Rethinking Land and Local Governance

Presented

to

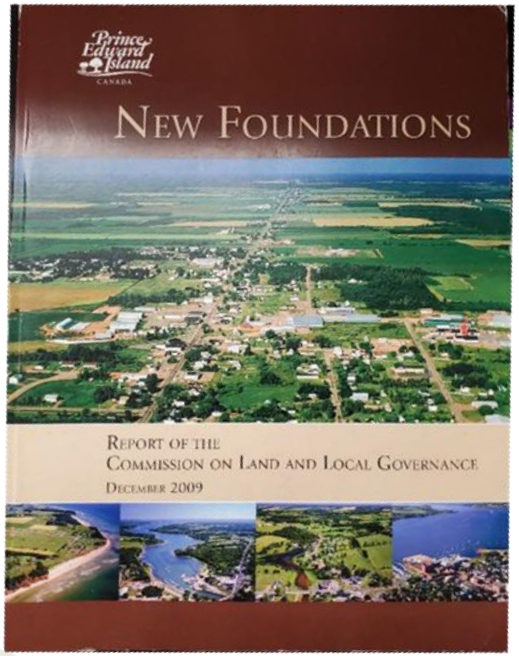
The Standing Committee on Education and Economic Growth

Legislative Assembly of Prince Edward Island

October 03, 2023

FEDERATION of PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND MUNICIPALITIES

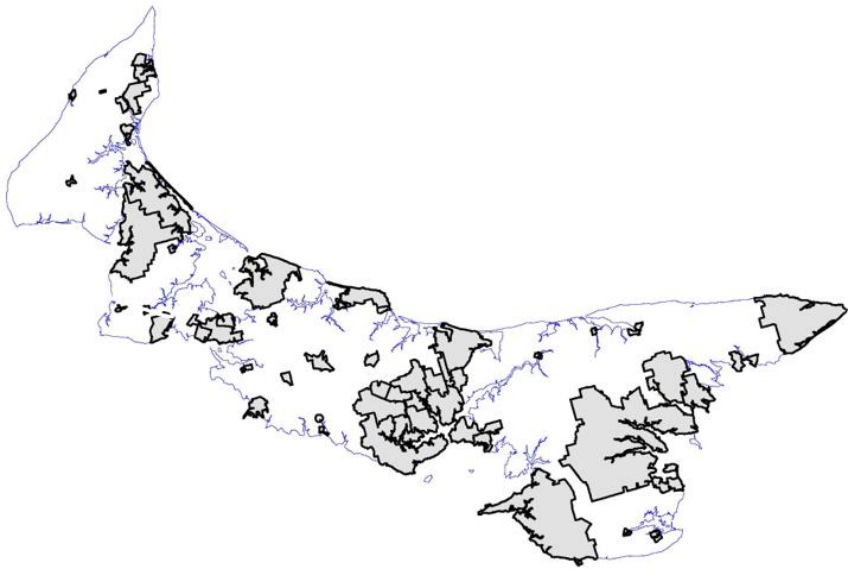
Priorities for PEI Municipalities



- ✓ Municipal Legislation
- Municipal Finance
- Land Use Policy Framework/Provincewide Land Use Plan
- Municipal Restructuring

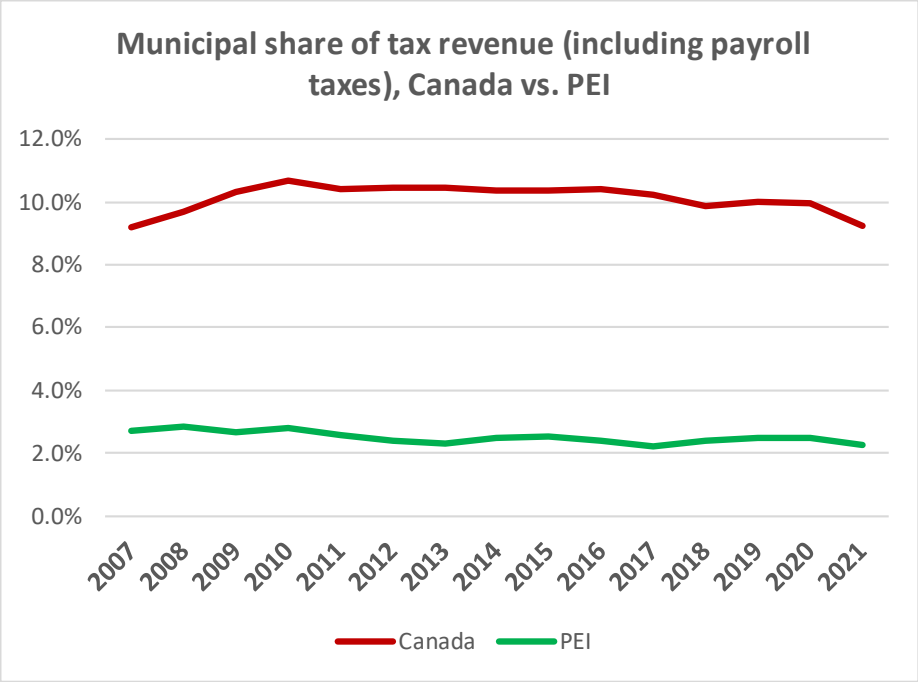
Local Governance (State of PEI Municipalities)

- Municipal boundaries are largely based on school districts from the 1800s.
- 58 municipalities cover 35% of PEI's area. The absence of local taxation and local decision-making in unincorporated areas is almost unique in Canadian provinces.
- 22 municipalities have an area smaller than 5 km^2.
- 33 municipalities have a population of fewer than 400 residents.
- Many small municipalities are struggling to retain CAOs.
- Three municipalities have applied to dissolve, and one has been approved.
- Property owners in urban and rural service centres are paying municipal taxes for services that benefit a much larger area.



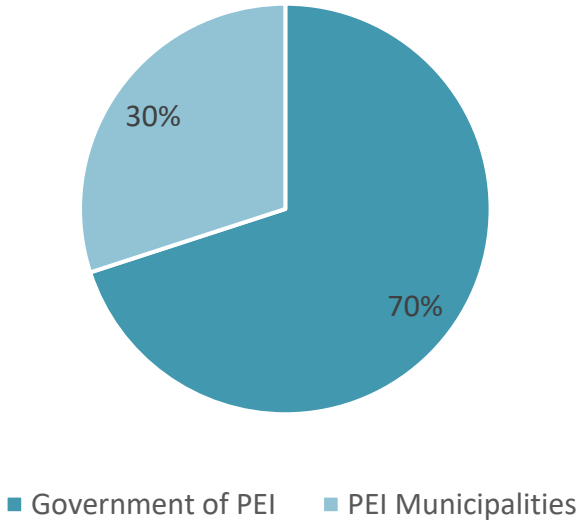
Current State of PEI Municipal Boundaries

Municipal Finance

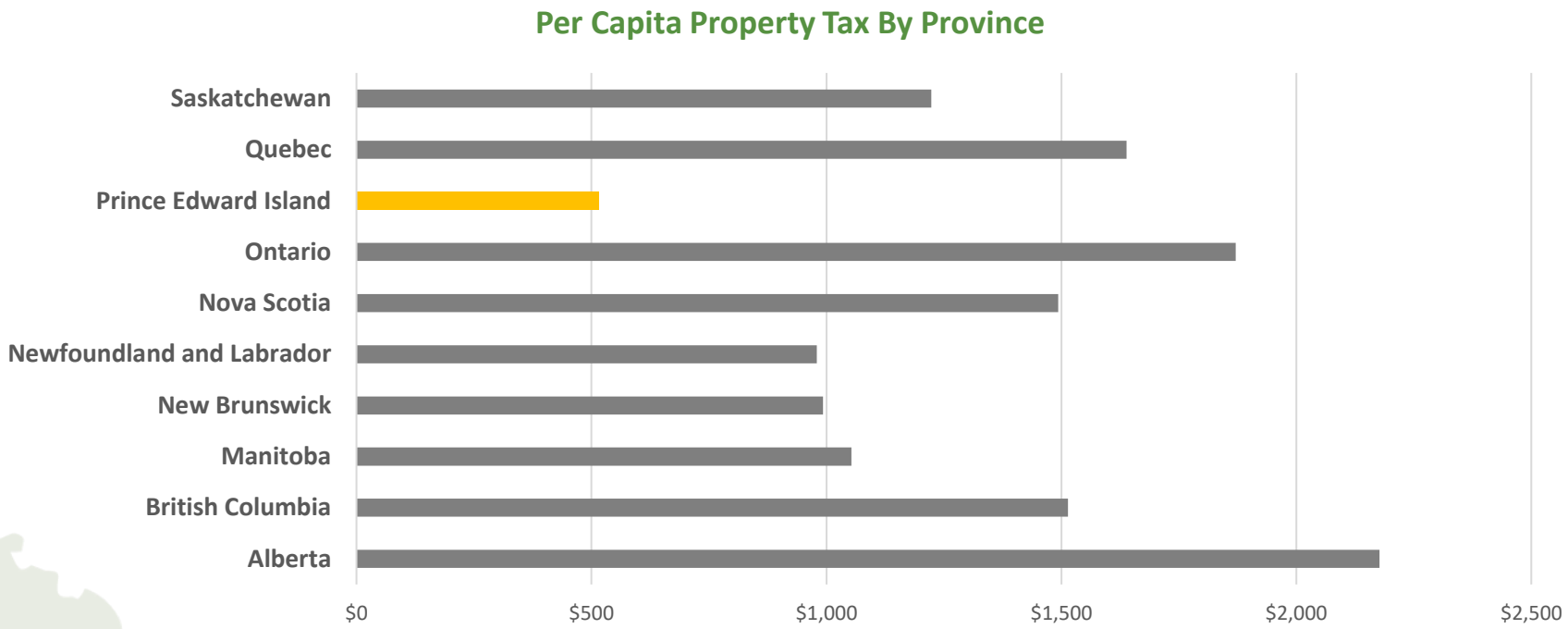


Municipal Finance

Share of Property Taxes Collected in PEI
by Municipalities and the Province

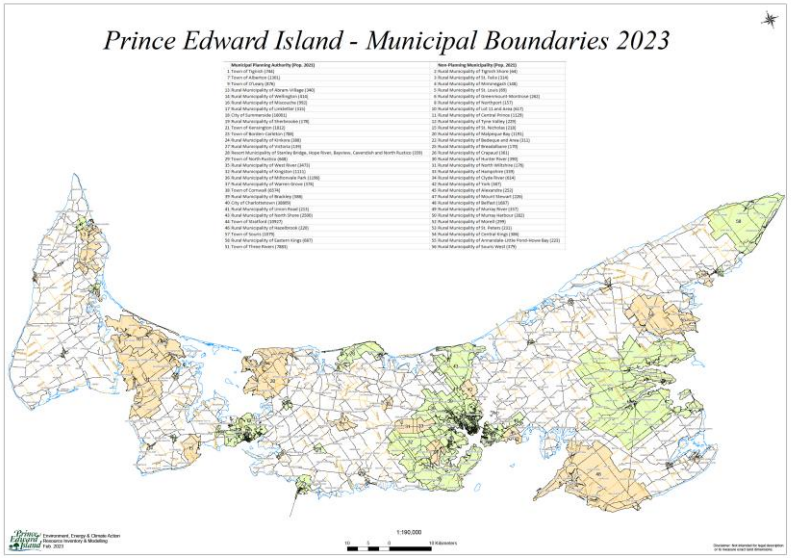


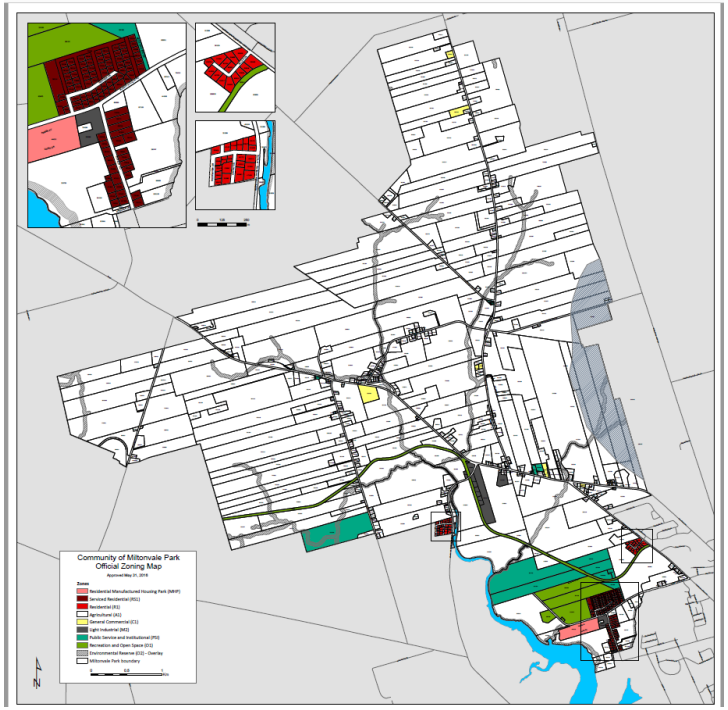
Municipal Finance



The State of Land Use in PEI

- Approximately 20% of PEI is covered by municipal land use plans.
- 29 Municipalities have official plans and land-use bylaws.
- Weak provincial land legislation fails to adequately protect remaining areas of the province. Few limitations on development create an incentive for sprawl. The effects of sprawl include the following:
  - Higher costs of public infrastructure and services
  - Higher greenhouse gas emissions
  - Deterioration of the landscape that attracts visitors to PEI
  - Loss of PEI farmland (39 acres per day from 2016 to 2021)
  - Increase in land use conflicts
  - Loss of wildlife habitat

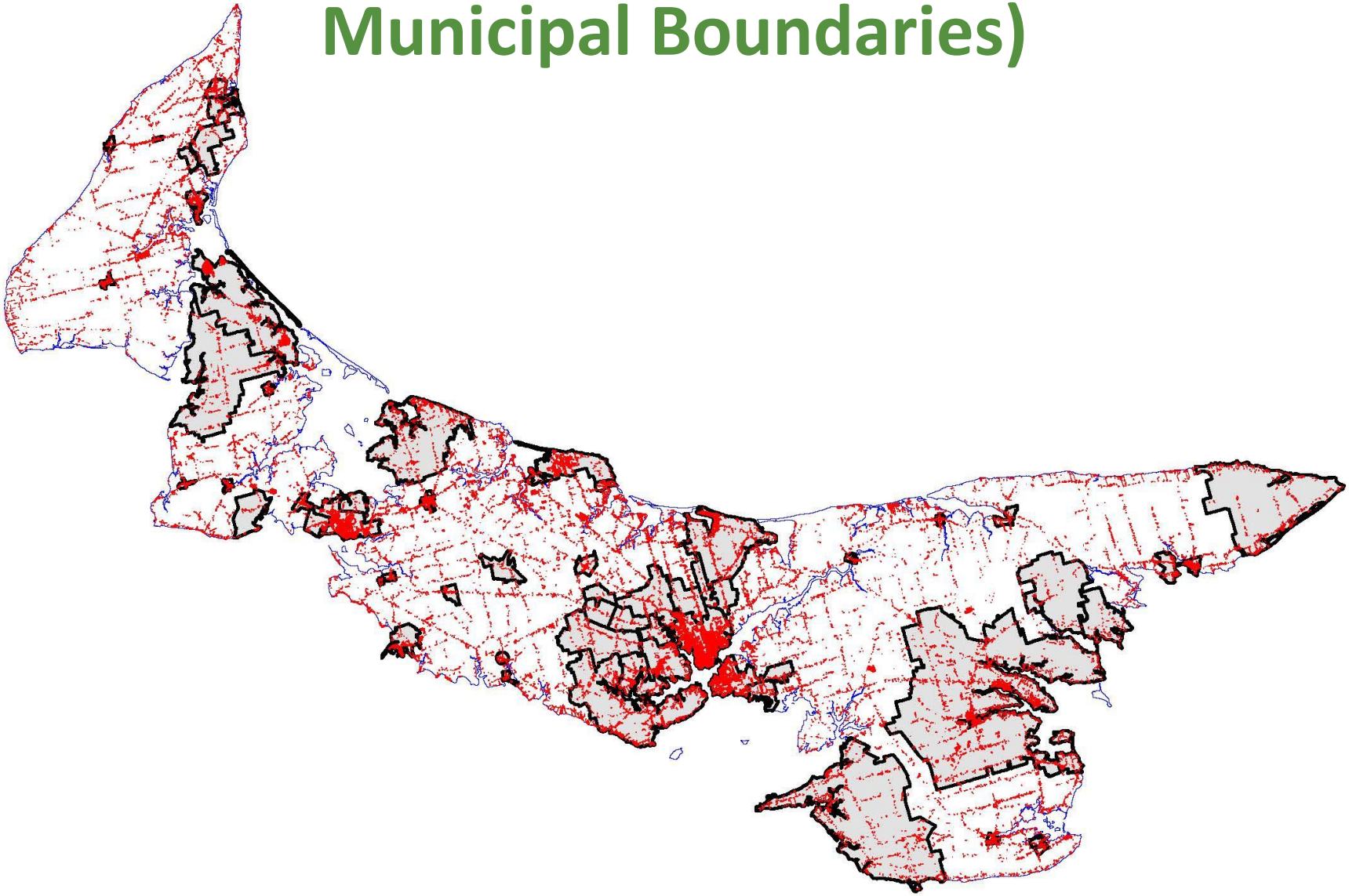




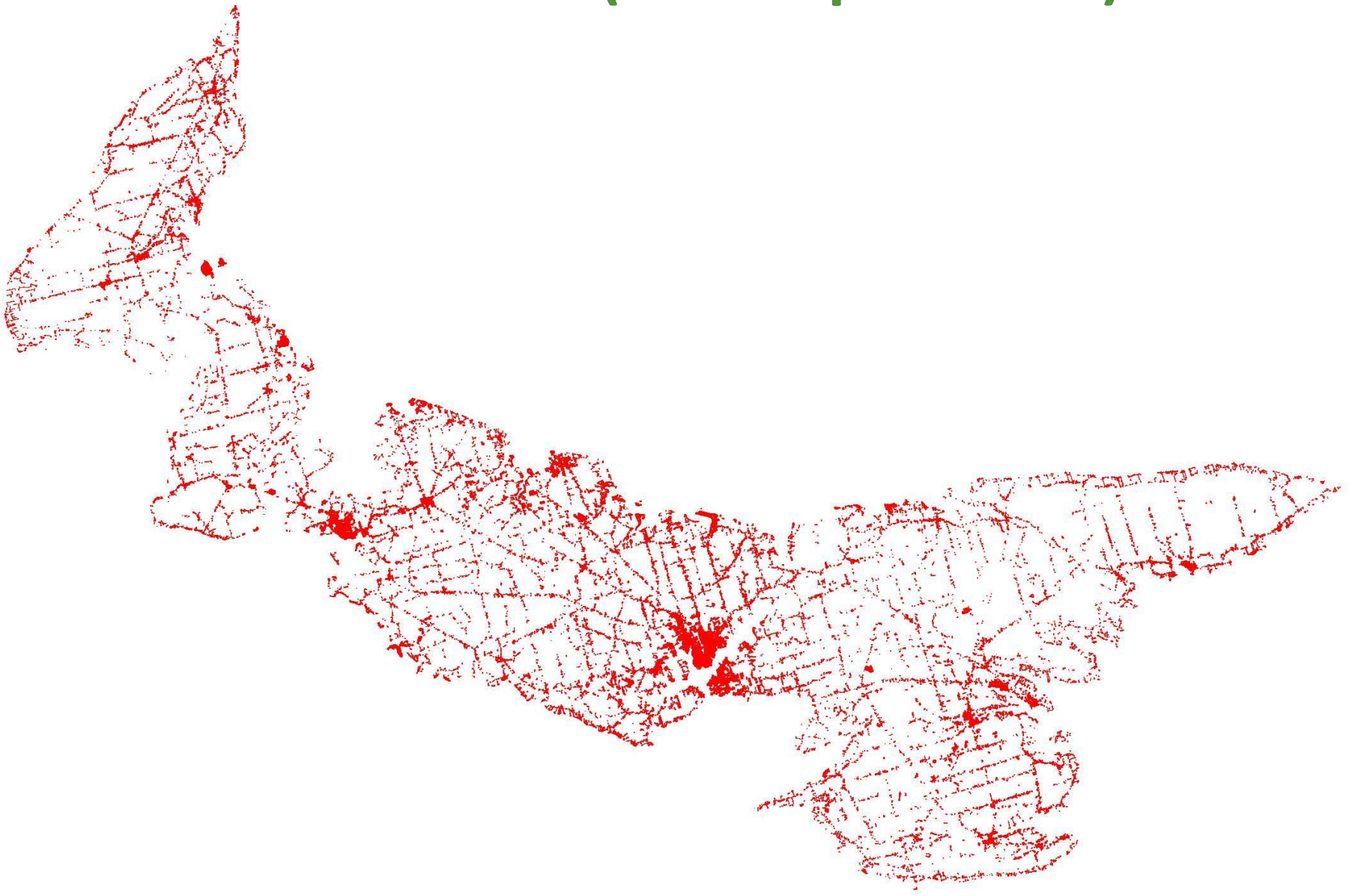
Town of Cornwall

As the smallest and most densely populated province, municipal land use planning is not a luxury – it's a necessity.

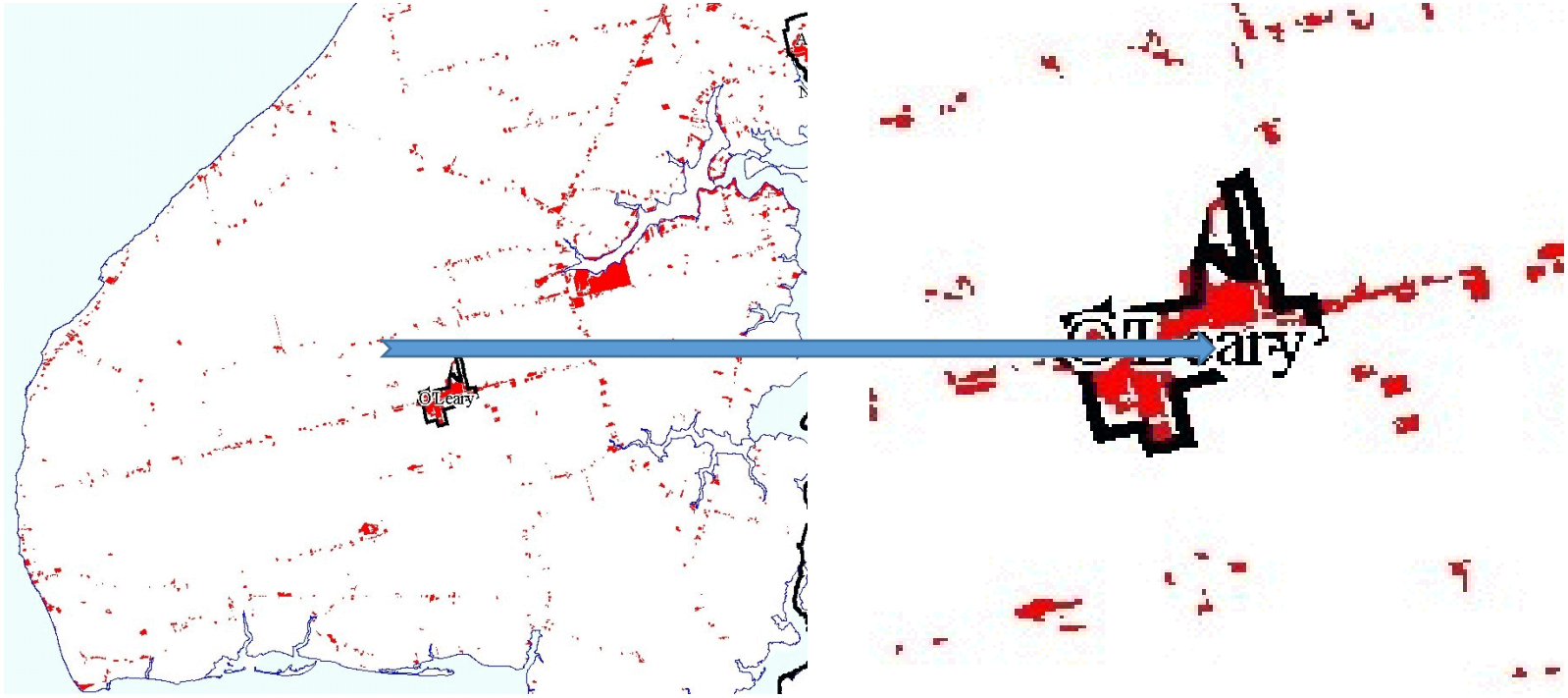
Land Use (Developed Land, Provincial and Municipal Boundaries)



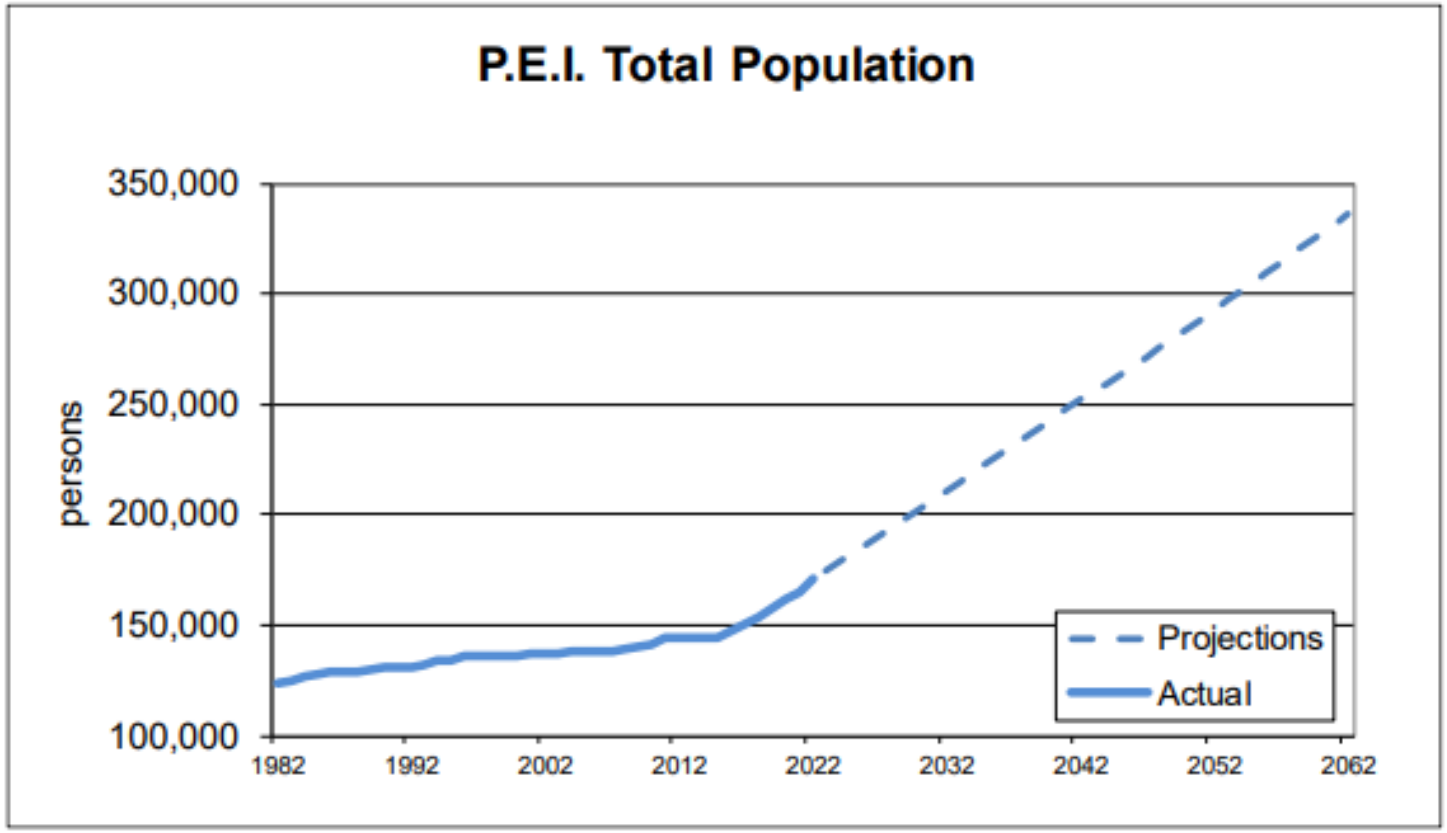
Land Use (Developed Land)



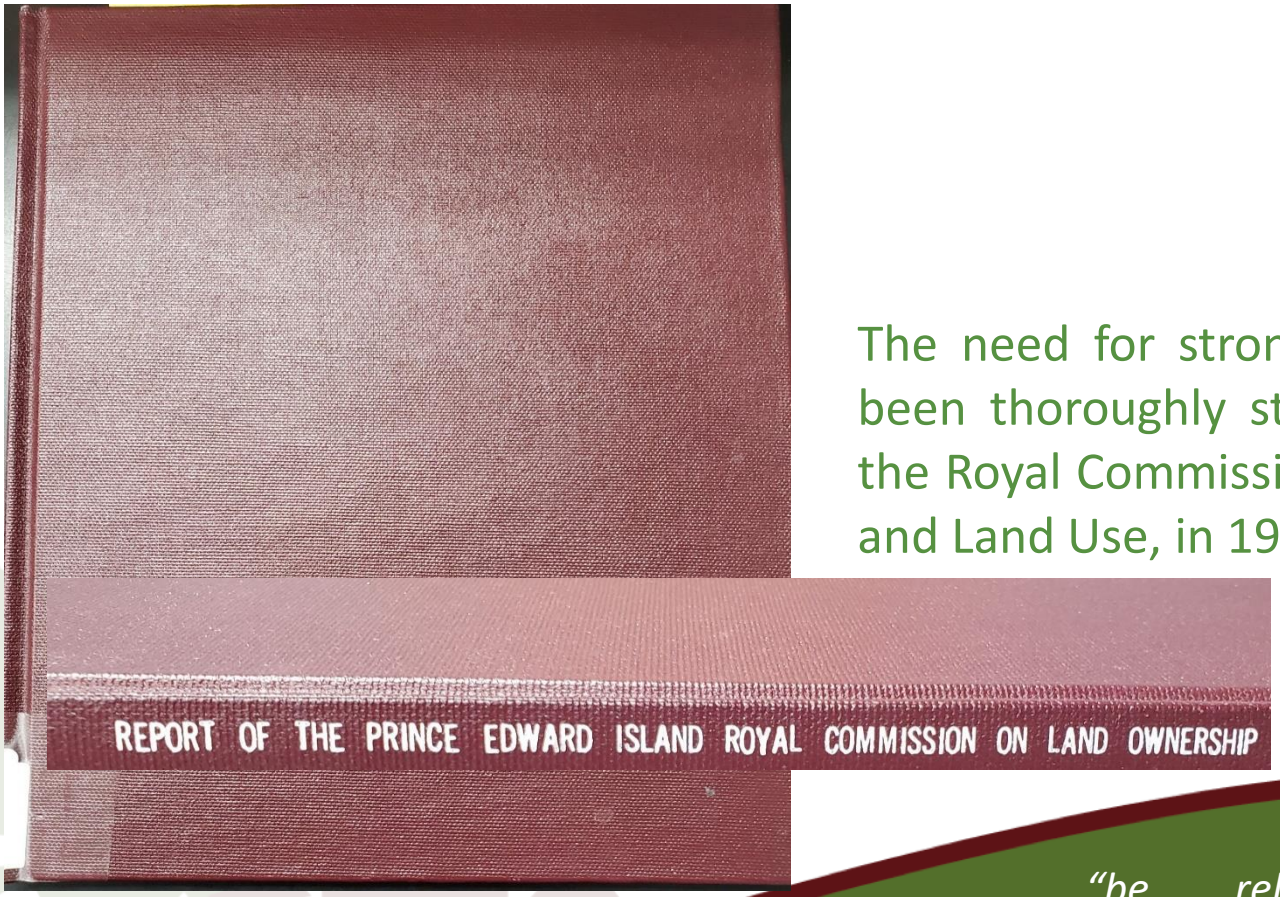
Map of Developed Land in the O'Leary Area



Provincial Population Growth Projection



FPEIM looks forward to the State of the Island report and the work that will follow to develop a modern land use policy framework for PEI.



The need for strong land use policy has been thoroughly studied, beginning with the Royal Commission on Land Ownership and Land Use, in 1973

"be . . . released immediately as a guideline to local community planning efforts and as a basis for broad government decisions with respect to land."

Local Planning: Scope & Challenges

Scope

Municipal planning versus a provincewide land use plan (provincial planning policy framework)

Local land use planning decisions on zoning and development control, including variances permitting

Challenges

Lack of professional planners and development officers

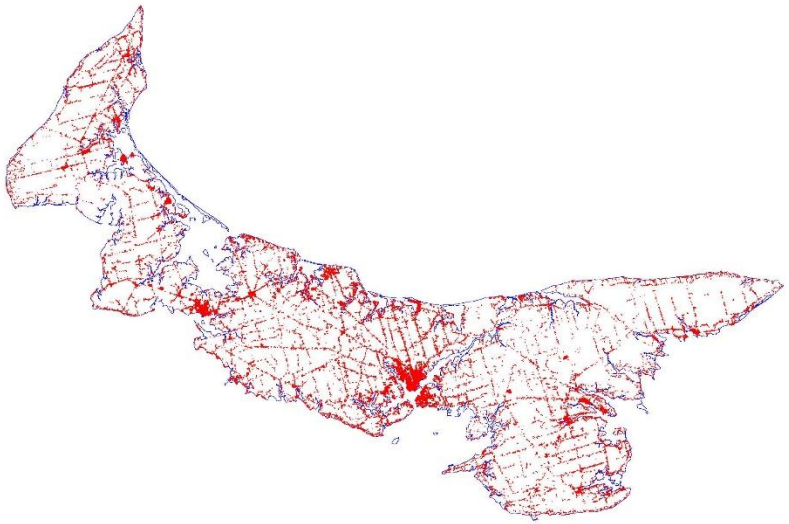
Lack of municipal capacity in developing plans and administering bylaws

IRAC appeals and expensive litigation for municipalities

Implement Interim Measures

FPEIM continues to call on the Government of Prince Edward Island to immediately implement interim measures to control development and protect the land and landscape of the Island while the government develops a province-wide land use plan.

Municipal Boundary Restructuring for Land and Local Governance



- It is time to restructure and introduce a system of municipal governments across PEI, from tip to tip.
- Through municipal planning and zoning bylaws, restructured municipalities will have a vital role in the province-wide land use plan and protect provincial interests.
- Local planning and decision-making will help build communities – rural and urban.
- Restructuring will build municipal capacity (a larger revenue base from sufficient population & assessment) for improved local governance, economic development, infrastructure, and service delivery.
- Water and sewer system management, fire services, emergency measures, and planning can be delivered with public accountability.
- Local climate adaptation and natural asset protection will help the Province achieve its net zero and sustainability goals.

Photo by Scott Anderson

CBC Photo

We cannot restore the scenic landscapes that we have altered or bring back farmland that we have lost. We cannot turn back the clock, but we can do things differently in the future.

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MUNICIPALITIES build Communities