

11 May 2023

Re: Federation of PEI Municipalities (FPEIM) AGM – Attendance Report

Mayor, Councillors and Administration,

It was my pleasure to attend the 2023 FPEIM AGM held in Souris on April 24, 2023 on behalf of the Rural Municipality of Belfast. The event was well attended by municipalities across the island. Provincial politicians, their aids and key industry representatives were also in attendance.



The day kicked off with official FPEIM business: the president's report, presentation of budget and Board elections. The president highlighted the disparity between Canadian municipal tax averages compared to PEI. On average, Canadian municipal taxes account for 9.2 cents for every tax dollar collected by federal, provincial and municipal governments – in PEI, municipal taxes account for only 2.2 cents. FPEIM continues to look for new revenue sources that don't include raising municipal tax rates. They have asked the Province to reduce the provincial non-commercial property tax rate inside municipalities, and provide a half percent property transfer tax. This would allow municipalities to increase their residential property tax rates without residents paying a higher tax rate overall.

From the Executive Directors report provided to us in writing: training for elected officials will be delivered by Holland College in 2023. An **'introduction to municipal government'** course is being developed and will be published to the FPEIM website. A resource **'Protecting Habitat: A Guide for Municipalities on Prince Edward Island'** is now available on the FPEIM website and may be of interest.

Provincial party leaders Hal Perry, Liberals and Peter Bevan-Baker, Greens both spoke. They ensured they were committed to assisting PEI municipalities. Hal stressed the importance of MLA's and municipalities to have a good working relationship with open communication. The key take-away concerns from the recent provincial election were: healthcare, affordability, housing and land use.

Kim Griffin from Maritime Electric discussed their green energy initiatives with their goal to reduce emissions by 55% by 2030. She stated that currently 86% of power produced on PEI is non-emitting. She stressed the importance of planning ahead and notifying maritime electric of any potential developments, expansions, new infrastructure, etc. – as they plan 'decades in advance' and thus including them early into projects, will help ensure everything is completed in a timely manner.

There was a housing forum by: Samantha Murphy of S J Murphy Planning and Consulting, she is a registered professional planner; Nigel Burns who is the Director of Economics, Statistics and Federal Fiscal Relations for the Government of PEI; and David Arsenault who is the President of Arsenault Properties, a development company. Nigel started with a report from the PEI Government. Since 2015 our population has grown by 30,000. The predicted population will be 200,000 by 2030, and by 2042 that population is expected to grow to 240,000. To make this easier to visualize, by 2030 in just 7 years time, it is expected that we will need to develop two more 'Stratfords'. This projection does not include the need that already exists. Currently we are building 1,300 new houses each year, we need to be building 2,000 to keep pace with growth of population and we need to be building 2,400 to get ahead (and lower pricing – supply/demand). Throughout the forum the three stressed the importance of future planning and I believe this to be paramount for our municipality as we look to adopt our new development by-law.

Samantha discussed the need to make sound decision making – not listening to those against change for the sake of being against change, but also not listening to those who want development without proper care and checks. She expressed that municipalities must plan with intention for future growth. They all agreed that the future will be shaped by our municipalities and it is our duty to ensure that a vision is in place. "If we don't plan ahead, we fall behind. We are behind".

Robert Lantz, who is now Minister of Housing, Land and Communities, addressed us over lunch hour. He ensured us that a land-use plan will be in effect during this term of government and he expressed the desire to have municipalities at the table for these discussions, as we are the ones seeing the issues first hand. He also announced there will be a new upcoming housing strategy from the province.

There was a forum on women in government by the Honourable Diane Griffin, past PEI Senator; Councillor Elaine Barnes from the Town of Cornwall; and Sweta Daboo who is the executive director for the PEI Coalition for Women in Government. This forum discussed the challenges women face from choosing to run in government, the election and the challenges once elected. They discussed the many factors that contribute to low representation from women in government across municipal to federal levels. Sweta stressed that women are encouraged to reach out with any questions or concerns that may come up throughout their term in office. A key takeaway from this forum was to make an active effort to include 'diversity' (women, BIPOC, LGBTQ2+) even if they are not currently represented by your existing council.

Marley Kingston, who is the Senior Municipal Advisor for the PEI Government addressed us regarding an update to the code of conduct regulations. Amendments are being made to the current code of conduct regulations, they will now include all employees of the municipalities, not just the mayor and councillors as it currently reads. It is not known when these will be released to municipalities, but once received we will have 6 months to implement and update our by-laws. Coming in the Summer of 2023, mandatory online code of conduct training will be required of all municipal staff, mayors and councillors, again once implemented there will be a 6-month window for completion and those not completed will not be allowed to continue in their role until the training is completed. It was reminded that anyone breaking the code of conduct regulations is subject to a \$500 fine per offence. Marley instilled that when communicating with others that the golden rule has always been 'treat others how you would want to be treated' but that rather we should 'treat others how THEY want to be treated'.

The day finished with an address from FCM's Green Municipal Fund leaders Patrick Costigan and Nathalie Lapointe. There are many programs – grants/loans available for municipalities. For municipalities with a population of less than 10,000 up to 80% of products can be funded through grants with just a 20% co-pay from the municipality. All of these programs are tied to the % of energy efficiency associated with the project. More information can be found at www.greenmunicipalfund.ca. ****There are programs that may be relevant for not only future developments but improvements to existing buildings, Belfast Rec Centre, BHS, etc..**

It was clear to me that it is incredibly important that the Rural Municipality of Belfast continue to attend these meetings. I was informed of upcoming changes to regulations and mandatory trainings - we are now able to prepare for these. It was a wonderful opportunity to network and meet various councils, provincial politicians and industry representatives - as we never know what we may face in the future. It's paramount that the municipality remain well connected in various circles. As one often is after a convention as such, I left the AGM excited and motivated to inform fellow councillors and implement what I had learned at the event. I look forward to future events and thank the municipality for allowing me the opportunity to attend.

Key actions for RMB

- Summer 2023 – mandatory code of conduct training (*6-month window*)
- Date TBD – update to code of conduct by-law
- Date TBD – training for elected officials - hosted by Holland College
- Date TBD – Introduction to Municipal Government online course

Katherine Bryson, Councillor Rural Municipality of Belfast