

Growing Together: A Population Framework for Prince Edward Island



Minister's Message

Prince Edward Island (PEI) is known as the smallest province in our nation, and in recent years it has emerged as an ideal place to live, learn, and work. After many years of outward migration, our Island population is now growing each year, and this upward trend is expected to continue for the foreseeable future.

The undeniable socioeconomic benefits of population growth enrich our province and have rewoven the tapestry of our Island identity.

The growth we are experiencing is causing new pressures in infrastructure and public services that PEI has not traditionally encountered.

Our province must align provincial government departments and work with all levels of government, community, and industry partners to meet the immediate needs of the population. Our work must be inclusive, balanced, and responsive to the needs of today and the years to come.

The PEI Population Framework takes a concerted approach to understanding and supporting our growing population. The framework will guide and inform our provincial policies and investments so that we can move appropriately to meet the evolving needs of our residents.

The work we advance as a government must collectively envision an Island that is healthy, safe, and prosperous — a place that everyone can proudly call home.



Hon. Jenn Redmond

Minister, Workforce, Advanced Learning and Population

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The Government of Prince Edward Island acknowledges that the land on which we work is the ancestral land of the Mi’kmaq and we respect the Mi’kmaq as the Indigenous Peoples of PEI.

A Native American man in traditional regalia, including a large feathered headdress and beaded jewelry, is performing a dance in a grassy field. Other dancers in similar regalia are visible in the background, along with several flags, including the American flag and a tribal flag. The scene is set outdoors under a clear sky.

Executive Summary

PEI has emerged as a regional and national leader in population growth, a significant shift from decades of stagnant or declining trends. The province experienced a notable surge in repatriated Island residents, immigrants, and Canadians during and after COVID-19. PEI's five-year growth rate (2018–2023) at 14.1% leads all provinces and territories.¹ At a rate of 3.5%, population growth in 2021–2022 was PEI's highest growth since Confederation.²

PEI continues to experience high population increases. Recent forecasts indicate that this trend will continue, projecting our population to reach 200,000 by the year 2030.

Population growth brings many advantages, including vibrant, multicultural communities and access to skills and talent for our workforce. This framework also recognizes that overall success and prosperity take more than just growth.

The reality of our aging population and retiring workforce is not news to many Island residents. The need for immigration and workforce development has been a focus of successive governments. The rate and success of investments in industry, attraction programs, and the societal shifts witnessed due to the COVID-19 crisis meant that PEI's population grew rapidly.

This population framework serves the purpose of providing a structured and systematic approach to understanding, analyzing, and managing our population. It will help researchers, policymakers, and organizations gather relevant data, identify trends, and make informed decisions related to population dynamics and demographics.

The key themes to shape the direction of the population framework for PEI are:

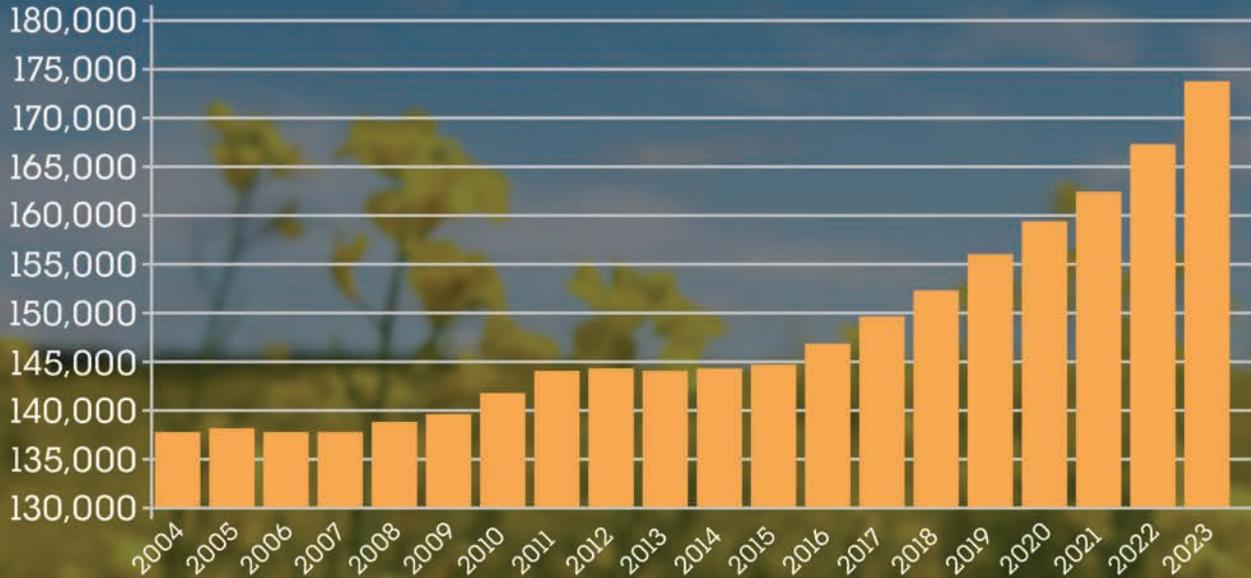
- 1. Expand critical infrastructure and public services;**
- 2. Build and retain PEI's workforce;**
- 3. Support land use planning and environmental sustainability;**
- 4. Enhance community connectedness and a sense of belonging; and**
- 5. Long-term planning and reporting.**



¹ Department of Finance (2023) Prince Edward Island: Population Report 2023, Government of PEI. https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/sites/default/files/publications/pt_pop_rep_0.pdf

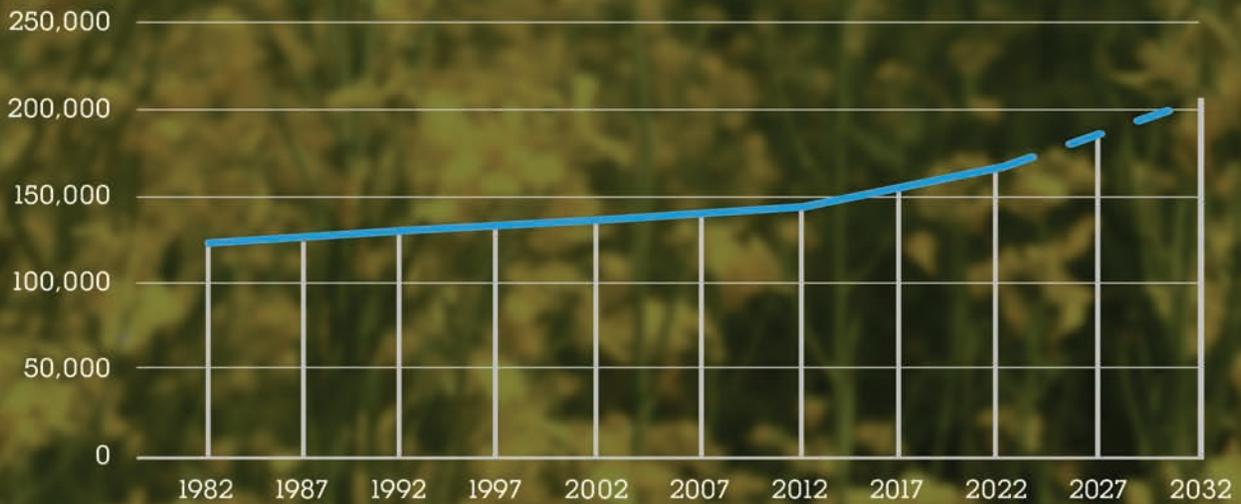
² Statistics Canada (2022) Component of Statistics Canada catalogueno.11-001-X. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/220928/dq220928c-eng.htm>

PEI surpassed its goal of growing the population to over 160,000 by 2022.³ Our province has witnessed global recognition as a place to live, learn and work.



Reference: Prince Edward Island: Population Report 2023

Total Population for PEI



Total population projected to reach 200,000 by 2030

Reference: Diagram 1: Department of Finance, Economics, Statistics & Federal Fiscal Relations (2023)
 Prince Edward Island Population Projections 2023 - 2062, May 2023
https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/sites/default/files/publications/pt_pop_proj.pdf

³ Department of Finance, Statistics and Federal Relations Bureau

A Vision for PEI's Growing Population

Canada's leader in sustainable population growth—where everyone sees meaningful participation and a rewarding future.

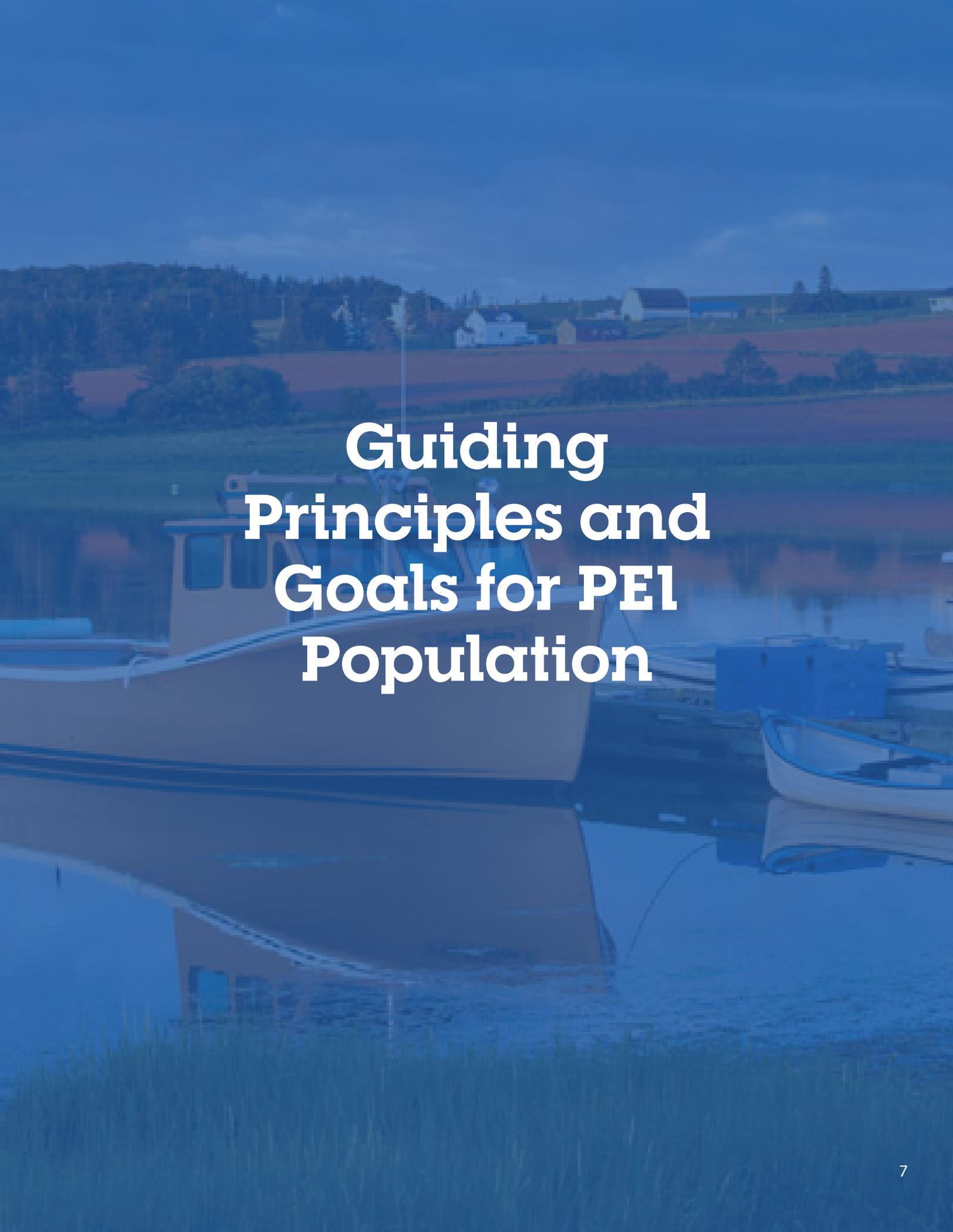
PEI's Population Value Proposition

As Canada's smallest province, we have the ability, agility, and tenacity to make things happen.

PEI's Population Mission

Bring everyone together to support sustainable population growth, considering social, cultural, economic, and environmental perspectives.





Guiding Principles and Goals for PEI Population



Expand Critical Infrastructure and Public Services

Growing our population and public services and supports need to go hand-in-hand to ensure our goals are met. Accessible and quality primary healthcare, education and childcare are fundamental for the well-being of individuals and communities and assist in population retention. Making smart, evidence-based decisions with our population growth will ensure that we can meet our goals.

Build and Retain PEI's Workforce

Prioritizing a skilled workforce is required for our province to maintain industries, small businesses, and essential services. Our programs, offerings, and support systems are geared towards recruiting construction workers, healthcare workers, and physicians, which can be refined and shifted based on population projections.

Support Land Use Planning and Environmental Sustainability

Sustainable development is the cornerstone of long-term prosperity. Our province aims to become Canada's first net-zero province by 2040, and achieving this goal is influenced by our population growth and its effects. By considering environmental, land, social, and economic factors in planning and decision-making, we can ensure our communities grow together in balance with environmental protection.

Enhance Community Connectedness and a Sense of Belonging

Close-knit communities are a fundamental aspect of life on PEI. Building and maintaining community connections is crucial for social cohesion and individual well-being. Encouraging communal activities, supporting local businesses, and creating spaces for shared experiences fosters a sense of belonging.

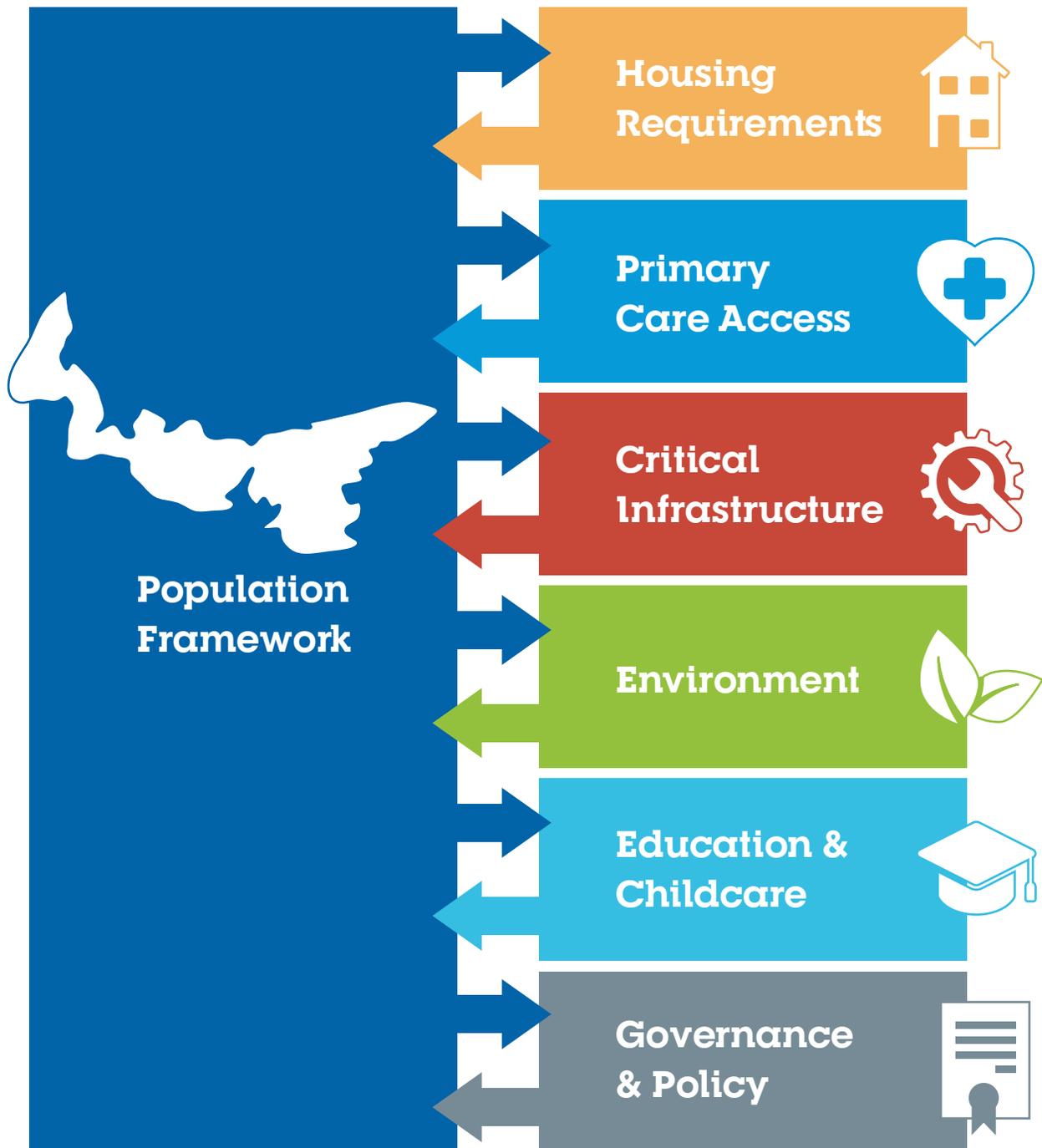
Long-term Planning and Reporting

Being the smallest province in Canada offers a special chance to use data-driven methods in forming our policies on population and public services. A comprehensive understanding of the trends and needs of our residents is essential for developing effective public policies. Regular annual projections and reviews can equip all levels of government and public services with a more precise understanding of our evolving demographics.

PEI's Population Framework: At A Glance

We must make informed decisions to foster successful growth in our province's workforce and population. Our commitment to understanding our population and the ways it is developing will allow us and our other partners to make effective decisions on housing, education resources, social supports, and access to primary care services. This will ensure we are developing in a sustainable manner with infrastructure to accommodate our growth.

As the Government of PEI, our strategies form the basis for addressing housing, access to healthcare, our path to net zero, land use planning, and governance. The PEI Population Framework will be aligned with each strategy and plan to record progress and be adjusted based on real and projected population data.



Goals for Population for PEI

Balanced Growth

Goal: Ensure that population growth is balanced with the needs of the current population and that evidence-based decisions are made in attracting and retaining new residents.

Sustainable Economic Development

Goal: Align population growth with the requirements of targeted sectors to provide employment opportunities and sustainable economic development.

Critical Infrastructure and Services

Goal: Match population growth with the development and maintenance of infrastructure and public services.

Land Use Planning and Environmental Sustainability

Goal: Encourage population growth while being mindful of environmental sustainability through land use, emissions controls, and climate adaptation.

Cultural and Social Integration

Goal: Welcome new residents and help them integrate into the local community to promote inclusion and a sense of belonging.

These goals for the population development of PEI are interconnected, and achieving a balance requires coordination and collaboration among various stakeholders, including all levels of government, businesses, community organizations, and residents.

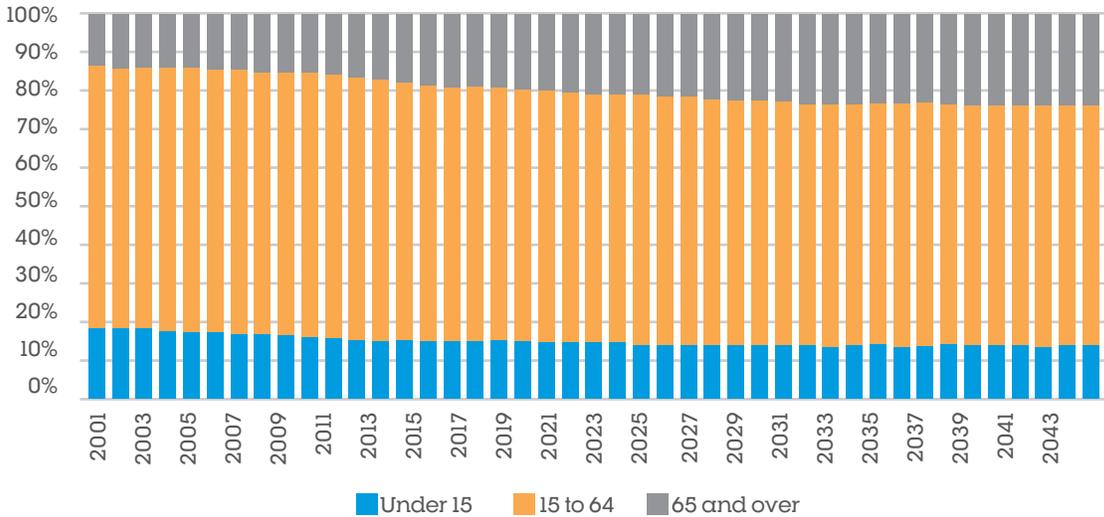


Why We Need Population Growth

PEI is committed to focusing on population development as the Island’s demographics have consequential impacts on the delivery and availability of public programs, services and infrastructure needs for our residents.

The Island's aging population and decreasing birth rates are significant factors in our shifting demographics. One of the most immediate impacts of these demographic changes is felt on our workforce. With these population trends, we won't be able to meet the demand for skills and labour.

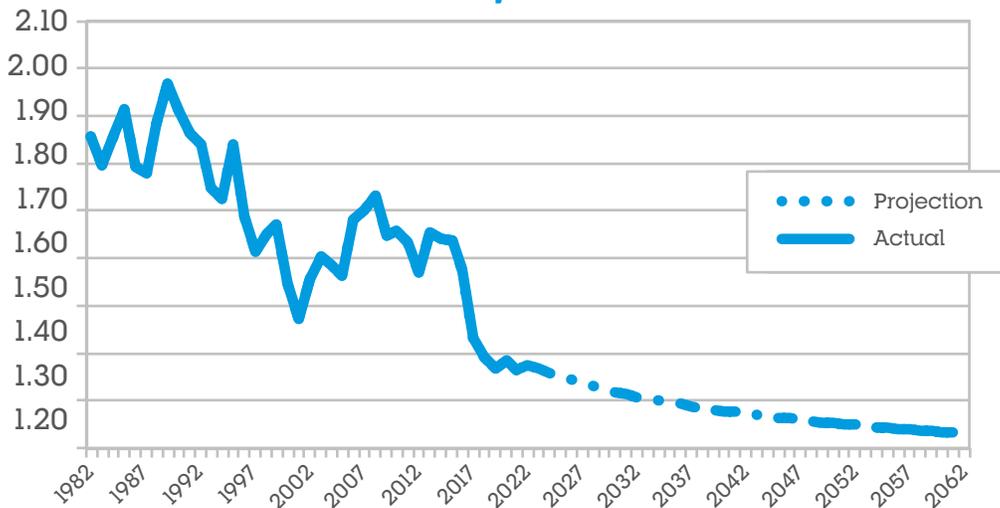
Age Distribution



Reference: Canadian Centre for Economic Analysis (CANCEA) (2023), Modelling Projections of Population & Age Distribution

Island residents are having fewer children. Since the 1990s, the natural increase (births minus deaths) has been declining and has been negative for five of the last six years.⁴

Fertility Rate

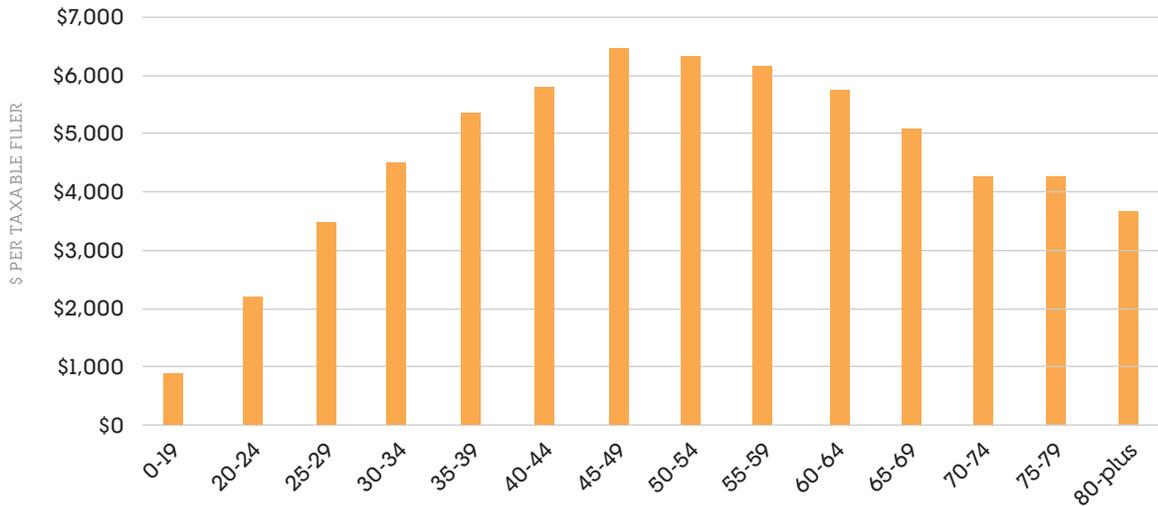


Reference: Prince Edward Island: Population Report 2023

⁴ Prince Edward Island: Population Report 2023
https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/sites/default/files/publications/pt_pop_rep_0.pdf

We must recruit and build the number of employees and businesses contributing to our tax base to support our critical infrastructures and services. By actively recruiting individuals in key sectors, especially during their peak earning years, it will allow them to contribute to the tax base required to support our public systems such as healthcare, long-term care, social supports and education.

Net PEI Income Tax by Age Range: 2021



ALL RETURNS BY AGE AND GENDER (ALL ITEMS ARE IN THOUSANDS OF DOLLARS)

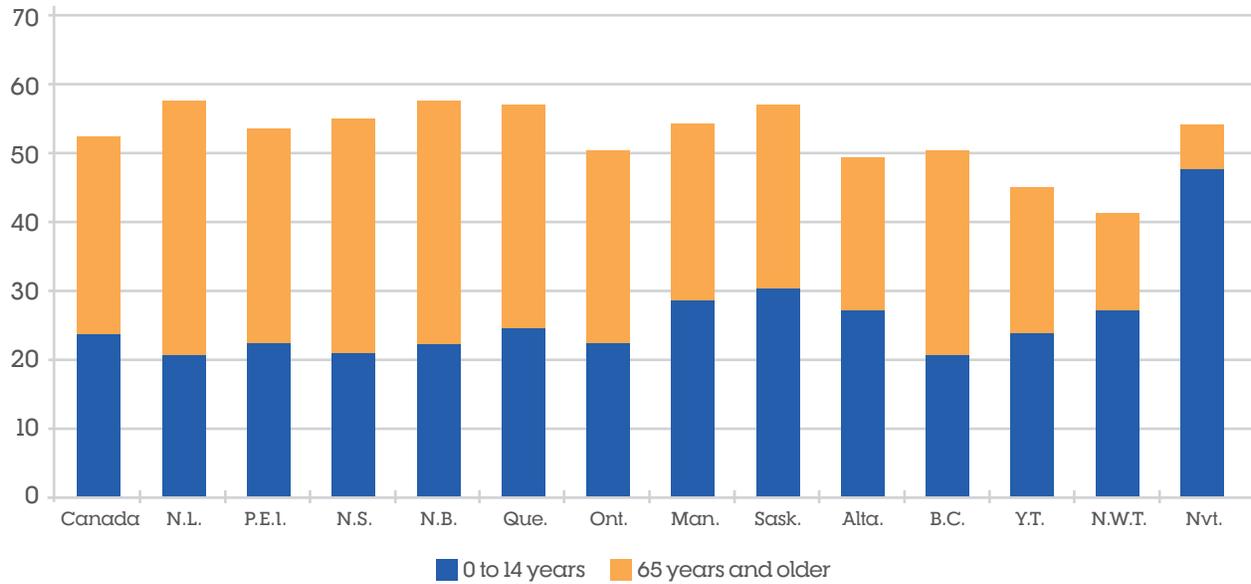
Reference: Canada Revenue Agency (2023) Table 4 for Prince Edward Island, Income Statistics (2021 Tax Year).
Canada Revenue Agency.

Essentially, without attracting and retaining residents from other provinces and countries, a smaller portion of our population will be tasked with supporting our residents through tax revenue. This, in turn, could result in reduced services and opportunities for growth. To ensure the sustainability of our industries and services, our population requires a vibrant, youthful, and trained workforce.



Demographic Dependency Ratio, 2022, Canada, Provinces and Territories

per 100 persons aged 15 to 64 years

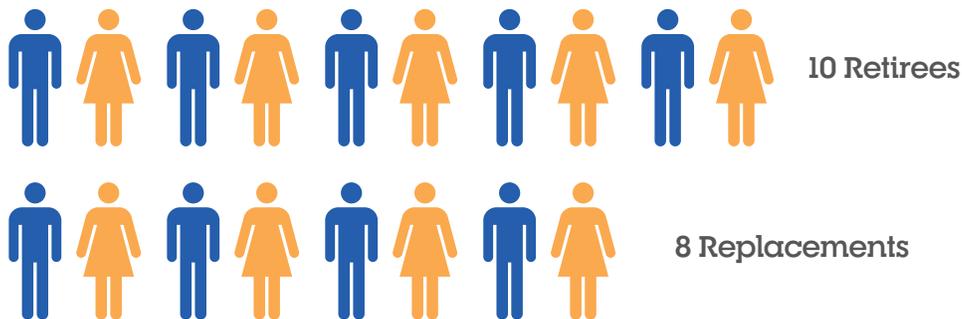


Reference: Statistics Canada (2023) Chart 2.4, Annual Demographic Estimates: Canada, Provinces and Territories, 2022, Statistics Canada.

What's the Dependency Ratio?

The dependency ratio measures the number of dependents, meaning youth (birth to age 14) and those over 65, compared with the total working population (aged 15 to 64). This demographic indicator offers insight into the number of people who are of non-working age compared with those of working age.

The dependency rate shows the government the number of people who can legally and adequately work in our industries and contribute to the tax structure that supports public services and infrastructure. While PEI does not have the highest dependency ratio, it's important to note that our province has more residents over the age of 65 than youth. At our current pace, for every 10 retirees, we have eight individuals entering the workforce.



The image is a composite of two scenes. The left side shows an aerial view of a coastal town with a large hotel building featuring the Delta logo, a marina with many sailboats, and various residential buildings. The right side shows a rural farm scene with a tractor pulling a plow in a field, a barn, and trees in the background. The entire image has a blue tint.

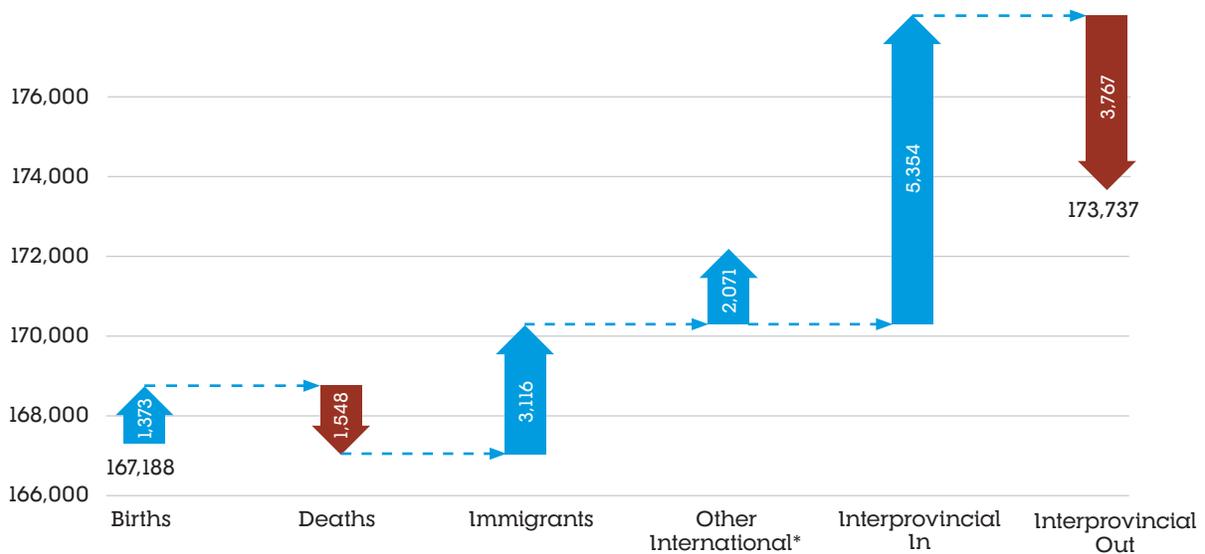
Current Population

As of October 31, 2023, PEI's population was estimated to reach over 175,000, representing a yearly increase of 6,707 persons, or a 4% annual growth rate.

While this growth has created pressure on our systems, it has also allowed our industries to grow, creating a strong economy and sustaining essential services.

Understanding growth involves considering various factors such as: births, deaths, interprovincial migration, immigration, international students, and temporary workers. While population projections offer some insights, it's also important to emphasize these individual components to ensure we can adjust effectively based on age and other demographic needs.

PEI Components of Growth, July 1, 2022 - June 30, 2023



*Other International = 2,098 Net Non-Permanent Residents - 260 Emigrants + 233 Returning Canadians

Reference: Prince Edward Island: Population Report 2023

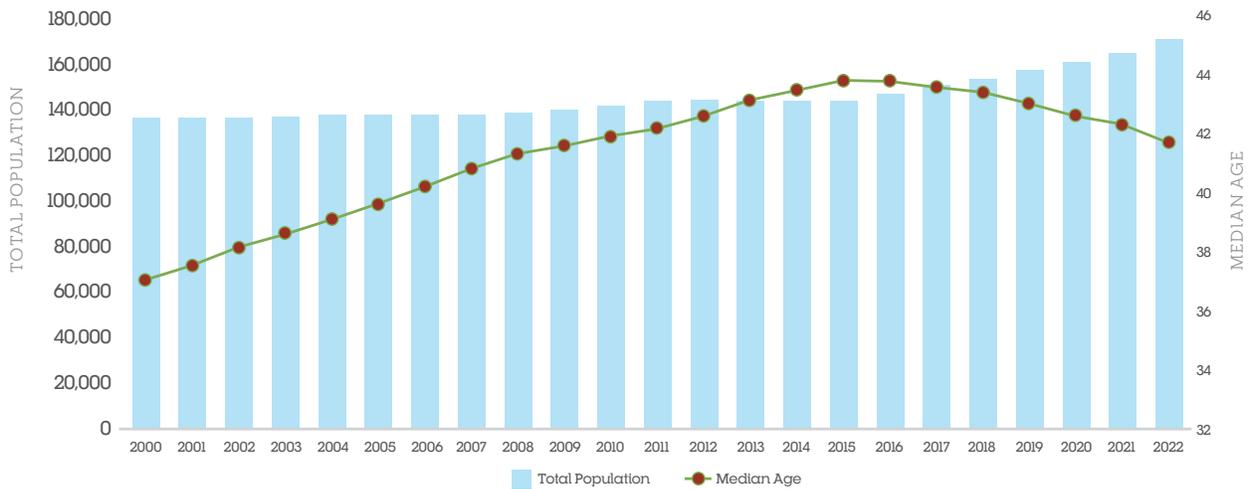


Shifting Tides

Canadians see PEI as a destination where they can have a thriving career while enjoying quality of life. The Island's natural assets and tight-knit communities have attracted new residents from all areas of Canada.

Between July 1, 2022, and June 30, 2023, PEI had an estimated net interprovincial migration of +1,587 people (5,354 in-migrants minus 3,767 out-migrants). This is the eighth consecutive year of positive net inter-provincial migration since 2015-16. Prior to that year, PEI only had one year of positive net inter-provincial migration from 2004-05 to 2014-15. The most significant net migration was from Ontario (2,783 new residents from Ontario, with 1,620 of our residents moving to Ontario).

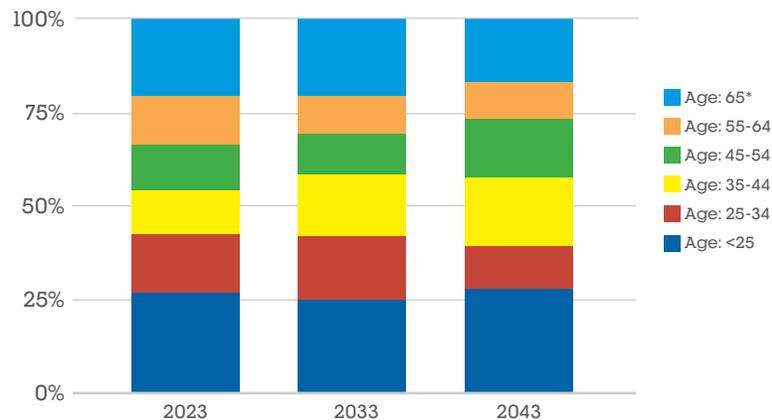
Age of PEI's Population



Reference: Statistics Canada (2022) Table 17-10-0005-01 Population estimates on July 1st, by age and sex. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1710000501>

As we've seen since 2017, a rise in immigration has an impact on the median age. Over the past decade, 70% of PEI immigrants have been under the age of 40. The notable increase of new Island residents under the age of 40 has contributed to a reduction in the median age. Despite this positive shift, the senior population continues to be the fastest-growing age group on the Island.

Population Projections Based on Age Group



Reference: Statistics Canada (2022) Table 17-10-0005-01 Population estimates on July 1st, by age and sex.



Considerations for Population Growth

PEI, like other regions, is now grappling with pressures such as housing availability, access to primary care, early learning and child care, and pressures on educational infrastructure and programming. However, it's essential to acknowledge that population growth also brings about positive impacts. A growing population can contribute to economic development, cultural diversity, and a broader talent pool.

Moreover, increased population can lead to higher demand for goods and services. Potentially, it fosters innovation and creates new opportunities for business. Balancing the pressures with the benefits of population growth is crucial for fostering a sustainable and thriving community in PEI.

Expand Critical Infrastructure and Public Services

Developed concurrently with this Population Framework, PEI's Housing Strategy – *Building Together* – will guide the provincial vision over the next five years. Like other jurisdictions, the PEI housing market has tightened, leading to pressures with access to adequate, affordable, and suitable housing. It is critical that the PEI Government, along with many partners, work to address the current housing market situation and pressures, while meeting continued growth in demand.

Building Together focuses on **acceleration** to facilitate the growth of housing supply, **affordability** to provide more options for low- and medium-income Island residents, and **vulnerability** to support those who are most in need. Provincial efforts complement other federal and municipal initiatives and help encourage development to increase housing supply, facilitate housing that is affordable, and provide complementary social supports.

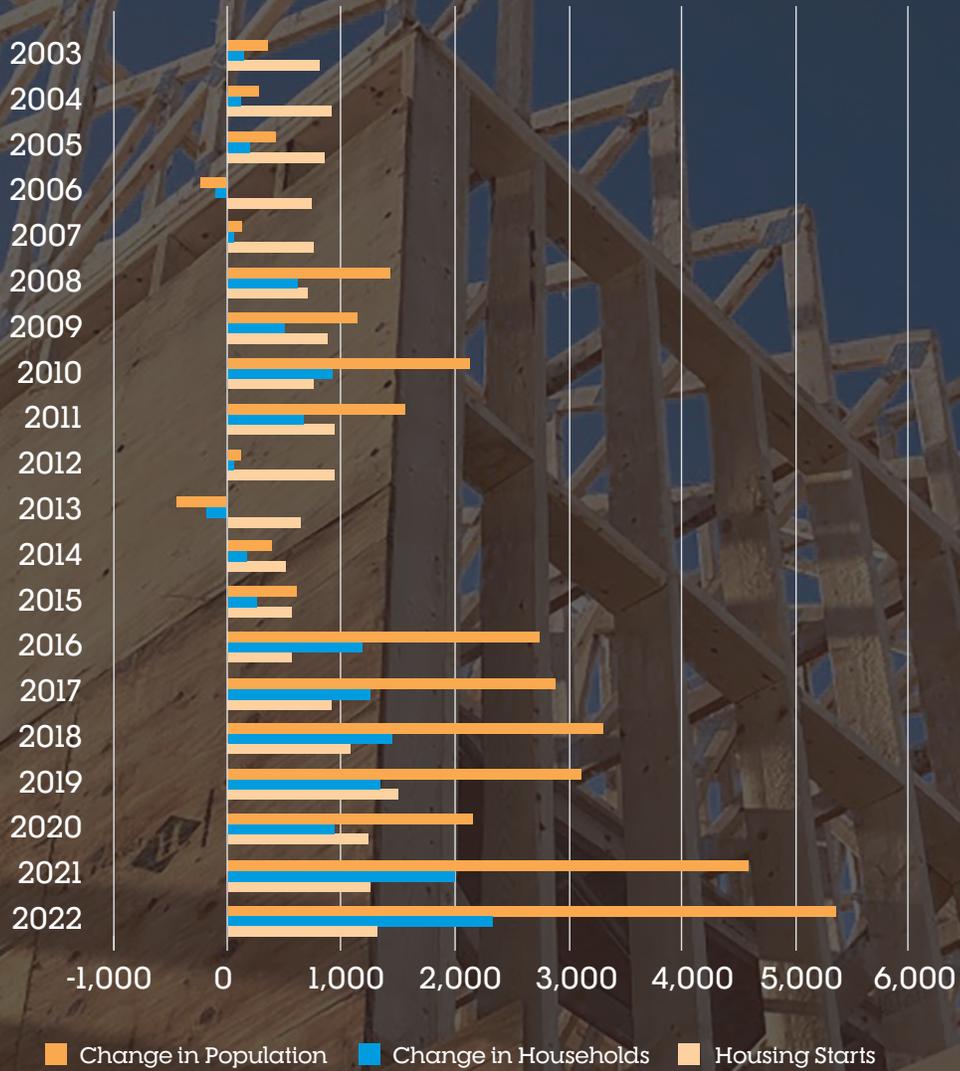
Specifically, there is a need to prioritize the following:

- Building new inventory to accommodate the anticipated shorter and longer-term population growth;
- Working towards narrowing the gap between housing starts and population growth; and
- Adding to the availability of supportive housing and affordable housing to ensure all Island residents have a place to call home.

This housing strategy identifies the need for an average of 2,000 more homes per year between now and 2030.



Increase in Population, Households, and Housing Start



Reference: Statistics Canada (2023). Table 17-10-0009-01.

Critical Infrastructure and Public Services

Our municipalities have grown much faster than they have traditionally. While many welcome and appreciate new residents and the increased capacity for essential services like schools and community centres — this rapid growth demands additional capacity to sustain development.

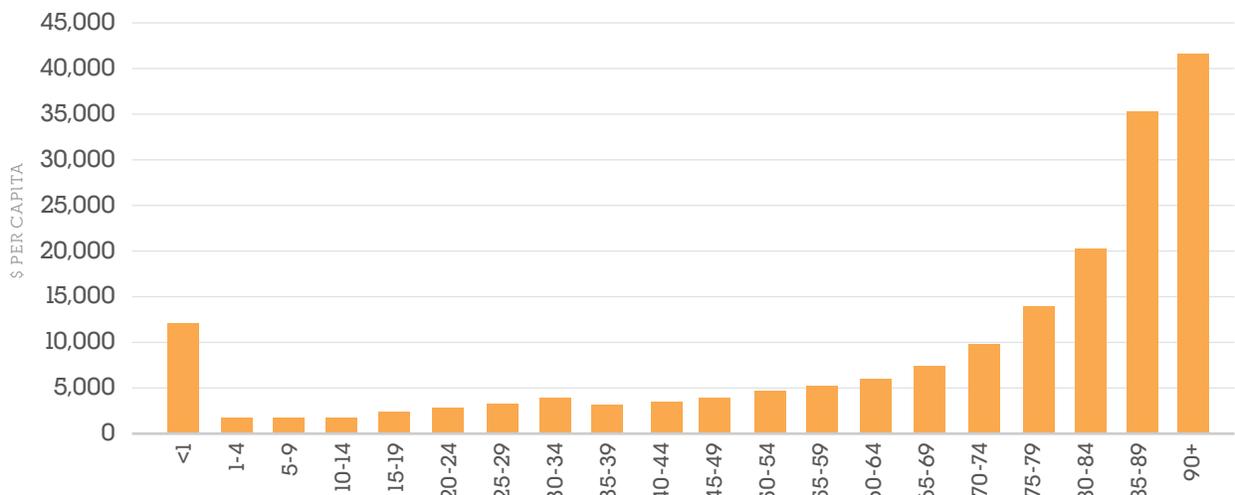
Additionally, the transportation pressure on roadways, public transportation, and active transportation routes needs to be addressed in both rural and urban communities. The expectation for access to public transit and its connectivity is higher for people moving to PEI from more urban or larger centres.

Beyond transportation, population growth will continue to have an impact on infrastructure like waste management, water and sewer systems, emergency response, courts, correctional facilities and community correctional demands, and the energy system that will require all levels of government to coordinate and build for our changing population.

Health & Healthcare

Ensuring all Island residents have equitable access to achieving the best health possible and access to healthcare is critical. PEI will have a population based approach to wellness, to decrease the risks factors associated with chronic diseases in PEI. It will be even more important than ever to focus on prevention of disease, and enhancing wellness, so we can have a health care system that is sustainable for the future of Island residents. The current health care system in PEI and across our country was built to serve a smaller demographic and needs to evolve to meet the needs of Island residents. How we provide care, where we provide care, and who provides the care must be modernized to accommodate the current demands of the system.

PEI Dept. of Health Expenditures by Age: 2021



Reference: Canadian Institute for Health Information (2023) National Health Expenditure Trends. Table E.3.26.1 Provincial/Territorial Government other institutions expenditure by age and sex in millions of current dollars by province/territory and Canada, 2021.

To address these strains on our healthcare systems, a new model of healthcare should be explored. Island residents should have access to a collaborative, team-based healthcare system in all communities, regardless of size or location. PEI is slated to be the first in Canada to implement this model of care province-wide, which will work to make our province an enticing place for healthcare practitioners to work.

PEI will continue to provide publicly funded immunization programs, and cover the costs of drugs, vaccines, investigations and treatment programs for communicable diseases to all Island residents and newcomers.

PEI will continue to provide services including newcomers immunization clinics and a public health latent tuberculosis clinic.

PEI will be expanding harm reduction services such as the naloxone take home program (THN).

PEI will be enhancing programs such as the smoking and vaping cessation program to help all Island residents.

Legislative and policy changes will be reviewed in terms of food premises, rental accommodation and child care and long term care/community care inspections.

Examples of Current and Future Health Initiatives:

- **Renewing the primary care system, with up to 30 Patient Medical Homes across the province by the end of 2024, offering more options for Island residents to access primary care;**
- **Making a record investment in health human resources, hiring more doctors, registered nurses (RNs) and licensed practical nurses (LPNs), social workers, and allied health professionals;**
- **Easing pressure on Emergency Departments by reducing off-load delays, adding care providers and patient advocates in waiting rooms, and integrating Physician Assistants and Nurse Practitioners;**
- **Preparing the provincial health system to train medical students and increase opportunities for residencies, fellowships, and locums;**
- **Offering free tuition for students training to become resident care workers (RCWs), LPNs, RNs, and Paramedics; and**
- **Reducing barriers to recognizing credentials of foreign-trained healthcare practitioners, including launching an Associate Physician license.**

Modernizing our healthcare system involves increasing investments in community services such as primary care, home care, services care, and mental health and addiction services. This ensures timely access for all PEI residents. These initiatives include launching the Patient Medical Homes and Medical Neighbourhood models, the Flexible Assertive Community Treatment (FACT) Teams, virtual care and the Pharmacy Plus program.

Build and Retain PEI's Workforce

As noted above, retirements have been brought about by demographic shifts, resulting in skills and labour gaps across various sectors. To ensure the success of both workers and industries, it is crucial to focus on attracting and investing in skills, training, and career pathways. Additionally, it is essential to prioritize inclusivity by providing equal opportunities for underrepresented individuals and addressing community needs.

Examples of Current and Future Initiatives to meet PEI's Labour Market Needs:

- Collaborating with industry groups to create sector-specific workforce development approaches, and addressing skills and labour needs through training, upskilling, reskilling and recruitment.
- Partnering with post-secondary institutions and stakeholders to enhance education access for equity-deserving groups, expanding skills and career opportunities.
- Supporting mobility and credentialing, including upskilling and reskilling for workers, to provide learning pathways for their full potential.
- Working with community partners to increase the participation of underrepresented individuals from equity-deserving groups in the workforce.
- Collaborating with industries to develop recruitment strategies, supporting reentry into the workforce for seniors, retirees, and new residents.
- Facilitating opportunities for employers to build diverse workforces and inclusive workplace cultures.
- Exploring avenues in collaboration with the federal government to utilize temporary and permanent resident streams, and addressing employer and worker needs.



Attraction and Retention:

In a competitive labour market, engaging strategies are essential for attracting and retaining talent, including youth, post-secondary graduates, and new residents. The Government of PEI is committed to:

Assisting youth in navigating career development and advancement opportunities, facilitating transitions from school to the workforce.

Encouraging private sector involvement in experiential learning through partnerships with K-12 and post-secondary education.

Strengthening partnerships with post-secondary institutions like the University of Prince Edward Island, the Atlantic Veterinary College, Holland College, and Collège de l'île. This aims to highlight pathways to permanent residency for international students.

Expanding support for new residents across the Island, aiding them in navigating housing, early learning and child care, and transportation to establish a new home in PEI.

Support Land Use Planning and Environmental Sustainability

Land Use

Population growth and land use are intrinsically interlinked. They drive each other, shaping how space is allocated for residential, agricultural, forests, wetlands, and future protected areas, industrial, and recreational purposes. The pressures on our province's land have prompted the creation of The State of the Island report, set to be released in 2024. The increasing demand for housing is driving urban expansion into farmlands, elevating the cost of agricultural land and hindering new entrants into agriculture.

Land Use	2020 Area (ha)	2020 Area (%)	Change from 2010 (2020 % - 2010 %)
Forest	245,919	43.2	-0.71
Agriculture	213,908	37.6	-0.18
Non-evident / Abandoned	21,943	3.9	-0.06
Wetland and Sand Dunes	28,788	5.1	0.36
Wet Forest	12,492	2.2	-0.02
Transportation	12,991	2.3	0.03
Other	32,978	5.8	0.58
Total	569,019		

Reference: Table 1. Land use areas for 2020. Prince Edward Island State of the Forest Report 2020.

Beyond agricultural land concerns, population growth triggers the need for additional services, schools, and roads, further utilizing land and changing its purpose. Striking a balance between our growing population's needs and sustainable land use practices is crucial to reduce negative consequences.

The aforementioned State of the Island report is set to be released by the Department of Housing, Land and Communities later this year. It will provide a foundation baseline for measuring the current state of population, economic growth and natural assets. Following this report, the department will be working towards modernizing provincial planning. This will include a comprehensive engagement process, releasing a province-wide land use plan by 2026. This will include a comprehensive engagement process, releasing a province-wide land use plan, updating the Planning Act and other associated regulations and policies. It also involves developing new and comprehensive regulations or policies to support the Land Use Plan.

Beyond the strain on our land and critical infrastructure, population shifts need to consider the strain and recovery of these systems in the face of climate change and increased natural disasters.

Our province is committed to leading the country in reaching net zero by 2040. The pathway to net zero will require our government to closely monitor the development of our communities, industry, and infrastructure. Population growth will also need to be monitored in relation to projections of greenhouse gases. Our emergency planning and climate adaptations will need to be aligned with our population projections, ensuring that as we grow, we take into account current and future climate change impacts.

Growth in PEI's Largest Communities

From census 2016 to census 2021



Reference: Statistics Canada (2021), 2021 Census of Population: Table 2: Census Counts for PEI Census Divisions and Subdivisions, 2021 and 2016. <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/dp-pd/prof/index.cfm?Lang=E>.

Examples of Current and Future Environment Initiatives:

- Path to Net Zero Energy by 2030 and Net Zero Province by 2040.
- Through the Province’s Reception Centre Resiliency Fund, eligible community groups and municipalities can access funding for generators to support designated reception centres in their communities.
- Development of Community Renewable Energy to increase on-Island energy generation.

Enhance Community Connectedness and a Sense of Belonging

Population growth has led to increased diversity, bringing a richness of perspectives, traditions, and customs to our province. While we grow and welcome new residents to our Island, fostering a sense of community and belonging is crucial to maintaining and extending our community connections.

Enhancing initiatives that promote social cohesion, cultural exchange, and inclusivity can assist in improving retention. Furthermore, addressing issues related to housing, healthcare, and quality of life can make it more likely that individuals and families will choose to remain in PEI.

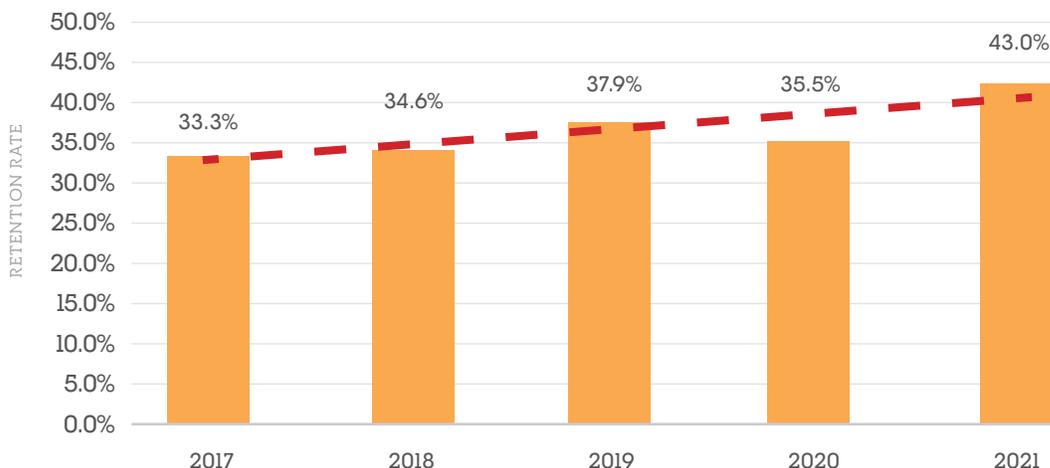
Retention

PEI has the lowest retention rate in Canada but has started to show signs of improvement.

One key approach to improving retention is to invest in education and skill development programs to improve employability. Matching our population with the skills and jobs required to meet employment needs, enhancing professional development, and recognizing foreign credentials would all help to create a more resilient workforce that would create growth opportunities in PEI.

A focus on creating a sense of belonging facilitated through government and community programs has contributed to increased retention of all new residents during their initial three years on PEI. Continued efforts aimed at building connections and providing meaningful employment opportunities will help to instill a sense of community and strengthen retention rates.

Three-Year PEI Immigration Retention Rates 2017-2021



Reference: Statistics Canada (2022) Longitudinal Immigration Database (IMDB) 5057 immigration information from Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, taxation data from the Canada Revenue Agency, and the date of death from the Canadian Mortality Database.

Examples of Current and Future Initiatives to Support Growing and Retaining a Diverse Population:

- Increase the total number of Early Years Centres to 78 by the end of 2024.
- Launch and operationalize priorities identified in the Early Years Inclusion Strategy in 2024.
- Continue to revise programming and invest in new positions to support emerging and changing needs within the public education system.
- Increase Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour (BIPOC) and diverse representation in all critical sectors and programming.
- Ensure settlement and community organizations, including in rural areas, are adequately supported to deliver appropriate, responsive, and quality services to newcomers which is aligned to the province's future growth.



Long-term Planning and Reporting for PEI Population



In response to PEI's population growth, measuring, understanding and predicting demographic trends and changes will be critical for all departments, levels of government and our communities to adapt and change. We are small and able to be a leader in understanding our population to make informed decisions for investments and programs.

The Government of PEI is working with Canadian Centre for Economic Analysis (CANCEA), Canada's largest and most integrated socio-economic simulation platform, to have a real-time, evidence-informed understanding of policies, programs, and investments in our province. Government departments are actively refining this important tool to enable respective areas to plan, analyze, refine, and reform future decisions alongside population shifts.

The CANCEA Analytics Platform gives our government access to over 800 datasets that demonstrate how a single policy decision can affect disciplines such as:

- **Housing policy and affordability;**
- **Labour force, skills, and economic development;**
- **Land use planning policies;**
- **Community well-being and social value; and,**
- **Government services and capital planning.**

The simulator provides a complete view of the necessary operational components of new or changing policy, along with other impacts to related government policy, programs, and services. The data generated by the simulator will allow government to determine the probability of success of new or changed policy, programs and services and ultimately support evidence-based decisions.

By utilizing tools such as the CANCEA platform, programs and policies can be informed by projected outcomes. As we adapt to the dynamics of our changing population, it is crucial to make prudent, financially sound decisions.



Actions for PEI Population Framework

Workforce Development

Working alongside our private sector partners to understand needs and future projections, our work is to attract and retain the skilled labour required to continue to support and grow our Island's economy and critical infrastructure and programs.

- Dedicate investments to support capacity building with organizations and employers to provide diverse and inclusive workplaces.
- Increase the number of experiential learning opportunities with the private sector.
- Refocus provisional immigration streams to address workforce needs in critical sectors and high-demand occupations.

Province-Wide Population Modelling

Evaluating and analyzing various population growth scenarios using the modelling and planning tool will help make informed policies and investments related to housing, education, the workforce, health, and other needs.

- Ensuring that planning and policy decisions consider and reflect PEI's changing demographics and the needs of all residents.
- Developing key metrics and indicators to monitor and measure progress to ensure support and public services can keep pace with growth.
- Using the planning tool data, indicators, and scenarios to help all levels of government, industries, and community organizations create a shared vision and coordinated response to PEI's growth.
- Collaborating with municipalities and other key stakeholders to investigate the possibility of expanding the modelling and planning tools to reflect municipal-level impacts.



Measurement and Reporting Plan

Measurement and reporting are crucial for accountability and transparency, allowing the government to adapt its priorities and investments accordingly.

- **Developing a cross-government committee responsible for this framework to ensure focus and alignment of actions and priorities across government. This includes regular reports to a committee of deputy and cabinet ministers.**
- **Ensuring regular communication and reporting to the public and stakeholders on key metrics and progress, including an online dashboard.**
- **Exploring mechanisms and data availability to monitor social and economic indicators and encourage engagement in planning and decision-making from all levels of government, industries, and community organizations.**

Current and Future Initiatives to support Long-term Planning and Reporting:

- **A publicly accessible dashboard updated on a quarterly basis, including information from the province-wide population modelling tool.**
- **Annual publication of progress related to this framework, including key metrics and government action items.**
- **Formalized committees and structures to ensure the Government of PEI works closely with external stakeholders.**



Conclusion

PEI's population is growing, and with growth comes both opportunities and pressures.

We know the work ahead is significant, and we will rise to this challenge together.

We need a healthy, sustainable, and skilled workforce to meet the current and future demands on our public services and infrastructure.

We need evidence-based data to make informed decisions for public policy, programs, services, and other investments to serve the people of PEI.

We need strategic and timely collaboration across multiple levels of government, industry and community to ensure our growth is in-step and adaptive to shifting demographic changes.

Growing together means we will ensure PEI remains an ideal place to live, learn, and work.



Appendix 1: Overview of Community Engagement Feedback

Approach

In developing the Population Framework, multiple forms of research were conducted to underpin the analysis. Critical elements of the planning process were outreach and engagement, including working sessions with industry stakeholders and community organizations, online surveys, interviews, and in-person “Capstone” planning sessions.

This engagement was strengthened by researching socio-economic trends, best practices, relevant initiatives currently underway or under consideration, and secondary research. The analysis included:

- A survey conducted by UPEI Island Studies Faculty with current and former residents.
- A review and assessment of the ambitious initiatives already underway in PEI.
- A review of federal and provincial policy initiatives.

PEI hosted two rounds of strategic working sessions and fourteen virtual working sessions with stakeholders and partners. Over 160 participants were invited, and 85 individuals participated in the sessions. Their input was strengthened by a widely shared online survey that generated 65 responses. Finally, four in-person capstone planning sessions involving approximately 80 participants concluded the engagement methodology. Strategic analysis to support the framework also involved evaluating the province's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats in terms of population.

What We Heard

Through the dynamic discussions on population the stakeholders, partners, and rights holders shared their insights on the province's value, strengths, gaps, and hopes for the future. These insights are explored in the following sections:

Province-Wide Land Management Plan

Land management planning for the Island was raised at several sessions as a significant barrier to sustainable growth for PEI. On this topic, the significance of considering the collective interest of all residents was emphasized.

Though land use reform is complex, many look to the Province for leadership. Participants stressed the urgency for the Province to act quickly as PEI's population continues to grow, raising the stakes to protect better agriculture and forested lands, coastal areas, and environmentally sensitive areas while focusing on sustainable and safe growth for the province.

Municipal and Local Governance

Smaller municipalities report struggling to meet planning demands and support local population growth. Alternatively, larger municipalities are growing rapidly and shared that they don't always have the resources to keep pace with the growing population.

Regardless of size or incorporation status, all communities contribute to the Island's vitality.

Infrastructure

While population growth is welcome, there were widespread concerns about the province's infrastructure being able to keep up with the growth. Currently, there is pressure on various types of infrastructure in PEI.

Housing Availability

The limited availability of housing across the Island was raised at every engagement session. There was a clear recognition that more housing is required to support population growth.

Population growth presents housing as the most significant challenge for PEI. While the shortage impacts all housing types, there are opportunities in densification (e.g., having more housing in smaller areas, like multi-unit buildings) and expanding rental supply.

Healthcare

Growing healthcare capacity was seen as the province's most important opportunity to support PEI population growth (scoring 2.86 out of 4 on the survey). The Island's aging population has apparent implications for healthcare. Experts also shared that new residents' unique and, at times, acute health needs may require special attention. Despite pressures in health service delivery, some progress was acknowledged, like UPEI's new medical school and collaborative community care models in patient medical homes.

Education, Early Learning and Child Care

Participants mentioned the need for the public school system to accommodate the increasing school-age population. The unique needs of new resident students, such as English and French as Additional Language students, were also acknowledged. At the same time, there was a recognition that the province has a robust education system on which to build.

Participants also raised Early Learning and Child Care access as a concern. Limited access to Early Learning and Child Care prevents some parents from participating in the workforce. Early Learning and Child Care inaccessibility are felt more acutely by vulnerable segments of the population—women, lower-income families, and members of equity-deserving groups—creating additional barriers to social inclusion.

Transportation

Participants reflected that transportation is vital, particularly for youth, new residents, and members of equity-deserving groups who are more likely to require public transportation options. In the survey, public transport ranked among the top priorities to support population growth. Investment in high-quality transportation infrastructure was broadly identified as a priority.

The growing importance of promoting active transportation—such as walking, cycling, scootering, and so on—was raised by participants during several engagement sessions.

Youth

The importance of youth retention and attraction resonated throughout the engagement. It ranked third among twenty opportunities to support PEI's population growth. At the same time, youth and young families were central in many participants' visions for PEI. The pressures experienced by many PEI residents were often felt more acutely by PEI youth as they embarked on the early stages of their careers. Numerous examples of PEI youth leaving the province to access more meaningful, better-paying work were shared. Youth attraction and retention are critical to supporting the next generation of leaders for the province, bringing with them a fresh perspective, innovation, and vitality.

New Residents

There was unanimous recognition of the societal and economic contributions of new residents as well as the critical role that immigrants play in the future of PEI. Immigrants play a key role in shaping PEI's modern identity, contributing to the renowned tenacity and work ethic of its residents. They fill labor gaps in crucial industries and services where local supply falls short, supporting ongoing growth in economic, social, and cultural diversity. Participants universally endorsed the importance of retaining international graduates from the Island's post-secondary institutions to help address these labour shortages and foster inclusion.

Opportunities to further enhance overall new resident retention were also highlighted during the engagement outreach. Participants acknowledged that retention would improve with greater advancement opportunities for new residents. Additionally, they focused on addressing the pressures experienced more acutely by new residents and international students, such as public transportation, housing, and underemployment.

Labour Market Development

Participants highlighted a need to support traditional sectors like farming and fishing. They also embraced economic opportunities in fields like bioscience, cleantech, aerospace and defence, advanced manufacturing, and creative industries. At the core of labour market development is nurturing a future-focused workforce.

Employers and sector representatives consistently reported that their most pressing priority was recruitment and retention. Though immigration efforts are achieving considerable success in attracting and retaining new Canadians to help alleviate labour pressures, further efforts warrant sustained, ongoing attention.

PEI's labour shortage is further impacted by lower labour market participation rates among some demographic groups. Encouraging and supporting inclusion in the workforce supports greater economic independence and success for individuals. It is also a way to address labour shortages.

The concept of "catalytic labour market development" emerged in the discussions. The concept means prioritizing skills that will make the most significant impact on the Island's growth and would further unlock growth potential. The catalytic labour market includes sectors like building trades to address the housing shortage and healthcare workers to improve access to care.

Views on growth opportunities in entry-level positions varied. Some felt upward mobility and personal growth could be challenging, particularly for new residents, while others believed PEI provided substantial opportunities for career advancement.

Cultural Vitality and Social Equity

Participants voiced support for advancing PEI's cultural vitality and social equity. Groups fundamentally agreed the Population Framework would only be considered successful when all residents—both Island-born and new residents—can prosper while remaining true to themselves and their cultures.

Some stakeholders spoke explicitly about the importance of recruiting French-speaking immigrants to maintain and ideally enhance Francophone and Acadian cultural vitality.

Some stakeholders firmly advocated for further efforts to address racism. We heard that not all residents felt safe and included. Despite appreciating much of what the Island has to offer, some new residents described feeling like an outsider and, in extreme cases, the subject of both covert and overt racism.

Members of racialized groups shared experiences of racism and discrimination, expressing frustration that their encounters often went unacknowledged. It was noted that some new residents left PEI due to racial discrimination and the lack of diversity.

The value of engaged and vibrant communities was universally endorsed, with support for any initiative that helped forge connections among generational and recent residents.

PEI Mi'kmaq and Indigenous Peoples

The importance of reflecting the voices of Mi'kmaq and Indigenous Peoples on PEI in the framework was widely acknowledged by participants. This is particularly significant considering the contemporary context of reconciliation and the population trajectory of Indigenous communities.

While the Indigenous participants in our consultations embraced the Island's growing population and increasing diversity, they noted generational considerations compounding the pressures of this growth. This includes housing shortages, healthcare access, workforce development, and upskilling. Land loss was also highlighted as a challenge – particularly in Lennox Island, with coastal degradation.

Most Indigenous participants expressed support for land use planning, especially concerning off-reserve land holdings, and recognized the importance of heritage land and greenspaces.

Educators as Partners

PEI is home to several critical post-secondary institutions, including the University of Prince Edward Island (UPEI), Atlantic Veterinary College, Holland College, and Collège de l'Île. Participants brought up these institutions as critical to population growth. In dealing with skill shortages and job market gaps today, we need to prioritize post-secondary education and lifelong learning in population planning.

The public school system was also seen as increasingly important in building career awareness in areas such as trades and STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts, and math) related fields.

Sustainability

Participants recognized that sustainability in all its forms, whether fiscal, social, or environmental, needs to be reflected throughout a population framework.

Throughout engagement, the thread of land use planning and environmental sustainability consistently emerged and is woven into the resulting thematic summary — including at transportation and land management. Land use planning and environmental sustainability, clean energy, and climate change adaptation are seen as defining pressures of the 21st century. The context of protecting and enhancing PEI's landscape and natural assets while facilitating their sustainable use also raised considerations for climate sustainability.

Quality of Life

A recurrent theme arising from the outreach process was the importance residents' place on quality of life.

While development is most often translated through economic indicators like GDP, participants noted the need to broaden the definition to also measure the quality of life (e.g., health, education, social participation and inclusion, political and civil rights, and happiness).

