

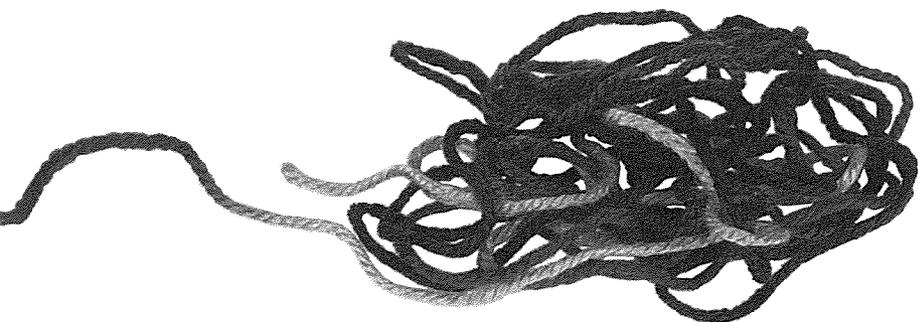
Pulling Strings

Policy Insights
for Prince Edward Island
from other Sub-National
Island Jurisdictions



Edited by Godfrey Baldacchino and Kathleen Stuart

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Charlottetown, 2008

*Pulling Strings: Lessons for Prince Edward Island
from other Sub-National Island Jurisdictions*

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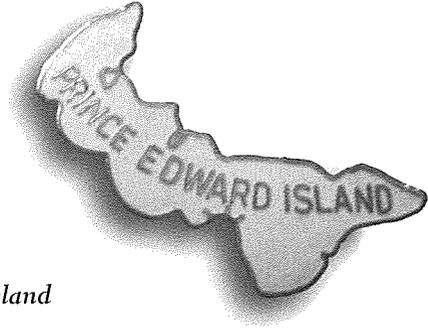
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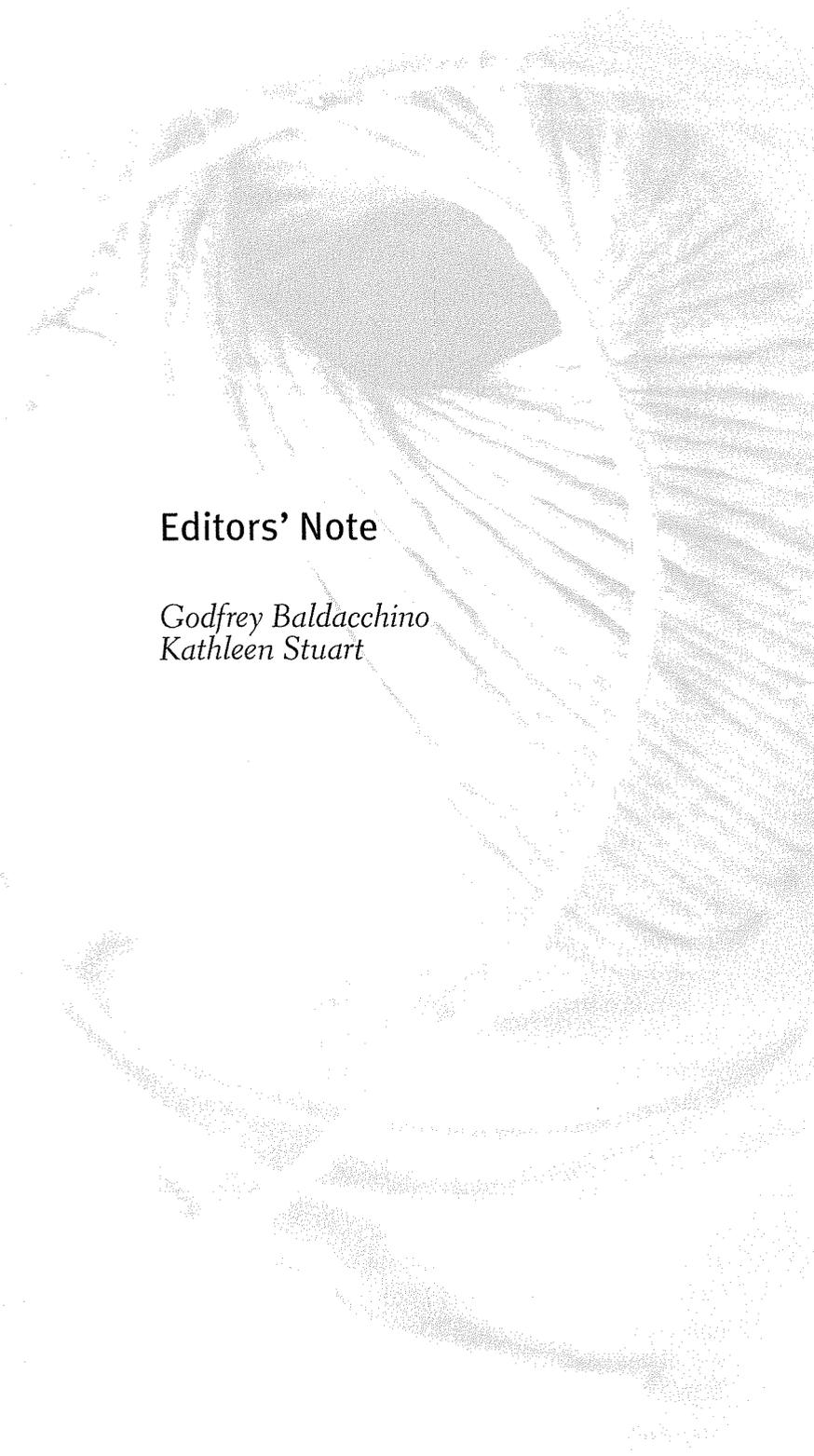
“People fall into that self-defeating trap of always looking at PEI as Canada’s smallest province. But we’re a *Province*, with all the rights and potential that goes with it.”

For Anna and Ron

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Editors' Note

Godfrey Baldacchino
Kathleen Stuart

Editors' Note

I'm impressed with this [article] and all the others to date. They are positive and practical. I know research has its own value, but it's great to see positive ideas that can actually apply to making PEI a vital, thriving place... This book could reach and interest a much wider audience than I had guessed. This material should be of interest to any Islander.

So wrote our intrepid book designer, Matthew MacKay, last December 17th, as he got round to getting a feel of this book when it was still little more than a collection of papers. Energized by this unsolicited but welcome vote of confidence, we hoped that Matthew is just one of many who would appreciate the power of the insights lurking in this book. Prince Edward Island may be a small, island province; however, emphasis upon *small* or *island* can suggest a whole raft of weaknesses, vulnerabilities and chronic dependency. From that perspective too, the stuff of local politics is invariably about how to cajole, argue, blackmail, flirt, or in any which way lure the big bucks from the national capital in Ottawa. It may be high time for Islanders to remember that theirs is also a *Province*. And there are different ways of making a province prosper.

'Pulling strings' is an apt PEI saying for behind-the-scenes political activity. The message of this book is to take such political activity forward by considering Prince Edward Island for what it is, fully and rightfully: a sub-national island jurisdiction. It shares this status, and its accompanying challenges and opportunities, with many similar territories spread all around the world. It is our sincere hope that this book will inspire more than just a glimpse of the lessons and empowerment that such a community holds.

Our sincere and heartfelt thanks to the many players who have helped to bring this project to fruition, including: the authors of the written contributions in this volume; Matthew MacKay who helped with layout, proofing and design; our colleagues and friends at the University of Prince Edward Island, Jean Mitchell and Irené Novaczek; the Advisory Board of the Institute of Island Studies at UPEI for their collegial support; John Eldon Green for graciously accepting to make time in his

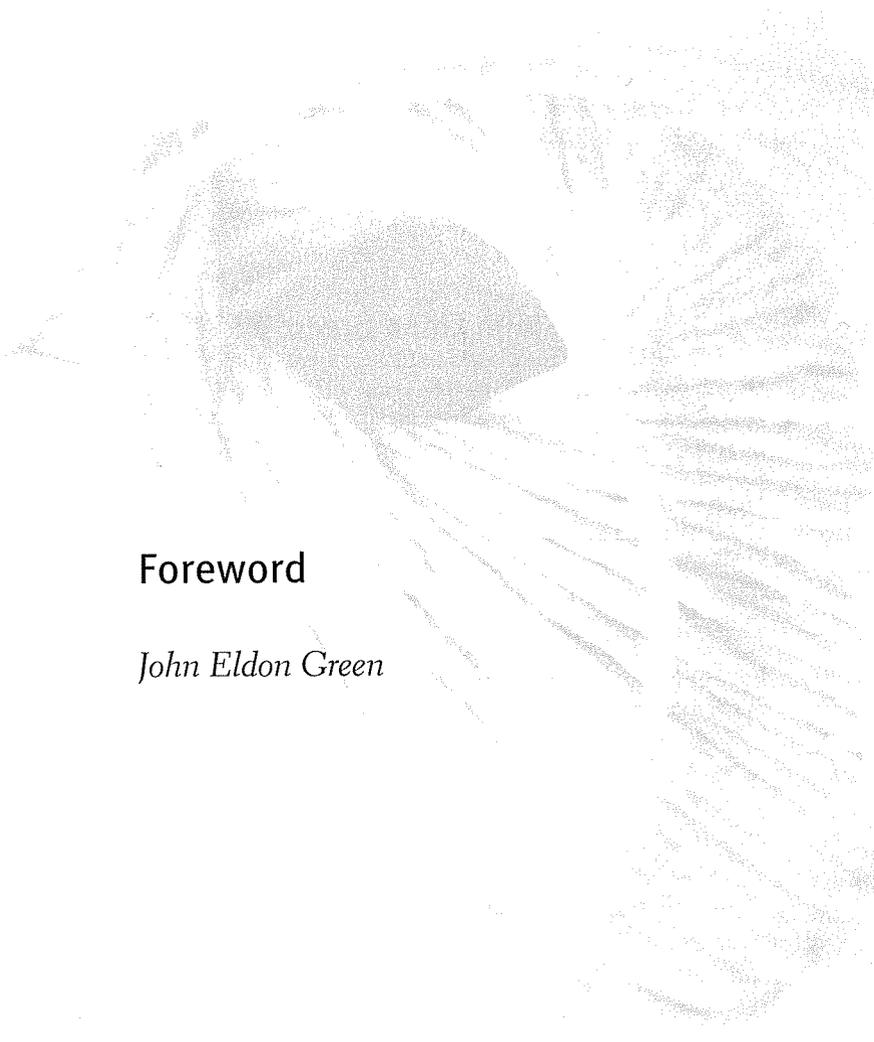
retirement to illuminate our work with his wisdom and experience; and the dozen or so graduate students, mostly drawn from the unique Master of Arts (Island Studies) Program at UPEI, who helped to populate the sub-national island jurisdiction database, now a handy research tool in the public domain.

The support of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) is gratefully acknowledged, by means of the allocation of a generous Standard Research Grant to Dr Baldacchino, entitled: 'Patterns of Sub-National Autonomy amongst the World's Islands' (SRG No.: 410-2004-0397).

Godfrey Baldacchino, Charlottetown, PEI

Kathleen Stuart, Meadowbank, PEI

January 2008

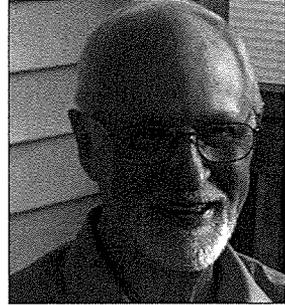


Foreword

John Eldon Green

John Eldon Green

John Eldon Green's family roots on PEI are more than 200 years deep. Of his own 80 years, all but two were spent on PEI. A graduate social worker, he spent 20 years in his field of practice with the Government of Canada, followed by 10 years as Deputy Minister of Social Services for the PEI Government. Upon resigning from the public service, he forged a 23-year career as a management consultant. He has recently published an insightful book on the mores that have driven Island society, perceived in the context of his own life. His is married to the former Mary Sigsworth of Charlottetown, and they have eight children.



Foreword

One of my great but unexpected delights in recent years was to have been invited, in June 2007, to chair a public presentation of four research papers, prepared under the direction of the Canada Research Chair in Island Studies at the University of Prince Edward Island.

I had been vaguely aware of the Chair prior to the invitation, perhaps through its progenitor, the Institute of Island Studies, which is also domiciled at the University. My acceptance of the invitation was out of a vague sense of duty, that I should be doing more to advance the standing of my home Island as truly one of the world's great islands. Maybe, the Chair could also aid me in this long-deferred ambition.

Let me explain. I have always regarded the popular designation of Prince Edward Island (PEI) as “Canada’s smallest province,” to be both meaningless and demeaning, as perhaps going beyond the geography of our Island to suggest also the competence of its inhabitants. Nova Scotia, for example, is Canada’s second smallest province, which perhaps should count for something if smallness is a positive attribute, but one never hears Nova Scotians presenting themselves in that light. When I first traveled outside PEI in my professional role, I was initially inhibited from expressing myself at meetings because our self-acknowledged smallness had also implied that we were also of least importance, perhaps even the weakest of the provinces. How could I presume to interrupt the flow of the nation’s business by intervening in debate, I wondered?

It took little time for me to realize that PEI delegates to national meetings and conferences were usually closer to the ground than their peers from other provinces, and that the experiences we brought to issues under discussion were usually more immediate to program objectives than what the other delegates could offer. This did not necessarily guarantee us a hearing, but it left me determined to alter the perception of others towards our islandness. Over many years, and many dozens of national and regional meetings, I brought that attitude with me. I could

do nothing to ensure that others listened, but I could ensure that we had a voice. I owed that to my Province.

Back now to these papers. To prepare myself for the task of chairing their presentation and the discussion that would follow, I asked for the opportunity to read them in advance, and was simply awe-struck by their quality, and findings. I quickly realized that one does not simply read this kind of work, one studies it, and so I did. The researchers were examining aspects of PEI life in the context of the varied experiences of over 100 autonomous islands, from all parts of the world, having sub-national jurisdiction, i.e. areas of autonomy. As I read their papers, I found myself being drawn away from the Canadian experience, which has severely limited our perspective as a people, and into a new perception of our uniqueness, and to a recognition of the potential that we have so improvidently constrained.

Barbara Groome Wynne's document on "Social Capital and the Social Economy" turned my thoughts to the very great efforts over the years by many thousands of Island residents, volunteering their services to local, provincial, regional, and national bodies, covering every field of human endeavour relevant to us, in order to make this Province work. Her paper is so well integrated that it almost defies synopsis, such as when she describes the dimensions of social capital, and points out the requirement for collaborative and cooperative efforts to turn this capital to use for purposes of multi-faceted development. I read her paper in growing awareness of the unfortunate and wholly unnecessary political and church-related divisions which, for more than 200 years, have muted those very generous efforts in all sectors. We are now slowly turning our backs on those divisions, and Barbara's very sound policy recommendations will facilitate us in common efforts for the benefit of our Island in the years ahead. The turning will not come easy, but it is being made, and is as certain as tomorrow.

Hans Connor's equally strong paper sets out how PEI can effectively exercise its jurisdictional autonomy and capacity, even within the framework of a federal system with its accompanying obligations and relationships. He observes that PEI has generally lacked the will to access its fiscal capabilities aggressively and creatively. He cites sources in identifying a range of resources that Islanders may draw upon in addressing our long-standing pattern of dependence on the national economy and government, particularly in federal-provincial relations and interactions. What caught my attention was his emphasis on the need for the political leadership of the Province to capitalize on the technical skills available within the public service.

This need has been underscored by the unfortunate tendency on the part of too many successful politicians to believe they have been elected to run things, and by god, so they shall. This failure to distinguish between governance and management has long been a weakness of the Island's political system, and has constrained development efforts in all spheres. The success of the Province's 15-year comprehensive development plan during 1969-1985 was the result of a federal-provincial agreement which required the participation of Federal officials in a management committee with provincial Ministers, an arrangement which no longer pertains. Top provincial managers, even at the deputy minister rank, are seldom admitted to government level meetings, whether of Treasury Board, Planning Board, Executive Council, or of government caucus sessions. Thus the technical experience of long-standing and highly competent government officials is put to use only to the extent that the latter are clever enough at finding ways to make themselves heard.

Connor observes that the fiscal liabilities that brought PEI into the national confederation created a condition of dependency that has, over the years, placed the Island's viability as a self-governing jurisdiction in question. His search for lessons about autonomy and capacity to act has led him to propose that this Province must exercise the full range of its formal and informal powers, including its fiscal capacity. His paper sets out ways that may be made to happen.

Crystal Fall has performed an excellent service in comparing the PEI performance in immigration matters with that of other sub-national island jurisdictions, from three perspectives: attraction, retention, and repatriation. She does this in light of the Island's home-grown approach to promotional strategies designed to encourage immigrant settlement and retention. Efforts in this regard have to give serious attention to a significant indwelling cultural barrier whereby settled residents tend to close our doors to immigrant newcomers. "Those friends thou hast, and their adoption tried..." as Polonius instructed!

The Island's initial great wave of settlement had peaked by the 1870s, when the age of steam spelled *finis* to the great ship-building industry of the early settlers. With its decline there followed a great out-migration, which cost the Island more than 25% of its population in a very few decades, a situation which only slowly began to reverse itself following World War II. It was not until the 1969-84 development plan that real economic and social development began to happen, bringing with it new waves of immigrants, greatly boosted by some major establishments created by the Government of Canada. By this time, however,

long-established islanders had settled into themselves, within our tightly defined communities, fractioned already by political and religious loyalties, which made it difficult for new settlers to gain acceptance as full-fledged islanders – greeted politely on public occasions but not invited into our homes. Thus we make it difficult for immigrants to become fully accepted as part of our community, except in the case of those who are aggressively determined to connect.

Fall's research makes clear that, in consideration of our rapidly declining birth rate, dramatically so within less than a decade, PEI needs a much improved effort to attract and retain immigrants. Concurrent with the declining number of live births is the aging of the population, making immigration an important issue for meeting the care requirements of the ever-growing seniors' population. Her report is so far-reaching that it cries out for early attention, particularly in the matter of recognizing skills and credentials, and I would add the need for appropriate pay adjustments. Her report highlights the issues of increased immigration, retention of newcomers, and repatriation of former Islanders now living in other parts of Canada.

Finally, Kathleen Stuart had the most difficult assignment in terms of drawing reader interest, when she was asked to address transportation and access issues – a common challenge for every island jurisdiction – and she has done so in masterful fashion. My notes, after reading her paper, include the reminders that it isn't what we don't have that matters, but what we do have; not what we can't do but what we can do. Stuart has described the various ways small island jurisdictions have sought to overcome problems of access, and the many challenges which have had to be surmounted. Tourism, she points out, "can be anything that is marketed to those who do not have the same thing in their home communities," which speaks volumes to our immediate neighbours while the industry pursues a more difficult distant market, focusing on golf, which is everywhere available. I have a friend who came back to the Island one summer for a holiday visit to his birth family. Walking home along Queen Street he was hit by a sudden shower, so a passing motorist stopped to offer him a drive. When he waved the man on, the driver protested: "But you're going to get soaked!" he called out, not understanding why Phonse had refused the offer. "That's OK," Phonse replied, "I'd rather be wet on PEI than dry anywhere else in Canada anyway." Now there's an image we can sell.

Stuart has described the many ways whereby sub-national jurisdictions “have exploited and capitalized on their airspace, territorial waters, seaports, and harbours to solve their transportation problems,” thereby enhancing their competitive position for continuing development. Her prescription calls for bold and studied attention, new perceptions of ourselves, new environmental awareness, and new alternatives. Every generation is called to make its own stamp on its own times, not through changes imposed by developments elsewhere but rather through the creative genius of our own best minds, such as those just now completing the reading of these notes.

What I’m saying is: read this book!