



RECENT SETTLERS TO PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND SPEAK

*Suggestions
and Recommendations*

FOR IMPROVEMENT ACTION AND PUBLIC POLICY

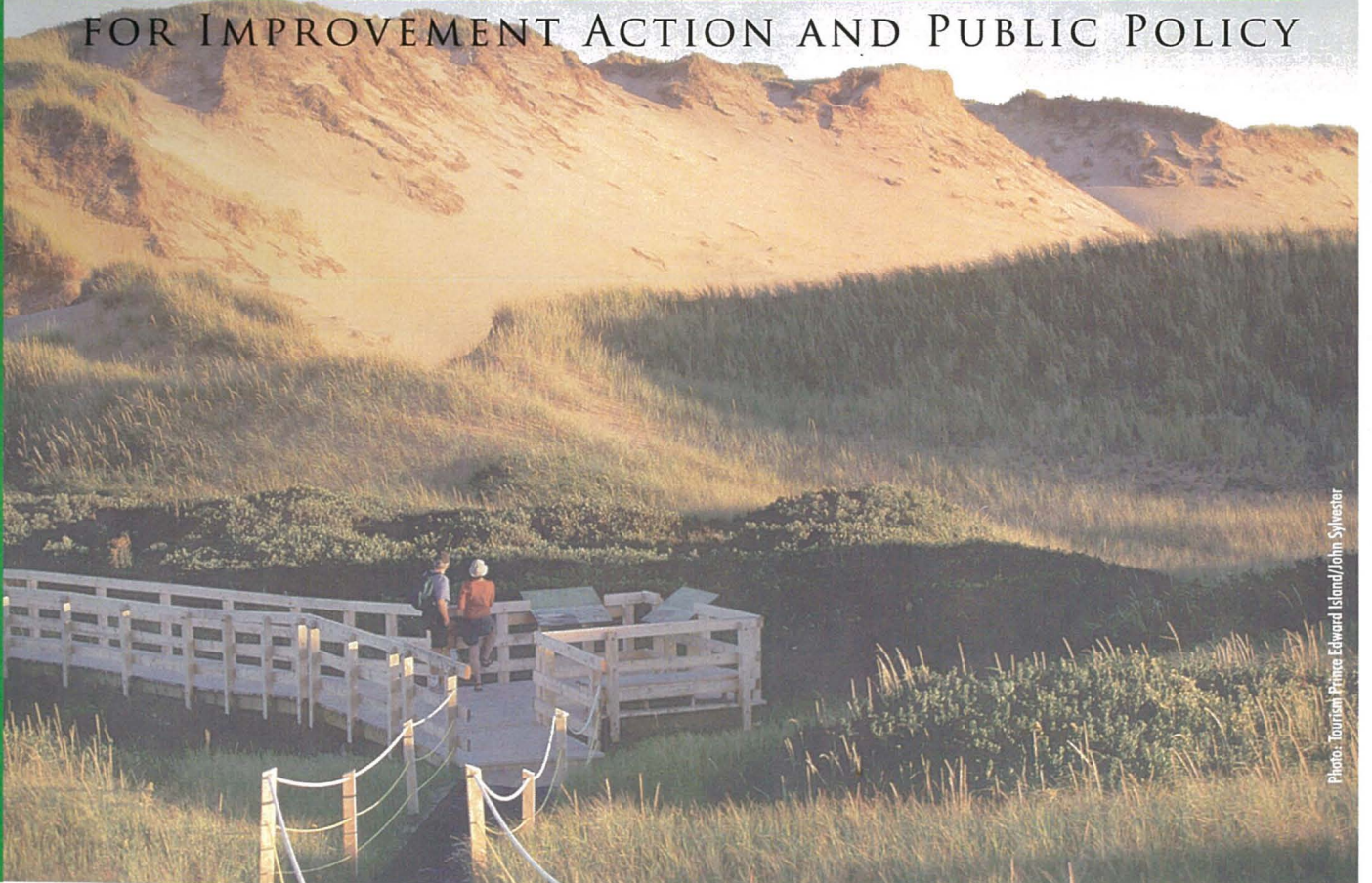


Photo: Tourism Prince Edward Island/John Sylvester



Recent Settlers to Prince Edward Island Speak:
Suggestions and Recommendations for Improvement,
Action and Public Policy

A thorough compilation of a set of testimonials / quotations by 'Islanders by Choice' - these being the 320 respondents to the 2005 survey titled: *Recent Settlers to Prince Edward Island: Stories and Voices*.

Compiled by

Godfrey Baldacchino
Canada Research Chair (Island Studies)
University of Prince Edward Island
Charlottetown
Prince Edward Island – Canada

for

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Provincial Government of Prince Edward Island

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Table of Contents

A Note of Thanks	Page 4
Organization of Material	Page 5
General Recommendations	Page 6
Content Analysis	Page 8
Tabulation of Statements	Pages 9 – 22

Photo: Tourism Prince Edward Island/John Sweeney



A Note of Thanks

This report is one of two documents that mines more deeply and exhaustively the rich database of personal stories and opinions that have been forthcoming from the 320 respondents to the survey of recent settlers to Prince Edward Island. (This has been published separately as: Baldacchino Godfrey (ed.) (2006) *Coming to, and Settling On, Prince Edward Island: Stories and Voices*, Charlottetown, Canada, University of Prince Edward Island with the kind support of the Population Secretariat, Provincial Government of Prince Edward Island, ISBN: 091901349X.) This 84-page document, complete with a copy of the questionnaire used in the study, is freely and readily available from the web-site of the PEI Population Secretariat (www.gov.pe.ca/immigration), or from my own moderated island studies web-site ([www.islandstudies.ca/Settlers to PEI/](http://www.islandstudies.ca/Settlers_to_PEI/)). The latter web-site includes a brief executive summary in both French and English.

It has been a privilege to note that, since this pioneering report was published in February 2006, a number of initiatives that have been suggested therein, including specific recommendations by its respondents, have already been taken on board. This includes the preferred usage of “islanders by choice” (now the title of the electronic Newsletter of the PEI Population Secretariat), and the compilation of a customized handbook for Newcomers to PEI. The PEI Population Network, where I represent the University of Prince Edward Island, has clearly also established itself as a clearing house for all local initiatives that seek to attract and/or retain people to this, Canada’s smallest province.

My sincere gratitude to Elaine Noonan, Executive Director of the Population Secretariat; her staff members Erin Docherty and Joanne McQuaid; Robert Maddix, Regional Advisor for the Rural Secretariat; and the 320 respondents to the 2005 settler survey, whose poignant narratives speak louder than words.

*Godfrey Baldacchino
Charlottetown, PEI*

February 12, 2007



Organization of Material

This document is a compilation of a set of testimonials by ‘Islanders by Choice’, these being the 320 respondents (179 females; 141 males) to the October-December 2005 survey titled: *Recent Settlers to Prince Edward Island: Stories and Voices*. They are therefore quotations, drawn from hard copy or electronically deposited interview scripts, reporting the thoughts, suggestions and experiences of a diverse collection of individuals, possibly united only in the fact that they moved to (try to) settle on Prince Edward Island between 1997 and 2003.

There are responses from 92 different respondents in this compilation.

These responses are an outcome of two particular prompts in the 25-question survey questionnaire that was used in the 2005 study. The first prompt invited respondents to tell, in as much detail as they wished, what would they consider to be the main obstacle(s) or problem(s) to attracting other settlers to PEI – Question 24. The second prompt was an open-ended request to add any information the respondent felt was important, and was the last question of the survey questionnaire – Question 25.

The responses are not doctored in any way, except to correct the spelling of some obviously mis-spelt words.

The responses have also not been edited, except in having been identified as having something to suggest about Prince Edward Island. Thus, these narratives come in a variety of lengths: most are short and terse, but some are wordy and fairly descriptive. Sections identified as “. . .” within the quotes means that a section of the narrative has been lifted and not reproduced because it discusses a personal matter or mentions a name or location which, if disclosed, would compromise the anonymity of the respondent.

It must also be remembered that responses represent the perceptions of those who articulated them. They are biased and carry the prejudice of whoever uttered them; but this does not make them readily dismissible as erroneous, false, malicious or unfair. They are perceived as true by those who expressed them, and while readers may be pleased to agree with comments that confirm and correspond to their own ideas, they should also spare no effort in understanding comments which do not necessarily conform to what they see as accepted truths. As proposed by sociologist William Isaac Thomas: “If people define situations as real, they are real in their consequences.”¹ This effort is necessary to appreciate the reasons why respondents may have views that are not shared by the reader, from there for the same reader to move on to develop a critical appreciation of the reasons for this, and ultimately perhaps to be in an informed position to do something about them, should that be felt necessary.

¹ Thomas, W. I. (1966) ‘The Relation of Research to the Social Process’ in M. Janowitz (ed.), *W. I. Thomas on Social Organization and Social Personality*, Chicago IL, University of Chicago Press, pp. 289-305.



General Recommendations

No attempt has been made to group or analyze the quoted responses which follow by theme. This has already been done, albeit with a smaller and more selective database, in Baldacchino (2006: 66-74). In that document, the various recommendations tabled were organized under the following themes:

1. Streamlining the procedure for obtaining a provincial driver's license.
2. Developing a user-friendly, multi-lingual Survival Handbook intended specifically for settlers to PEI. (A provincial adaptation of the *Welcome to Canada* guide)². Settlers could be involved in such an exercise.
3. Enhancing the artistic, amusement and entertainment programme on the island, possibly hand in hand with tourism stakeholders. We are reminded by Richard Florida that a concentration of artists however defined – including “writers, designers, musicians, actors and directors, painters and sculptors, photographers and dancers” – is an amazingly strong predictor of dynamic development.³
4. Developing an Indoor Community Centre which incorporates a ‘Quality PEI Museum’.⁴
5. Streamlining the Immigration Process.
6. Switching to organic farming and more environmentally-friendly agricultural and energy practices that would improve health on the island generally and propel the island province as a pioneer in sustainability, exploiting an ingrained flexibility that results from its small size.
7. Putting in place a development and zoning plan that puts a stop to the wanton destruction of the countryside and the haphazard building initiatives.
8. Developing a public transit system: in Summerside and, possibly, island-wide.
9. Strengthening and diversifying the Welcome Wagon Programme.

² Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada, 2004 edition. 47pp. Also available in French.

³ Florida, R. (2002) *The Rise of the Creative Class*, New York, Basic Books. This ‘Bohemian Index’ is explained on pp. 260-2.

⁴ A new blog has now been launched on this: <http://peimuseum.blogspot.com/>



10. Offering better, and cheaper, language and general educational support for immigrants, both within school and out-of-school programmes, like night language training.
11. Making available longer, and stronger, support for business and potential entrepreneurs, for instance by means of longer-term loan facilities and skills training, while showcasing successful businesses by newcomers.
12. Expediting the procedure for assessing the equivalence of off-island qualifications and the recognition of foreign credentials.
13. Enabling PEI residents to purchase bulk, 'Confederation Bridge' access tickets at a reduced rate. This would reduce feelings of isolation and promote cross-island traffic and trade, and may act as a further spur towards settlement on the island by other Canadians.
14. Improving support services for would-be settlers.
15. Allowing, or obliging, refugees to carry out some work, including community work, even though they may be getting transitional financial assistance from the federal government.
16. Improving the quality of formal education on the island, not just for immigrants but for all. This education should itself promote cultural diversity and a broader appreciation of the role of immigrants in the contemporary history of Canada, and not just of the role of European settlers many years ago.
17. Involving immigrants actively in any exercise meant to improve the welcoming nature of PEI society.
18. Improving the experience of newcomers of 'fitting in' and feeling 'at home' in a largely clannish, tightly-knit, family-based society.
19. Improving the perceived state of health in the province. This can be broken down into 3 distinct yet related issues: the restricted range of specialist care facilities available, the attrition rate of both medical and para-medical staff, and the nature of environmental hazards associated with run-off from primary industries (especially agriculture and animal husbandry).

The absence of thematic profiling of the statements below is deliberate, since these responses are best appreciated holistically rather than thematically. Moreover, the richness of the material deserved being showcased as such. It will be up to readers to discriminate within the data, as they may see fit.



Content Analysis

Content analysis is essentially a method that enables a researcher to discriminate between and within large amounts of textual data, and systematically identify its properties, such as via the frequency of keywords most used, or by detecting the more important structures of its communication content.

A content analysis of the statements which follow (in the English Language only) reveals the frequency of usage of what are likely to be key expressive nouns and adjectives:

Work / Job / Jobs (mentioned 49 times in the statements tabulated below);

Health / Health Care (mentioned 32 times);

Wage / Wages / Salary / Salaries / Pay (17 times);

Culture / Cultures (17 times);

Bus / Public Transit (16 times);⁵

Education (14 times);

Tax / Taxes (13 times);

Winter(s) (13 times);

Sport (13 times);

Family Doctor / Doctor / Medical (11 times);

Immigration (11 times);

Business (10 times);

Employment (8 times);

Small (8 times);

Profession (6 times);

Race / Racial (5 times);

Bridge (4 times);

Roads (4 times);

Pesticide (4 times);

Cost / Costs (4 times);

Safety (4 times);

Entertainment (4 times);

Planning (4 times);

Society (4 times);

Flights / Airport (4 times).

Other comments – such as ‘come from away’, conservative, expensive, food, gay, hospital, insurance, isolation, language, prejudice, remote, snow, travel, water, weather – are each mentioned three times or less.

On the basis of the above, the absence of (suitable) employment opportunities and the state of health care in the province are clearly the top two concerns that recent settlers to

⁵ Note that the survey from which these comments are taken was administered between October and December 2005. Only a skeletal bus (public transit) system was running in Charlottetown at that time.



PEI have when it comes to considering what are the main obstacles or problems to attracting other settlers to the island.

Tabulation of Statements

Health care in Canada is a major concern: we maintain private health care in Europe and the difference in quality and service is substantial. Fortunately we are in good health, but a couple of small issues have come up that clearly demonstrated the poor quality and service of the Canadian system. Tests that have substantial waiting times in Canada we had done in Europe within days versus months. To get a doctor in PEI takes over a year. Even when you get one, the fact that the facilities lack much of what we considered in Europe as normal technology was shocking. Poland which many consider a developing nation has a far superior health care system with a combined private, public system. A normal Pole has better health care than the average Canadian, a statement that would not have been true 15 years ago. So, for families considering coming to PEI the two big issues will be Health care and Education. Again, I am not sure if the quality of education is unique to PEI, and maybe overtime we will adjust, to the different educational concepts in Canada. Much of education can be supported in the home and while a concern in terms of our young daughter, now two years old, it is an issue that we will keep a close eye on. Lastly more convenient flights would make life easier. Unfortunately most international flights still go to Toronto and, while an international airport would add substantial value to PEI, it is not likely to happen anytime soon. The lack of easy travel is one of the key issues for developing new business in PEI.

One problem that we faced was that our international driver's license was not accepted here on PEI. We had to undergo a written test and a driving test too. I also think it would be a good idea if a Survival Handbook could be made available to new settlers on PEI, including what is needed to get through the harsh winters!

Overall, I think PEI is an absolutely wonderful place to live. It is very clean and picturesque, is very sophisticated in terms of environmental protection and generally has a quiet, peaceful pace to life. I think Charlottetown in particular needs to be developed. In this area in particular, there needs to be more of a balance between wanting to preserve a historical feel and bringing in modern architecture, cultural events and entertainment. Overall, the communities feel a little too "conservative" - (e.g.: discussions over gay rights). It is rather sad to see such a huge population dependent on seasonal work.

I would have never considered moving to PEI without the Confederation Bridge. It may seem like a small thing - being inconvenienced in trying to get off the island - but I went to Holland College in 1989-90 and put up with the ferry for that short time but I would not have done it on a permanent basis. It's not only the inconvenience but the isolation that the ferry brought.

Where I grew up in NS, all secondary roads were well taken care of (salted) in the winter. The way the secondary roads are taken care of here in the winter leads to the feeling of living in middle of nowhere and supports the preconceptions of non-Islanders.



There is a need to stress the safety and quality of life: and access to fairly cheap homes should be a big asset in 'selling' the island. Much more stringent land policies need to be in place - way too much of the island, especially ocean frontage, is now in the hands of seasonal dwellers, who contribute little to the quality of life and make our taxes go up! Imagine declaring the island a pesticide-free place! Both tourists and permanent residents would FLOCK here!

PEI is a special place, but many people tend to romanticize it as a hidden treasure. There are limited opportunities here and some of the social and political attitudes can be daunting. Until government programs acknowledge this, I fear that people will decide against staying.

Good study, results will be useful if the province wants to use them in the right way. Unfortunately, there's a perception (that word again) that even politicians on the island are a bit slow to get things done and are quite willing to leave things as they are if it benefits either themselves, their relatives and/or friends. I hope you understand that I'm telling you what my perceptions and observations are, but I'm not unduly upset by any of these 'flaws', I really, really like the physical environment and many other things about PEI. For instance, the arts and crafts and the closeness to the land are really appealing in a homey way, and then the golf courses are world-class in a lovely cosmopolitan way.

For myself, being a professional who was educated in the States, assistance for my student loans would have been a huge incentive to come here especially if I had not already lived on PEI. Pay on PEI is not comparable to the states in my profession and compensation to offset some of my loans to provide the service to this isolated region would be welcomed.

The political system on the Island, though probably not detracting from immigration, would seem to militate against permanent settlement. There are two viable parties with no fundamental difference between them and neither appears able to control government spending. At the same time, provincial income taxes are among the highest in Canada, as are transfer payments on a per capita basis, and provincial sales tax - because it is not "harmonized" with the federal GST - is actually 2½% higher than in the other Atlantic Provinces. Also, the cost of administration of that provincial tax is yet another charge to government and to business and, therefore, to taxpayers/consumers. Blatant "boondoggles" like Polar Foods are aggravating in the extreme to thinking taxpayers, who include a disproportionate number of people "from away." We have lived on the Island three times during our lives so far and we've come back twice, in both cases to "wind down" from very stressful occupations. Now, with retirement, we still like this place. However the warts do show from time to time. I very much hope this is of some help to someone, somewhere, and thank you for your efforts.

There have been some positive changes to the PEI "environment" since we have arrived. However, I would like to see even more, to make it a more culturally vibrant place - for example, we need an excellent "indoor" venue, such as a quality museum where we can



spend those miserable long, cold winter days with children. I don't think "Islanders" understand what it is like to feel isolated. "They" all have large, extended families and many doors and activities to welcome them. "WE" have to seek out activities and places and people in order to keep us entertained and keep our social world open for our children. We consider ourselves open, friendly people who are interesting as well as interested in others. I find it frustrating that, after 2.5 years, we have been invited to very few homes to share meals, etc. Again, I think that "Islanders" are already busy with their extended family that they don't need/want to reach out any further to include the "new" people in a more intimate setting. We left behind many, many close friends in Ottawa, and if we ever moved back there, it would be for jobs and friends. I certainly enjoy the unspoiled scenery, beaches and natural world that PEI has to offer. I stay here also because I feel I have successfully stepped out of the horrendous "rat race" of Ontario's busy roads and cities and consumer culture.

I think PEI has so much to offer & love living here. There is definitely a need to promote other ethnic cultures other than Caucasian as some locals are unkind/ignore those from Taiwan, etc. There are many generalizations in regard to Asian people & I think we could change that perception by showcasing successful business/working people every so often - they are part of the community & it's time the community woke up to that fact.

Quality of life, peace and tranquility, safety, security, a place 'back in time' with a more gentle, kinder way: these are some aspects of island life that should be emphasized to attract prospective settlers.

I think PEI has come a long way - there are still areas that need to be overcome - the Winter Carnival last year was a great start - the Confederation Centre improves every year - maybe more cross-cultural events need to occur to educate islanders about other cultures that are on the island so these barriers can be broken down.

The rural beauty of PEI is being destroyed by the total lack of planning. My first impression on coming here was how many really ugly houses there are spread all over the countryside. In the U.K., where there are so many other people, the countryside is free from development. This unfettered development will eventually destroy the tourist industry, massively reduce the amount of productive land, and remove our ability to implement an affordable public transportation system.

It took my husband and I 14 years to obtain a family doctor when we moved to Charlottetown. Way too long in my opinion. Health care could be improved.

The immigration process would be improved if the processing time was decreased, without loss of integrity, particularly with reference to sponsorship of family.

I think Summerside could use a transit system: there are a lot of people that can't afford the car insurance on PEI so they can't drive their cars. Taking a taxi everyday, sometimes 4 times a day, gets really expensive especially when you only get minimum wage. I think Summerside would do good with a city bus.



There is much potential being lost by way of exclusion on the Island. There is a definite sense that influence and authority are the preserve of a self-select few who do not welcome difference or alternative ways of seeing the world and themselves.

I am presently planning to live off-Island during the winter months after I retire. The lack of medical and health services for elderly people have really been a factor in that decision. Also the fact that it is difficult to get outside to walk and bike throughout the winter has to be considered. Though I ski, the weather is sometimes unpredictable. Maintaining my level of health is important to me. I may spend some winter months in my home country of Ireland, even though it is much more expensive to live there.

Good luck with your study! As an "Islander" who returned to settle on PEI, I am concerned about those who decide to settle on PEI and then leave. I know that PEI cannot offer what everyone needs, but we need people from elsewhere to contribute to the Island economy and culture.

The only fault I have found since I moved back to the Island is that there is a lack of entertainment for people from 30 - 60 and those are the people with earning power. All the clubs are aimed at young people (i.e. no Country bars at all). There would likely be more folks going out and putting money back into the community if someone had the foresight to cater to that particular genre. Other than that, moving back here was the best thing I could have done for my family!

There has to be more awareness for Islanders with respect to the benefits of immigration, something like a marketing campaign. A big turn off for Islanders is immigrants living out of welfare. The roots of this problem include the lack of good jobs and also the lack of education, meaning not enough ESL support in schools which make students in the senior level drop out from school and therefore not potential employees.

We don't have to live on PEI. We choose to. Despite its challenges, PEI is a fabulous place to be.

It would be beneficial to have support groups (informal) for people 'from away' to gather and socialize in an environment free from prejudices!

Thanks for this opportunity. I have wanted to 'thank someone' for letting us live here. We feel very privileged. It has been 2 years (including [Tropical Storm] Juan) and the honeymoon continues . . . Other events may force us to return to Ontario but it would not be because we want to live there. If we both lose our incomes before retirement we would have to move back. Otherwise we intend to retire here. Hope for us!

There has to be a holistic approach to this issue. It seems to me that the province is very eager now than ever before to bring in immigrants but there must be an economic development package that should go hand-in-hand with this approach. The province needs to provide the enabling environment for immigrants to come in, and for them to



stay. The Island is a small place but we can make the Island an attraction by providing those facilities and services that are available in larger cities.

I find it interesting that you make no mention of the bridge. While the bridge did not directly affect our decision to set up shop on PEI - we never would have even considered moving here without it.

Aim at the 20 to 35 year olds for retention or recruitment or we are going to be in trouble. Put this to leaders - especially provincial and municipal - in very clear, stark terms. Young people will not stay if they do not feel wanted. Some 50 plussers may have to look at his very truthfully. It may involve re-thinking. I think most of our community leaders love older people but do not like younger people. We are too much in love with 'not rocking the boat' here. We should be full square behind arts and culture as a major potential industry of the future.

There is nothing that cannot be accomplished on PEI. With the advent of high speed internet, VOIP and airline service, you can run any type of business/work from anywhere in the world. Remoteness is not a factor anymore. But a welcoming favourable community that is open and welcoming can be more inviting.

PEI needs to promote its scenery and (alleged) folksy hospitality far less, and instead celebrate its people far more. I find it difficult to imagine another community of 130,000 with such a diverse mix of talents and skills, and this is only getting better as the cultural diversity increases. The singers, the writers, the bloggers, the artists, the researchers, the activists, the entrepreneurs: these, and a host of others, make PEI a truly great and interesting place, and our government should support them at home and promote them to the world them far, far better than they do now. This study, hopefully, can be a piece of that. Bravo and good luck!

We received lot of support from the government, but it's not enough. Everybody knows it takes between 3 and 5 years to make run a business. However, the support here is just for a year, and then, it's your problem.

There needs to be more public education geared towards accepting people from different racial backgrounds as well as the benefits of accepting "people from away" into our communities and helping them to feel like an important "part of" the entire fabric of the Island culture. There needs to be more sensitivity awareness of the difficulties people from away experience not just leaving their previous homes but adjusting to a new life and culture in PEI. Just because people have always looked at people from away as being different from them doesn't mean it has to continue to be that way.

I find a severe lack of customer service on the island. People who were born here probably don't know any different, but nobody makes an effort to provide decent service. In a lot of cases, there's no excuse for the laziness but they seem to get away with it.

It is difficult for the children to be accepted into the well established social groups. There is one class of each grade at the school where we live, the children are often on the



outside looking in. This was not at all expected. It seems to be who you are for work opportunities and placement on sport teams.

I love PEI and I think this place has a potential to grow if people open up their minds.

I was very pleased with the quality of SETTLER information on the government web site. It made getting started much easier.

If we are to attract more people from "away", Islanders have to be educated that these immigrants are not taking away jobs but are helping to create opportunities and introducing fresh DNA into the gene pool.

I think surveys like this are key to finding out what attracts and deters settlers. Who knows better than people who have actually made the move? If only you could contact the people who wanted to move but didn't or those who moved and were discouraged and left. Unfortunately, I feel that most of the people in charge of recruiting and planning with respect to potential settlers have no experience with knowing what will attract people to our province and worse yet don't know what will keep people here. A good friend of mine from Charlottetown has his masters from university and after looking for work here for over a year had to move away because all he could find were low paying labourer jobs. Until that changes, our population will continue to decline.

The Island is a beautiful place to live, and I have felt so welcomed by the people I have met! I hope that my comments above don't hurt or insult anyone, but I do feel that the Island still has quite a ways to go in some things (I am still amazed at the lack of public transportation--both city-wise and province-wide!). I do realize that it small, but by broadening its horizons, it can become a leading province in certain areas (ie. reusable wind energy or use of canola oil, composting facility advancement, education) and not just be a place to come for summer vacation. PEI just needs to get up there and show itself off to the rest of the country! Hope this helps.

It is great you are doing a study like this. Reality is we need people to come to the Island full time and offer jobs to the residents. So many kids are leaving because there really isn't the opportunity for them to advance.

I left PEI years ago, in part because I am a gay man. In my decision to return, I made it clear to myself, to my employer and to my family and friends that I was not to return here to go back into the closet. This is not always easy and comfortable in PEI but MUCH more so than when I left many years ago. PEI is progressing, but there is lots of development to go.

I live here because I want to, but I am leaving again. I have always intended on raising a family in PEI, simply for the family support I would get. I don't know if I feel that way anymore having lived away and come back. There's so much opportunity in other places. We need jobs, true. But we need more than just call centers. We need expanded



medical/complimentary medical services available in more locations. We need manufacturing and skilled trade work. We need educated people to want to be here.

I was fortunate to land a job in my profession. I must state, however, that the immigration process was horrible and almost made me change my decision. The process was demeaning and unwelcoming and tedious. The entire process never once took into consideration my earnest intention to reside in an extremely rural location which would enhance & contribute to that local economy & social structure.

Island is over-governed. Doesn't have the number or quality of people needed to properly run a provincial government. Equivalent in population and area to a small regional municipality.

I have thoroughly enjoyed living on P.E.I, but as a retiree with a comfortable pension, the prices, and the lack of good jobs are not problems for me. The "closed society" would have been a major concern as I believe that it is true that Islanders are really not interested in making friends with people from away. (They are very "friendly" at first glance, but after 7 years here, my husband and I have never been invited inside an Islander's home, even though we have opened up our home for Christmas parties for our church choir and the Women's Institute, etc.) Luckily, we discovered a group of "newcomers" who were in the same boat, and have made a number of wonderful friends in that group. I must admit however, that in the small village in Ontario where we lived before coming here, the locals were not much better at welcoming outsiders than they are here. Our friends there were people from work, or other newcomers to the community.

PEI is a nice place to live. However, in order to change the perception of a "backwards" place, much more resources would have to be put in place. The weather is not a problem here, on the contrary. Alberta's winters are 10 times worse, and yet it is the most prosperous province in the country. Build the infrastructure and the people will come.

I've gained meaningful employment with a suitable salary. I feel I was just available at the right time. Temporary employment with PEI Government and desire to move back to PEI attracted me. I have since gained full-time employment with the PEI Gov. Salary is quite good, but someone with my education and experience could make more in a larger city in another province. The desire to live on PEI makes up for it though. I am an engineer. In much of the private sector on PEI, salary is much lower and quite unattractive to junior-intermediate engineers. I've seen numerous peers move to larger cities (from graduation and some after working on PEI for a while) in other provinces and states to gain meaningful employment with a fair salary.

PEI is a lovely place like all other Maritime communities. It's unique and interesting during the summer and fall months. The beaches are positively lovely. But come winter it's a completely different place. I wish that the farmers market would become a bigger affair considering all the exceptional artists and organic farmers in the area.

Educate Islanders on the benefit of Immigrants, regardless of colour, race religion or culture. Have someone (or a small office) that returning Islanders and Immigrants can go



to, to cut through the red tape and voice their issues before we lose them. Discrimination can take on many different voices...the greatest part of being Canadian is our country is built on Immigrants. We need to embrace and celebrate the uniqueness of being Canadian and that needs to spread to each and every crook and cranny on PEI! Educate, Educate, Embrace!!

To the Government of PEI: Stop wasting time and money on attracting immigrants to PEI.... Why are you dealing with the "low birth rate" by considering immigration as a major component of population growth? Why aren't you considering increasing the "low birth rate"? Increasing the birth rate on PEI will certainly result in a positive impact with regards to the expected labour shortage. I suggest that the government take the time and the funds which are currently focused on attracting immigrants, and direct them to making it more attractive to have a baby on PEI. Put some of the money into daycare subsidies... increase the payments to mothers on maternity leave by supplementing the current EI payments. Other countries (where you are suggesting that we attract immigrants from)... have much better benefits for new mothers than we do. For example, a new mother in Sweden who normally earns approx. \$32,600/year would accumulate \$13,000 in benefits in the FIRST 6-MONTHS of maternity of leave. That's 80% of her wages... AND she is offered 96 weeks of statutory maternity leave.

We came to PEI with naïve expectations. We were a military family that had moved all over Canada and have never encountered the difficulty we seemed to have adjusting to PEI and the community. We have persevered so far, however we are likely not going to make this a permanent home. The prospects for our Children are poor for gaining decent employment in their trained fields. We felt that we had to stay in PEI long enough to have our children finish and graduate from high school here as we were fearful that if we moved back out West they would be at a disadvantage as the school system here in PEI seems very behind that of its western counterparts.

P.E.I. does have many things going for it, but that statement applies for some people more than others I'm white and healthy, with former knowledge of the Island and family to make my time here more rewarding. I want to see the Island become more progressive, more welcoming, more diverse and more successful. I returned two years ago not knowing how long I would stay. Much to my surprise, I will be here for four years. Living with my mother, also a recent returnee, will allow me to continue my education. However, my instructors and the graduates of our program who have spoken to us all say we will get work IF we are willing to leave the province. Opportunities here are limited. Gathering information, creating awareness is the first step in solving any problem. I wish you best of luck in your study.

I am very happy to be here now, I am grateful that my husband's family has accepted me so well....but I wouldn't want to be someone coming to the Island all alone...Islanders are very "ignorant" to other cultures and ways....

I have come to refer to islanders as tourist friendly. Islanders are very family oriented which is not a bad thing however they do seem to forget that not all living here have

Photo: Tourism Prince Edward Island/John Sylvester



family here, so they often forget to include people from "away" in special occasions. I have lived in several cities in Canada and I do not find the island as one of the friendliest. That is not to say that I haven't met great people I have, but it has not been easy. When asked what the people are like I always say "tourist friendly".

I felt that poor language skills have precluded me from attaining work I may have done in the past elsewhere. It was difficult getting a family doctor on PEI - (no problem in Toronto) Local training for resident care-worker costs 3 times what it would cost in Toronto. Language training options are considerably cheaper in Toronto. Love summer; dislike winter. Island still needs to work on being open to newcomers.

Not a lot of French language services. Lack of Physicians. Felt the "come from away" concept. Not a great deal of diversity; very British. Good veteran services for PEI; officials laid back.

On the whole, I have found the local islanders to be extremely friendly towards us. I do know other Canadians who have had a hard time with the locals. I have also found that most business people have just regarded us as a gravy train and we do tend to pay more for services once they have heard our accents and come to our house. This has been quite stressful at times and we have decided that we are not going to contact anyone else and just do the work ourselves or buy off the internet.

Immigration means a cosmopolitan culture, which means your goal must be to blend new cultures in a welcoming way with the Island culture.

My wife and I are here because we wish to be - having moved across the country a couple of times we are secure in knowing we can pack up and go somewhere else if we want to. We like it here and there are good things about PEI and Islanders. However, because we want to make our lives here and because we see the good in it, I want to expect a good deal from it. I don't want to see Islanders rest on their laurels on what is already good about this place. I fear that if they don't challenge themselves to take an honest look and change, the place will stagnate and my children, who will have benefited from the positive aspects of this place will still realize they need to leave to prosper - not just economically, but socially and spiritually as well. To the researchers involved - thank you for taking on this brave and (in my opinion) most worthwhile project - please be brave and outspoken in your findings.

We have been living on our savings since we moved here. I have been fortunate to get a fabulous family doctor (I went without for almost a year after we moved here), and she has now cut her practice down to half-time. Once she quits or leaves the island, we will leave also. At this point, the only reason we haven't left is that we cannot afford to move, and I love our doctor too much. Simple as that.

I'm tired of being told I'm a CFA (come from away). It feels very exclusionary to me. I'm an IBC (Islander by choice) is what I prefer and just because I wasn't conceived and born here doesn't mean I don't live here now and I do pay taxes. I choose to call myself an



ISLANDER, whether someone else likes it or not. Sorry - but this is a bit of a sore point with me, I guess.

PEI should build an amusement park similar to Crystal Palace in Moncton. This should be open all year and be located in Charlottetown. Must do: -Sunday shopping; -can pop; public transit; - beer and wine in corner store; - year round amusement park.

Only refugees get help from the Newcomers Association, not immigrants in other categories like business people for example. I think everybody as an immigrant needs assistance and support upon arrival to the new country. I think the Canadian government should make immigrants stay in the province for a longer period of time and don't let them come to PEI as an easy way to get into the country and then move. If refugees get financial support from the government, these people should be doing some kind of community work and not be seating in their houses waiting for the government cheque (sometimes they refuse job offers because its easier to stay at home getting the assistance than going out to work and lose the help).

It is unfortunate that there are two solitudes on the island and not the usual Canadian English/French issue. One is either an islander or "from away". Perhaps this is a result of so many years of being in a non-contributing province and the insecurity and jealousy that this might instil.

I marked myself as a 'visible minority' only because, with my name and my looks and my accent, Islanders know immediately that I am not an Islander and that is problematic here.

If my wife and I weren't from here, we never would have moved here; especially if we had no children. There simply is no incentive for people to come to the Island. It's come to our attention in recent years that P.E.I. has some serious pesticide / pollution issues that are not being taken very seriously by the Island government. We live close to a golf course and farm land (like most Islanders), and are growing more concerned about what these fertilizers and pesticides are doing to our ground water. We've also been told that P.E.I. has one of the highest cancer and asthma rates in Canada, if not North America. This is very alarming. Islanders also seem to resist change, willing to sacrifice economic growth for the preservation of an 'island life' - whatever that is. We have the lowest minimum wage, but live in one of the most expensive provinces; there is a lot of poverty here on the Island. Had I been aware of the pesticide issues and water problems here, I likely would have seriously reconsidered my decision to move home. I find myself often wondering if the health risks were worth it and praying for my family's health. Like many others, I'd like to see the Island become the trendsetter in organic farming, but the ways of farming here on PEI are so deeply entrenched in the community that they are very difficult to change.

Business owners who are not from PEI do not get any help starting or running a business. Getting Government help is almost impossible and getting a bank loan is also hard.



What happened to Trans-Canada Highway? Why are we not getting a discount on the bridge, ie. 10 passes at a discount.

I have found that there is little motivation here and a low standard of living. This is a seasonal province where people only work long enough to get their stamps. Very depressing and a lot of alcohol abuse. Little excitement. I think the biggest thing about the island is the prejudice I've experienced because I'm FROM AWAY- you're really looked down upon- a second class citizen. To attract people to PEI you'll need round year employment, a BIG shift in people's attitude (which you may see with the younger population)and MORE acceptance, better healthcare and more entertainment.

PEI is an incredibly beautiful island, with great, friendly people. There is a wealth of talent here; however, if it were not for the great church community and the friendship club that I joined (originally for newcomers), I would probably be actively planning to move back West.

The Province, in concert with the Federal Government, should introduce a 'Scheme for Innovations and Entrepreneurship' aimed at helping and encouraging immigrants become self-employed through the establishment of income-generating business. Skill training mechanisms must be provided to immigrants with the potential for self-employment. This will encourage immigrants to stay here rather than leave due to unemployment, a situation over which the Province has little or no control.

Good child care is very hard to find. We only recently got kindergarten and still not part of school system.

We were told by my brother-in-law that there were jobs available. As a certificate from Holland College is required for my husband to get a job in his area of corrections, he is not employable here in Corrections.

Cultural Diversity makes up Canada: Many PEI people could stand to gain by taking a few courses on this subject.

I would really like to see research done into why people don't stay, especially people that are recruited here in the health care field I have seen numerous Nurses recruited from away and most of them don't last six months. It's a very hostile environment. There have been two suicides and one attempt at one hospital in six years of health care workers from away, this just the ones I am aware of: is this not very high? If I was not farming here I would be long gone. Both my children now are adult and have left. This province desperately needs the benefits of people bringing the knowledge, skills and fresh insights from around the world; but it's very hard to overcome the hostility to anything that's not 'the Island way'. I love the land the culture and the people; in many ways, they are utterly charming. In some ways, I have found the farming community surprisingly accepting, considering it is so non-traditional for a woman alone to farm. Sometimes I think it's entertainment value for them. The health care field is very disheartening here though with

Photo: Tourism Prince Edward Island/John Shevett



open hostility little respect for extra knowledge and skill and little opportunity for further education.

To really address immigration, islanders as a whole have to deal with the "myths" of their welcoming. I think to really address this situation there needs to be honest and open dialogue. The Immigration/Settlers initiative needs to also be lead by immigrants. I'm not just talking about those who have been beaten into submission and now want to toe the party line. I think you need to engage strong, proud, vocal members of the immigrant communities, who are also respected by the members of the community. I also believe that looking at immigrants as mainly "economic" is setting a dangerous precedent. There are humanitarian and cultural reasons why people might want to relocate.

If PEI wants to attract more settlers, we need to open immigration to very large groups and accept the fact that there will be changes to our society. Both new settlers and previous residents will change, adapt and evolve. That is a sign of a healthy, confident, and prosperous society.

PEI is very dark in the evening. The island needs more light. Seems like there are more car accidents in the evenings.

There should be more English courses for people from away AT NIGHT. Foreigners want to learn English badly; but most times they're working during the day to support their families.

If my children were younger, the state of the education system would be another reason to leave PEI. The school system seems to cater to the lowest common denominator in the class room rather than try to push the brighter children. The school report cards are meaningless. The ones we received in my home country were much more detailed for each subject. Showed where my child was in terms of placement in the class and always gave in details three points for us to work on in improving my child's work.

When I got here I found that there were people in place who were supposed to be able to help me find out basics like SIN numbers and where to get them. No one could help me. The people employed by the province and the people in immigration office plus the health service area who were supposed to know basic information didn't know how to help me with some basic issues. I used to get told they never dealt with issues like mine before this. Maybe I was supposed to be the first immigrant to move to PEI??? I am referring to an incident with immigration Canada and my health coverage on PEI. I could stay in the country while my application for permanent residency was being looked over, I could work here but the Province of PEI didn't want to cover me for any health care. I spent 2 weeks been sent from one phone number to another to no avail. I gave up in the end and spoke to a person at work who knew someone!!! and basically it got sorted in 24 hours. However I dealt with every bureaucrat on PEI who was supposed to know how to help people from out of the province but to no avail. I am sorry for going on and on. I have lived here now for 3 and a half years and I do love it here. However if I had arrived here on my own, I would never have stayed here.



Summerside does not offer enough support to immigrants, convincing a lot of them move to Charlottetown.

Don't know of one new settler on the island, but have met a few immigrants. These are too afraid to complain, seek right info, scared to rock the boat. They feel they are on their own. The islanders are a closely knit bunch of traditional, if not conservative, people.

If you don't own a car - how do you get around on PEI? If new settler - how do you get around, if you do not have credit, to buy a car?

I don't really like to leave PEI because I love the peaceful, quiet and friendly environment. Safety for my family is my priority. But we can't survive unless there will be a good family income. I want to be an asset of the government, not a liability.

Island is small society. there are not fully open to various immigrants. It is hard for an immigrant to become a settler here.

I think we want a club to meet and party. We want an easy newspaper for settlers in PEI.

PEI needs to develop projects for tourism - e.g. a carnival competition every year, etc. - the health service needs more specialists. -health insurance should cover dental work, as in Ontario. I am a professional painter and PEI is very nice for my profession.

I wish the Immigration process would get a bit less bureaucratic. I went to PEI as a visitor and then I decided to stay. I got several work permits until I received my Permanent Residence in April 2005. All the stress I had to go through before this past April was more than I could ever express here but many times I felt like giving up on the whole thing. Actually, the only reason why I didn't give up is my love for the Island, a place where I hope I can go back to in the near future. I really appreciate the opportunity of expressing these ideas here and congratulate you on this project.

I can tell you that any friends or family who have considered moving here have always asked about the schooling. We have 4 young children grades 6, 4, and 2 and the amount of time missed from school is outrageous. All of our friends who have thought about coming here also have young children and education is very important to them as well. There are far to many professional development days and other reasons not to have the kids in school. I don't understand why parent teacher interviews cannot be conducted over the course of several evenings rather than closing school for two days. I also can't figure out why the snow days are so frequent. I understand the importance of safety but there have been countless times when drifting snow has been a problem in say, O'Leary, and the streets of Summerside are fine, however the entire western school board shuts down. This not only puts a burden on the quality of education but also on the parents who have a job to get to. Even if on days such as this when not all the teachers are able to make it nor all the students because some of the rural bus routes and roads are shut down, the school should still be open for those able to get there. I think that a scaled down staff



and student population on these days⁶ with perhaps the teachers coming up with a lesson that deviates from the regular agenda so the missing children don't fall behind would be much more beneficial to the children that sitting at home alone playing game cube or watching TV. Both my wife and I feel that if we were in a position leave PEI this would be one of the main reason to do so. It scares me that our kids are so far behind the rest of the country with their education.

Les six sujets suivants sont primordiaux dans notre décision de rester ou de quitter l'Île :
1- des emplois convenables pour les jeunes (l'exode de nos jeunes en Ontario et dans l'ouest canadien) Qui sera là pour prendre la relève financière de la province quand les plus âgées seront à la retraite. 2- les coûts énergétiques (électricité, huile de chauffage, essence, etc.) 3- taux de taxation (taxe de vente et impact provincial) 4- pénurie d'emplois bien rémunérés 5- Services de santé (pénurie de médecins) et 6- bilinguisme au niveau des structures politiques et gouvernementales.



Photo: Tourism Prince Edward Island/John Sylvester



Notes