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PRE-BUDGET CONSULTATIONS 2023/2024

BUILDING AN ACCESSIBLE ISLAND





CONNECTING PEI TO OPPORTUNITY AND GROWTH

The Greater Summerside Chamber of Commerce (the GSCC) is a thriving volunteer organization made up of businesses and professional people sharing a common goal — the economic development of the Greater Summerside area in Prince Edward Island. Small and large businesses from virtually every sector and profession form our membership.

The GSCC represents businesses of all sizes across Prince Edward Island, advocating for economic advancement in every industry and sector.

The GSCC's focus is not only in strengthening the Greater Summerside Area, but also to advocate for its members' collective interests and drive economic growth.

The Chamber believes in a strong partnership between the private sector and all levels of government to tackle the unique challenges that PEI faces.

We aim to strengthen and support our diverse industries, and that starts with accessibility to and from the Island.

CONNECTING PEI TO OPPORTUNITY AND GROWTH

PEI has recently had its highest year-over-year increase in population to date.[1]

The expanding population has created unprecedented opportunity for the Island, our in-migration growth has supported our island growth with new human capital, new intellectual capital and new investment capital, for all Island residents.

Despite the population growth, the province of Prince Edward Island has experienced barriers for further expansion, we have been impaired by the highest inflation rates in Canada [1], unpredictable energy costs, and disruptions to critical extra-provincial connections.

While our economy is susceptible to the domestic and global economies, the the impacts we can make on our Island, can enable growth, opportunity, and accessibility for business and land citizens to thrive.

Recommended Action:

1) Reduce Federal Government Transportation Tariffs And Tolls to enter and leave PEI

2) Increasing reliable flight connections to major airports nationally

CURRENT STATE:

Bridge Connections: The current automobile tariff is \$50.25

This is not accessible for many Islanders, it represents an additional tax to Island business, and it constricts our tourism potential. The cost imposed on the Federally-owned Confederation bridge creates barriers for businesses to import and export goods, Islanders to attend out of province health appointments and visitors to frequent our beautiful Island.

"This is grossly unfair, and it creates resentment and divisions in our country." - Senator Percy Downe. Senator Downe has led an initiative for fee reduction consideration, as is offered by other Federal infrastructure such as the Champlain bridge.

The Chamber supports statements echoed by the Prime Minister: "We will look at what can be done to make sure that people are able to travel freely, travel efficiently, and openly across this country at modest costs."
~Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau, January 13, 2017

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The time has come to equalize the cost of land transport and business in PEI with our sister provinces. The additional financial burden to access PEI is a tax, it is an inhibitor to business, it is an obstructor to tourism. We recognize there is a need for a toll to support maintenance, but as a Federally owned piece of infrastructure guaranteed to Prince Edward Island under the terms of our union with Canada we need effective, accessible and cost appropriate linkage.

The Toll should be reduced to only that which is necessary to support required maintenance activities on the Confederation Bridge - and not be an impediment to commerce or transport of goods and people.

We ask the federal government to re-evaluate this Toll and provide appropriate relief to the Canadian province hardest hit by inflation and food costs.

Reliability of air connections:

Prince Edward Island is only accessible across the water, and through air. we are limited in our connection points and geographically isolated from important commerce and cultural hubs.

Struggling to recover from the restrictions of the covid pandemic, price Edward island's recovery is further challenged through air transit connections.

PEI has lost one of two national carriers when west jet discontinued service to the province on November 15, 2022. Compounding this cancelation, Air Canada has also reduced daily connections to PEI by as much as 30%, as of July 2022. this as revenge tourism has been exploding around the globe. [3]

As options have reduced, prices have increased through lack of supply and increased inflationary feel costs. Additionally, when flights are disrupted or canceled, travellers are left with very limited options to rebook flights.

This adds additional costs to islanders, who are sometimes forced to fly out of province through Moncton or Halifax; and is becoming a very significant barrier to business attraction and expansion.

We ask the federal government to find ways to support our carriers to increase reliable service to the Island.

REFERENCES

- [1] <https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/en/information/finance/pei-population-report-quarterly>
- [2] <https://www.cbc.ca/news/business/bank-of-canada-1.6677004>
- [3] <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/prince-edward-island/pei-charlottetown-airport-air-canada-1.6506607>