

15 October 2023

Re: The Federation of PEI Municipalities (FPEIM) Semi-Annual AGM – Attendance Report

Mayor, Councilors and Administration,

It was my pleasure to attend the 2023 FPEIM Semi-Annual AGM in Summerside on October 14, 2023 on behalf of the Rural Municipality of Belfast and also as a board of director for the FPEIM. This event was well attended by municipalities across the island. Provincial politicians, municipal affairs and key industry representatives were also in attendance.



The day began with official FPEIM business: the president's report and the presentation of financial statements. The president's report was based largely around the provincial land use plan. He discussed the interim measures proposed by FPEIM to curb rural sprawl until the land use plan is in effect. He stressed that these measures were not about stopping development but about doing so responsibly. He stressed the need for effective local planning to meet local needs. He again addressed the disparity with the tax share from the province, in that nationally the average is 9 cents where in PEI our share is 2 cents (this is an on-going issue that was explained in detail on the last AGM report). While the municipal government's act was a positive step forward, without the increase in tax funds from the province many municipalities are left stretched and unable to achieve the goals asked of them in the MGA.

We had speaker, Stephanie Arnold, address the delegates regarding "Finding Hope in Municipal Climate Action". Stephanie is a fantastic speaker that is incredibly knowledgeable in all things climate change, they are the Strategy and Programs Manager and PEI Climate Services Specialist at CLIMAtlantic. They described how we need to look beyond the obvious things (larger culverts to deal with water management, heat pumps, etc) and look at the big picture of climate change, how everything in our ecosystem has our place and it's our duty to protect those ecosystems. They urged municipalities to use a community approach while aligning our goals and efforts to tackle climate change. Stephanie and their team offer services FREE of charge to municipalities through the CLIMAtlantic - this can be consultation, grant writing, etc.

The forum titled "Rethinking Land Use on PEI" was led by Megan Williams, Manager of Planning, Department of Housing, Land and Communities for the province, Satyajit Sen, Policy and Special Projects Advisor, FPEIM and Matt Pelletier, Policy Researcher. This session went for an hour and a half, and I'm sure it could have continued for at least another hour.

From Megan we learned that her department was in the finishing stages of compiling an Island Report, this report will be released in 2024 and will be used by the province to direct how the Island wide land use plan is created. It will contain economic, social, environmental and the cultural status of communities around the island. It will not be a policy document, rather just an information piece. She urged municipalities that have not previously provided their official plans to get that information to her ASAP to ensure it is included in the report.

Satyajit Sen, provided a similar presentation to that of the standing community the week previous. He discussed rural sprawl and how it was detrimental to PEI and the interim measures proposed by the FPEIM to curb rural sprawl. He explained how rural sprawl leads to the elimination of our rural farm land, currently at a rate of 39 acres per day (Statistics Canada data). He stressed that the projected population for 2062 is 350,000 and this point alone demonstrates the urgency in the creation of an island wide land use plan. "The land we take for granted. We need to protect it".

Matt Pelletier spoke to our population growth and our lack of housing supply island wide, the solution to this will be either "up or out" and it is municipalities who will make those decisions. He had a great presentation that outlined all of the numbers and facts for us. Last year PEI saw a growth of 66,000 in our population – this comes from international immigration, interprovincial emigration, non-permanent residents (international students, temporary workers, etc). and birth rates. The average age in PEI is currently 41-42. He stressed that we are nowhere near hitting our housing needs, 2000 homes/dwellings needed to meet our current needs per year, 2400 needed to get ahead of our population and have an impact to see our vacancy rate raised to 3% = decreased demand and decreased prices. A great quote from him that is incredibly relatable "Federals have the money, Province has the power, Municipalities have the problems".

The floor was opened for questions, all of which were statements ranging from how this land plan will affect the next election and that we need to be 'cautious' how we approach this subject (to which I say previous governments have been

more than 'cautious' for the past 50 years and it shows), to just general statements about the cost of services for municipalities. I did stand and asked a two-part question. 1) Clarification surrounding the interpretation that the FPEIM proposed interim measures leads to further centralization 2) Given their proposal, what are their recommendations to rural municipalities, those specifically without water and sewage services, who are experiencing rapid growth and have current needs for sub division type developments. The questions were addressed by Sen, representing the FPEIM. 1) This is not the case. The suggested service areas or hubs, are to be located throughout the province, in each municipality, and are intended to do the opposite of driving services centralized. 2) These recommendations were proposed to stop the loss of land. They're urging municipalities to look to the future, develop their plans with the future in mind. They were not created to halt development in rural areas but rather to ensure that any developments built would have the ability to be services appropriately. They're urging rural municipalities to develop 'hub' areas in which these developments are centered. These models are not new or unique to PEI, they are recommending similar structures to those in Europe which have allowed communities to prosper for centuries while protecting the natural landscape and agricultural land.

Lunch was addressed by the honorable Rob Lantz, Minister of Housing, Land and Communities. The minister has been adamant since the day he took his position that the land plan would be in effect during his administration and their team are on plan to complete this. The plan is projected to be in place in 2026. He is currently in the process of having legislation passed that would lock in the government to this commitment. He stressed the URGENT nature in which municipalities need to complete and update their official plans, he explained it as "war time efforts" in relation to the urgency of this matter and asked municipalities to fast track these plans. To which he then said to "encourage discussions, fight inaccuracies, THIS IS HAPPENING" in regards to the land plan. He also stressed that PEI will be moving into a 100% incorporation, in that all unincorporated areas will be creating or amalgamating into a municipality, this received applause from the entire audience. He acknowledged my question during the forum and spoke that any interim measures would include and address rural growth. He spoke to new code of conduct training; this has just been launched and a login to the online training will be coming to our emails. He finished in addressing the issues coming out of Murray Harbour this past week and that he would not be stepping in to remove the councillor.

We broke into round tables to discuss successful initiatives from our municipalities. I highlighted ShopBelfastPEI. Other municipalities spoke to pollinator gardens, fishermen's memorials, garden plots, outdoor fitness parks and splash pads.

We finished up the day with Giselle Bernard and Jeremy Oakes speaking to the reception centre resiliency program, no new information regarding this, just urging municipalities to apply.

The Bruce H. Yeo award was awarded to David MacAdam, the former mayor of Morell.

This meeting was dominated with the land use plan, and while change can be scary and uncertain, we need to shift our thinking to how incredibly important and historic this land use plan will be in shaping our province for centuries to come and how lucky we are to have input on such important decisions. Again, I will stress how important it is that RMB is attending these meetings and having a seat at the table of these discussions. This attendance will prove to be more and more important as the land use plan and amalgamation efforts proceed. Beyond those specific issues, it is incredibly beneficial to network with other municipalities and share our concerns and solutions at these meetings.

Key Actions for RMB:

- Code of Conduct Training, 6 month window to complete once we receive our login information
- Continue steps towards completing our **Official Plan URGENT**
- Creation of an **amalgamation committee** – consisting of 3 councillors to make a report/recommendation to council regarding next steps towards amalgamation, council will then discuss and vote to amend or approve the report. The report will then be sent to the province and FPEIM outlining our desires towards amalgamation of our municipality.

Councillor Katherine Bryson