

Excerpt from: Prince Edward Island Legislative Assembly Hansard, First Session of the Sixty-fifth General Assembly
Thursday, 26 November 2015

Re: Statement by Minister Robert Mitchell on municipal viability

Mr. Mitchell: Mr. Speaker, all residents of Prince Edward Island depend on local services and community supports in their daily lives.

As part of the process to ensure that our municipalities remain strong and successful, we have been working closely with the Federation of Prince Edward Island Municipalities to develop a vision for sustainable, viable and dynamic municipalities that serve their residents.

We have good references to draw on. The Thompson Report and other studies provide direction on how successful municipalities can be built in size, services, administration, and organization. The Finn report in New Brunswick, for example, recommended populations of 4,000 with a minimum of \$200 million in assessed value of real property for effective organization.

These same reports underline that municipalities should have established infrastructure, such as water and sewer and parks, and a range of existing economic and institutional activities within their boundaries, such as education, health, businesses, and other amenities.

Successful towns and municipalities normally would have professional administration, fire services, land use, and emergency planning and boundaries that reflect communities of interest.

Flexibility in such criteria is always necessary, but growing municipal structures should be encouraged to meet or exceed; these requirements, as well as to incorporate best practices such as differential tax rates and equitable population distribution in wards. Research shows that municipalities that have these elements are set up to be successful and sustainable over the long-term.

Beyond having these foundations for success, I believe that having the right supports for success will also be critical, and our government is prepared to provide those supports where communities are interested in pursuing growth.

Funding for growth management and feasibility studies, for example, is available now. We will work with municipalities so that in the future new or larger municipalities will receive funding at least equal to what the individual communities receive today. Additionally, funding will be available to assist with one-time costs such as aligning and combining official plans, or legal and accounting costs.

In closing, I would like to thank all of the community leaders who continue to work hard for the betterment of our Island communities. . . . Thank you, Mr. Speaker.