

**SPECIAL COUNCIL
REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING
APPROVED MINUTES**

DATE: May 26, 2021

TIME: 4:34 p.m.

PLACE: Council Chambers

PRESENT: Deputy Mayor Gary Clow; Councillors Gail MacDonald; Steve Gallant; Derek Smith; Darren MacDougall; Jill Burridge; Robert Hughes, CAO; Wendy Watts, Community and Business Engagement Manager, and transcribed by Mary McAskill

REGRETS: Nil

CHAIR: Mayor Steve Ogden

1. CALL TO ORDER

- a) Mayor Ogden called the meeting to order at 4:34 p.m.

Mayor Ogden took a moment to acknowledge the land upon which we gather is the unceded territory of the Mi'Kmaq people, and we pay our respects to the indigenous Mi'Kmaq people of this territory past, present, and future.

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

- a) It was moved, seconded, and carried that the agenda be approved as presented.

3. RESOLUTION CW006-2021 EI PROGRAM ECONOMIC REGION CHANGES

- a) **Resolution CW006-2021 EI Program Economic Region Changes**

Moved by Councillor Gail MacDonald

Seconded by Councillor Darren MacDougall

WHEREAS Prince Edward Island is a sovereign province of Canada; and

WHEREAS the province constitutes a single and integral zone for the purposes of the design and delivery of most policies and programs of the Government of Canada; and

WHEREAS the entirety of Prince Edward Island is smaller than most of the other legally constitutes and identified economic zones; and

WHEREAS the federal government, through Bill C-30, the *Budget Implementation Act, 2021, No. 1* proposes the entrenchment in the legislation, the establishment of two economic zones within the province for the purpose of the *Employment Insurance Act*; and

WHEREAS such entrenchment would legislate in statute inequity between neighbours and co-workers by imposing different rules for eligibility and access to benefits for seasonal workers under the *Employment Insurance Act*; and

WHEREAS such inequity would be disruptive to the economic and cultural well-being of the provincial community and arbitrarily impose hardship upon some seasonal workers to the exclusion of others.

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that the Parliament of Canada amend Division 36, Schedule VI of Bill C-30 the *Budget Implementation Act, 2021, No.1*, to ensure that Prince Edward Island is regarded as a single economic zone for the purposes of the interpretation of the *Employment Insurance Act*; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that such amendment read:

"Schedule VI, (5) The region of Prince Edward Island, consisting of the Province of Prince Edward Island."

Discussion: Mayor Ogden noted that this is an issue that is of importance to a lot of residents of Stratford who operate under different rules because of where they live for the purposes of the *Employment Insurance Act*. This is not fair and should be corrected. Mayor Ogden added that PEI is one region, and you can drive anywhere on the Island to get to a job. It's not where you work, it's where you live and constitutionally, mobility rights are protected under the Canadian Constitution. There is a negative greenhouse gas affect by having two zones because people want to live in the more advantageous zone, and they will drive great distances to go to where the work is. Summerside is another metropolitan area, and if you look at it logically, the economic zones are supposedly divided along urban/rural lines, but in fact we do have a metropolitan urban area within the more advantageous zones. There are many reasons why this is not fair to Prince Edward Islanders and especially to those who live in Stratford and hopefully it will be corrected.

Councillor Smith stated that he is conflicted on this issue. He noted that his vote will be based on the following: is this resolution going to be based on the EI being the same right across the province, and if so, will the people outside of the Charlottetown area be subject to the Charlottetown rules versus their own rules. Councillor Smith noted that the way it reads, the federal government could come back and say yes PEI will be one region, but they will all follow Charlottetown rules, and he felt that would not be fair. However, if they are saying the whole region is going to be outside of Charlottetown, he would vote in favour of that. Councillor Smith asked if we knew which one we would be voting on, and the CAO replied that it doesn't specify in the resolution. Councillor Burrridge stated that they will take the two zones and use a calculation to determine the outcome. She added that she had worked it out in the past, because we did a resolution on this issue in the past, so it is a bit repetitive. She added that at the time of the last resolution she was also a little conflicted, but because we are representing the citizens of Stratford it would be more beneficial if it was one zone.

Mayor Ogden noted that he had a discussion with Mayor Brown of Charlottetown about this issue and he said there are two aspects to it. One is that the zone would be based on a calculation based on the unemployment rate and the average income. However, Mayor Brown stated that it would be at the zone 2 rate for the whole Island, but Mayor Ogden is not sure what he based that information on. Mayor Ogden added that currently Stratford residents are not treated fairly. Councillor Burrridge noted that you could look at it from a business perspective - you have Stratford residents who work at Phinley's, and you could have workers travelling in from Pownal to work at Phinley's, so your workforce is not treated the same and it gets confusing. Councillor Smith added that it is not based on where you work, it is based on where you live. He asked if Mayor Ogden would be calling for the votes for and against, as well as anyone who is abstaining, and Mayor Ogden replied that he always calls for the in favour and against votes, but not for abstention. If someone abstains from a vote without a good reason such as a conflict of interest, it is counted as a vote in favour of the motion.

Question: **CARRIED**

4. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:45 p.m.