neighbors have always helped me find a place within the community and I am grateful for my time spent on PEI growing up (Survey participant).*

*I think most Islanders want to welcome everyone who moves here – at least initially - but we're not always accepting of new perspectives and ideas so we may sometimes ignore new people after they've been here awhile. I suppose we're rooted in our ways and maybe see newcomers and immigrants as "come from aways" rather than people that we need to connect to and involve in our lives. We need to change that way of thinking and be better at welcoming people and helping newcomers to see themselves as part of the community. I'd want people to do that for me if I moved to a new place (Focus group participant).*

This report summarizes the research contracted by Economic and Population Growth PEI and completed by the Institute of Island Studies (IIS) into the factors that influence population retention and out-migration on Prince Edward Island (PEI). The research had several objectives:

1. Identify the factors associated with retention and out-migration of Islanders.
2. Connect with Islander organizations associated with mobile populations.

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3. Offer retention strategies that could help the province develop more effective population strategies.

Although PEI has been quite successful in relative terms in recruiting international newcomers, the ability to retain a high percentage of this group on PEI has been more challenging. Further, the success of intra-provincial migration with respect to PEI has been mixed. While people from other provinces do move to the island, there is an annual net loss of Islanders moving elsewhere in Canada. These retention challenges have persisted despite a series of thoughtful and constructive strategies in various population action plans.

An effective population strategy encompasses several intersecting components, including natural increase, recruitment of people from international and Canadian origins, and retention of those currently living in PEI. This research initiative focuses on identifying retention challenges in order to assist the province in developing more effective population retention strategies.

### **Methodology overview: methods, limitations, thematic format, and research scope**

In order to develop the report, the IIS research team worked closely with staff from Economic and Population Growth PEI to frame the research parameters, connect with local organizations and interested parties and develop survey instruments. The IIS research team utilized the on-line surveys to hear from current and former Islanders regarding retention challenges and opportunities and followed up by hosting focus groups with a representative sampling of the survey participants.

**Methods:** The first phase involved connecting to organizations involved with newcomers and immigrants on PEI. These conversations helped the project team to develop a better understanding of the range of possible factors that may be most closely associated with out-migration from PEI and other similar places. This step was also important to develop accurate and appropriate questions that would be used in survey instruments created



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later in the process. Further, the consultation with organizations provided the research team with platforms to advertise the survey instruments.

During this initial stage of the research, the researchers also examined literature pertaining to immigration, migration and rural repopulation in Canada, the United States, Australia and the UK. This literature review drew upon library databases, peer reviewed journals, government policy documents, advocacy reports, conference presentations and organizational web-sites. The team was also able to utilize recent research into well-being and quality of life indicators for PEI – a data set that helped inform the themes emerging from the surveys and focus groups.

The next phase of the research involved completing surveys with current and former Islanders. An initial online survey, using the SurveyMonkey software, was used to connect to current and former Islanders (See Appendix B). This survey was intended for Islanders in general, but especially for those Islanders who may be more likely to leave PEI (e.g., newcomers). A self-selection sample approach was used (a URL link provided on social media platforms and on the platforms of relevant partner groups) and all responses were recorded as anonymous.

A second online survey was developed to better understand the decision-making of former residents of PEI who moved elsewhere (See Appendix C). This survey focused on the factors that prompted them to move from PEI. The participants for this survey were obtained through snowball sampling; accessing participants by asking those on PEI if they knew of friends or family who had moved. For ethical reasons (privacy), the PEI contacts were asked to contact the former residents and ask if they were willing to participate in the survey. Those who agreed were sent the survey link.

The final research stage involved hosting a series of on-line focus groups with survey participants who had indicated a desire to be part of further discussion. During the focus

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group conversations, the preliminary thematic results of the surveys were shared, and questions were asked to provide greater comprehension and depth to the explanations regarding who moves and why (See Appendix D).

**Limitations:** Responses to the on-line survey provided a sufficient sampling size with over 1109 Current Islanders and 281 Former Islanders completing the on-line questions. Details regarding respondents can be found in Appendix A. Further, the subsequent four focus groups reached a total of 47 people (See Appendix D). While these numbers enabled analysis of retention challenges and strategies, we note that since any PEI resident 18 years of age or older could self-select to participate in the survey, caution should be exercised in generalizing these results to the population as a whole.

It is important to point out that the sample size and respondent profiles did not provide sufficient data for detailed cross tabulation comparisons such as statistically significant relationships between two or more variables (e.g., gender, education or income and willingness to move back to PEI [Former Islander survey] or likelihood of moving away [Current Islander survey]). Such analysis works better for questions that have fewer categories of answers and the answers to a particular question are more evenly distributed. It does not work well for questions where the survey provides many possible answers that cannot be grouped together (such as the ones that asked respondents to select all reasons for staying or leaving). We suggest that future surveys may require oversampling of specific groups that might not be adequately represented in traditional sampling approaches. Oversampling is simply an appropriate sample of these groups, which allows researchers to make inferences and explore intersection of identities and perceptions that are not always adequately revealed in general option surveys such as the one for this study.

We also note that most of the questions that made up the survey were closed-ended; in other words, they required participants to choose from among a limited number of

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responses provided in advance. To give people an opportunity to go into more depth in their responses, several open-ended questions were also included in this survey. This survey element proved to be quite revealing as people took time to reflect on previous questions and their own lived experiences.

Despite these limitations, we feel that the sample size is large enough to draw out the major themes relating retention challenges and strategies in the province. While the research cannot include all comments, we have summarized the quantitative and qualitative commentary as themes and included representative quotations throughout this report. The research team submits that a thematic representation of the data provides a rich portrayal of retention challenges and strategies and also reveals specific ideas for policy and practice.

***Thematic format:*** Given the rich commentary, the report strives to present the qualitative and quantitative data in a thematic format rather than as a series of statistical measures. There are several reasons why the research team choose this approach. First, the research project parameters are principally concerned with presenting retention challenges and strategies on PEI - a detailed statistical analysis of data was not requested. That said, the statistical data was used to help frame and support the thematic areas. Second, the focus group data is primarily qualitative allowing the researchers to delve deeper into themes emerging from the surveys within a group setting. This process allowed for both refinement and winnowing of the thematic areas as presented within the surveys. Third, and as noted previously, the sample size and respondent profiles did not provide sufficient data for detailed cross tabulation comparisons such as statistically significant relationships between two or more variables. Even if such comparisons were completed, it is unlikely that the resulting findings would reveal statistical relationships that would inform policy and practice. However, the survey responses to the open ended questions and the focus group data did provide significant data regarding retention challenges and

opportunities. Finally, the on-line surveys faced a minor issue with “bots” completing the questions. While the team was able to discern which survey responses were people and which were bots, this factor places some limits on the statistical veracity of the quantitative data. Despite this context, the qualitative survey data (from the open-ended responses) was not affected and thus, lends itself to thematic analysis and presentation.

***Expansion of research scope:*** The reader should also consider that while this research began with a mandate to explore only matters pertaining to retention, it became evident, as the research progressed, that a broader analysis was required. That is, retention is but one component of a population strategy and many of the policies and practices necessary for a successful retention plan are inherent to a robust population strategy and overall sense of belonging to a place. This sentiment was echoed by interviewees and consultation participants who requested strongly that the researchers examine retention within the context of a rural-urban population strategy and also by considering concepts of well-being and quality of life. While the limitation of resources and time prevented a complete exploration, this report does attempt, where possible, to frame the research findings pertaining to retention in Prince Edward Island within the context of a broader population and well-being strategy. On the latter, the researchers were able to draw from recent data and research on quality of life indicators on PEI which helped substantiate and deepen the findings.

### **1.0 The contemporary imperative of immigration and retention**

*Newcomers purchase homes, start businesses, have children and create employment. Immigration makes us more diverse and better able to relate to the rest of the world (Focus group participant).*

*Immigration will work – it has to work. Natural repopulation will not work. We are suffering from “brain drain”. Immigration has to be part of the solution. Depopulation in*

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*rural PEI is a silent crisis that immigration can help address. We need to view it as such*  
(Survey participant).

*The benefit to us is the added value that immigrants and newcomers bring to the economy in new investment, job creation and purchasing power. They bring an entrepreneurial spirit that is not always present in the local population and they bring new skill sets such as expertise in exports and trade, ideas, and perspectives* (Focus group participant).

It is no longer possible to be ambivalent about immigrants, temporary residents, newcomers, and expats, and their fundamental role in building a welcoming, vibrant and stronger island society. In fact, perhaps at no other time in our province's history has the importance of recruiting and integrating immigrants and temporary residents into local communities become so important. For island jurisdictions where economic and social pressures are felt more acutely than the rest of Canada, retention strategies are essential to current and future vitality.

Throughout many regions in Canada, immigrants, temporary residents, newcomers, and expats play a vital role in local economies and are an integral part of the social and cultural fabric of communities. As Canadian birth rates decline and an entire generation of "Baby Boomers" retires, immigrants as entrepreneurs, workers, employers, consumers and taxpayers become even more critical to the economic and social vitality of Canada. Further, together with longtime residents, immigrants and newcomers contribute to community problem-solving and help address longstanding issues such as poverty, economic mobility, and racial inequality.

The contemporary imperatives for immigration arise from demographic, economic, and social civic realities. Demographically, the harsh reality of regional/provincial/national migration trends continue to challenge and provide opportunities for communities that want to improve economic mobility, cultural cohesion and social diversity. Those communities that take a "creative leap" in attracting and integrating immigrants and newcomers (e.g., broadening the

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term resident, providing PLAR services, incentivizing employers to hire diverse candidates) appear to grow while those regions that ignore their aging demographic decline rapidly.

Economically, the current and future stability of many Canadian communities is dependent upon immigrant and newcomer integration since the country no longer has birth rates that can keep up with retirements and deaths. This dire scenario is particularly evident in small towns and rural communities where young people and young families travel down the road in search of a better life. Those left behind try to sustain a deteriorating community infrastructure using a business and tax base that is circumscribed by an aging demographic. Socially, the policies that are needed to improve immigrant and newcomer integration are also needed for all Canadian communities and families. Put simply, to continue thriving as a province, people and organizations across PEI must be intentional regarding how they recruit, welcome and integrate immigrants, temporary residents, newcomers and expats into their local community fabric.

### **2.0 The importance of language and perspective**

*I'm still not considered an "Islander" by many people who hold onto an idea that you have to be born here or have multiple generations of family here to be a true Islander (Survey participant).*

*Generations of people growing up together creating cliques of family and friends in neighborhoods, rinks, and even workplaces and churches. So many people are related or grew up together! The saddest thing about living here and raising family here, but not having been born here, is how much you don't belong to these circles. At first you feel welcomed but after a few years passes you realize it doesn't go further. Yourself, and your children remain on the outside, not really included or invited in what others are doing. I haven't seen this anywhere else I've lived (Survey participant).*

*I've lived here for years but people still treat me like a come from away and ask me what country I was born in. I tell them I was born in Ontario (Survey participant).*

Rather than articulate and debate the merits of definitions already apparent in much of the research literature, this section provides a summary of the terminology, perspective, and discourse used in this report. This opening section lays the groundwork for the remaining sections of the paper in which challenges and strategies for retention are presented.

***2.1 Understanding terminology: Immigrant, temporary resident, newcomer, expat, rooted Islanders, likely movers, former Islanders***

Four terms are used in this report to describe people who may wish to settle on PEI: *immigrant*, *temporary resident*, *newcomer* and *expat*. The term *immigrant* is used to describe a person not born in Canada but who is a permanent resident or a citizen or has completed the vetting process but has not left their country of origin. The report also uses the term *temporary residents* (e.g., students, workers, seasonal residents) to describe people who are not *immigrants* but who live on PEI. This distinction between *immigrants* and *temporary residents* is important to understand. The first group can live, travel, and work without the need for any permits. The latter group may require permits or permissions from Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) in order to visit, study or work, and does not have all of the same benefits and privileges as permanent residents or Canadian citizens. For example, a visitor does not have free access to Canadian health care and their children must pay to attend public schools. Further, employers wishing to hire an *immigrant* who is a permanent resident or citizen do not require any special procedure or permission. They can hire them as they would a Canadian-born citizen. However, if they wish to hire a foreign national as a temporary foreign worker, they must satisfy IRCC and the Office of Immigration on PEI that they have attempted to hire a Canadian first and the temporary worker must secure the necessary work permits.

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The report also uses the term *newcomers* to refer to Canadian citizens who wish to live on PEI either on a permanent or temporary basis (e.g., business telecommuters, digital nomads). Newcomers may have been born in Canada or internationally. Finally, the report uses the term *expats* to describe people who were born and/or who once resided in PEI but who now live elsewhere in the country or around the globe.

Finally, the report uses several terms to denote the groups who completed the survey and took part in the focus groups. These participants comprise three sub-groups of Islanders:

- **Rooted Islanders:** Those who are more settled and are more likely to stay in PEI
- **Likely Movers:** Those who are currently living on PEI but who may move soon
- **Former Islanders:** Those who have already moved (born on PEI or born elsewhere)

### ***2.2 Focusing on integration rather than assimilation***

This report makes a distinction between *integration* and *assimilation*; particularly, in relationship to creating a welcoming island community. The term *integration* is used throughout the report rather than *assimilation* to emphasize a respect for differences, the importance of mutual adaptation and an appreciation of diversity. Successful integration programs and practices in other provinces and countries require mutual responsibility, a multi-strategy approach and multi-organizational involvement. Further, intentional newcomer and immigrant *integration* programs transform all community partners, reaping shared benefits and creating a whole that is greater than its parts. This is a foundational component of any vibrant retention strategy.



Assimilation of immigrants, newcomers and temporary residents into the “dominant” culture and local business norms does not provide such robust social and economic benefits – a sentiment noted in the research literature and voiced many times during the focus groups and within the surveys. For most of the people who completed the surveys, and those who participated in the focus group consultation sessions, the concept of *immigrant and newcomer integration* provides a retention framework that holds considerable promise to guide program, policy and funding priorities to build a stronger and more vibrant island society and economy. For them, integration (not assimilation) is a cornerstone quality of community building efforts in the province and, perhaps most importantly, expanding and enriching what it means to be an Islander.

### ***2.3 Using an asset-based/citizenship discourse rather than a deficit discourse***

In the context of this research document, *assets* are those human, financial, social, cultural, educational and experiential resources that immigrants, newcomers, temporary residents and expats bring to a community. Assets include the abilities, capacities, knowledge and experiences that enable immigrants and newcomers to achieve greater social mobility and economic security. Successful immigrant and newcomer strategies focus directly on creating sustainable opportunities for immigrants and newcomers to recognize, develop, and use their assets.

The core strength of an asset-based discourse is that it emphasizes what immigrants and newcomers bring to a community rather than what they need. The focus of integration activities is on recognizing and applying existing skills and experiences rather than elucidating deficits. As a result, immigrants and newcomers see themselves as active citizens rather than needy clients. Supporters of such asset-based language submit that the lived human experience attributes (confidence and personal well-being) that result from an asset-based emphasis foster increased civic participation since immigrants and newcomers are more likely to see themselves as integrated members of the community rather than “come from away” residents living on the periphery. These participation

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benefits have an even greater impact on local communities as inclusive, asset-based approaches cross economic, social, cultural, and psychological and institutional boundaries.

From a policy perspective, asset-based language frames local retention strategies and practices as long-term developmental processes rather than short-term relief assistance programs. The experiences of provinces and countries that use asset-based language in their immigrant and newcomer integration programs demonstrate how such discourse changes the behaviour and attitude of immigrants and newcomers (e.g., willingness to take risks, improved self-confidence, actively involved in the community). In this respect, asset-based retention and integration language seeks to promote a sense of autonomy, personal independence and forward planning – personal qualities that should be at the core of retention strategies on PEI.

### ***2.4 Navigating the term “Islander”***

Many of the survey respondents and focus group participants shared comments that revealed sentiments of loving the island but feeling like an outsider within the island community. People expressed frustration with trying to meet others, being included in community conversations, trying to fit in, feeling unaccepted and noting that the term “Islander” seemed reserved for those with a PEI birthplace and generational ties to the island. Most Current Islanders did not express such sentiments, but Likely Movers and Former Islanders were nearly uniform in stating that they felt like outsiders and come-from-ways.

Specifically, the term “Islander” is seen as othering as it may carry exclusionary meaning to denote people who were born on PEI and have a particular heritage. That said, several respondents and focus group participants spoke highly of “Islanders” and of initiatives to help people understand discriminatory attitudes, practices and policies; however, they felt these activities needed more support from a broader array of

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organizations. Further, they want to see a more diverse make-up of Islanders represented in leadership positions at the municipal and provincial levels of government and business. We discuss the use of the term Islander in the report and offer suggestions on how to broaden its scope and enrich its understanding.

### **3.0 Retention challenges on PEI: findings from the research, surveys and focus groups**

*We didn't come here to work only in your Tims, Wendy's and Subway (Focus group participant).*

*If all you are looking for is people to fill seasonal jobs that do not pay well and have no benefits, then you'll never keep newcomers on PEI. There are much better opportunities elsewhere (Focus group participant).*

*I find that many PEI communities do not have spaces for people to connect, interact or meet; it is especially bad in my small community, no town centre or social spaces. People who come must wonder: Where is the community? How do I find a sense of community? Overall, I have a hard time connecting and feeling like I am part of my community (Focus group participant).*

Although immigrants, newcomers and expats do settle in PEI, the province has found it challenging to retain new people. While PEI has experienced significant levels of population growth in recent years and anticipates future population increases, many immigrants and newcomers may leave because of better opportunities and more robust infrastructure available elsewhere such as in the larger cities of Vancouver, Montreal, and Toronto. In addition, there are contextual factors that may negatively impact retention on PEI including the availability of essential services (e.g., health care, transportation and housing), overall affordability,

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opportunities for job training and career advancement, discrimination issues, the increasing impacts of climate change on island life and out-dated notions of who is an Islander.

PEI has long recognized that immigrants and newcomers are needed to breathe new life into an economy that has suffered from the decline of traditional industries and an aging demographic. More immigrants and newcomers, it is hoped, will bring new skills and open up new opportunities for communities. However, there are specific challenges to integration and retention that persist and, thus, it is important to identify key factors that could support or limit the growing population on PEI.

### ***3.1 Immigrant distribution in Canada and PEI's rural context***

Canadian immigration has always had an element of geographical clustering. In the late 1800s and early 1900s, immigrants tended to settle either in the manufacturing cities of Montreal and Toronto or to move westward as agricultural workers and farmers. Today, the majority of immigrants who come to Canada yearly are highly concentrated in three provinces: Quebec, Ontario, and British Columbia and primarily in three magnet cities: Montreal, Toronto, and Vancouver. In addition, the Canadian migration of children born to Canadian immigrants tends to be within these magnet areas. Children of Canadian immigrants frequently leave smaller provinces for Quebec, Ontario and British Columbia. Until the introduction of the Provincial Nominee Program and other distribution initiatives, this uneven geographical distribution of immigrants had implications for disproportionate growth or decline in the population of provinces and local communities. That is, most rural communities saw their populations decline while the three magnet cities grew substantially as a result of immigration, mostly because immigrants initially settled there, but also because of the secondary internal migration of the children born within these areas.

PEI's rural makeup is obviously a challenge for retention as there are limitations for service delivery in areas such as transportation, education, health and recreation. Professional employment opportunities and affordable housing are also pressing issues.

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Further, and as highlighted by survey participants and focus group members, not all small communities are open to the diversity of culture, faith, ideas and social customs that newcomers and immigrants bring. The preference in some rural communities (as shared in the survey data) is for newcomers to assimilate to the dominant culture rather than express diversity. Thus, the issue of how to increase ethnic and inter-group tolerance as well as how to help those affected to confront and cope with prejudice, discrimination and racism remains a critical challenge for rural communities in PEI.

Compounding this rural-urban dichotomy and tolerance issues are two additional distribution realities. First, the percentage of workers in the higher growth knowledge occupations is much larger in urban areas than in rural areas. Second, immigration patterns tend to favour the urban areas of Canada since many new immigrants prefer to locate in urban communities where employment is available and cultural relationships can be made. While these distribution realities place economic and social challenges on urban areas, they also present opportunities for additional rural growth and corresponding rural immigration strategies. However, for many rural areas of the country, urban growth leaves small towns and communities struggling to attract new business and recent immigrants. In these less-populated areas, shrinking resources often limit access to learning opportunities, cultural growth and newcomer support. Given the predominantly rural make-up of PEI, this distribution challenge is particularly pressing.

### ***3.2 Contextual challenges: underemployment, racism, and limited recognition***

In PEI, as in most of Atlantic Canada, the decline in the working age population is happening sooner and is more pronounced than in the rest of the country. As the demographic profile of PEI changes, labour productivity and labour input will become increasingly important determinants of the province's future economic performance. Labour productivity and labour input are affected by factors such as the size of the working-age population, labour force participation, work intensity and human capital.

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Given that PEI's aging population and out-migration may limit future labour supply, the education and training of the province's existing workforce and the recruitment and retention of newcomers and immigrants to the region are key to the vitality of continued economic growth. However, there is a caveat to this point which was raised numerous times in the survey data and in focus group discussions; namely, the persistent underemployment of many newcomers, immigrants and expats.

The current workplace in PEI and in Atlantic Canada is raising skill levels for various occupations but this context can also create conditions where workers are underemployed and/or have a skills mismatch. The survey data and focus group discussions indicated that newcomers and immigrants were often taking jobs requiring less skills than those developed as a result of their formal education. Survey participants noted that they are often faced with this decision because their skills, training and education may not be recognized on PEI. Further, they may be forced to take a job to pay their living expenses upon arrival even though the job requirements leave them underemployed. Finally, several survey and focus group participants noted that they were unable to secure employment in their field because they were not considered "true Islanders". They felt that they were not accepted into positions for which they were qualified because of their cultural background, race, ethnicity and, in several instances, their gender identification. These immigrants, newcomers and expats faced the harsh reality of having been well trained in their occupation but unable to find quality work on PEI. The result was that they were forced to seek lower skilled and lower paying jobs. This underemployment context left them feeling unfulfilled and unaccepted, and many identified the lack of professional employment and workplace training as a key reason for leaving or wanting to leave PEI.

A related and disturbing factor which emerged in the focus groups and in several survey responses is that the underemployment trend may create challenges for job seekers who have lower educational levels. That is, in rural communities where employment is

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scarce, adults with lower skills may find themselves in competition with higher skilled individuals even though the positions may require lower skill levels. As several survey participants noted, such a competitive underemployment context can lead to anger and unwelcoming commentary regarding “outsiders coming to take island jobs”. Obviously, such comments do not encourage immigrants and newcomers to remain on PEI.

### **3.3 Survey and focus group themes: retention challenges on PEI**

During the focus groups and in the on-line surveys, participants shared thoughts, ideas and perspectives relating to retention challenges on PEI. A summary of responses is provided in Appendices B and C. There are a number of themes that emerge from this qualitative and quantitative data presented in this section. However, the most predominant perspective voiced is that many people do not always feel welcomed and accepted. Thus, the report devotes a specific section (See Section 5) that offers strategies for welcoming newcomers, temporary residents, immigrants and expats as part of a broader retention strategy.

#### **Theme 1: Belonging**

##### **Belonging challenges**

*Sense of not belonging*

*Need for longer-term welcoming supports*

***Sense of not belonging:*** A common refrain in the focus groups and in the survey comments was that the “come from away” label tended to be quite pervasive, no matter how long one lived on PEI. Participants spoke of finding it difficult to meet people, noting that “Islanders” (those born on PEI), “tend to stick together” and are “somewhat suspicious of newcomers”.

Survey data and focus group sessions revealed sentiments of loving the island but feeling like an outsider within the island community. People expressed frustration with:

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- trying to meet others
- being included in community conversations
- trying to fit in
- feeling unaccepted and
- viewing the term “Islander” as reserved for those with a PEI birthplace

Another attribute of belonging as expressed by many research participants relates to having places to gather and converse. Rooted Islanders seemed more comfortable with their social networks and long-standing family and community relationships. They noted that they often met with friends “at a neighbour’s house”, “at church”, “at the store”, “at a local hall”. For most Rooted Islanders, the community as it currently exists is a great meeting space and they feel connected within their region and province.

This welcoming community context as expressed by Rooted Islanders does not seem to be the reality for Likely Movers and Former Islanders who view their communities as having limited gathering and meeting places. Both Likely Movers and Former Islanders expressed a strong desire to meet others, share ideas, learn and feel connected. However, they felt that existing community spaces did not encourage connection, and many noted the guarded nature of long-term Islanders who did not always include “outsiders” within existing social networks. This exclusionary or othering characteristic was often mentioned as a roadblock to forming meaningful relationships. For Likely Movers and Former Islanders, this othering context was mentioned in the survey comments as a significant factor in wanting to leave/leaving PEI.

***Need for longer-term welcoming supports from communities:*** In a community that is welcoming, people feel trusted, engaged and embraced. Members of the community will often state that others look out for them and will help them in a time of need. There is a strong sense of belonging to the community and a feeling of being included in discussions regarding current activities and future plans.



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For some Likely Movers and Former Islanders, such supports seem to “dissipate after the initial warm welcome”. In the focus groups and in the qualitative comments, people noted that they need on-going supports to come together to navigate challenges, adapt to new realities, and thrive in a new province where existing social networks are “hard to navigate and enter”; especially, in a rural communities. Newcomers and immigrants seek to identify with the community and feel that “their voices are heard”, “their ideas incorporated”, and their “lived experiences respected”. They desire an overall sense of individual and collective well-being. However, to achieve this stability and feeling of acceptance, they may need longer-term supports than what a community currently provides.

Several research participants noted that this reality is probably more pronounced given the continuing isolation felt by many during the Covid-pandemic restrictions and the resulting need for longer-term supports to help adjust to island life. While several participants noted the “warm initial embrace of Islanders”, “the nice first welcome” and “a great initial meeting with the provincial supporters”, they felt such supportive attributes and practices were fleeting leaving them alone during “the dark of winter”.

### Theme 2: Inclusivity

#### Inclusivity challenges

*Lack of diversity and representation in leadership*

*Discrimination and racism*

***Lack of diversity and representation in leadership:*** This theme came up in each focus group - Rooted Islanders, Likely Movers and Former Islanders – and was expressed as seeing PEI “stuck in the white 1950s”, “having no diversity in leadership”, “no representation” and “few diversity champions”. Participants of all cultural backgrounds noted that there seems to be limited diversity representation on PEI in political,

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municipal and business leadership. Several people spoke of not feeling accepted because of their cultural and racial background. However, PEI is generally seen in a positive light when it pertains to LGBTQSI+ spaces.

In communities that have a high degree of democratic engagement, citizens actively take part in the democratic process to express their views and aim to foster good governance using political institutions, organizations and activities. In these societies, local, provincial and federal governments build strong relationships rooted in trust and shared responsibility. There are opportunities for citizens to participate in decision making and there is an overriding concern for democratic values that foster inclusiveness, transparency and trust. People feel their votes count and their voice is important. They express confidence and respect for the political process and feel that their political leaders listen to their concerns and are open to meeting with them.

***Racism and discrimination:*** At first glance, the survey data suggests that PEI may not have significant discriminatory issues; however, the lived experience of some survey respondents (as noted in the qualitative commentary) reveals that discrimination is evident in the daily life of people living on the island. These comments were echoed in focus group discussions especially from individuals who identified within a marginalized group. Participants noted “the commonplace” and “subtly disturbing” nature of island discrimination and felt that people on PEI did not want to acknowledge its presence. As noted, even the term “Islander” could be seen as othering as it may carry exclusionary meaning to denote people who were born on PEI and have a particular heritage. While several respondents and focus group participants spoke highly of “Islanders” and of initiatives to help people understand discriminatory attitudes, practices and policies, they felt these activities needed more support from a broader array of organizations and that people “need to be accountable for their words and actions”.

**Theme 3: Vitality**

Vitality challenges
<i>Affordability and cost of living pressures</i>
<i>Inadequate health services</i>
<i>Limited career and workplace training opportunities</i>
<i>Climate concerns and island living</i>

**Affordability and cost of living pressures:** Numerous studies indicate that wealth and income distribution will impact measures of inequality, poverty and food security. Income disparities most often have negative impacts on the well-being of those with lower income but can also extend to people at all income levels who may be affected by related issues (e.g., labour shortages, employment volatility, housing prices, civic unrest, increased crime).

Within the survey data and the focus group responses, there are several dimensions to the theme of affordability. These include limited career advancement, lower wages, higher costs for housing and food and a perceived lack of employment in professional fields. Survey participants and focus group members in all categories (Rooted Islanders, Likely Movers, Former Islanders) noted that many PEI jobs are temporary or casual with limited benefits and tend to be focused in the three dominant areas of fishing, farming and tourism - all of which “do not provide sufficient income for living on PEI”. During the focus group sessions, Former Islanders noted that when they left the island and settled elsewhere in Canada, they generally “made more money and could find better housing options at a lower cost” - even in larger urban areas such as Montreal, Ottawa, Victoria. Likely Movers seemed acutely aware of this “greener pasture context” commenting on affordability and underemployment as significant reasons for needing to leave PEI despite wanting to stay.

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Interestingly, even Rooted Islanders who call PEI home echoed the sentiment expressed by Likely Movers noting that their current employment does not always reflect their education and experience, and may no longer “pay the bills”. Rooted Islanders remain on PEI because they “love the island”, “have family and housing”, “enjoy gathering with lots of friends” but even they are uneasy about future affordability of island living for their children. In fact, participants in all categories indicated that the “limited PEI realities”, “fearful future”, and “uncertainties” of lower salaries, higher housing costs, climate change, a perceived absence of career advancement and no on-the-job training opportunities are impacting their view of remaining on PEI. Opportunities elsewhere in Canada are “tempting” and “more attractive” as they may provide “a better income”, “a closer match to career goals”, “opportunities for advancement and training” and a “better standard of living”. Further, it is worth noting that survey participants in all categories have either experienced or expect to experience an undesirable change in their employment with some expressing fear that they will not have sufficient income to purchase necessities and pay bills on-time and may face future food security and housing challenges.

***Inadequate health services:*** There seems to be a growing perception that PEI and all of Atlantic Canada no longer have adequate health services and that existing services are at risk. For young families, older workers and seniors, health care availability is a top priority and a precursor to moving to and remaining on the island.

In a healthy community, there is an emphasis on the provision of good health care that belongs to and is accessible by everyone. There is a recognition that determinants such as housing, income, education and access to public spaces impact health; and there is a stated acknowledgment that disparities based upon race, ethnicity, language, income, gender, sexual orientation, disability and other factors must be addressed.

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For many of the survey respondents (including Rooted Islanders) and echoed in the focus groups, PEI's health care system and determinants are viewed as inadequate. Specific challenges mentioned included:

- limited accessibility (“not enough doctors”, “lengthy wait-times”)
- lack of recreation opportunities (“lots of rinks, but no other place to get exercise”, “no community leisure programs”)
- high food prices (“limited food options and higher priced than in other provinces”)
- limited opportunities to connect with others and a sense of not belonging to the community (“no location to meet others”, “you never really get to know people”)

***Limited career and workplace training opportunities:*** Survey and focus group participants indicated that they seek learning opportunities that can help enrich their lives, explore interests and bolster their careers. This sentiment was expressed by all groups – Rooted Islanders, Likely Movers and Former Islanders. Most participants recognize that being able to engage in learning throughout one's life will lead to better health, financial and overall well-being outcomes. However, for many research participants, and particularly the Likely Movers and Former Islanders, PEI has a limited availability of accessible opportunities to engage in learning as an adult. Likely Movers indicated that they felt the lack of learning opportunities created a sense of feeling like employers did not value training and career advancement. Former Islanders noted that the companies in which they now worked (in other provinces) offered workplace training as part of the HR programs and that connections to local universities and colleges were more evident than when they lived and worked on the island.

***Climate concerns and island living:*** The focus groups and surveys occurred prior to hurricane Fiona. Even so, a number of participants in the focus groups commented on

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the current and future impacts of climate change on island living as many had experienced the impacts of hurricane Doiron and other storms on PEI (e.g., “power outages”, “damage to property”, “closure of the bridge”). Certainly, recent weather events on PEI demonstrate the increasing effects of climate change, and this reality can impact people’s perception of living on an island. This perception is also borne out in other research on SIDS (small island developing states).

While damage to infrastructure and shorelines is concerning, mental health research on SIDS indicates that extreme weather is negatively influencing the wellbeing of people. This emerging research demonstrates that climate change stressors are impacting the mental health and wellbeing of people living on islands including interruption of livelihoods, interference with social and community connections, displacement, damage to property and land, and disruption of schooling. The long-term impact of such stressors is concerning with increasing reports from island people of acute stress, anxiety, depression and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). After a significant storm, people may feel a sense of loss, sadness and anger, and become uncertain about island living.

While the current study could not determine the extent to which climate change is influencing people’s perception of staying on or leaving PEI, the survey comments and emerging studies indicate that this is a theme to watch as it could impact retention. For instance, if Likely Movers feel that PEI may experience more powerful storms which cause increasing disruption of employment, housing, connection to others and overall well-being, they may decide to leave sooner. Even Rooted Islanders could begin to question the viability of living on the island year-round if their well-being and mental health suffer as a result of disruptions caused by powerful weather events over which they have no control.

#### **4.0 Learning from exemplary national and international integration practices**

*To make recruiting easier we need to start with the younger generation. We need to establish welcoming committees in our schools that relate to young people and educate the next generation about the value of community and diversity (Survey participant).*

*A lot of recruitment and retention support should come from the community, but it is not there. Kids need to learn about pride in the community, welcoming diversity, supporting local business. However, there is little funding allocated to worthwhile youth projects. Organizations fight for the same resource dollars and charities that do no real charitable work, except perhaps dances and bingo for older people but not for kids. The younger population here is relatively transient - people travel out of their community even the province for work or school. Rural communities are losing their base (Focus group participant).*

*It would be nice if PEI had a vibrant training culture in the workplace instead of seeing employees as only labourers (Focus group participants).*

Inclusive immigrant and newcomer retention policy frameworks in the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand and in several Canadian provinces exhibit a number of citizenship and social inclusiveness policy practices that foster a vibrant and responsive approach to integration and retention. The policy development practices presented in this section emerge from an analysis of the policy and practice initiatives in these countries. The policy practices foster partnerships, encourage dialogue, support community innovation, remove deficit-based thinking and link youth education with cultural education. Further, they are viewed by the international sites as sustainable and reflective of the economic and social dynamics and dimensions of people's lives. In addition, research in these countries indicates that when immigration and newcomer policies carry such elements, the result is greater success in

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retention because the ensuing practices and principles encourage people from elsewhere to relocate while also fostering welcoming attitudes among current residents.

### **Exemplary practices**

***Stimulate career paths and workplace learning for immigrants and newcomers***

***Establish coordinated partnerships to help with settlement and a vibrant welcome***

***Foster a lifelong learning culture for immigrants, newcomers and expats***

***Recognize the value of prior learning and ensure its portability***

***Provide cultural and global awareness training to children and youth***

***Improve the quality of ESL learning and make it more accessible***

***Remove deficit language***

***Take a creative leap to build social capital***

#### ***4.1 Stimulate career paths and workplace learning for immigrants and newcomers***

A business and work culture that values and contributes to learning is an essential component in a comprehensive and inclusive immigration and repopulation framework. Most working adults train because they receive support from their employer, and investments in training can be powerful tools in attracting and retaining immigrants, enhancing performance, remaining competitive and improving customer service. Much of the current workforce training in North American societies is available only in larger companies and tends to concentrate on workers who are already qualified and/or who enjoy relatively high status. Immigrants and newcomers and employees of small and medium sized firms are often left out of workplace training programs. Further, in smaller companies training does not happen in a formal way but occurs most often in an informal, ad hoc manner. The result is limited career growth and human resource enhancement.

To turn around this pattern of limited investment in employees, particularly immigrants, within small and medium sized industries (e.g., workplace training, skill upgrading),



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collaboration among educational institutions, businesses, labour organizations, governments and employees is needed. Such collaboration enables smaller companies to benefit from shared training programs with other small companies (thus reducing costs) and also shared tax incentives to invest in training. Further, and as a result of educational practices honed during the COVID pandemic, many employers and employees can now utilize virtual training programs.

### ***4.2 Establish coordinated partnerships to help with settlement and a vibrant welcome***

Partnerships among all levels of government, the private sector, institutions, not for profit organizations and volunteer agencies lead to comprehensive and integrated policy frameworks rather than fragmented and silo-type immigration and repopulation policies. The literature reveals that government in partnership with regional development agencies are in the best position to develop such coordinated partnerships because they have the power to ensure equality of access to everyone; function as impartial monitors and evaluators; create a climate for cross agency partnerships; and provide the broader (regional, provincial, national) perspective. However, governments and regional agencies cannot do all of these tasks on their own. In countries with high rates of immigration and newcomer retention, power sharing and decision making with all interested partners is a primary characteristic of the strategy. Such broad coordinated decision making results in resources that are used effectively, and repopulation ideals that once seemed out of reach (e.g., workplace training and immigrant support services across a province; standardized welcoming program) become possible.

The recent PEI Community Navigator initiative is a good example of how such provincial support can be provided. The PEI Community Navigators help rural communities and businesses welcome new people. They help immigrants and newcomers meet their neighbours by organizing inclusive events, recommending services and connecting people to employment opportunities. PEI Community Navigators also collaborate closely

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with rural communities across the island to facilitate inclusivity and connection initiatives. As they continue their work, it will be important to ensure that team demographics represent the broader community.

### ***4.3 Foster a lifelong learning culture for immigrants, newcomers and expats***

Several studies demonstrate that one of Canada's greatest citizenship challenges is the lack of a lifelong learning culture which leaves many adults without the skills necessary to participate fully in society as employees and citizens and many immigrants without their skills recognized or upgraded. This research suggests that the reason for the low participation rates is that Canada has a fragmented adult lifelong learning culture. In this fragmented culture, communities and employers may not always see the need to support immigrants in formal learning or in their attempts to gain recognition for experiential learning and foreign credentials. What Canada needs, according to these reports and writers, are national and provincial policies that support immigrants with strong statements regarding the recognition of prior learning combined with active sponsorship of formal and informal learning programs in the workplace, in the community and within institutions. Such policies would support a national and provincial framework (consistency) with a strong focus on local level collaboration and networks (autonomy and flexibility). Further, the policy focus would be on encouraging a learning culture throughout a person's lifespan which would encourage older adults to participate and provide skilled immigrants and newcomers with the opportunity to upgrade their skills while living in Canada. Knowing that one can come to a place where learning opportunities are provided, and career growth is possible are strong incentives for people to remain in that province

For older workers (particularly expats) wishing to relocate to PEI, such on-going support for training is essential and should be a key component of a population and retention strategy. Numerous reports have explored how older workers could be enabled to extend their working lives to benefit themselves, their families and the economy. This

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research suggests that the aging demographic in developed countries like Canada presents a unique societal opportunity to achieve economic, social and quality of life objectives through a proactive strategy of attitudinal changes, flexible residency requirements and a focus on human capital development. For PEI where the demographic profile is aging, a focus on older worker training could be an attractive component of a population and retention strategy; particularly, in attracting expats. The work of Skills PEI and the PEI Literacy Alliance is making inroads in this demographic area and they should be supported to expand their efforts.

### ***4.4 Recognize the value of prior learning and ensure its portability***

A process to recognize and provide the portability of professional and personal competencies across territorial and provincial boundaries should be a part of a retention strategy. This framework requires that the various certifying industry bodies recognize and support the principle of portability. Further, the recognition of professional qualifications and work experiences will need to be part of a provincial post-secondary system. Several research surveys exploring prior learning in Canada revealed that many Canadians would participate in further education if their previous education and experiences were recognized. Unfortunately, the surveys also showed how deeply socialized and limited the prevailing *learning equals schooling* mindset remains. It is a paradigm that virtually excludes any serious consideration of the individual and collective hidden skills of informal learning. An inclusive immigrant, newcomer and expat learning policy would reveal these hidden skills in their entirety by implementing broad prior learning assessment and recognition (PLAR) policies in Colleges, Universities and certifying bodies.

***4.5 Provide cultural and global awareness training to children and youth*** Research with children and youth demonstrates clearly that creating a global learning culture begins early in life. Children and teens who develop foundational cultural awareness, feel like global citizens and meet immigrants are more likely to understand the importance of a

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local immigration and retention strategy. In those countries and provinces where immigrant and newcomer programs are successful, school programs are available to children and youth on diversity, cultural awareness, language training and global citizenship. Thus, school programs on PEI can expose young people to international trends and cultural diversity and help shape local attitudes toward immigrants and newcomers. The result is a more vibrant welcoming community.

### ***4.6 Improve the quality of ESL learning and make it more accessible***

ESL learning has too often emulated secondary education models. To be successful, ESL learning programs must be instructionally sound, motivating and well designed. Such quality in design and content permits not only instructor-led learning but also self-directed learning as adult learners are able to have confidence in the learning materials. These quality standards must also be complemented by professional development opportunities for staff working in formal and informal learning settings. However, such opportunities are not offered consistently across the immigrant ESL learning spectrum particularly in rural communities across PEI as many instructors working in adult basic education and ESL instruction are accorded little time or funding for professional development. They are treated most often as temporary employees with limited training provisions, few if any benefits, and a career path that is non-existent. A comprehensive suite of ESL learning policies would develop a multi-faceted professional development model for all those teachers, facilitators, and instructors working in ESL environments.

### ***4.7 Remove deficit language***

Immigration policies and retention practices that use language that focuses on what people can do and have done well in the past rather than language which serves to expose deficits bolsters the confidence of people who are deciding to move or who have moved to stay or return. In countries and provinces where immigrants and newcomers are well integrated, the marketing language used to recruit people and the language

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used to describe policies and practices that help newcomers integrate focus on what people bring to the region as opposed to what they require. Put simply, a positive language creates a more welcoming community because immigrants and newcomers feel like citizens rather than clients.

### ***4.8 Take a creative leap to build social capital***

As a federal responsibility, immigration carries specific policies and practices that local communities may see as complex and obstructive. Working through these policies often requires a “creative leap” to build social capital. That is, local communities may need to think of initiatives that both link to and stretch the concept of immigration and being an immigrant and newcomer. Thus, ideas presented later in this document such as working with local post-secondary graduates, offering housing and tax incentives, increasing the number of temporary residents, and recruiting existing Canadian immigrants from other provinces are but only a few of the many creative ways in which communities can use existing federal and provincial immigration structures to advance local needs.

## **5.0 Fostering a welcoming environment – a new view of Islander**

*We are a fairly homogenous community (white, Christian, etc.) and therefore immigrants may fear alienation due to not having a shared community (ethnic, cultural, faith-based), and having limited access to cultural necessities (food options, entertainment, etc.). The community itself is not as welcoming as we perceive ourselves, both in business and socially (Interview participant).*

*The challenge here is making them feel welcome, more like returning home than trying to fit in (Interview participant).*

The experiences of other provinces and countries demonstrate that the often maligned notion of a welcoming community is in fact the most important element in influencing settlement

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choices among immigrants and newcomers. At its core, a welcoming community is a place where newcomers feel at home. A welcoming community takes the extra steps to ensure that new people are able to participate in all aspects of community and civic life, are provided with meaningful opportunities for employment, have appropriate housing and have access to a full range of services and programs necessary for long-term settlement.

Canada is arguably one of the most open and generous countries for receiving immigrants and refugees in the world. And PEI touts its welcoming nature in advertisements to tourists and visitors. It is important to ask the question, is this generosity and openness apparent and extended to the immigrants and newcomers in PEI in a meaningful way?

### ***5.1 Why a welcoming community is essential for integration and retention***

The research literature demonstrates that when immigrants and newcomers feel welcomed and integrated within a community they have a stronger sense of well-being and overall adjustment than when they face community attitudes of separation or marginalization. In a welcoming community, immigrants and newcomers have a sense of feeling at home, of feeling like a citizen rather than a client, and of belonging to the place. The result of this understanding is that they desire to remain in that community and contribute to its economic and social fabric.

Case studies in provinces and regions with explicit integration policies, such as Manitoba and its rural regions, show that immigrants and newcomers feel less integration stress than do those immigrants and newcomers who “settle” in communities where the predominant ethic is focused on assimilating “outsiders”. On PEI, outsiders might be referred to as “come from aways”. A welcoming community focuses on integration and fosters attitudes of acceptance and respect for diversity, whereas a community that prefers assimilation is often characterized by prejudice and discrimination towards immigrants and newcomers. This situation heightens integration stress and often results in the out-migration of those who “come from away” to a more welcoming community.

A welcoming community focuses on the rewards of providing immigrant and newcomer services and less on the costs. In effect, a welcoming community understands that a focus on the rewards of integration builds identity and fosters belonging (the “we” factor). Further, in a welcoming community, all policies and programs ensure equity in the delivery of services, and residents pay close attention to how these services support community harmony and combat prejudice and racism. If PEI wishes to retain immigrants, temporary residents, newcomers and expats, the province must be intentional and continuously vigilant in building and supporting a welcoming community.

### ***5.2 Key characteristics of a welcoming community***

From a cursory review of the literature and a close examination of the policies and practices of exemplary programs in other provinces and countries, a number of key characteristics emerge as common to building a welcoming community. These characteristics include:

#### **Leadership and partnership**

- Community champions
- Regional cooperation and coordination
- Strong relationship with employers, sector councils and community groups
- Volunteer and service club support

#### **Wide array of services and initiatives**

- Immigration strategies that are not restricted to labour market needs but also include initiatives to encourage refugee settlement
- An array of support services including language training, childcare, credit access, recreational opportunities

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- Settlement as part of a broader repopulation, youth and economic development plan
- Affordable housing
- Employment opportunities

### **Local staffing**

- Paid immigration staff that are integrated with local, regional and provincial staff
- Local facilitator to ease resettlement

### **Focus on integration in all settings**

- A welcoming community (tolerant, culturally aware, range of educational opportunities, acknowledges differences in faith and spirituality, safe)
- A formal welcoming process
- Balance between rural and urban settlement strategies
- Absence of community cocoons and cocooning
- Critical mass of established immigrants

### ***5.3 Practices and policies of a welcoming community***

Several common policies and practices are also evident in the welcoming community strategies of other Canadian provinces and international countries.

***Stated intent to make a difference:*** Welcoming communities express their intent to make a difference in population growth, retention, diversity, cultural knowledge and entrepreneurship. This intent is expressed by political and financial support.

***Adequate funding:*** Welcoming communities develop an adequate funding structure to ensure long-term trust with community leaders and businesses.



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***Robust leadership:*** Welcoming communities establish a strong leadership team that reflects community interests and experience. This team is willing to learn from other immigration practices and is prepared to conduct detailed planning.

***Core group of paid staff:*** Welcoming communities have a core group of paid staff members who are well trained, meet regularly, work diligently, may collaborate with volunteers, and are trusted in their community. Such formalized staffing arrangements provide a greater degree of success in helping communities achieve immigration goals.

***Trusted task team:*** Welcoming communities have a trusted group of local leaders who work as a task team alongside the paid staff. These leaders meet regularly, take ownership of the program and help make decisions on implementation priorities.

***Detailed recruitment and retention plan:*** Welcoming communities have detailed recruitment plans and retention strategies that clearly articulate the activities and actions required. These plans are reviewed regularly and adapt to contextual shifts. The plans include: an open communication process that permits dialogue and clear decision-making among local, regional, provincial and federal partners regarding expectations; and a specific and transparent accountability structure that spells out individual, organizational, institutional and government (municipal, provincial, federal) implementation responsibilities, practices and timeframes.

***Acknowledgement of diverse measures of success:*** In a welcoming community, residents recognize that immigration and newcomer initiatives carry tangible and intangible measures of success. Quantitative measures of success (e.g., number of immigrants and newcomers retained) are certainly required but the qualitative aspects (e.g., how immigrants and newcomers feel - outsiders or true Islanders),

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while harder to collect, are critical to the overall success and the perception of success within the community.

### 6.0 Recommendations for integration and retention

*I hope that you include objectives that are realistic, measurable, doable, and tangible. We have a lot of groundwork to do first and we need to ensure that our goals are realistic and not pie in the sky (Focus group participant).*

*A formal, ongoing welcoming system would be very helpful. This system would provide an orientation to the community and provide orchestrated ways for people to get acquainted (Survey participant).*

#### 6.1 Belonging: Ensure and vibrant, long-term welcoming process

Belonging strategy ideas
<p><b>Focus on immigrant and newcomer assets</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Use asset-based language</li><li>• Develop and monitor initiatives for a long-term welcoming community process</li></ul>
<p><b>Foster and support welcoming communities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provide school age and youth cultural awareness programs</li><li>• Engage longtime residents in multicultural learning activities</li><li>• Link immigrant and newcomer integration activities to existing community projects</li></ul>
<p><b>Safeguard staffing and encourage local coordination of retention initiatives</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ensure adequate staffing for immigrant and newcomer services</li><li>• Encourage local coordination</li><li>• Link immigration to local rural population strategies</li></ul>

**6.1.1 Focus on immigrant and newcomer assets**

***Use asset-based language:*** On PEI, immigrant and newcomer communities are sometimes portrayed using a dependency lens. The result is a local narrative concerning immigrants that is rooted in deficit-based policies and occasionally mistrustful attitudes. Seemingly innocuous terms such as “clients”, “come from away”, “others”, and “those people” and more harmful sentiments such as “they are taking away our jobs” and “we need to focus on our own people” do not inspire confidence among immigrants and newcomers that PEI will be an inclusive community. Deficit-based thinking is rooted in fear, misunderstanding and prejudice. Asset-based thinking arises from hope, possibility and inclusiveness.

PEI recruitment and integration messages to immigrants, newcomers, temporary residents and expats should be more hopeful and inclusive. A vibrant retention strategy should focus on assets rather than deficits, on diversity rather than assimilation, on cultural richness rather than community norms, and on new ideas rather than standard practices. The use of asset-based language in PEI recruitment campaigns, regional business workshops, chamber of commerce meetings, church halls, and public messages can change deficit thinking by demonstrating how immigrants, newcomers, temporary residents and expats, can help to develop proactive, innovative responses to community challenges. Such language reinforces the integration reality that immigrants and newcomers want the same positive qualities in rural communities that longtime residents desire: inspiration, capacity, self-reliance and sustainability.

Asset-based discourse does not rely on blind optimism or magical thinking. It does not offer quick fixes to community problems or over-promise results. It is not based on ideals of sweeping social transformation, but it does seek fairness

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and equality. This is a straightforward strategy based on direct, systematic observation into how a growing number of highly effective provinces and countries think, feel and act with regard to what immigrants and newcomers have and can be (assets) rather than on what they do not possess and cannot do (deficits).

### ***Develop and monitor initiatives for a long-term welcoming community process:***

A PEI retention strategy will recognize that building a welcoming community is the most important step in retaining immigrants and newcomers. As such, the province should ensure that community welcoming processes are carefully monitored and long-term. A long-term and carefully monitored process (over several years) will ensure that all immigrants and newcomers receive a foundational understanding of what is available to them and who can guide them. The research literature and the documented experiences of other jurisdictions illustrate that being a long-term welcoming community is challenging because the services offered, discourse used, training provided and interactions needed require constant monitoring and improvement. Thus, the welcoming process will require close monitoring and support from a strong leadership team comprised of community representatives, development organizations, existing immigrants, business representatives and local immigration staff members (e.g., Community Navigators). A 2-3 year welcoming process should be considered.

There are excellent resources in the form of “Welcoming Tool Kits” to help in the development and monitoring of a PEI welcoming process and the province has many great processes and materials. However, it is unclear if all communities are aware of such documents and processes – a point raised several times in the focus group sessions. Perhaps a retention training program for mayors and councilors should be included as part of municipal service offerings. This training

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could provide ideas, resources, strategies and practical tools for small communities that wish to attract and retain immigrants, newcomers, temporary residents and expats. The existing Anti-Racism Microgrants and the services of the Community Navigators - both mentioned later in this report - could be utilized for this purpose and could help ensure that welcoming services are not just short-lived activities but, long-term practices.

### ***6.1.2 Foster and support welcoming communities***

***Provide school age and youth cultural awareness programs:*** Cultural awareness and appreciation starts early in life. Children and teens who develop foundational cultural awareness, feel like global citizens, and meet people from other countries are more likely to appreciate and help foster diversity in their schools and communities.

The research shows that local schools in partnership with immigration staff members should develop a foundational cultural awareness program for preschool, kindergarten, and school children. Thankfully, such workshops already exist on PEI and several of the consultation participants shared examples of individual program efforts; however, it seems that not all communities and schools participate equally. Several participants noted that their children received limited exposure to cross-cultural understanding within the current provincial school curriculum; although, such content is in-place. Evidence from other jurisdictions (e.g., Manitoba and Ontario) demonstrates the value of more extensive and wide-spread program efforts and it may be necessary to explore the extent to which such programming is offered throughout PEI and how community partners are involved.

***Engage longtime residents in multicultural learning activities:*** Social and cultural interaction is critically important in fostering trusting relationships. Such interaction lays the foundation for mutual engagement and paves the way for integration particularly in rural communities unaccustomed to linguistic and cultural differences. Volunteer organizations, service clubs, municipal government, educational institutions, and church organizations can help to provide the public spaces necessary for these interactions and learning activities.

Several strategies can help build social and cultural bridges in rural communities. Facilitated forums to help educate immigrants/newcomers and the local community about one another's cultures, histories and concerns are helpful to bring about mutual understanding and respect (e.g., meet and greet activities). Cultural productions, plays, music, dance, and other arts performances enrich community creativity and diversity. Civic participation activities that emphasize interaction among immigrants, newcomers and PEI born residents enrich cultural and social understandings (e.g., perhaps longtime residents could be invited to be part of a *Newcomer's Conference*). Multicultural school activities and holiday celebrations help children and youth to develop a broader awareness of cultural, religious and civic events. These activities help newcomers and longtime residents appreciate differences and find common ground.

While many of these initiatives are in place on PEI, they are not reflected equally in all communities and often, long-time residents may not participate – a point noted several times in the focus groups. As one survey participant noted, *"The province should work with municipalities to encourage such activities from tip-to-tip and get everyone involved. Let's make sure everyone feels at home"*.

***Link immigrant and newcomer integration activities to existing community projects:*** Intentional and inclusive planning allows newcomers and long-time

residents to work together to facilitate retention and promote an overall sense of well-being in the local community. Such interaction fosters understanding, creates a sense of belonging, and facilitates mutual engagement and responsibility. By intentionally engaging newcomers in all facets of community planning, they become a vibrant and cohesive part of the region. PEI should work with municipal councillors and mayors to ensure that immigration and integration become part of all existing and future community plans.

### ***6.1.3 Safeguard staffing and encourage local coordination of retention initiatives***

***Ensure adequate staffing for immigrant and newcomer services:*** In all provinces and countries with successful immigrant and newcomer recruitment and integration strategies, there exists a full complement of well trained staff specifically devoted to the implementation and support of immigration and newcomer strategies. The literature reveals clearly that no jurisdiction can develop, deliver and support immigrant and newcomer services without adequate staffing. As noted earlier, this statement does not mean that volunteers are not required but, rather, it appears that locally based, paid staff members will have greater success than an uncoordinated group of volunteers.

In jurisdictions where volunteers are the only immigrant and newcomer resource, there is less control over the professionalism of the immigration program which can result in poorly developed relationships with local businesses and a loss of trust in the integrity of the process. Further, volunteers may not be aware of complex immigration policies, may collect data inconsistently and are less likely to be able to conduct annual or ongoing research. Finally, immigration programs that use volunteers are portrayed in the literature as short-lived since they do not have the capacity to follow up on local needs.

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PEI is fortunate to have Community Navigators in many rural communities who are able to work with local residents and volunteers to welcome immigrants and newcomers and help them feel a strong sense of belonging. The PEI Community Navigators assist newcomers as they navigate the many challenges in moving to and living in rural PEI including meeting their neighbours, creating inclusive events, recommending services and connecting them to employment opportunities. The Community Navigators work to facilitate inclusivity and integration so that people feel a part of the community fabric and Islander network.

The Navigators also play other key integration roles including providing relocation information, assisting in recruitment efforts, supporting cultural awareness and diversity, providing workshops, and connecting community and business organizations. They play a key role in the implementation of broader retention strategies for PEI and are becoming a local repository for all matters relating to immigration and newcomers and.

In sum, the Community Navigators are an essential component of PEI's retention efforts and their good work was mentioned in several of the focus groups. With additional support, they could be involved in future retention research efforts; particularly, longitudinal studies on integration and repopulation strategies within rural PEI.

***Encourage local coordination:*** As noted earlier in this report, the literature reveals that regional or inter-provincial bodies are in the best position to develop such coordinated partnerships because they have the power to ensure equality of access; function as impartial monitors and evaluators; create a climate for cross agency partnerships; and provide the broad perspective. However, such organizations cannot do all of these tasks on their own. In countries and



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provinces with successful integration strategies, power sharing and decision making with all local organizations and parties is a primary characteristic of local leadership teams. Such broad coordinated decision-making results in resources that are used effectively and makes ideals that once seemed out of reach (e.g. the provision of training throughout a region) possible.

***Link immigration to local rural population strategies:*** A PEI retention strategy will be more effective if linked to a broader rural population strategy for the province and delivered in local communities. Increased immigration will not solve the depopulation trends in PEI but can mitigate the effects.

A rural population strategy for PEI would have several components including:

- Plans for recruiting and integrating immigrants and newcomers
- Support details for settlement, multiculturalism, and diversity (welcoming community strategy, labour market integration program, pre-arrival information workshops)
- Anti-racism and anti-discrimination strategies
- Youth retention initiatives
- Expat recruitment and incentives
- Proposals for family friendly policies and services
- Ideas for employer engagement including hiring incentives

The strategy would set out clear goals for population growth in PEI and would encourage local investment and self-sufficiency. The strategy would also aim to make current and future residents aware of why population growth is critical to the success of the region and what they can do to help support the repopulation plan. Strong local leadership is essential to the success of a regional repopulation plan and efforts should be made to link the plan to a broader provincial plan for rural repopulation.

## 6.2 Inclusivity: Foster a broader perspective on Islander and ensure diverse leadership

Inclusivity strategy ideas
<b>Broaden the term Islander</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Profile “I’m a proud Islander” to broaden understandings</li></ul>
<b>Ensure diversity in leadership and Islander profiles</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Profile and engage immigrant entrepreneurs</li><li>• Highlight local success initiatives</li><li>• Provide citizenship and civic engagement opportunities</li></ul>
<b>Stop discrimination and racism and make Islander an inclusive term</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Recognize Islander privilege and bias</li><li>• Support and expand province-wide anti-racism and anti-discrimination initiatives</li></ul>

### 6.2.1 Safeguard staffing and encourage local coordination of retention initiatives

**Profile “I’m a proud Islander” to broaden understandings:** As noted, many of the survey respondents and focus group participants shared comments that revealed sentiments of loving the island but feeling like an outsider within the island community. Specifically, the term “Islander” is seen as othering as it may carry exclusionary meaning to denote people who were born on PEI and have a particular heritage. More pointedly, and as stated by several focus group participants, there appears to be a visual perception of who is a true Islander; namely, “a person who is white”. Several focus group participants noted that even the term “expat” seems to revolve around ideas of white people returning to PEI which ignores the diversity of Islanders living elsewhere.

Put simply, everyone needs to see themselves represented in island marketing, in leadership positions at the municipal and provincial levels of government, in business profiles, in educational settings and in community life. A focus on hiring

and electing people who represent a more diverse cultural and racial background is needed. Further, a media campaign that uses the slogan "I'm a proud Islander" that shows and profiles diversity would help enrich and broaden understandings of the term Islander.

### **6.2.2 Ensure diversity in leadership and Islander profiles**

**Profile and engage immigrant entrepreneurs:** Existing immigrant entrepreneurs and business people provide a credible and relational voice to an immigrant and newcomer strategy. The literature reveals that when engaged as an integrated partner, immigrant entrepreneurs and business people can play a key role in working with local leadership teams during recruitment seminars (in Canada and abroad). Immigrant entrepreneurs bring a first-hand perspective to the challenges and opportunities of a region, and they help inform local policy and practice. Rural regions benefit from an immigrant entrepreneur lens because that lens magnifies issues and reveals solutions. In rural communities, a different perspective, different culture, and perhaps different set of beliefs often help illuminate possibilities and innovations not visible to longtime residents.

In the focus groups, many participants felt that PEI should take advantage of diverse perspectives by fully engaging existing and future immigrant and newcomer entrepreneurs and business people on all leadership teams. In addition, the region should profile and celebrate the successes of existing immigrant entrepreneurs using video and narrative tools. These stories might comprise part of the "I'm a proud Islander" campaign.

**Highlight local success initiatives:** Within the surveys and during the focus group consultations, several local success stories were shared. Such local immigration, newcomer and repopulation success stories illuminate a deeper narrative of

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what is possible. Uncovering these stories and sharing them with a wider audience through video or text case studies should be part of a PEI retention and integration strategy. Personal stories carry much deeper meaning, generate stronger emotional connections, and provide richer inspirational messages for potential immigrants and newcomers than do statistical data and labour market information. First-hand accounts are always more evocative than statistical reports and help foster richer understandings and encourage pride in place.

***Provide citizenship and civic engagement opportunities:*** Facilitated opportunities for immigrants and newcomers to participate in civic life are vital to integration and retention. The result of such active participation is a more vibrant democracy in which all groups are accepted as equal members of society with the opportunity and the responsibility to engage and contribute to community life. The PEI community must commit to providing information about community processes to new residents and must encourage recent and long-time immigrants to become involved in civic life. Often this encouragement begins with an invitation to participate in community planning efforts at the municipal, town or regional level. The invitation can be to join a local fire-hall, service club, church organization, school advisory council, recreational organization or to become involved in local politics, school boards and industry sectors – the list is as comprehensive as the services in a local community. As illustrated by the exemplary practices described in an earlier section, civic participation from immigrants and newcomers begins with an intentional act of community engagement – an invitation.

### ***6.2.3 Stop discrimination and racism and make Islander an inclusive term***

***Recognize Islander privilege and bias:*** A first step in stopping racism and discrimination on PEI is learning to recognize and understand long-standing

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Islander privilege; particularly, racial privilege. Acknowledging that racial privilege in the form of white Islander heritage is evident across social, political, economic and cultural environments and then taking steps to dismantle systemic racism on PEI are important first steps. Of course, race is only one component of privilege as religion, gender, sexuality, ability-status, socio-economic status, language and citizenship status are all elements of Islander privilege.

Using these privileges to collectively empower others and include everyone as “Islanders” requires first being aware of such privileges and acknowledging their implications. This awareness can be heightened through anti-racism and anti-discrimination training and campaigns with children, youth and adults. During such training, people are able to confront their biases, stereotypes and prejudices. They ask questions such as:

- What messages did I receive growing up on PEI about people who are different from me?
- What is the racial and/or ethnic make-up of my neighborhood, school, or religious community?
- How might that community make-up be biased toward immigrants and newcomers?
- What can I do to change this context?

Bias and privilege can also be addressed by understanding and supporting the lived-experiences of immigrants and newcomers. This understanding often requires listening to and engaging in tough conversations about injustice and inequality, learning about intersectionality and then taking action to address racism and discrimination in local communities.

In addition to expanding current anti-racism and anti-discrimination training on the island, PEI should bolster support for workforce inclusivity incentives, diversity awareness campaigns (Diversity Thrives Here), newcomer welcome

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events, multi-cultural festivals, school education, inter-faith services, award programs, etc. Further, the province should work with municipalities to conduct reviews of by-laws and policies to make sure that these do not contain elements with discriminatory impacts.

The result of such activities will be a more inclusive island and a broadened understanding of Islander.

### ***Support and expand province-wide anti-racism and anti-discrimination***

***initiatives:*** A significant initiative on PEI in viewing practices and activities through a culturally inclusive lens is the establishment of the Anti-Racism Table. The Table has a mandate to develop actions to address systemic racism and discrimination through:

- Education
- Justice and policing services
- Provincial legislation, regulations and policies
- Opportunities for employment and job security
- Health, mental health and well-being
- Housing
- Social programs

These areas are of particular importance to retention initiatives as each impacts the challenges discussed in this report: Belonging, Inclusivity and Vitality. The work of the Anti-Racism Table should be profiled widely throughout the province as it will help inform and move forward retention and integration policies and practices.

Further, the Anti-Racism Microgrants administered by the Table will help immensely in helping youth, individuals and communities strengthen links

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between racial equality and community cohesion. Projects have the possibility of strengthening BIPOC communities, increasing public engagement and bolstering organizational capacity regarding anti-racism and anti-discrimination practices and policies. Based upon similar initiatives in other jurisdictions and from a review of the literature, this is a program that holds great possibility for supporting retention initiatives on PEI and its financial stability should be guaranteed and expanded.

### 6.3 Vitality: Develop social capital and infrastructure supports

Vitality strategy ideas
<b>Confront affordability issues</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Provide incentives for post-secondary students, apprentices, employers</i></li><li>• <i>Highlight PEI businesses and communities that have employment opportunities for immigrants and expats</i></li><li>• <i>Broaden residency concepts</i></li><li>• <i>Focus on immigrant classes that hold the most potential for retention</i></li></ul>
<b>Improve health services, determinants and regional cooperation measures</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Nurture and promote healthy communities</i></li><li>• <i>Draw attention to regional cooperation on health issues</i></li></ul>
<b>Provide workplace training and PLAR opportunities</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Encourage workplace training</i></li><li>• <i>Provide prior learning and assessment and recognition (PLAR) services</i></li></ul>
<b>Profile climate change adaptations and green economy lifestyles</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Share community vitality stories</i></li><li>• <i>Profile green economy lifestyles and opportunities</i></li></ul>

#### 6.3.1 Confront affordability issues

***Provide incentives for post-secondary students, apprentices and employers:***  
International students at UPEI and the Holland College are well positioned for immigrant recruitment. These *temporary residents* are familiar with the island,

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have established community linkages, possess excellent language skills and are well-educated. To help facilitate the immigration process, the province should connect regularly with international students from these institutions – during orientation, during their program and at graduation. This recommendation is supported by the qualitative understandings of many of the survey participants and students in the focus groups. Further, there is no reason to limit recruitment to local post-secondary institutions as there are many students throughout the Atlantic region who may desire to live and work on PEI.

Even if local international students do not wish to immigrate to PEI, they can provide cultural support to local communities. For instance, UPEI and Holland College could offer course credit to international students who provide workshops and support to local communities regarding cultural understandings. International students could also provide language support to recent immigrants in need of language training both in the workplace and in the home.

Another more involved but promising strategy is to explore diversity hiring incentives. Several provinces are offering diversity bonuses to employers as part of existing incentive employment programs. Employers receive incentives for hiring youth, apprentices, or graduates and when that graduate, apprentice or youth is diverse, the incentive increases.

### ***Highlight PEI businesses and communities that have employment opportunities***

***for immigrants and expats:*** PEI has many excellent web resources for immigrants and newcomers which were noted by survey participants. However, a significant number of the focus group members – particularly the Former Residents who would like to return to PEI and immigrants who would like to stay – would like a focused web site that would connect them to information about employment and incentives. It seems that the existing employment websites



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may not be reaching Former Islanders who want to return to PEI or immigrants who want to stay. There are many sites where employment information is provided but a specific site or a specific marketing campaign (e.g., for expat Former Islanders) may be needed to draw attention to opportunities on PEI. This web presence could also highlight local immigrant community success stories and profile immigrant entrepreneurs and businesses.

***Broaden residency concepts:*** The concept of permanence is losing importance for some people as they live in numerous places during their lifetime. This transient lifestyle quality is especially evident for mobile workers (digital nomads), retirees and individuals with mid to high economic status. Therefore, if consideration is given to people living in a place for less than 12 months of the year, the opportunities for newcomer and immigrant settlement are much greater. For instance, digital nomads are able to operate from any location provided that sufficient technological infrastructure is in place. Their skills as knowledge workers are in demand and the place from which they work can be anywhere. This group includes money managers, financial analysts, remote business operators, telecommuters, on-line service providers, management consultants and on-line musicians.

Unfortunately, many immigrant and newcomer strategies overlook this mobile labour group. There are several reasons for this oversight including the focus of the current Federal immigration programs which do not encourage nominations for people who are older or seeking a digital nomad lifestyle. However, in broadening the recruitment focus, people in their 50s, 60s and 70s who may still want to open/operate a business or live in PEI but perhaps only as temporary residents. Further, younger people who want to call PEI home but live on the island temporarily may feel excluded as Islanders.

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There is some irony in the fact that for many people, financial self-sufficiency does not occur until later in life and yet this reality is not acknowledged under current immigration policy that considers older immigrants, newcomers and expats as more of an economic risk (e.g., placing a burden on the health care system) rather than bringing their wisdom and resources to the province.

Another reason for the oversight of mobile workers may be explained by considering how Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs affects immigrant and newcomer rural recruitment strategies. As one survey participant noted, many rural immigration strategies target the first two needs of Maslow's Hierarchy (safety and food/shelter). The result is a recruitment focus that may emphasize what people need (deficits) rather than what they bring (assets). However, if one applies a creative focus to immigrant and newcomer recruitment and considers Maslow's higher-level needs (self-actualization), rural recruitment efforts might focus on people who desire to live on PEI for part of the year but may not require traditional infrastructure components such as long-term housing. They may prefer a rural lifestyle and although they reside on the island temporarily, they offer greater long term economic development potential for the region since their work is not always dependent upon local economic conditions. The key to their integration is a welcoming climate for digital commuting and residency.

***Focus on immigrant classes that hold the most potential for retention:*** Based upon exemplary practices in Canada and other international settings, the initial research concept of recruiting from a particular country does not seem to be the best strategy for immigrant recruitment in PEI. As noted earlier in this report, even Manitoba which has used this "country recruitment" strategy (often under the *temporary worker* immigrant category) to fill employment vacancies in hog and poultry farms (mostly low skilled workplaces), now acknowledges that such

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targeted benefits are limited. This is particularly the case when employment contracts end, and people are forced to move to an urban area to find work. A more useful strategy would be to target countries that could fill labour shortages in higher skilled labour areas within PEI (e.g., Health Care, skilled trades).

It is also important to note that, based upon the surveys and focus group sessions, the *temporary worker program* is not seen as a key component of a retention strategy. Focus group members noted how many of the jobs that fall within the temporary worker program are lower paying and have few employment benefits which leads to people leaving the province once the work is completed. However, most people acknowledge that this immigrant class has proved effective in meeting labour force needs within seasonal workplaces (e.g. tourism, hospitality, fishing, agriculture) provided that no local labour force could be found. Thus, it is more of a labour force program than a retention strategy. That said, the province could investigate measures to encourage temporary workers to consider PEI as a long-term settlement option even though such an initiative would require re-applying to come to PEI under a different immigration classification.

Finally, and as by several focus group respondents, there is a lingering perception that past PEI immigration strategies have focused on immigrants who come to the area for a short time and then leave to go to an urban setting. While statistics to support this anecdotal observation are not available, the literature suggests that for jurisdictions that are more rural, it may be necessary to recruit immigrants and newcomers who are accustomed to or who desire a more rural lifestyle. Of course, there may also be people those are looking to get away from urban life and would view PEI as a great place to settle. Recent inter-provincial movement - accelerated by the Covid-pandemic restrictions - certainly supports this latter possibility as many Canadians moved to Atlantic Canada seeking rural

settings. However, and as noted in the focus groups, some were surprised to find health and other infrastructure services not at the level they expected or were used to in their previous urban environments.

### **6.3.2 Improve health services, determinants and regional cooperation measures**

***Nurture and promote healthy communities:*** There are many factors which impact the health of a population including social determinants, health disparities, system accessibility, and policies and practices. A healthy community has wrap-around physical and mental health supports and services, a responsive health care system and public policies that emphasize wellness and prevention. Personal health attributes – physical and mental - are also critical to any overall measure of well-being and can be assessed at both the individual and societal level. Factors such as relationships with family and friends, a sense of community and being connected to services are important components in having an overall feeling of personal well-being.

Many of the previous strategies mentioned in this report will help cultivate and support healthy communities on PEI. Retention strategies that help people improve their sense of belonging, connection to others, employment prospects, skill recognition, assets and overall feeling of being an Islander will make island communities healthier. People will want to stay in a place if they feel better about themselves and if they feel their health is not at risk.

While access to health services such physician care will remain a challenge for some time, there are many things that communities and organizations can do to improve health outcomes. Ideas emerging from the focus groups and literature include:

- Providing local spaces and events for people to meet their neighbours

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- Developing outdoor and year-round activities for families
- Hosting festivals that celebrate diversity in arts and culture
- Using rinks as recreation and community hubs rather than “just a place for hockey”
- Working with educational institutions to recognize prior learning
- Providing incentives for businesses to hire newcomers
- Encouraging newcomers to be part of civic life
- Linking retention to affordable housing initiatives

All members of a community can play a role in the provision of such services and supports. For instance, businesses and employers can play an active role to ensure that new residents have access to employment and business opportunities. Service clubs and chamber of commerce organizations can connect with immigrants to explain local services and to offer a mechanism to connect to the wider community. Daycare agencies can provide information on their services, schools can offer academic and language support to families, and doctors and hospitals can provide clear language information on how to access medical care.

***Draw attention to regional cooperation on health issues:*** This scope of this research does not permit a detailed examination of this strategy. However, it seems that a retention initiative that might encourage people to reside on PEI despite knowing that the island health services are limited could be one that focuses on the health services that are available within the Atlantic provinces; particularly, for specialist care. Further, the support of the Atlantic Premiers in their endorsement of a regional health accord that will enhance collaboration in delivering health care services to Atlantic Canadians might be a message to mitigate uncertainty about living on PEI.

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The Accord of Guiding Principles states that the Atlantic Provinces will *“collaborate on the recruitment and retention of health professionals and create a sustainable work environment for the health care sector. Provinces will work together to develop and maintain specialized care services for the region, limiting duplication while ensuring local needs are met. Provinces will also collaborate on the introduction of new technology and learning to improve health care delivery”*. The Ministers of Health in each Atlantic province are also working on key priorities for regional alignment to improve health care services.

Such statements and initiatives are worth profiling to newcomers as they show that PEI is working to improve health services for Islanders. Further, the success of the Atlantic region and PEI in particular in dealing with the recent Covid-pandemic demonstrates a commitment to healthy communities.

### **6.3.3 Provide workplace training and PLAR opportunities**

***Encourage workplace training:*** Education is a key component of thriving communities as it leads to the growth and development of the populace and shapes society into a better world. Education is a lifelong process and plays an important role in pre-school arrangements such as childcare and early childhood education and continues to high school, college, university, apprenticeship and professional training. People who participate in lifelong learning and attain higher levels of education are often more employable and likely to earn more.

In essence, education is a critical resource and a predictor of our health, democratic participation, and our ability to function and adapt in society. Given its lifelong importance, the education and learning domain includes measures of educational achievement such as overall academic achievement, attainment and participation, along with basic educational knowledge and skills indicators.

Research participants expressed a desire to see investment in lifelong learning and workplace training. This investment would see a renewed focus on community schools, virtual training, apprenticeship training, professional certification, and strong connections to post-secondary institutions.

***Provide prior learning and assessment and recognition (PLAR) services:*** A PLAR/Portfolio process to recognize and provide the portability of professional and personal competencies across provincial and international boundaries should be a part of a PEI retention strategy. This PLAR framework would require the various certifying industry bodies and educational institutions to recognize and support the principle of portability. Further, the recognition of professional qualifications and work experiences from other countries and other provinces would need to be part of the regional (and provincial) post-secondary systems. Studies that have explored prior learning in Canada reveal that many Canadians would participate in further education and remain in a jurisdiction if their previous education and experiences were recognized. This is a finding that was also noted by Likely Movers and Former Islanders who found it challenging to get their skills recognized on PEI. Immigrants and newcomers who can have training, education and experiences recognized are more likely to remain in the province.

### ***6.4 Profile climate change adaptations and green economy lifestyles***

***Share community vitality stories:*** PEI is well positioned to share stories which highlight an alternative vision for growth and development. The province can profile organizations and individual initiatives that are generating economic development and improvements in people's lives in a manner that is consistent with environmental and social well-being. A significant component of a green economy strategy is to promote the development and adoption of sustainable

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technologies and this promotion has the added benefit of attracting investment and people to PEI.

Increasingly, people are looking to live in a place that strives to establish real links between the ecological system and the economic system. PEI has many initiatives that can reinforce perceptions of a province that is working to transition to a green economy (e.g., EV incentives, wind and solar power, heat pump rebates). Such fundamental transformations towards more sustainable modes of energy production, consumption and transportation are very attractive to people and provide tangible incentives for remaining on the island. Individual stories of immigrants, newcomers and expats living a greener lifestyle should be profiled widely and included as part of a retention and population strategy.

***Profile green economy lifestyles and opportunities:*** Building upon the previous strategy of sharing green economy stories, PEI can also be profiled as a leader in climate change and sustainability initiatives. Immigrant, newcomer and expat attraction and integration activities can showcase research and innovation opportunities that are available to accelerate green businesses and help existing businesses go green. Attraction and retention initiatives can also highlight provincial incentives that help businesses and individuals develop and evaluate innovative technologies in sustainability. Further, the educational opportunities available at both UPEI and Holland College can be featured to demonstrate the learning and training opportunities available within the province.

PEI's green business ecosystem, infrastructure and commitment to sustainability goals are powerful qualities for attracting and retaining immigrants, newcomers and expats who want to build a better world.



## 7.0 Conclusions

### *Take creative leaps to build social capital and inspire retention efforts*

Of key interest in the literature is whether the benefits of social capital can be altered through deliberate interventions and if these interventions carry direct benefit.

Retention initiatives are deliberate interventions (albeit with the consent and involvement of the local community, partners and newcomers themselves). Retention activities respect the networks, norms of reciprocity and trust, and the traditions that exist in a community. However, retention activities can also play a role in challenging these norms and encouraging change and action. The key is building trust and public cooperation among diverse members of local communities and making everyone feel welcome, respected and engaged.

Within the context of PEI's social, economic, cultural and climate realities, change in the form of personal, social and economic transition, and island living has become a continuous and permanent feature of life. The impact of demographic change in the form of an aging population and growing diversity in the workplace and society, the uncertainties of living on the island as climate change becomes more pronounced, and the restructuring of the workforce are but a few of the drivers that have had wide and lasting effect on individual employability, collective requirements for a qualified workforce, and social, family and community life. These changes have affected everyone from the highly trained and credentialed professional to individuals in marginalized groups facing multiple challenges and barriers.

While change can be daunting, it can be met with confidence since immigrants, newcomers, temporary residents and expats bring perspectives, ideas and skills to nurture and develop the required human, social and cultural capital for PEI to participate in an increasingly connected global society. Effective retention strategies

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that keep new people on the island will require a rethinking of traditional formal educational structures, an explicit recognition, value and support of informal and experimental educational opportunities, a creative leap in dealing with pressing affordability and infrastructure challenges, and the development of long term welcoming practices that build community vitality. A vibrant retention strategy also requires increased participation by local, regional and provincial government, and from island businesses, volunteers, immigrants, post-secondary institutions and development agencies.

It is important for everyone on PEI to identify which retention strategies are important to them and then determine what they need to do to foster a welcoming, inclusive and vibrant island. The key is to identify retention strategies that resonate and are amenable to policy and practice interventions—by individuals, organizations, communities, and government.

While there is no overarching specific conclusion, it is fair to say that if retention efforts focus on Belonging, Inclusivity and Vitality, PEI can utilize its many compelling attributes to ensure that everyone feels like an Islander and has opportunities for a full and abundant life.

## Appendix A

### Survey Data Statistical Summary

#### Former Islanders Survey (281 responses)

- Locations of Former Islanders (of those who provided a postal code):

N&L	3
NS	7
NB	16
PEI	12 (may still have PEI as principal residence)
Que	18
ONT	75
M	4
S	6
A	22
BC	21
Terr.	5
Inter.	9

- Number willing to participate in Focus Groups = 141 of total respondents

#### Gender

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Female	54.84% 153
Male	42.65% 119
Non-binary gender	0.72% 2
I would prefer not to answer	1.79% 5
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>279</b>

#### Race

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Asian	4.66% 13
Black	7.89% 22
Caucasian	76.34% 213
Hispanic	3.58% 10
Indigenous	1.08% 3
Pacific Islander	1.08% 3
Don't know	0.00% 0
I would prefer not to answer	3.58% 10
Other (please specify)	<a href="#">Responses</a> 3.23% 9
<b>Total Respondents: 279</b>	

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### Current Islanders Survey (1,109 responses)

- Number willing to participate in Focus Groups = 405 of total respondents
- Rooted Islanders versus Likely Movers:

Q. Which of the following answers best describes how well you like living on PEI?

We define Rooted Islanders as those who answered, “I would do everything possible to stay on PEI” (N=365) and Likely Movers as “I would really like to leave PEI if I had the opportunity to do so.” (N=63)

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
▼ I would do everything possible to stay on PEI	33.00%	365
▼ I would prefer to stay on PEI	48.28%	534
▼ I would probably be more satisfied living away from PEI	13.02%	144
▼ I would really like to leave PEI if I had the opportunity to do so	5.70%	63
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>1,106</b>

### Gender

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
▼ Female	62.52%	689
▼ Male	33.30%	367
▼ Non-binary gender	1.27%	14
▼ I would prefer not to answer	2.90%	32
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>1,102</b>

### Race

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
▼ Asian	12.12%	134
▼ Black	5.24%	58
▼ Caucasian	67.45%	746
▼ Hispanic	3.80%	42
▼ Indigenous	4.25%	47
▼ Pacific Islander	2.26%	25
▼ Don't know	0.90%	10
▼ I would prefer not to answer	3.16%	35
▼ Other (please specify)	<a href="#">Responses</a> 4.25%	47
<b>Total Respondents: 1,106</b>		

## Appendix B

### Current Islanders Survey Summary

Q1 Which of the following answers best describes how well you like living on Prince Edward Island (PEI)? (please choose only one answer)

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
I would do everything possible to stay on PEI	33.00%	365
I would prefer to stay on PEI	48.28%	534
I would probably be more satisfied living away from PEI	13.02%	144
I would really like to leave PEI if I had the opportunity to do so	5.70%	63
TOTAL		1,106

Q2 Suppose you were offered a job that is much better than your present or most recent job, but it required you to move away from PEI. How willing would you be to move to take this job?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Not at all willing	18.44%	204
Not too willing	15.82%	175
It depends on the circumstances	27.76%	307
Somewhat willing	15.10%	167
Very willing	17.18%	190
Not applicable (for example, I have never held a paying job)	5.70%	63
TOTAL		1,106

Q3 In thinking about whether you intend to move or stay on Prince Edward Island, which of the following would be most important to you in making your decision to move or stay? (please choose only one answer)

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
What would be best for my own future	42.66%	471
My household's need for a higher income	22.19%	245
Improving the safety and security for myself or my household	21.74%	240
What is best for family members who are not currently part of my household	13.41%	148
TOTAL		1,104

Q4 Which of the following reasons might encourage you to leave PEI? (please choose all answers that might apply)

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ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
None of the above	13.23%	145
To find meaningful employment	35.40%	388
To further my education or training	20.71%	227
To further the education or training of someone else in my household	20.99%	230
To go back to my former home	13.50%	148
Due to my own or my spouse's/partner's health	28.74%	315
Due to someone else's health	14.23%	156
To be closer to my family or friends	20.16%	221
Because of discrimination or racism towards myself or my family	10.40%	114
To become independent from my family	6.66%	73
A marriage or domestic partnership	12.04%	132
Due to a lack of adequate or affordable housing	22.26%	244
To get to know new places	17.52%	192
Total Respondents: 1,096		

Q5 Do you have anything more you want to tell us about why you might want to move away from PEI? (Open-ended responses. See other report)

Q6 Which of the following reasons might encourage you to stay on PEI? (please choose all answers that apply)

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
None of the above	4.41%	48
My home is here	58.03%	632
I would not want to impose big changes on my family and/or children	33.98%	370
I would not want to leave my friends behind	28.19%	307
I would not want to give up my house or other property	36.36%	396
I already have meaningful employment here	34.16%	372
It is too much of an effort to go and work elsewhere	13.13%	143
The cost of living is too high elsewhere	18.55%	202
I or my friends/relatives have had bad experiences elsewhere	5.79%	63
I don't feel qualified enough to work elsewhere	6.06%	66
The quality of life elsewhere is worse	20.02%	218
The political situation elsewhere is worse	13.68%	149
The economy elsewhere is worse	7.25%	79
Attitudes towards someone from my ethnic or racial group is more hostile elsewhere	3.40%	37
Total Respondents: 1,089		

## Fostering belonging, inclusivity and vitality on PEI

Q7 “Belonging is the feeling of security and support when there is a sense of acceptance, inclusion, identity and shared values for a member of a certain group.” Based on this definition, how would you rate your “sense of belonging” living on PEI? (please choose only one answer)

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
I have no sense of belonging	7.24%	80
I have a weak sense of belonging	15.38%	170
I have a modest or average sense of belonging	26.33%	291
I have a somewhat strong sense of belonging	24.80%	274
I have a very strong sense of belonging	26.24%	290
TOTAL		1,105

Q8 Do you have any specific examples that you could share with us regarding why you do or do not have a strong sense of belonging living on PEI? (Open-ended responses. See other report)

Q9 "Sense of place is a feeling of attachment to a place based on the social networks and friendships you have there, or the physical or cultural features of that place." Based on this definition, how would you rate your “sense of place” living on PEI? (please choose only one answer)

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
I have no sense of place	5.97%	66
I have a weak sense of place	13.92%	154
I have a modest or average sense of place	23.96%	265
I have a somewhat strong sense of place	27.67%	306
I have a very strong sense of place	28.48%	315
TOTAL		1,106

Q10 Do you have any specific examples that you could share with us regarding why you do or do not have a strong sense of place living on PEI? (Open-ended responses. See other report)

Q11 Do you have anything else you want to tell us about why you want to stay on PEI? (Open-ended responses. See other report)

Q12 Has the COVID-19 pandemic made you more or less likely to stay on PEI? (please choose only one answer)

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ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
The COVID-19 pandemic has made it much more likely for me to stay on PEI	36.26%	400
The pandemic has made me somewhat more likely for me to stay on PEI	19.04%	210
The pandemic has made no difference in whether I stay or leave PEI	35.54%	392
The pandemic has made me somewhat less likely for me to stay on PEI	5.62%	62
The COVID-19 pandemic has made it much less likely for me to stay on PEI	3.54%	39
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>1,103</b>

Q13 Which of the following gender categories do you most closely identify with currently?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Female	62.52%	689
Male	33.30%	367
Non-binary gender	1.27%	14
I would prefer not to answer	2.90%	32
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>1,102</b>

Q14 Which of the following sexual orientation categories do you most closely identify with currently?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Heterosexual or straight	85.93%	947
Gay or Lesbian	4.36%	48
Bisexual	3.81%	42
Other	1.45%	16
I would prefer not to answer	4.45%	49
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>1,102</b>

Q15 What race would you identify yourself as? (please choose all that apply)

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Asian	12.12%	134
Black	5.24%	58
Caucasian	67.45%	746
Hispanic	3.80%	42
Indigenous	4.25%	47
Pacific Islander	2.26%	25
Don't know	0.90%	10
I would prefer not to answer	3.16%	35
Other (please specify)	4.25%	47
<b>Total Respondents: 1,106</b>		



## Fostering belonging, inclusivity and vitality on PEI

Q16 What is your cultural background? (please choose all answers that apply)

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
African	4.61%	50
European	52.77%	572
East Asian (for example, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Taiwanese)	8.30%	90
South Asian (for example, Afghan, Bangladeshi, Indian, Pakistani)	4.89%	53
South East Asian (for example, Filipino, Indonesian, Malaysian, Thai, Vietnamese)	3.14%	34
First Nations or Indigenous (please specify)	6.27%	68
Hispanic or Latinx	5.17%	56
Middle Eastern	2.03%	22
I would prefer not to answer	8.58%	93
Another cultural background not listed here (please specify)	11.81%	128
Total Respondents: 1,084		

Q17 Which of the following best describes your household marital and family status at this time? (please choose all answers that apply)

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
I live by myself	17.01%	188
I am part of a two-person household with a spouse or common-law partner	45.88%	507
I live in a household that includes children or grandchildren	33.12%	366
I live with other family members (for example, grandparents, grandchildren)	8.42%	93
I live with other household members who are not part of my family (for example, roommates)	5.07%	56
Other (please specify)	3.26%	36
Total Respondents: 1,105		

Q18 Which of the following best describes the highest level of education you have completed? (please choose only one answer)

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Some secondary school	2.08%	23
High school diploma or GED (General Educational Development test)	10.38%	115
Some post-secondary (college or university)	13.00%	144
Completed a College diploma	23.01%	255
Completed a Bachelor's degree or equivalent	33.75%	374
Completed a Master's or PhD degree	17.78%	197
TOTAL		1,108

## Fostering belonging, inclusivity and vitality on PEI

Q19 Which of the following best describes your current employment situation? (please choose only one answer)

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
None of the above	0.36%	4
Not employed and currently looking for work	4.16%	46
Not employed but not currently looking for work	3.62%	40
Employed part-time	8.96%	99
Employed full-time	50.68%	560
Self-employed	9.59%	106
Going to school	3.08%	34
Household work/caring for children	2.62%	29
Retired	13.57%	150
Other (please specify)	3.35%	37
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>1,105</b>

Q20 Which of the following comes closest to the overall gross income (before taxes are taken off) for your entire household in 2021?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Under \$30,000	15.46%	167
\$30,000 to \$59,999	28.70%	310
\$60,000 to \$89,999	21.67%	234
\$90,000 to \$119,999	17.04%	184
\$120,000 or more	17.13%	185
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>1,080</b>

Q21 How many years have you lived in your current community or city (write in number of years)?

Q22 Which of the following choices best describes how long you have lived on PEI (please check only one answer. If you were not born on PEI, please write in the number of years you have lived here in the box provided)?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
I was born on PEI and have lived here my entire life	49.26%	299
I was born on PEI but lived elsewhere for at least one year	51.89%	315
Total Respondents: 607		

Q23 To better understand your answers in relation to where you live in the province and to discourage spam responses, but still ensure your confidentiality, please provide us with the first three characters of the postal code of your current primary residence on PEI?

## **Fostering belonging, inclusivity and vitality on PEI**

Q24 If you want to receive a copy of the results of this survey when they are released, please provide us with your email address below. Answered: 636 Skipped: 473

Q25 If you want to be entered into a draw to receive one of fifty \$15 gift cards, please provide us with your email address below. Answered: 869 Skipped: 240

Q26 If you are willing to participate in a follow up focus group to talk further about population retention on PEI, please provide your email address below. Unfortunately, we may not be able to include everyone who volunteers for the focus groups. Answered: 466 Skipped: 643

## Fostering belonging, inclusivity and vitality on PEI

### Appendix C Former Islanders Survey Summary

Q1 What year did you leave Prince Edward Island? Various answers 1995-2022

Q2 How long did you live in PEI before you left (if you were born on PEI, choose the "My entire life" option. If not, write in the number of years you lived on PEI before leaving)

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
My entire life	71.07%	199
If you were not born on PEI, write in the space below the number of years you lived in PEI before you moved away.	29.64%	83
Total Respondents: 280		

Q3 Which of the following answers best describes how satisfied you are living in your current community or city? (please choose only one answer)

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
I would do everything possible to stay here	25.45%	71
I would prefer to stay here	37.28%	104
I am reluctantly considering moving away from here	10.04%	28
I would be more satisfied living somewhere else	18.64%	52
I really want to leave my current community or city	8.60%	24
TOTAL		279

Q4 Suppose you were offered a job that is much better than your current or most recent job, but it required you to move back to PEI. How willing would you be to move to take this job? (please choose only one answer)

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Not at all willing	7.50%	21
Not too willing	12.50%	35
It depends on the circumstances	26.79%	75
Somewhat willing	15.00%	42
Very willing	33.21%	93
Not applicable (for example, I have never held a paying job)	5.00%	14
TOTAL		280

## Fostering belonging, inclusivity and vitality on PEI

Q5 Which of the following reasons were important in your decision to leave PEI? (please choose all answers that apply)

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
None of the above	2.93%	8
To find meaningful employment	53.48%	146
To further my education or training	34.43%	94
To further the education or training of someone else in my household	19.41%	53
To go back to my former home	11.36%	31
Due to my own or my spouse's/partner's health	8.79%	24
Due to someone else's health	5.49%	15
To be closer to my family or friends	6.59%	18
Because of discrimination or racism towards myself or my family	9.16%	25
To become independent from my family	17.22%	47
A marriage or domestic partnership	10.62%	29
Due to a lack of adequate or affordable housing	7.69%	21
To get to know new places	17.58%	48
Total Respondents: 273		

Q6 Do you have anything more you want to tell us about why you left PEI? (Open-ended response. See other report.)

Q7 Which of the following reasons would encourage you to move back to PEI? (please choose all answers that apply)

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
None of the above	10.00%	27
My home is on PEI	25.19%	68
I want to be closer to family or my children or grandchildren	42.96%	116
I want to be closer to my friends on PEI	37.41%	101
A meaningful job	34.07%	92
To take advantage of a lower cost of living	18.89%	51
Because of the quality of life on PEI	31.11%	84
Better access to public services (for example, health or education)	14.44%	39
Because there is greater acceptance of someone from my ethnic or racial group on PEI	10.74%	29
Because there is greater acceptance of someone of my sexual orientation on PEI	7.41%	20
To take advantage of better or more affordable housing	12.22%	33
Total Respondents: 270		

## Fostering belonging, inclusivity and vitality on PEI

Q8 “Belonging is the feeling of security and support when there is a sense of acceptance, inclusion, identity and shared values for a member of a certain group.” Based on this definition, how would you rate your “sense of belonging” when you lived on PEI? (please choose only one answer)

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
No sense of belonging	9.29%	26
Weak sense of belonging	23.57%	66
Modest or average sense of belonging	16.79%	47
Somewhat strong sense of belonging	25.36%	71
Very strong sense of belonging	25.00%	70
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>280</b>

Q9 Do you have any specific examples that you could share with us of why you did or did not have a strong sense of belonging when you lived on PEI? (Open-ended response. See other report.)

Q10 Using the same definition as in the previous question, how would you rate your “sense of belonging” where you currently live? (please choose only one answer)

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
I have no sense of belonging	7.50%	21
I have a weak sense of belonging	25.36%	71
I have a modest or average sense of belonging	23.57%	66
I have a somewhat strong sense of belonging	27.50%	77
I have a very strong sense of belonging	16.07%	45
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>280</b>

Q11 Do you have any specific examples you could share with us of why you do or do not have a strong sense of belonging where you currently live? (Open-ended response. See other report.)

Q12 "Sense of place is a feeling of attachment to a place based on the social networks and friendships you have there, or the physical or cultural features of that place. Based on this definition, how would you rate your “sense of place” when you lived on PEI? (please choose only one answer)"

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
I had no sense of place	11.83%	33
I had a weak sense of place	18.64%	52
I had a modest or average sense of place	19.71%	55
I had a somewhat strong sense of place	21.15%	59
I had a very strong sense of place	28.67%	80
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>279</b>

## Fostering belonging, inclusivity and vitality on PEI

Q13 Do you have any specific examples of why you did or did not have a strong sense of place when you lived on PEI (Open-ended response. See other report.)

Q14 Using the same definition of sense of place as in the previous question, how would you rate your “sense of place” where you currently live? (please choose only one answer)

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
I have no sense of place	11.91%	33
I have a weak sense of place	19.13%	53
I have a modest or average sense of place	27.80%	77
I have a somewhat strong sense of place	28.52%	79
I have a very strong sense of place	12.64%	35
TOTAL		277

Q15 Do you have any specific examples of why you do or do not have a strong sense of place where you currently live? (Open-ended response. See other report.)

Q16 Has the COVID-19 pandemic made you more or less likely to move back to PEI? (please choose only one answer)

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
The COVID-19 pandemic has made it much more likely for me to think of moving back to PEI	18.71%	52
The pandemic has made me somewhat more likely to think of moving back to PEI	19.06%	53
The pandemic has made no difference on whether I move back to PEI	38.85%	108
The pandemic has made me somewhat less likely to think of moving back to PEI	10.79%	30
The COVID-19 pandemic has made me much less likely to think of moving back to PEI	12.59%	35
TOTAL		278

Q17 Do you have anything more you want to tell us about what might encourage you to move back to PEI? (Open-ended response. See other report.)

Q18 How many years have you lived in your current community or city (please write in number of years)?

Q19 Which of the following gender categories do you most closely identify with currently?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Female	54.84%	153
Male	42.65%	119
Non-binary gender	0.72%	2
I would prefer not to answer	1.79%	5
TOTAL		279

## Fostering belonging, inclusivity and vitality on PEI

Q20 Which of the following sexual orientation categories do you most closely identify with currently?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Heterosexual or straight	79.21%	221
Gay or Lesbian	6.09%	17
Bisexual	4.30%	12
Other	3.58%	10
I would prefer not to answer	6.81%	19
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>279</b>

Q21 What race would you identify yourself as? (please choose all that apply)

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Asian	4.66%	13
Black	7.89%	22
Caucasian	76.34%	213
Hispanic	3.58%	10
Indigenous	1.08%	3
Pacific Islander	1.08%	3
Don't know	0.00%	0
I would prefer not to answer	3.58%	10
Other (please specify)	3.23%	9
<b>Total Respondents: 279</b>		

Q22 What is your cultural background? (please choose all answers that apply)

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
African	4.30%	12
European	65.23%	182
East Asian (for example, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Taiwanese)	5.38%	15
South Asian (for example, Afghan, Bangladeshi, Indian, Pakistani)	2.51%	7
South East Asian (for example, Filipino, Indonesian, Malaysian, Thai, Vietnamese)	1.08%	3
First Nations or Indigenous (please specify)	7.17%	20
Hispanic or Latinx	1.79%	5
Middle Eastern	3.23%	9
I would prefer not to answer	5.73%	16
Another cultural background not listed here (please specify)	8.24%	23
<b>Total Respondents: 279</b>		



## Fostering belonging, inclusivity and vitality on PEI

Q23 Which of the following best describes your household marital and family status at this time? (please choose all answers that apply)

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
I live by myself	18.57%	52
I am part of a two-person household with a spouse or common-law partner	45.00%	126
I live in a household that includes children	27.14%	76
I live with other family members (for example, grandparents, grandchildren)	12.50%	35
I live with other household members who are not part of my family (for example, roommates)	4.29%	12
Other (please specify)	1.79%	5
Total Respondents: 280		

Q24 Which of the following best describes the highest level of education you have completed? (please choose only one answer)

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Some secondary school	1.79%	5
High school diploma or GED (General Educational Development test)	14.64%	41
Some post-secondary (college or university)	12.50%	35
Completed a College diploma	22.50%	63
Completed a Bachelor's degree or equivalent	29.29%	82
Completed a Master's or PhD degree	19.29%	54
TOTAL		280

Q25 Which of the following best describes your current employment situation? (please choose only one answer)

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
None of the above	0.00%	0
Not employed and currently looking for work	3.21%	9
Not employed but not currently looking for work	2.50%	7
Employed part-time	14.29%	40
Employed full-time	58.57%	164
Self-employed	9.29%	26
Going to school	2.14%	6
Household work/caring for children	0.00%	0
Retired	8.93%	25
Other (please specify)	1.07%	3
TOTAL		280

## Fostering belonging, inclusivity and vitality on PEI

Q26 Which of the following comes closest to the overall gross income (before taxes are taken off) for your entire household in 2021?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Under \$30,000	10.14%	28
\$30,000 to \$59,999	26.45%	73
\$60,000 to \$89,999	24.28%	67
\$90,000 to \$119,999	9.78%	27
\$120,000 or more	29.35%	81
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>276</b>

Q27 To better understand your answers in relation to where you live now and to discourage spam responses, but still ensure your confidentiality, please provide us with the first three digits/characters of your postal code or zip code of your current primary residence?

Newfoundland and Labrador	3
Nove Scotia	7
New Brunswick	16
PEI	12 (may still have PEI as principal residence)
Quebec	18
Ontario	75
Manitoba	4
Saskatchewan	6
Alberta	22
BC	21
Cdn Territories	5
Other International	<u>9</u>
Total	198

Q28 If you want to receive a copy of the results of this survey when they are released, please provide us with your email address below. Answered: 188 Skipped: 93

Q29 If you want to be entered into a draw to receive one of fifty \$15 gift cards, please provide us with your email address below. Answered: 224 Skipped: 57

Q30 If you are willing to participate in a follow up focus group to talk further about population retention on PEI, please provide your email address below. Unfortunately, we may not be able to include everyone who volunteers for the focus groups. Answered: 154 Skipped: 127

## Appendix D

### Focus group invitation and statistics

#### **Current Residents – Rooted Email message (12 participants)**

You may recall that you recently participated in a survey on population retention and mobility on Prince Edward Island. We wanted to thank you for your input. This first phase of the project has now finished, and we are organizing several small focus groups of those who completed the survey. When you filled out the survey you expressed an interest in taking part in one of these focus groups. The purpose of these focus groups is to better understand the factors that have led to the outmigration of REI residents as well as what has prompted others to remain in the province. Your focus group will take place online, will consist of 10-12 people and last about 90 minutes. It will take place on **Monday, June 13<sup>th</sup> at 6:30pm** Atlantic Daylight time. If you are still interested in participating in this focus group, could you email me back as soon as possible and I will follow up with you by providing more information.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Jim Randall

Island Studies, University of Prince Edward Island

#### **Current Residents – Likely Movers Email message (11 participants)**

You may recall that you recently participated in a survey on population retention and mobility on Prince Edward Island. We wanted to thank you for your input. This first phase of the project has now finished, and we are organizing several small focus groups of those who completed the survey. When you filled out the survey you expressed an interest in taking part in one of these focus groups. The purpose of these focus groups is to better understand the factors that have led to the outmigration of REI residents as well as what has prompted others to remain in the province. Your focus group will take place online, will consist of 10-12 people and last about 90 minutes. It will take place on **Tuesday, June 14<sup>th</sup> at 6:30pm** Atlantic Daylight time. If you are still interested in participating in this focus group, could you email me back as soon as possible and I will follow up with you by providing more information.

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I look forward to hearing from you.

Jim Randall

Island Studies, University of Prince Edward Island

### **Former Residents – Born on PEI Email message (12)**

You may recall that you recently participated in a survey on population retention and mobility on Prince Edward Island. We wanted to thank you for your input. This first phase of the project has now finished, and we are organizing several small focus groups of those who completed the survey. When you filled out the survey you expressed an interest in taking part in one of these focus groups. The purpose of these focus groups is to better understand the factors that have led to the outmigration of REI residents as well as what has prompted others to remain in the province. Your focus group will take place online, will consist of 10-12 people and last about 90 minutes. It will take place on **Wednesday, June 15<sup>th</sup> at 6:30pm Atlantic Daylight time**. If you are still interested in participating in this focus group, could you email me back as soon as possible and I will follow up with you by providing more information.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Jim Randall

Island Studies, University of Prince Edward Island

### **Former Residents – Born Elsewhere Email message (12)**

You may recall that you recently participated in a survey on population retention and mobility on Prince Edward Island. We wanted to thank you for your input. This first phase of the project has now finished, and we are organizing several small focus groups of those who completed the survey. When you filled out the survey you expressed an interest in taking part in one of these focus groups. The purpose of these focus groups is to better understand the factors that have led to the outmigration of REI residents as well as what has prompted others to remain in the province. Your focus group will take place online, will consist of 10-12 people and last about 90 minutes. It will take place on **Thursday, June 16<sup>th</sup> at 6:30pm Atlantic Daylight time**. If you are

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still interested in participating in this focus group, could you email me back as soon as possible and I will follow up with you by providing more information.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Jim Randall

Island Studies, University of Prince Edward Island