

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY



Speaker: Hon. Kathleen M. Casey

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Standing Committee on Agriculture, Forestry and Environment

DATE OF HEARING: 24 JUNE 2008

MEETING STATUS: PUBLIC

LOCATION: POPE ROOM, COLES BUILDING, CHARLOTTETOWN

SUBJECT: PRESENTATIONS ON REGULATIONS TO WILDLIFE CONSERVATION ACT, AND BIOFUELS;
FUTURE PRESENTATIONS TO THE COMMITTEE; COMMENTS ON COSMETIC PESTICIDES

COMMITTEE:

Jim Bagnall, MLA Montague-Kilmuir
Olive Crane, MLA Morell-Mermaid, Leader of the Opposition
Valerie Docherty, Minister of Tourism
Sonny Gallant, MLA Evangeline-Miscouche, replaces Charles McGeoghegan, MLA Belfast-Murray River
Robert Henderson, MLA O'Leary-Inverness
Alan McIsaac, MLA Vernon River-Stratford
Robert Vessey, MLA York-Oyster Bed
Buck Watts, MLA Tracadie-Hillsborough Park

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:

Carolyn Bertram, Minister of Communities, Cultural Affairs and Labour
Cynthia Dunsford, MLA Stratford-Kinlock
Charles McGeoghegan, MLA Belfast-Murray River

GUESTS:

Buddy Aitken, Carol Aitken, Tommy Kickham; David Latimer

STAFF:

Marian Johnston, Clerk Assistant and Clerk of Committees
Laura Morrell, Research Librarian, replaces Ryan Conway, Research Officer

The Committee met at 2:00 p.m.

Chair (McIsaac): Good afternoon folks. We do have a quorum now so we'll begin.

Carol, I'm going to ask you to introduce your people for the sake of Hansard so we'll have the people on tape. Then we'll allow you to go through a presentation and allow some time for questions and answers afterwards, if you would. Okay? So I'm going to turn it over to you.

Carol Aitken: Tommy Kickham and Buddy Aitken. There was four other people supposed to come but due to work commitments they weren't able to make it. Okay?

Chair: Yes. Turn the floor over to you.

Carol Aitken: My name is Carol Aitken and I want to thank you for the opportunity to present to you today and express my appreciation for your time and consideration of the issue to be addressed.

First, I would like to provide some background information on our business. My husband and I operate a small seasonal tourism business in eastern Kings County, PEI, under the name of Aitken Harbour View Cottages. We have developed this business over the past 20 years. We offer cottage rentals to visitors, and like many small business owners, specifically tourist operators, we are struggling to ensure the continued success of the operation. Our main rental season is, of course, the summer months. However, we have worked very diligently over the years to establish a viable shoulder season. As you are fully aware, the province of PEI and the various tourism associations have also worked for many years in an attempt to establish an extension of the tourism season, both pre-summer and fall.

While most Atlantic Canadian tourism destinations vie for many of the same vacation dollars, it is evident that those provinces that have the imagination and ability to recognize niche markets will be successful.

In the eastern Kings area we have had, and continue to have, a unique opportunity to forge strong relationships with the residents of another island close by, the Magdalen Islands. The fact that the ferry terminal is located in Souris can provide for the development of such niche markets as we have done for many years. As I stated, we work diligently within our business to establish a shoulder season and had some measure of success in doing so during the off-season period of October through December 10th annually. That is, until the former government of PEI, without consultation with the general tourism industry on PEI, significantly changed the act and regulations pertaining to non-resident hunting on PEI in September 2005, particularly as it relates to goose hunting.

Previously on PEI, non-resident hunters were allowed to purchase a non-resident license and hunt unaccompanied. With the changes to the act and regulations, non-residents must now be accompanied by either a licensed guide or a licensed resident hunter. In the licensed guide situation, they may accompany four licensed non-resident hunters, while a licensed resident hunter may accompany a maximum of two licensed non-resident hunters.

It is not always possible for residents to accompany visitors who are hunting. The negative impact this change has had, not only on our business, but on many other businesses in eastern Kings, and indeed all other areas of PEI, is enormous.

As one who has seen first-hand the level of spending these friends and customers from

the Magdalen Islands have done in the past, it is extremely discouraging to know that with the stroke of a non-informed pen many years of hard work in developing this niche market simply disappeared.

Let me tell you what a typical fall season used to look like before September 2005 in comparison to what happens now. These non-resident hunters would bring their spouses and family or friends, rent a cottage or motel rooms for up to two months, and sometimes two and a half months, and live on PEI. They bought hunting licenses, guns and ammunition. They rented farmers' fields. They bought their gas, diesel, groceries here. They ate in local restaurants. They purchased clothing for themselves and family. They purchased their winter supply of goods. They purchased many vehicles on PEI. They purchased their commercial fishing supplies. They purchased goods for home improvement projects during the winter months at local building supply and hardware stores. They did all their Christmas shopping here on PEI.

The loss of the above economic activity is not only felt in Souris area but also across PEI. I know for a fact that these non-resident hunters made two, if not three, shopping trips to Montague, Charlottetown and Souris weekly while on PEI and many weeks they made a trip each day.

Now, let me tell you what happens with non-resident hunters, particularly from the Magdalen Island. Following this regulation change, they drive off the boat with a full tank of gas and they drive across PEI, across the Confederation Bridge and on to Quebec, particularly the Gaspé Bay, to hunt. They do not stop in PEI. As a result, we are, as a province, totally losing out on what was once a well-developed and established market.

The changes to the act and regulations were probably requested by outfitters operating

within the province, particularly in central and western PEI. However, they have had a detrimental effect on businesses such as our cottage rentals, as well as many others mentioned above. In fact, if you review your own data on non-resident hunting you will see that my case is proven by your own PEI games' survey statistics.

In 2003 and 2004, before the changes were made, there were 1,019 licensed non-resident hunters on PEI. In 2004 and 2005 that number declined by 73 to a total of 946. In 2005 and 2006 that number again declined by an additional 77 to 869. In 2006 and 2007, the latest year that statistics are available, the number again declined by an additional 126 to 743.

In summary, the province of PEI has lost 276 licensed non-resident hunters since this regressive and ill-informed change was made. Is anyone wondering why the hunting revenues and numbers are declining? There is your answer.

Your own industry research states that the average tourist from Quebec spends, on average, 69.91 per day while visiting PEI. This is the typical family vacationing in the summer for a couple of weeks. However, these non-resident hunters are not the average tourist because they depend upon the importation of all their goods by either boat or air freight. When these non-resident hunters came to PEI they literally bought truckloads of goods to send or take back home to prepare for the winter months, such things as groceries, meat, commercial fishing supplies, paper goods, clothing, and home building supplies. They spent considerably more than the average tourist due to the amount of shopping for these home, personal, and business supplies they used to buy on PEI. However, using a conservative figure of only \$65 per day, the economic loss to PEI over the past three years has been over approximately \$1,166,000.

As I mentioned before, the changes to this act and regulations were probably as a result of lobbying by outfitters of PEI. However, the fact is that the people who use the expertise of outfitters are not the ordinary Joes who simply want to come to PEI with their families to pursue the sport they love while also taking advantage of an opportunity to shop on PEI. The people who utilize outfitting services are not the same people who want the independence to hunt as and when they please, without additional hassles and such unnecessary regulations.

This is not a safety issue. Goose hunters are located in open fields and they are required to have passed a firearm's safety course in order to purchase a license. It is not as though they were frequenting densely forested areas such as that of New Brunswick or British Columbia. Some would say that the change in regulations simply puts PEI in line with other Canadian provinces where guides are required. However, the fact remains, as I stated earlier, that the province, creating an advantage in marketing, which PEI had prior to this negative change, will be successful in developing off-season and niche tourist markets.

It is shameful that this province has enacted a regressive piece of legislation that has cost the small tourism operators and the provincial economy in the range of \$1.2 million at a minimum.

I respectfully request that the act and regulations revert to those of pre-September 2005, which had served the economy of the province well in developing a niche off-season market that was unique in Atlantic Canada. It is only by doing so that we will ever hope to regain what we have lost in the past three years and will continue to lose in the future if nothing is changed.

If you believe that you cannot do so immediately, I would respectfully request a

three-year pilot project to be established for the Kings County area in the fall of 2008 wherein the requirement of non-resident hunters be accompanied by guides or resident hunters be rescinded. Following an evaluation of the outcome of that pilot program, I am sure you will see an increase in the number of licensed hunters in Kings County and indeed related positive economic spinoff.

Thank you again for your consideration of this request and I look forward to your positive response.

Thank you.

Chair: Thank you very much, Carol.

Buddy or Tom, do you have any comments you want to make?

Tom Kickham: Pardon me?

Chair: Do you have any comments you want to make, opening comments, or are you just ready for questions?

Carol, you were saying there was other people coming with you as well, except for the conditions of the day and that sort of thing. Is there a big lobby on your behalf in Kings County or the Souris area with regards to this?

Carol Aitken: Yes.

Chair: Can you just give us an idea how big that might be?

Carol Aitken: Well, the number of people that rent fields. How many in total would there be?

Tom Kickham: God, I don't know. All the farmers.

Carol Aitken: You rented fields to hunters. Kathy Aitken. Like Rollie Jenkins, he would

have had all the total numbers but he was out fishing and wasn't able to make it. There's a lot of people. It's not only the Magdalen Island people. It's our people in eastern Kings that are really upset over it.

Chair: Okay. Buck, and then Jim.

Mr. Watts: Yes. Carol, you mentioned that they come here in October and stay until December. So would the same hunters from Magdalen Islands actually stay for that length of time to hunt?

Carol Aitken: Yes.

Mr. Watts: Yeah? They must be pretty avid hunters.

Carol Aitken: What it is, it's more or less of a vacation and a sport for them. They don't care if they get one a day or they get the limit. They like the hospitality on PEI and they want to come here and have a vacation.

Mr. Watts: So they'd rent a cottage for two and a half months, or whatever.

Carol Aitken: Yes. Only people that are involved with them would know the money that they leave here on PEI. They're big spenders.

Chair: Jim.

Mr. Bagnall: Yes, Carol, just a question on that. Has the tourism association been lobbying on behalf, the Tourism Advisory Council, or TIAPEI, or any of these tourism organizations, been lobbying government to have this changed?

Carol Aitken: I'm the first one that - I started with it. I tried a couple of years ago. The last two years I've been trying to get something going but this is the first that I've done or anybody that I've contacted now.

Mr. Bagnall: So have you met with the Tourism Advisory Council, TIAPEI, or any of - the Eastern Tourism Association or any of those tourism groups - to put on support for your request?

Carol Aitken: We just talked among ourselves. There wasn't anything as far as to meet with anybody. We never made any -

Mr. Bagnall: Okay. So what are you asking our group? Because really what our group, we can move forward, but it's hard to move forward and push an agenda if we only have one person in speaking. No tourism councils, no advisory councils. What about hunters, Ducks Unlimited? Have you met with those people on this issue?

Carol Aitken: No. There's just the people of the community and the locals.

Mr. Bagnall: I understand where you're coming from.

Carol Aitken: Yeah.

Mr. Bagnall: But, you know, in order to get a lobby group those are the people that you have to, you know, really to go to government and do a lobby with them, you have to have those type of groups on side that have a voice.

So I know what you're saying and it's an issue where you have to push, and if it's a loss in tourism in Kings County then the Eastern Tourism Association, I would think, would be a group that should be out there lobbying on your behalf for this. But I haven't heard that from any of the tourism groups and that's why I asked.

Carol Aitken: It's the hunters from the Magdalen Island had asked me if I could do something and this is my first step forward. None of them came last year. They went right to Gaspé and they said they just won't change. They don't need somebody

babysitting them on the side of the field. So this here -

Mr. Bagnall: I guess they probably don't want to pay for a guide now to take them out hunting. Is that the story?

Carol Aitken: Not only that, they don't need it. Those people are better educated than some of the guides. I mean, it's made a big difference in people coming. There'd be a lot of people say: Well, it's not with tourism because it's only the east end. This really hurts us in Kings County, eastern Kings.

Mr. Bagnall: It hurts all over.

Carol Aitken: I mean all the dollars, even what government is losing in taxes and sale of hunting licenses, all the taxes on the things that they bought.

Chair: I'm going to let Tom make a comment.

Tom Kickham: Mr. Chairman, if I may - and I have more questions than answers - but I don't know of any outfitters in Kings County for starters. Now, there may be in Prince and Queens but I'm not aware of that.

I guess I'd have to ask Jim this question. Why was this legislation enacted in the first place? Because it happened under your regime.

Mr. Bagnall: Well, it came in - I was on Legislative Review at the time, and I remember that we had sent this back three or four times to the department and the department had said that one of the reasons was safety and, major, was safety issue that they were promoting. That people were coming in without proper guides, shooting in proper areas, that they didn't know the areas. This was all stuff that we had gotten on the Legislative Review Committee that dealt with that piece of legislation when it

came through.

Tom Kickham: But did that come in from groups, Tourism, Ducks Unlimited, and all those, as well?

Mr. Bagnall: Oh yes, they were all supportive of it at that time. So this is why I'm asking if these groups have been lobbied on this part because all these lobby groups were in favour of the change at the time.

Tom Kickham: Because I know as a landowner it affects me personally and it affects a lot of the small landowners that wouldn't have had time or probably were not even consulted because now we don't have the revenue coming in from those people that are coming in from off-Island to rent our fields. We're not going out to babysit them while they shoot ducks and geese because I'm not interested in sitting in a duck blind all day.

Mr. Bagnall: That's exactly one of the reasons, when it came to Legislative Review, when I was on that committee, was that was some of the arguments that we had. I know in Prince County there was a lot of potato farms there and grain land and in the Bedeque, Kensington, Borden area where they do a lot of duck hunting. Let's face it, they sell their land there for maybe \$5,000 for the fall season to a bunch of hunters to hunt.

Tom Kickham: Exactly.

Mr. Bagnall: Well, you know, unless these guys were bringing in hunters and using that. So anyway there is change.

Tom Kickham: I guess the way I'd look at it now with the farming situation and the crisis it's in, would it not be better for the little farmer out there to pick up any little bit of extra cash he could instead of an outfitter picking it up? That's how I see it.

Mr. Bagnall: The only suggestion I could make maybe through this committee is that we have the department come in and give the committee a rationale why this was done, and deal with that. I think that we're hearing - all the committee members here probably don't know the rationale, why it was done or what took place. I think it would be good to bring the minister and department in to our committee and have them explain why this was done.

Tom Kickham: I'm not saying it was a wrong decision at the time, but I'm just saying maybe there was a lot of people out there that didn't realize the implications until after it was enacted. That's usually the case a lot of times. The barn door gets shut after the horse has run away and then it's too late and then you've got to come back and fight for some of this stuff that we lose.

Carol Aitken: As a tourist operator, we were never consulted in the area because I belong to a tourist association.

Mr. Bagnall: Chances are, and I'm not being - that the tourism aspect of it probably wasn't - because it was safety, safety, safety, safety, safety that we were hearing across the committee all the time, why these changes were taking place. Right or wrong, I'm not going to argue one way which.

Carol Aitken: But those people have all the requirements and even higher class hunting licenses from over there than what our Island people have. They hold higher licenses.

Mr. Bagnall: I guess what I would suggest to the chair of the committee, if he would entertain that, is that we bring in some people from the department to explain to the committee why these changes were felt to be necessary to have done, and to explain it to us and that makes us more educated on the issue.

Chair: Might also find out if there were other repercussions across the province, if Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, if people stopped coming from there as well.

We have a couple more questions. Rob and then I'll -

Mr. Henderson: I guess my question was just a little more pertaining to is it only the Magdalen Islands that this is sort of affecting? Now, I'm from the west end of the Island and I rent my fields out to an outfitter. I find it's a way better setup than it was previously. I had all these people fighting trying to get your field and whatnot. Where this way an outfitter rents the fields and he has different people that come in, and I'm sure they're all experienced hunters as well, but it doesn't seem like it's a big issue up our way.

Carol Aitken: They don't want somebody babysitting them. For one fellow, if they wanted to go before, if one guy came here and he wanted to go by himself he could, and now he's not going to go and pay out \$200 a day, he said, for somebody to come and babysit him.

Mr. Henderson: Is that what the cost is for an outfitter? I don't know.

Carol Aitken: This is what he said anyway.

Chair: (Indistinct) \$50 a day I think.

Carol Aitken: Pardon?

Chair: (Indistinct).

Mr. Henderson: But I mean they'd spent that much on gas driving to the Gaspé Bay, \$50.

Carol Aitken: No. They won't come back. They're not coming back unless this is changed.

Mr. Henderson: But that sounds to me, it's just like you've got some hunters that figure that they don't have to abide by certain rules or whatever so they go somewhere else.

Carol Aitken: No, it's not.

Mr. Henderson: But if they went to Nova Scotia or New Brunswick would they not have to abide by the same rules?

Mr. Bagnall: (Indistinct).

Mr. Henderson: They would, yeah.

Carol Aitken: Saskatchewan tried to bring this in and it never got passed.

Chair: The act only states what the license fee is. It doesn't state what the cost of -

Carol Aitken: But, as you can see in there, the decline in the number of people coming and what the province is losing, I think, but I was at the very bottom of the list as far as what I was making because you become friends with those people and you don't want to charge them too much for accommodations. But it was everybody else that was getting the spinoff from it. You know, you become friends with them.

Mr. Henderson: See, I'm finding in our area, like the outfitters go and they'll rent the cottages and make it a package, and they're saying that the hunters like to move around to different locations so they might do two or three days in Tyne Valley area and then two or three in the Kensington area. In addition to (Indistinct) it's one individual, he has them all booked. I don't know. It seems to work.

Carol Aitken: Those people have been coming, some of them, for over 20 years.

Tom Kickham: Yes. You can't hunt the same field day after day after day. That doesn't work.

Chair: Okay. Olive, a question.

Leader of the Opposition: Excuse me. A couple of quick questions. Mrs. Aitken, when you were talking about your own Harbour View Cottages, how many cottages do you have and how many other cottage owners are we talking about that would be missing out on this business?

Carol Aitken: Well, I -

Leader of the Opposition: And then I have question for Mr. Kickham, as well.

Carol Aitken: I had three.

Leader of the Opposition: Three cottages. Okay.

Carol Aitken: Yes. There could be as many from two to about 10 that would be staying in each one of those. The motels, Rollo Bay Inn and Hilltop, and some other cottages around or private homes that people, that they had.

Leader of the Opposition: They're no longer staying in. Okay.

Carol Aitken: No.

Leader of the Opposition: Then the next question to Mr. Kickham. I know you mentioned that you came here first. I was just curious. Did you go to talk to the present minister of agriculture to raise the issues of the lost revenue in your farming fields or have you asked him and his deputy to set up maybe some meetings with the minister and the deputy of environment? Like, things change over time, and whether regulations were brought in five years ago or not, maybe it's time to review the whole area. I'm just curious what other things you've done.

Tom Kickham: I haven't done anything. Actually, I just came here as a support

today.

Leader of the Opposition: Okay. Sure.

Tom Kickham: Getting back to Mr. Henderson's comments, I know you have outfitters down west. Maybe we're not as organized in the eastern end but it doesn't mean your field is going to get rented just because you - that's the other side of that coin. So you may get overlooked and you lose revenue. All outfitters don't take every field.

Mr. Henderson: I will make a comment that if you've got geese coming out of your fields, you're going to rent her.

Tom Kickham: Maybe.

Mr. Henderson: You know, if you want to rent it, as a landowner.

Another little comment I'll make too, and this is something as a farmer, as well, or landowner. Liability becomes a bit of an issue too. If you've got people hunting on your field and something every happened, at least this way I have a little more of a sense that there is a guide or an outfitter there that's making sure that things are not happening.

Mr. Bagnall: And you're covered.

Mr. Henderson: What? Well, I think I'm covered. I'll not say I know for certain of that.

Tom Kickham: You will not know until you end up in a court of law, I suspect, whether you're covered or not because when the accident happens you'll be sued as well as the outfitter.

Mr. Henderson: But I think I have a far better argument knowing that there's an outfitter there, I guess is what I'm saying, versus just letting some -

Tom Kickham: It depends on the outfitter you have.

Mr. Henderson: Even though. I'm not arguing that either but just I'm saying it at least gives me a little bit of an argument to exonerate my property from liability.

Carol Aitken: But this year with tourism down so low that would have been a great bonus for me in the fall to have those people coming, which I won't have. So I'm strongly thinking of giving up my business because I don't have anybody. One month filled and that's it.

Chair: Okay. Good. Are there any other questions for your group?

That's certainly an interesting discussion, and we as a committee will likely look into this a little farther and check it out with tourism and some of the other groups and see exactly what kind of implications it has. It certainly sounds like you're affected up there and we can check those things out, that's for sure.

Tom Kickham: Thank you for your time.

Carol Aitken: Yes, and as I said in the last paragraph there, if there could be a pilot project back for the Kings County area to see what change this would make for us, that we'd appreciate it very much. Some of the people from the Magdalens would like to have been here today but they just couldn't because they're fishermen and they couldn't be here.

Leader of the Opposition: Sorry, (Indistinct) I just have one more quick comment.

Chair: One quick one. Go ahead.

Leader of the Opposition: Mrs. Aitken, have you had any contact with the - like, I know the Pisquid-Mount Stewart area is a

heavy hunting area and down, I guess, probably to Wood Islands, that area too, Uigg, that part. Have you had any conversations with any of the tourism operators in those areas and are they impacted in the same way?

Carol Aitken: I don't know. I'm just thinking of our own area -

Leader of the Opposition: Okay, sure.

Carol Aitken: - and ourselves.

Leader of the Opposition: Okay. No, that's fine. Thank you.

Chair: I really want to thank you for coming forward and making the presentations. It's terrific. Appreciate you taking the time to come in.

Carol Aitken: Thank you for your time, then.

Chair: Going to take about a one minute break. Our next presenter on the agenda, Mr. Charles Murphy, is not able to make it today. It's a pretty fine day and I'm sure he's cropping.

So we're going to move on to Mr. Dave Latimer who is here with us. We'll give you a couple minutes to set up. Marian is passing around your document there. So if you want to get comfortable at the table and if anyone wants to grab a glass of water or something, we'll reconvene in a minute of two.

[There was a short recess]

Chair: Okay, our next presenter is Mr. Dave Latimer. He's going to talk to us a bit on biofuels which is a topic that we did put on our agenda. We're planning to hear it from many groups, individuals, on this topic, hear the positives, negatives, and what the people's opinions are on that.

So I'm going to turn it over to you, Mr. Latimer, and you can make your presentation. Leave a little time at the end for questions and comments, that'd be great. So I'll turn it right over to you.

David Latimer: I'm glad you put that hammer down. It woke me up here.

Anyhow, my name is David Latimer. Some of you know me, but most of you don't. I'm here to talk about biofuels. I've been on the Island now 11 years and most of you would call me from away, but I look at myself as an Islander by choice. I think there are many problems that we're going through here on the Island but one of the most significant ones right now is fuel, diesel fuel in particular. It is being used by farmers and fishermen and truckers and all the rest of them that use diesel in their vehicles.

As you know, there's something coming up in Ottawa where they're talking about putting a carbon tax on diesel, and I think that's going to be another charge that the people can't afford. From my observations and watching what goes on on the Island here, I find that farmers are struggling, and I think you all know this, with the cost of operating requirements. Not only are they not getting a decent price for their product, but they're having to pay a very high price to operate their equipment and keep themselves running.

So I'm really here just as sort of like a water boy to try and let you know that I think that it's really necessary that something needs to be done about the conditions with regard to biofuel.

I know that most people will say: We can't cut off the food line to produce fuel from farmlands. But I think there has to be an equation here where there's some available space just to develop this kind of a project. The need here is terrific. I think this Island, claiming itself to be a green island, it would

be a great opportunity to show that they are really green because what they would be doing here is they'd be producing a product that wouldn't be effecting the atmosphere, it wouldn't be causing any problems for the environment, and yet it would still be saving the farmers money because they would be producing the product with what they grow in the fields and what they could develop by producing diesel fuel.

So this is really where I'm coming from here. I don't know whether you've had a chance to look at some of the situations that are going on around here. I read the paper every day and I find that's all you hear on the front pages and the centre pages and all through it is about fuel costs. I know that the gasoline cost is very high, but we're not going to change that overnight and we're not going to be able to produce enough on the Island to satisfy the needs for automobiles with making this ethanol. But I think we can produce enough on the Island to satisfy the needs of the farmers and the fishermen that work this land here and operate on the waters. I think that's where we have to focus our plan here is to just do that, stay within the confines of the Island, not try to produce it for commercial use or to go outside of the Island itself, but to keep it here for the farmers and the fishermen.

I think the government has to get involved to the point where they can - they have two things available to them. They have a storage space in the way of silos in which we can put the stock and they also have the means by which to develop funding through going after bond issues, where you can get people outside and around the Island to invest in this kind of a project. It doesn't have to come out of the general funds. It can be a special bond issue set up specifically to develop this kind of a program.

I don't know what else I can say. I'm kind of limited in my knowledge of what goes on, but I do know that it's a necessity and it's

also an urgency. I think that we should be starting on this, not next year, not two years down the road, but immediately. I think a survey should be taken of the farmers to find out who is available to be able to produce the product to make the diesel fuel and (Indistinct) diesel.

Leader of the Opposition: Are you talking about canola, then?

David Latimer: Canola is one product you can use. I know there's some canola being grown on the Island and I think that's one of the base items that we could think about.

The other thing is we've got a lot of sea lettuce and all kinds of stuff like that. It still can be brought into the mix. It wouldn't be enough to satisfy the conditions, but it would be one of the things that could be added to the fold.

Chair: Okay, do you have a question, Olive?

Leader of the Opposition: Well, if you're ready for them?

Chair: Yeah, are you ready?

David Latimer: Yeah, pretty well, yeah.

Leader of the Opposition: Sure. Are you familiar with some of the work that Gerard Mol is doing?

David Latimer: I'm sorry?

Leader of the Opposition: Are you familiar with some of the work that Gerard Mol is doing? He's a farmer in the Kinkora area.

David Latimer: I've heard of it. I know what he's actually doing.

Leader of the Opposition: He has an oil extraction facility. Yes.

David Latimer: Yeah, and that's a good starting point.

Leader of the Opposition: Sure.

David Latimer: There's a man that should be involved with what we're planning here.

Leader of the Opposition: Sure.

David Latimer: I haven't had a chance to talk to anybody, in particular, in the farming industry to be able to - I just brought this to the table because I think it's an urgent matter -

Leader of the Opposition: Absolutely.

David Latimer: - that needs to get dealt with right away.

Leader of the Opposition: Are you also promoting the use of maybe disease barley in barley burner units? Like having contracts. I know in some countries like Germany, etc., they've used this particular technology for a long time. So in my district, for example, where I have Morell Consolidated, Morell High School, and the provincial library, if farmers were given a contract to provide heat to those facilities, there would be that capability of doing it. Like are you doing the broad biofuels? Is that what you're promoting for agriculture and fishing?

David Latimer: I'm promoting the idea of biofuels and biodiesel for the -

Leader of the Opposition: Diesel, okay.

David Latimer: - use in agriculture and fishing.

Leader of the Opposition: Fishing, okay.

David Latimer: These are the two main concerns I have because without fishing and without farming, you might as well shut this

place down. I mean, the Island is not like downtown Toronto where they can come up with different ways of making money. The basic core of this Island here is farming and fishing and tourism. Tourism being one of it, being brought on by the farming, being brought on by the fishermen. So this is why we have to concern ourselves with what's happening here on the Island.

Leader of the Opposition: Sure. Are you presenting to the committee that's looking at a long-term strategy for agriculture?

David Latimer: Well, I would hope it'd be long term, but I'd like to see something happen sooner than that.

Leader of the Opposition: In the short term, sure.

David Latimer: I'd like to also bring to the table Jamie Ballem's name as a consultant to deal with this issue. I know that he's not in government any more, but I know that he's working an awfully hard a lot of time on environmental -

Leader of the Opposition: On wind energy?

David Latimer: Yes, and I'm just suggesting one name because I know the man and I've dealt with him, and I know that with his knowledge he could be a contributor to this whole thing. But I think you're going to have to go outside of government to get the people together that can talk about it, like the farmer you mentioned.

Leader of the Opposition: Sure.

David Latimer: These people have to sit down. We need to talk to people who are in the financial industry, like Wes Sheridan could help us with developing these bonds to finance this program. I'd like to see a plant developed in each county, one in

Kings, one in Queens and one in Prince, if that's possible. It might not be possible right away, but that would be the end result and have these farms around these developing or processing plants to feed to the farmers. I'd like to see the farmers become part of it. I'd like to see them be able to buy into this so they would become the owners of this whole thing eventually, in the long run.

Chair: Okay. I've got two other requests over here, Rob and then Buck.

Mr. Henderson: I guess my question is: What's stopping somebody from growing biofuels or from manufacturing biofuels now?

David Latimer: First of all, you don't have a commercial market here to bring money into do it. You're not going to get outsiders to spend a lot of money putting a plant on the Island unless they've got someplace else to sell it. I'm concerned -

Mr. Henderson: That's the point.

David Latimer: Pardon?

Mr. Henderson: But that's the point. Like, there's ethanol plants shutting down all over North America.

David Latimer: I'm not talking about ethanol. I'm not talking about making alcohol for going in cars. I'm talking about servicing the farmers and the fishermen on the Island. That's the main concern. What you do after that, it's up to you or whatever happens, but initially you got to take care of the farmers and the fishermen.

Mr. Henderson: But I'm losing you to say, what - I mean, farmers don't want to produce a product that there's no demand for or that it's not profitable in doing so.

David Latimer: First of all, the profit would go back to them. If they become

involved in it -

Mr. Henderson: But there has to be a profit.

David Latimer: Well, if the farmers shut down, who's going to make the profit and how are you going to make the profit on the farms? Where are the profits going to come from for other farms?

Mr. Henderson: But you're into a catch-22. If the ethanol plant can't make money without being forced upon the marketplace, then it doesn't make money. So if you're part of that, you're not any farther ahead.

David Latimer: You're getting into ethanol again. Forget ethanol. I'm talking about diesel fuel and biofuel. I'm not talking about - I'm talking about biofuel, biodiesel. I'm not talking about trying to get it to become a commercial venture. I'm talking about possibly giving a farmer an opportunity to buy his fuel at a reasonable rate and that would be caused by him selling the base product to the plant and then buying it back from the plant. That's an equation that has to be worked on.

Mr. Henderson: But that does exist. I mean, actually, Gerard Mol is doing that at the moment or he's -

David Latimer: Which only proves the point that it works, as far as I'm concerned.

Mr. Henderson: But I'm getting back to saying, but what's stopping that from happening then?

David Latimer: First of all, I think that they need to have the money to put a proper facility in place, something that can provide the quantities that we need to supply the farmer and the fisherman. We need to have a plant that's able to do that. Now you don't want a great big huge plant to supply Nova Scotia and New Brunswick and all the rest

of them. But you need a plant sizeable enough that you can provide most of the biodiesel and biofuel to the farmers at hand. Each county could have their own operation and each farmer could have his own investment in it. Just the fact that he provides the base for it, the -

Mr. Henderson: Well, the canola. But right today there's nothing stopping me from going and buying a tractor that burns canola and there's nothing to stop me from going and getting my canola oil from Gerard Mol. I guess that's my - I'm a bit confused of your topic here.

David Latimer: You're talking - can Gerard supply enough for the farmers on the Island to make it worth their while?

Mr. Henderson: If the money's there, I'm sure he could.

David Latimer: Well then, let Gerard set up a plant.

Chair: Okay, we've got a question from Buck.

Mr. Watts: I was just wondering. The other day I read an article, I think it was Gwynne Dyer, possibly, I'm not sure of that: pond scum. Did you read that article?

David Latimer: What was that again?

Mr. Watts: It was an article about pond scum.

David Latimer: Yes, I read it.

Mr. Watts: Did you read it?

David Latimer: Yes, that's one of the things you can use. You can use sea lettuce. You can use all these things.

Mr. Watts: Yeah, I read that article. I found it rather interesting.

David Latimer: Every day you open the paper and you see these articles. I mean, this fuel thing is not going to go away. If somebody has the idea that the bottom is going to fall out of it, it's not going to happen. First of all, the kingpins are all in control of this thing and it's not going to change. I mean, the Americans are complaining because they're paying \$4 and change for a gallon of gas. They haven't been up here lately.

Mr. Henderson: Or to Europe.

David Latimer: We're almost - well, go to England where I go to visit. They're paying up over a pound, over a pound per litre. So I mean, this is a real issue. But I'm not only concerned about the farmers on this Island. I'm not going to try to go beyond and trying to become a very commercialized business. I think the farmers need this for their own protection, for their own use.

Mr. Watts: But I thought it was an interesting idea, this pond scum thing, because I mean every day that you pass by a river or a bay, I pass by it every day and look up the Winter River, and all I see is vegetation on top of the water and stuff.

David Latimer: That's right, Buck.

Mr. Watts: It costs nothing.

David Latimer: That's what I just handed you there. I handed you our newsletter because I've been working with Friends of the Bay for - I've been on the Island 11 years. I've been working on Friends of the Bay for seven. Okay, this will be my eighth year, and believe me, I know about pond scum. I know about sea lettuce because I live on Covehead Bay and I look out there. It looks like a potato field for about 200 yards out from where my land ends.

Mr. Watts: It costs nothing to produce either.

David Latimer: You got to harvest it, though. That's the other side of the coin.

Mr. Watts: Yeah, harvest it, but it takes nothing to grow.

David Latimer: The harvesting is a big problem. I'd like to see them harvest the sea lettuce on the bays because that sea lettuce could be used and it would also clean out the bay.

Chair: Olive has another question.

David Latimer: Sorry, Olive.

Leader of the Opposition: It's not a question, I guess, or a combination of questions, but I think what you're referring to is a paradigm shift, and looking at different opportunities for agriculture that are more environmentally related but also comes from the amount of dollars we already have here circulating in PEI.

In terms of the comment, Gerard Mol's just starting. In terms of some of the farmers that are presently growing grains, etc., probably in their future they would have a certain acreage that they would actually produce maybe canola, take it to Gerard's facility, have it extracted. He uses some for feedstock and the rest could come back in a biodiesel format to provide fuel for your tractor, right?

The other kinds of, when you mentioned Jamie Ballem, and different alternative energies, I think we're at that point in not only agriculture and fishing but environment on PEI that we have to look at different models in a different way. Some people refer that to natural capital. Two years ago, before I entered politics, or I guess 2.5 years ago, I had the luck to be at an organic dairy farm in Ontario where the farmers themselves were actually making their own biodiesel in their garage to run all their tractors.

So maybe part of it is, for yourself, to keep your discussion going with the long-term strategy that's looking at long-term options for agriculture. But also then maybe that's something we can do is bring some people into the province, like that young farmer that, you know, he was 12 years as an organic dairy farmer milking 190 some cows and very successful at it and turning a real profit. Bring some of those people here so ordinary farmers could then provide a service, too, of some of that being converted for use for fishing. Because as the price of diesel goes up, it's a stress that's not just on agriculture and fishing but a lot of other places as well.

David Latimer: The last I heard, it was not very long ago in the paper where they were saying they were losing money because of the fact they couldn't afford the diesel to operate. One farmer in my area -

Leader of the Opposition: Major.

David Latimer: - 7,000 litres he uses.

Leader of the Opposition: Absolutely.

David Latimer: I mean, it's not like you're talking nickels and dimes here. We're talking lots of dollars, and this is only an opportunity to keep it within the Island and without going commercial just to make sure the farmers are well served with this product.

Leader of the Opposition: There's also - it's a type of co-operative movement that was called New Generation Co-operatives through agriculture. I think, again, the old model of agriculture that ran into a lot of trouble, it's now forcing some people to look at different opportunities and ways to go. So maybe this is an opportunity for a number of people in agriculture.

David Latimer: I would like to see a survey done as quickly as possible to get the

farmers on board, maybe go through the Department of Agriculture or whatever means you have in order to find out how they feel about it, how they can contribute, how much land can they afford to put into this kind of a product in order to service this facility.

Leader of the Opposition: It really, you know, if government's interested in helping out, by changing some of the policies - and that's what I was getting to with alternative energy, and again, using that example from Morell. If government said they were putting out a request for proposals that'll go to agriculture to provide alternative methods to heat those three facilities, right now those facilities, although they're being heated, all that money goes off PEI in comparison to having something locally.

Chair: Olive, as you said at the start, I mean, this is one of the biggest topics on a lot of people's agenda and we're going to hear, hopefully, from a lot of people on this topic. I'm sure we'll hear positives and negatives on both sides on how we should go on this issue.

Any other questions or comments for Mr. Latimer?

We really want to thank you for coming forward, David, and putting your comments forward. This is terrific. Appreciate you taking the time.

David Latimer: Thank you, thank you very much.

Chair: As was noted earlier, Mr. Murphy couldn't make it today and we'll try and get him on to our next meeting or whenever we can.

There are a couple of other items. Rob, I think, wanted to put a couple of items on that people we could meet or may want to meet with us. Do you want to bring those

forward now?

Mr. Henderson: I guess we had talked a little bit about on the rural economy committee about the May Day group, Gary Morgan and some of those people, whether they should make a presentation to whether it's agriculture or the rural economic review, but I just throw that out. I know they would be interested in coming forward and they do have some ideas or initiatives. It's just whether -

Ms. Docherty: Who are they, Rob?

Mr. Henderson: It's the May Day group that did the rally here on the 1st of May. It's Gary Morgan and Justin Rogers. They were in the Legislature. They did have meetings with -

Leader of the Opposition: The West Prince Chamber of Commerce.

Mr. Henderson: Some of them are involved with the West Prince Chamber of Commerce. It's sort of a bigger group or whatever.

Leader of the Opposition: I think that's a good idea.

Mr. Henderson: But they have some ideas and they have pitched them around the community and around.

Mr. Bagnall: Why don't we bring in Doctor - what's his name that's here working with Rory Francis?

Chair: Tyrchniewicz, Ed Tyrchniewicz.

Mr. Bagnall: And have them in and talk about what strategies they're looking in the long term for agriculture in the province and what they're hearing and the course of action they're going to be taking.

I think at one time they talked about having

a member from government and a member from opposition sitting on this committee. I've heard nothing about that (Indistinct) since I've taken over.

Leader of the Opposition: That was on the original terms of reference, wasn't it?

Chair: It was. I asked about that, but they are not requesting us to sit on that. But we can ask to have a meeting. There's no problem with that.

Mr. Bagnall: I think we should find out what they're doing.

Chair: I think they're (Indistinct) anyway.

Mr. Bagnall: It'll put them in -

Chair: Okay, let's do one at a time. What's the other request?

Mr. Henderson: The other one was the -

Chair: Just let's get one, Rob, first. What's the feeling on the May Day group? Should we ask them to come in?

Leader of the Opposition: Yes, yes, yes.

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct).

Leader of the Opposition: No? Did you say no?

Chair: No? Hands up, those in favour of having the May Day group come in.

Ms. Docherty: I guess I'm not quite sure what the purpose is, that people -

Mr. Henderson: They just have some proposals for agriculture is basically what it is.

Mr. Bagnall: Don't you think - and I have no problem with them coming in - but don't you think they should be meeting with this

long-term strategy, at least with Rory Francis and these people in the department first, and then maybe after they've met with them and they've got a strategy together, you could talk to them then? I think bringing them in without putting any feedback into what's taking place, I think that we're putting the cart before the horse.

Mr. Henderson: But that begs the question what we're doing as a committee, then.

An Hon. Member: Yeah, exactly.

Chair: Okay, Rob.

Mr. Vessey: I guess, Olive, my question, why I would say not, I think our committee has to try and change the mind-set of the industry. Like, if we get a bunch more negative feedback - we never hear any good news. It's always how bad things are. Like we got to, as a committee, try and help the industry a little more as opposed to being negative all the time.

Rob, like, that group, if they want to meet with Jim or meet with the other committee to put some ideas forward and then let it fall out from there as opposed to coming into the committee and telling everybody how bad it is and the media's recording how bad it is.

Mr. Henderson: But I don't think that - well, from my understanding they do have a list of ideas and initiatives. I guess that's what I'd be looking at to see what they -

Leader of the Opposition: The other part for, they are representing not only a few people directly in agriculture but also agri kinds of businesses and other related. I know since they met with us, that was back outside the Legislature when we first started.

Mr. Henderson: The first of May.

Leader of the Opposition: The first of

April, wasn't it?

Mr. Henderson: The first of May. May Day.

Leader of the Opposition: Oh yeah, May Day, right. May Day, right. So it would be nice to follow up, in my perspective, and at least hear them out and hear their ideas. No different than, you know, where Mrs. Aitken came in and presented this afternoon, even to give her or them further direction of who else.

I don't have any problem with them meeting with Rory Francis and the other group, too. But if they haven't met yet, it may be a long time before they even get to see them in August, September. I know I was up in West Prince there two weeks ago and things are not going well at all.

Chair: Why don't you check with them, Rob, and see if they're going to meet with Rory and Ed Tyrchniewicz?

Mr. Henderson: To my knowledge, as of today they have no commitment to meet with anybody. I should say, they're not really specifically requesting to talk about the past. They do have some initiatives -

Leader of the Opposition: Some ideas.

Mr. Henderson: - and proposals. Whether this is the proper committee or rural development is the proper committee or whether it's that commission, I'm just bringing it forward. If the committee feels it's good, if it's a thing that's going to split the committee, I have no problem with saying that they don't.

Mr. Bagnall: That will be done before you come back.

Chair: Buck has a comment on that.

Mr. Watts: Robbie mentioned first that this

committee is the same group. Regardless of even if they did come down and demonstrate, with the present situation that we have in agriculture, I, for one, would like to hear some constructive ideas, some new ideas, some ideas that may take agriculture forward.

If this group has good ideas, good constructive ideas that it's going to help agriculture in the future, then I see no reason why they shouldn't come in. But I would like to find out for sure that they do have some good ideas. If they're going to come into this room and say: We need a \$100 million, then I don't want to hear them. So is there a way that we can find out what they're going to present? If they're going to present some good, sound, constructive ideas, I want to hear them. But if they're going to come in here and ask for a \$100 million, I don't want to hear them.

An Hon. Member: I agree with (Indistinct).

Chair: Rob, why don't you check with them and see if we can see Dr. Ed and Rory and see what kind of presentation they may have put forward. I mean, I believe the committee is quite open to hear from them as soon as possible.

Mr. Henderson: I'll certainly make it clear to them that we're looking for initiatives and ideas. That's right, we're not looking for -

Mr. Bagnall: Some positive feedback and initiatives.

Mr. Henderson: - what's been wrong. We want to know what are some of the solutions.

Chair: Yeah. Okay, you had another thing.

Mr. Henderson: The other one was that in 2006 the Senate of Canada did the Farm Income Improvement Committee. So they have a report that's out. I guess Marian had

mentioned that she knows of that report. I'm just wondering if we shouldn't have a copy of that for all our committee members.

Chair: Are you interested in that? Can you circulate that? Okay.

The other thing that came up today, maybe we'll ask Marian to contact some others with regards to this *Wildlife Conservation Act* from our first presenter to see if we can get some other sides on this or a little more background on it.

Mr. Bagnall: I think that if you (Indistinct) -

Mr. Henderson: Is this even an issue, though?

Mr. Bagnall: - have the department in that put the act together, they can really tell you what the issues are. I can tell you, Alan, there are all kinds of issues out there why this change was made. It's not just - I'm telling you, safety was a main concern, and there were a lot of issues that should be - if we're going to even make any kind of a (Indistinct), we should hear why these changes were made from the department.

Chair: Okay, so we'll have somebody in.

Mr. Henderson: I just don't even see this is an issue.

Chair: It's a big issue to her and to her group, she brought it forward. We can at least look into it.

Mr. Bagnall: Well ask (Indistinct) the Minister of Tourism. Have you had any dealings with the hunters complaining about the way the hunters can hunt on PEI? Coming in? Have you had anybody approach your department about the tourism? That's what I thought.

Chair: Well, it seemed to be a concern of

these - so maybe we'll ask somebody and see if we can find somebody to come in and just explain the situation. We do owe her a (Indistinct).

Mr. Bagnall: I think we should have the department in the explain it.

Chair: Since we did discuss that we would have them in, I think that we should go that far at least.

Mr. Bagnall: That way, we can say that we did follow up on it.

Mr. Henderson: (Indistinct) a waste of time.

Chair: Okay. Are there any other issues that you feel the committee needs to deal with at this time?

Mr. Bagnall: One question. There was nitrates were supposed to be out in June, a report in. I'm wondering if we can have the chair of the committee come in and explain the findings of the nitrate study. It was the minister said in the House that it was going to be available in June. It's the end of June now, so I'd like to get the minister or the chair of the committee to come in and explain their findings on the report to us.

Chair: Sure, sounds fair. Anything else? Okay.

Do we have some dates booked as of the first of September? Other than that, the committee will go at the call of the chair for the next meeting -

Mr. Bagnall: Sounds great.

Chair: - as issues come up. Okay?

Mr. Bagnall: Adjourn.

Clerk Assistant and Clerk of Committees: I have (Indistinct) comments to pass

(Indistinct).

Chair: Oh yes, that's right, sorry (Indistinct). We have other comments that came forward with regards to the cosmetic pesticide issue that Marian's going to circulate, for information at this point.

Mr. Bagnall: Are these just more people making presentations?

Chair: Some repetitive, some of the same people again.

Clerk Assistant and Clerk of Committees: (Indistinct) that have come in since the committee has filed its final report and so -

Mr. Bagnall: From who? From the people that (Indistinct)?

Clerk Assistant and Clerk of Committees: Members of the public.

Mr. Bagnall: Okay. Give me one for Olive, too, please? Thank you.

Adjournment.

Chair: Motion to adjourn?

Shall it carry?

Some Hon. Members: Carried.

Chair: Good.

Thank you, folks.

The Committee adjourned