

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY



Speaker: Hon. Francis (Buck) Watts

Published by Order of the Legislature

Standing Committee on Communities, Land and Environment

DATE OF HEARING: 5 MARCH 2019

MEETING STATUS: PUBLIC

LOCATION: LEGISLATIVE CHAMBER, HON. GEORGE COLES BUILDING, CHARLOTTETOWN

SUBJECT: BRIEFING ON WATER ACT REGULATIONS

COMMITTEE:

Kathleen Casey, MLA Charlottetown-Lewis Point [Chair]
Dr. Peter Bevan-Baker, Leader of the Third Party
Colin LaVie, MLA Souris-Elmira
Alan McIsaac, MLA Vernon River-Stratford
Hon. Pat Murphy, Minister of Rural and Regional Development
Hon. Chris Palmer, Minister of Economic Development and Tourism (replaces Allen Roach, MLA Montague-Kilmuir)
Bradley Trivers, MLA Rustico-Emerald

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:

Hal Perry, MLA Tignish-Palmer Road
Allen Roach, MLA Montague-Kilmuir

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:

none

GUESTS:

Communities, Land and Environment (Richard Brown, Bruce Raymond, George Somers)

STAFF:

Emily Doiron, Clerk Assistant (Journals, Committee, and House Operations)

The Committee met at 1:00 p.m.

Chair (Casey): Good afternoon, everybody and welcome to the Standing Committee on Communities, Land and Environment. Those of you who don't know me, I'm Kathleen Casey, and I'm the Chair of the committee.

Hon. members, we do have a substitute in today; he's going to be a few minutes late. Chris Palmer is going to be subbing for Allen Roach and I heard that Hal Perry is on his way. In the interest of time, we're going to move on as we have a quorum.

Hon. members, the agenda is before you and I'm looking for approval of the agenda.

Mr. McIsaac: (Indistinct)

Chair: So moved. Thank you, Alan McIsaac.

Hon. members, you remember that we sent an invitation to the Department of Communities, Land and Environment to have the minister come in and talk about the *Water Act* and the minister is with us today. He is here to give us a briefing on the *Water Act* regulations.

I'd like to welcome on behalf of the committee, the hon. Richard Brown, Minister of Communities, Land and Environment, and Mr. George Somers, Manager of Drinking Water and Wastewater Management.

Gentlemen, I'm going to turn the floor over to you. For the first couple of times that you speak, I would ask that you say your name so that when we're recording we can attribute your remarks to the proper person and our technical people will thank me for that. Just for the first couple of times that you're doing it so they'll know whose speaking.

Minister, I'm going to turn the floor over to you and welcome to the meeting of Communities, Land and Environment. We look forward to your presentation on the *Water Act* regulations.

Mr. R. Brown: Thank you, Madam Chair and I want to thank the members of the

committee for allowing us the opportunity to update the committee and Islanders on the progress we are making on the *Water Act* that has been adopted by the Legislative Assembly of Prince Edward Island.

As we all know, the *Water Act* is an important piece of legislation for all Islanders. All Islanders cherish their water and they want plenty of it and they want it clean and they want it safe and this legislation basically ensures that for all Islanders into eternity.

I have with me today, George Somers, the Manager of Drinking Water and Wastewater Management. During the consultation process we heard over and over again that the *Water Act* and any changes to the *Water Act* should publicly be vented through this committee. Any regulations that are being proposed will be vented through this committee and I think it's the right way to do things. Regulations are an important piece of the legislative structure we have in Prince Edward Island and in our democracy, so therefore, it should be – any regulation should be vented back through a committee.

We have two pieces of regulation that we are wanting to go to the public with and we want to present these regulations to the committee for your review and your comments and we will then post them on the website and we will ask for consultations and input into them

I will pass it over to the brains of the operation, George here, to go through the presentation.

Thank you.

George Somers: George Somers here.

Thank you, minister.

It is a real privilege to be able to present these particular regulations to you folks. One of the things quite often we hear in public consultation is lack of confidence in our ability to manage, or science and things like that. Actually, are very proud, we've got a very strong team of folks that have contributed to this and to our daily management of things. So it's a privilege to be able to share our thoughts on that. I guess the key thing is that – I've got friends in

high places in university and stuff that think it's a bunch of bureaucrats sitting around coming up with a bunch of rules. Certainly, what we're presenting is based on strong science. We hope it reflects the public's interest.

We spent a lot of time listening to the public through the process of – and developing the *Water Act*. Of course, some of these things are reflected in the act, but other things are reflected in the regulations to support the act.

The other thing is that, in addition to sort of reflecting the spirit of the act, these things have to be workable. This is where things really become real and we actually try to accomplish stuff. We've got a lot of experience in that, so we do have a strong team; many of us over three decades in managing water, studying water, contributing to scientific literature on water and things like that. I think it's fair to say without being too boastful, that we probably have the right to speak with as much authority on water issues on PEI as anyone else. Again, that's not to be boastful, but I think it is important that the public has confidence in our ability to manage water and our knowledge of water.

We were joking around the department; actually, we have over a century of experience in a lot of this stuff.

The other thing is that, while we know PEI water really well, we're not doing this in isolation. (Indistinct) obviously, we're not an Island, but we are an Island. We have a lot of staff that include into – or tied into national, international affairs with Todd, our director, who's with the Canadian council, minister of the environment, environmental planning and protection committee. He has a long history with water issues through the Atlantic Salmon Federation as well. Bruce Raymond, whose been involved in a great deal of this stuff; is currently on the CCME Water Management Committee, but has held many positions, formal and informal roles, with the federal/provincial territorial committees and CCME.

Qing Li, who's again with CCME groundwater sub group, has worked on groundwater sustainability, environmental flows. Cindy Crane, a surface water

biologist who has been a key liaison with DFO and Environment Canada and work on sustainability indicators, (Indistinct) develop and things like that. Morley Foy behind me here who sits on the associated boards of certification, it's an international body that basically develops the rules for certified operators. He's also got previous experience as a design engineer and is spearheading work the other Atlantic Provinces and updating our guidelines for water and wastewater systems in light of climate change.

Also, there are folks; Tony Sturz has contributed a lot to this effort. No stranger to important environmental policy issues, including this. I'd be remiss if I didn't mention the Legislative Council office as well; particularly, Cathleen O'Grady and Janet Christian have contributed a lot to actually coming up with stuff we can actually use as regulation.

We think we've got a team that was well positioned to deliver regulations that are up-to-date, in terms of what's going on in the world in general, about the scale to the size suitable for PEI. Just as a quick thing before I shut up on this stuff; I sit on the federal/provincial drinking water committee and immediately after Walkerton; the Ontario provincial rep mentioned that his instructions were not to come up with the best water regulations, just the strictest and most involved. We're trying to avoid that. We've got 150,000 people in the province and so we think that we can come up with something that matches anything in the country, in terms of effectiveness, but without the length in complication.

With that, and again, it's not to be boastful, but we think part of what we really need to do is make sure that the public has confidence in what we're trying to do in terms of managing water.

So, what I was going to do is go through first of all, just a little overview of the *Water Act* itself – not at great length because that's sort of behind us now – and then to focus on two of the supporting regulations for the *Water Act*.

The *Water Act*, I guess in our view, was kind of a milestone for Islanders and for us in a lot of respects in terms of how we work

with developing legislation. For the first time it clearly identified government's leadership role in managing water and protecting water resources which was – we'd often talked to lawyers and say: Where does it say we own the water, control the water or whatever? It was kind of vague or done by (Indistinct), so here; it's clearly stated what our role is.

The other thing is the act hopefully reflects the deep connection Islanders have with water. Certainly that's something we heard a great deal as we went through the public consultations.

Again, there was extensive public consultation; the Environmental Advisory Council that supports the minister; had a sub-committee that hosted a series of 12 meetings, heard over 100 submissions, produced a great report and that report was kind of really our marching orders in terms of actually developing the act itself. Once we had that done we had four more public meetings to show how we've interpreted what the public was hoping to see.

As the minister mentioned, it received Royal Assent in December 2017. A couple of strong points; it recognizes water as being a common good. We're not claiming any individual has a right to it. We also try to make sure that it was clear we were recognizing human and ecological well-being when we looked at the water resources. It's not simply for our benefit; they're obligations we have to other aspects of the environment that we want to look at.

It tries to stress evidence-based decision making. So science is one of the things we want to underpin this and the regulations. The other thing is transparency and accountability. Certainly one of the things we try to make possible is that the public can be made aware of more about the status of our water resources, the decisions we're making in terms of its management, things like that. So, accountability and including meeting with this committee as part of that.

The act included a lot of developments from the former – well not former – but for the *Environmental Protection Act*. I mention that because a lot of folks seem to be surprised that we actually manage water at all and we went through public consultation.

In fact, a lot of what we are still proposing to do, we were doing under the *Environmental Protection Act*. So we pulled those elements out – the ones that specifically deal with water – but there's some important new provisions as well.

One of the key ones is section 2, it's the purpose section of the act, which really is kind of aspirational, sort of provides almost like a spirit or a sense of direction for the act in our future decisions. Where something can't be anticipated in advance, it provides some sense of where we were coming from when we developed in the first place.

The second important part is the water management planning areas. It's important for two reasons. First of all, where trying to rather than just react to situations, but to (Indistinct) and planning to the management of our water. It's the only way we're going to really make sure we end up where we want to with our planning. The second thing is it's an approach that recognizes that not one shoe fits all circumstances, that we can tailor things to specific needs or specific areas. We're looking forward very much to getting on with that part of the act as well.

Implementing the act; the act does provide us comprehensive framework for what government intends to do in terms of managing water, but it can't do it on its own. It's kind of the 'what and what' we're here for is the starting part of the regulations which are kind of how government is actually going to fulfill those goals.

Proclamation of the act; actually requires a few key regulations and the two we're going to look at today are the well construction regulations and the water supply and wastewater treatment system regulations.

We mentioned the two regulations we're looking at today, the well construction regulations and the water supply and wastewater treatment system regulations. A little later we'll be looking at water withdrawal regulations and those three are the essential ones we need to actually proclaim the act. Immediately following that, the next one we'd want to get on with are the water management planning area regulations, the ones I just alluded to in the past. You can see the colours sort of give you an idea of where we are in the process.

The first set of regulations; there are amendments to the water well regulations, but we've renamed them to the well construction regulations. The reason I guess is fairly straight forward. We have removed all the water extraction provisions from the well construction regulations, just to focus on well construction itself and licensing of drillers. The reason for this is that for the last decade or so, when we make decisions on allocating water from groundwater sources, we're really looking at the impact on surface water resources. We're looking at the impact on stream flow. If you look at things like the Winter River or Coles Creek and things like that, all those things are based on surface water conditions. We also regulate the withdrawal of water from surface water resources. So it made sense really to set separate regulations looking into that and that will be something we'll be discussing a little later on in the process. These ones just focus on how you drill wells and who can drill wells.

One of the other highlights we're looking at is trying to look at the requirements for getting a license to drill on PEI. They're not really aligned with what happens in other provinces, particularly in terms of inter-provincial trade barriers, so we're going to be having a look at that and that will be an issue of a fair bit of discussion and back and forth, I'm sure, during consultation with the well drilling sector itself.

The other key thing that we're looking at is for the first time we've actually recognized and used the word 'geothermal' in our water well regulations or well construction regulations. Geothermal energy is kind of a pivotal leg, if you will, in the approach to minimizing our emissions in fight against climate change. Up until this point geothermal wells weren't mentioned at all in the regulations, (Indistinct) meaning certain geothermal wells were being constructed, but they had no particular place. We're looking at them specifically; we're looking at the license and requirements for constructing them, and also the standards and materials for geothermal units.

That's unique – as far as I know neither New Brunswick or Nova Scotia mentioned geothermal anywhere if you look through and search their water well regulations and things like that.

Inside the regulations themselves, section 1 and 2 are kind of (Indistinct) stuff, definitions and application and really the only thing about the application is that it talks about is supplying to geothermal wells or (Indistinct) systems, excluding the horizontal sort of systems that you might see put in some places.

Sections three and four talk about the requirements for licensing of drillers and drilling contractors. Section five deals with well construction reports; really no big changes in that.

Well construction reports are the thing that a driller is supposed to complete every time they drill a well and they've got information on what sort of rocks they went through, how much water, what level the water was and things like that. They are kind of an essential database for the well construction industry, for homeowners when they have a well drilled, and for us to look at these things.

Section six are well permits. These are not permits to withdraw water. There are occasions where you may want to construct a well that doesn't follow the normal construction requirements. An example might be there may be a dairy farmer that wants a well for a barn but it's less than 90 metres from a manure storage facility. In that case, he can apply for a variance from that and we would issue a permit which might say: Okay, you can put the well here but you're going to have to put in extra casing or more grouting or something to mitigate the risk that way.

The other thing – there are areas around the province where there has been contamination of ground water quite often through hydrocarbon spills and things like that, in which case we have what are called restricted areas and these are areas where you require – the driller needs to get a permit and we would specify, again, additional well construction requirements. So, again, usually more casing or more grouting.

None of these things are really new. As I mentioned, licensing the drillers; there are some changes there.

With sections seven to 11, they're all different elements of the well construction requirements. So location of wells, well design considerations. So the bulk casing, well completion, pump insulation – and we went with the drillers way back in the spring, early summer, asked them if they saw any need for any changes. They didn't. We haven't seen anything going on in other provinces. In fact, we have stricter requirements in terms of well casing and grouting and things like that than either Nova Scotia or New Brunswick. So those sections are pretty much exactly as they were in the past.

Sections 12 and 13 are the new sections dealing with geothermal wells. With geothermal systems, there are two types of systems: Open-loop systems where we pump water out of one well, extract some heat from it and pump it down through another well. Those are quite similar to regular water wells and there really aren't too many extra provisions there, except a provision where you can't dump the water into a septic system and you have to make sure that your return well can actually accept the volume of water, so nothing really significant there.

For the closed-loop systems, there are a couple new things. They were, first of all, completely unanticipated in the existing regulations, so we have required the materials used and the way they were installed meet the CSA standard for earth energy systems. We haven't paired with the whole earth energy standards (Indistinct), 448 or whatever it is, just extracted the bits that had some bearing on well construction itself.

And the final section is the abandonment of wells. That's unchanged from before as well. So again, it's important that wells, once their useful life is over, that they are plugged so they don't create a safety hazard or a pathway for contaminants getting deeper in the ground.

In terms of the implications, the big news is it's a focus on well construction alone, not broader water usage. That will be in a different regulation. It includes recognition of geothermal wells for the first time. We'll be working to try to more closely align the well driller license with practices in

other trades in terms of interprovincial qualifications. It will have limited impact on well drilling. That may be the main thing. In terms of the actual construction requirements, really nothing that should affect them there.

I don't know –

Chair: Yeah before – I have two people on the list for questions before we move onto the next section.

So, on well construction, which was just presented, I have Brad Trivers and Peter Bevan-Baker on my speaking list. So, Mr. Trivers, you're first.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Chair.

I do have some questions overall as well. Did you want me to hold them or –

Chair: If you want to hold them – if it's not specific just to this –

Mr. Trivers: It covers probably all the sections. It's more about the timing –

Chair: Well let's wait until after the whole thing is done and I'll come back to you.

Mr. Trivers: And we're not any unlimited timeframe today? Like you guys aren't leaving in an hour or anything like that?

Chair: No. I don't think so.

Mr. Trivers: Okay. My question –

Chair: So are you going to hold your question until the end?

Mr. Trivers: No, I have some questions on the well construction as well.

Chair: Okay.

Mr. Trivers: So, I just wanted to clarify that well construction is not going to look at the purpose of the well. One of the things that – the concerns that's come up from a lot of my constituents is about the holding ponds and so you have wells that are being drilled and they're out in the middle of a field somewhere and the purpose isn't for residential use, it's to feed a holding pond. So, does the well construction regulations

deal with the purpose of the well, for a holding pond or something like that?

George Somers: No, it doesn't.

It's strictly the construction requirements. So, if a well is permitted for whatever reasons there are, these are the rules in terms of how it's constructed and who can construct it.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you.

The other question I had was about the geothermal wells, and when you were talking about the open-loop systems, those are the so-called dump wells. Is that correct?

George Somers: There are two wells; one is a supply well and the other one is the dump well, yes.

Mr. Trivers: Okay.

Those ones – I was wondering if you could clarify, again, some of the issues with the dump wells that you think there might be some regulations around them might change.

George Somers: Yeah, certainly. The first one is that it would be a bad practice to dump the water into a septic tank rather than into a dump well. It would just overwhelm the system. The second thing is that in developing the return well, it's actually harder sometimes to get water back into the ground than it is to get it out – complicated explanation for that, but it is.

So one of the other provisions is that you need to make sure that the return well or dump well, or whatever you want to call it, has sufficient capacity to accept that water without overflowing.

Mr. Trivers: Do you think there's a chance that these regulations will impact geothermal wells that are already in place? Or do you see those ones being grandfathered in? Or, how do you think the regulations will work in that respect?

George Somers: Well, in terms of the construction of them, I don't see any issues that way. The construction details are essentially the same as for regular water wells. As long as they were constructed in that fashion, that's fine. In terms of dumping

the water into a septic system, we're not aware of any circumstances like that.

We have occasionally had questions in municipalities in terms of whether someone can put the water in a ditch rather than a well, and in that case it's been up to the utility whether it is compliant or works with their storm water management system or not. But those have been rare.

So to this point, we don't see any impact in that way at all. So, on either of those two points, we don't see an issue.

Mr. Trivers: Just to clarify based on the existing geothermal wells you know of and the methods of using them, for example, to return the water, you don't see an issue? But, is there a possibility that the regulations could cause people to change the well?

I mean, that could be a reasonable thing. I'm just curious.

George Somers: Well, to our knowledge at this point, no because we're not aware of, for instance, any wells which are overflowing because they won't accept the amount of water being put back into them. We're not aware of anyone putting water into a septic system from one. So those are the two provisions for open-loop systems where we don't see any existing geothermal wells which would not be in compliance with what we're proposing.

Chair: Brad Trivers and then I'm going to move to Peter Bevan-Baker. I'll come back to you later.

Mr. Trivers: Okay.

Just to be clear, when you're implementing regulations – I mean we're talking about geothermal, but it could be all the regulations – if there are existing wells, for example, that don't meet the current regulations, is there going to be grandfathering that's put into place where people can keep their existing wells? Or do you foresee the regulations saying: Okay look, you're not in compliance with the regulations. You're going to have to take action to change?

George Somers: No.

We have never retroactively (Indistinct) the regulations for how you construct them according to the law of the land at that time – there are many older wells, dug wells for instance, we’re not telling people to abandon them or anything like that.

So, it’s just going forward – well construction provisions have changed over the years and so as you move forward, you construct wells according to the standards that exist at this time. In fact, the standards aren’t changing in terms of well construction anyhow with this (Indistinct)

Mr. Trivers: Good, thank you.

Chair: Peter Bevan-Baker.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Chair.

Thank you, George and minister, for being here.

A couple of points on this section; I noticed that I think the wording you had there was that it would loosen the requirements for drilling experience in the new regulations. I’m wondering if you can expand on that a little bit.

George Somers: Yeah, the current regulations require that a person have 4,000 hours experience operating a drilling machine, and that 1,500 hours of that has to be in PEI.

Now, the Canadian Free Trade Agreement – the labour mobility section would frown on that sort of practice. We are looking at it in the draft regulations, which you guys will see when this session is through, remove that requirement for local experience for drilling.

We’ve had some initial discussion with drillers and they’re not really happy about that so there may be some middle ground there where we can address their concerns and still try to more closely align us with practices elsewhere. But, if you’re in Nova Scotia or New Brunswick you still have to be licensed in that province, but there’s no requirement that you’ve gained your experience in that province, so it’s an issue we’ll be talking with the drillers about. They certainly have their feeling and, you know, and we can understand from their point of

view they like having a kind of a closed shop. It makes it very, very – almost impossible to become licensed unless you live in PEI.

So we do want to have that discussion with them. Where exactly it’ll wind up is hard to say, but currently that provision for the local experience is removed from the draft we’re putting forward and I’m sure we’ll have lots of discussion with the drilling industry as to exactly where we’ll end up in that.

Chair: Peter Bevan-Baker.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you.

Thanks, George, and I can understand from a business perspective why that sort of – the removal of that provision would be problematic, but is there a reason related to the particular or unique geology of Prince Edward Island where that local knowledge would be beneficial?

George Somers: It’s a matter of degree. Before I came here, I worked in northern Nova Scotia, and the formation we’re looking at here is essentially the top of that same formation you’d have in Amherst. In fact, we have the least complicated geology of any of the Maritime Provinces, so it’s a little difficult on that sort of basis to look at.

It is true that a local driller might have a better idea in terms of, you know, where there’s salt water intrusion and where there isn’t. On the other hand, they frequently call us up looking for advice on the same sort of questions and (Indistinct).

One of the things that we’ve talked about – and again, this is a discussion we’ll have with the drillers – for closed-loop systems in particular, the quality of water is completely irrelevant.

It may be something where we say: Okay, for licensing of drillers for closed-loop systems you don’t need the local experience because it has absolutely no bearing on your ability to construct a well. I throw that out as the type of discussion we might have. We haven’t had that discussion with them yet; but there are various sorts of ways, so, you know, I guess we want to be pragmatic; we want to listen to the local industry. At the

same time, we also want to be in tune with what's happening in other provinces.

This probably should have been a question for you.

Mr. R. Brown: No, that's good.

Chair: Peter Bevan-Baker.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you.

And I, of course, can understand why a closed-loop system wouldn't require such stringent regulation; but I imagine that the number of closed-loop systems – and I presume you're talking there about geothermal specifically – that almost all the 99-point-something percent of wells that are drilled on PEI would be an open system, whether that's for geothermal – I'm not talking about geothermal, but just for general use, for residential use.

George Somers: Yeah. Closed-loop systems are exclusively geothermal.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Right.

George Somers: Okay, right; and so, yes, for most residential situations it's an open-loop system. Typically the closed-loop systems, because they actually require a longer length of drill hole, usually it includes like 50 or 100 wells in an area, like a parking lot or something like that, so they're generally for industrial or commercial or institutional-type settings as opposed to residential.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Right.

George Somers: Not that you couldn't, but I mean, that's typically what we see.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Sure.

So just to talk about geothermal for a minute, George, what are the data on the number of geothermal units currently in use in PEI, and what percentage of them are closed-loop and open-loop?

George Somers: I don't think we actually have any data on that. There'd be nothing in the regulations which has stimulated a way of recording open-loop systems. So we're aware when they've required an expiration

permit because it's a high-capacity well that'd be involved. We would have information on that and Qing Li would have those numbers. I don't myself; but for anything less than 50 gallons a minute as an extraction rate, we wouldn't have –

Dr. Bevan-Baker: You wouldn't know.

George Somers: – any particular way of knowing.

Certainly in PEI, the tendency has been more towards open-loop systems. In part, and this is just sort of a theory, but we have very limited ground water resources so open-loop systems are efficient thermally –

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Yeah.

George Somers: – so it's quite likely to be the preferred sort of option. There are many other parts of the country where closed-loop systems are more the norm, at least for institutional use, but that would make sense if you had some more sluggish ground water movement and things like that. It may be the sounder, more efficient approach in that regard.

So closed-loop systems are gaining in popularity in institutional things in the last little while, but certainly the majority of institutional systems to-date would still be open-loop systems in PEI.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I actually have an open-loop system where my dental office is – or was, it's not my dental office anymore – and we were strongly advised to use an open system rather than a closed-loop back then. Interesting that we don't have data on that, but I'm wondering whether, as we move forward, given that you're including regulations on geothermal systems and you mentioned earlier the other Maritime Provinces do not have them in their water acts, is this because you anticipate a large uptick in the number of people who will be using geothermal systems?

George Somers: No, actually, although I think that's quite possible and I think we would want to encourage people to adopt that technology. No, it's really more because it was a question that no one seemed to have an answer for. We would get calls as to: Well, what are your regulations around

geothermal wells? And we'd have none; we've got water well regulations which would apply to open-loop systems, but we had nothing else.

I imagine people in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and various other places get similar questions. Some of them have guidelines and things like that, but if you look through their actual regulations they don't actually mention the word 'geothermal'. I'm assuming that they would impose the same requirements on open-loop systems as they did for any other water well, and my understanding is they don't require licensing or any sort of oversight of closed-loop systems.

Our concern with the closed-loop systems is you're still drilling a hole into the ground, potentially a pathway for contamination of the aquifer.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Yeah.

George Somers: Proper grouting of the hole is critical. In spite of the fact they haven't chosen to do it, we thought it was important to actually clarify that, make sure that people knew what the standards were, and so, really, we're kind of stepping out of line, I guess, a little bit in a way, that way, but we think it's justified for protection of the water resources.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Final question on this section and it's to do with the well construction reports that you mentioned –

George Somers: Yes.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: – that are made after each well is dug. Having spoken with a couple of well drilling operators here on the Island, I'm hearing reports – and this is more than anecdotal now, because I've spoken to a number of them – and this relates to what Mr. Trivers was saying earlier about the holding ponds, that those ponds are having an impact on residential wells in those areas, and now rather than using, for example, a 40-foot casing they're having to go to 60-foot casings on a regular basis, and also that they're experiencing salt water intrusion in areas where they have not experienced it previously.

The data coming back from the well construction reports that you must get in your department, are they – is that in line with what you're getting or not?

George Somers: Well, actually, no. It's the first time I've heard a connection between holding ponds and salt water intrusion.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Actually, sorry, those were two separate things. The depth of the well was related to the immediate locale –

George Somers: We certainly – and Bruce can speak to this in more detail – but we have had cases where people have used low-capacity wells to sort of get around the notion of a high-capacity well.

The pond itself isn't the problem. It would be the source of water. These particular regulations don't address that at all. We have taken all that element out, and as Mr. Trivers was asking as well. We don't address the purpose of the well.

Basically, the key concern is that the well is constructed in a way that will not – will prevent contamination of the aquifer, essentially, and be constructed by qualified people; and so all the use stuff is really something for another day. It's not contained in these regulations.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Sorry. Can I have a follow-up to that, Chair?

Chair: Yeah, sure.

Peter Bevan-Baker.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I appreciate that, George, but my question was regarding the well construction reports that your department receives, and from my discussion with well drillers here on the Island, things are changing, and I'm wondering whether those well construction reports that you are getting in are in alignment with that or not?

George Somers: They would in some respects, for sure. So you mentioned casing length.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Yes.

George Somers: I know certainly some drillers on a routine basis are exceeding the

minimum casing length now, so they're going with 60 feet of casing rather than 40 feet of casing. Most often that's actually in response to elevated nitrate levels.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Yes.

George Somers: So nothing to do with water level, things like that.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Yeah.

George Somers: So yes, and we can use them to try to translate that. Way back, we would have only required 20 feet of casing, and perhaps in the 1990s we went to a minimum 40 feet of casing. We can track trends like that over time.

You raised an interesting point also earlier, though. One of the things that we could incorporate on the water well report would be what the use of the water is. So if we were looking at whether it's geothermal or not, that'd be important for one reason; if it's an open-loop geothermal well, then it's got no impact on the water budget. What you're taking out, you're putting back. So it's something that I think would be worth looking at for the well construction report, re: a simple box as to what its use is, whether it's residential or geothermal or whatever.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Sorry, Chair. Can I have one more follow-up to that?

Chair: Yeah, sure.

Peter Bevan-Baker.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I appreciate your willingness to do that.

It seems to me you just said something very important there, George, that you are seeing trends from these well construction reports over time which are suggesting that deeper wells are having to be dug whether that's because of nitrate contamination or some other reason. Is that data freely available?

George Somers: Now that's a really good question. I know our intention is to have a publicly available water well database. There are also privacy concerns that need to be respected at the same time. I'm not sure where we stand on that. I mean, certainly we

consider the information that a consultant is looking for, depth of wells or things like that to make that available.

We are not in a position, I think, to provide individual persons well information. But even that, I'd have to check. The question has come up in the past and we've sought legal advice on it. Maybe the information is okay as long as we (Indistinct) personal information, things like that.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: So the aggregated data, you would not have an issue with that. But you're not sure that that's freely available?

George Somers: It's not easily available in terms of a searchable database at this point. We get it frequently from consultants where they would say: Look, can we get the water logs for a particular region or something like that. Just from that technical point of view, we don't have a – well actually that's not true. Perhaps Bruce, you can answer that.

Chair: George, if you'd like him to answer the question, we'd ask him to come to the floor?

George Somers: Yeah, Bruce, can you speak to the water well database?

Chair: We'll have him introduce himself as well. If you could introduce yourself to the committee that would be appreciated.

Bruce Raymond: I am Bruce Raymond; I'm the Manager of Water and Air Monitoring section in the Department of Communities, Land and Environment.

Chair: Welcome.

Bruce Raymond: Thank you.

So your question was about the availability of well driller information. As George alluded to, there is parts of it that is confidential, like the owners of the well. But yes, a lot of that material is now public and it already is online in the government's open data section. There are some challenges with it as we currently sit, and over the next couple of years we'll be hoping to improve the quality of that data. Part of that relates to the current system that we have, which is an improvement of what we had in the past and we're going to be looking to improve that

yet again, as we're moving forward into the water registry which will happen when it's dictated by the *Water Act*.

Chair: Peter Bevan-Baker and then I've got Alan McIsaac and Chris Palmer on the list.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, I appreciate that, Chair.

In collecting data, have you noted any correlation between proximity to these holding ponds of which there are many now across the Island, and the need for individual residences to drill deeper wells in order to get potable water?

George Somers: Not to my knowledge. I do know that we've had isolated cases where people have had problems with wells and they were close to well supply and holding ponds. But I certainly would not characterize it as a trend as far as I'm aware. I can think of maybe two cases perhaps.

Bruce Raymond: I can think of two.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Chair.

Chair: Alan McIsaac.

Mr. McIsaac: Thank you, Chair, and thanks for the presentation folks.

Most of my questions actually got spoke about. The other members, except for one, yes, you kind of peeked my interest when you had mentioned abandoned wells. I'm just wondering, is there a registry or whatever, of those wells?

I'm thinking back actually to my farming days and actually in my area. When you go back to the olden days, the old wells that were actually dug by hand and continue to sink – there was two actually came into existence, again, you might say, as the earth caved in. One of them had a birch tree planted on top of it after it was filled in and the roots kind of grew out over top of the well and when the tree died and it was hauled off there was at least a 10 foot hole, which was filled in and sunk again later. Another one; drove right over the top of it on a rented field with my new hay mower. Lucky I didn't go in it; would have wrecked the machine altogether.

I'm just wondering if there is a registry of these things, or does the department mark them? Who's responsible for that? Because they were around two former homesteads and I guess that was the reason they were there but they were never marked; didn't know anything about them until all of a sudden they appeared.

George Somers: No, there is no registry, which, maybe something that's worth looking at as well. Of course, most wells that are abandoned now are drilled wells. Same concerns, but still we do – when we kind of cross them we require the land owner to have them filled in. In terms of responsibilities; the landowner's responsibility. We did have a program closed about 10 or 20 years ago where we would go and actually assist people when they found these wells to fill them. We were getting down to the point where we might have one report every couple of years or something like that. We still respond to them, but it's the homeowner's responsibility to actually fill them. What normally happens, we'll take information on where it is and direction as to how to curve the problem.

Mr. McIsaac: Thank you.

Chair: Chris Palmer.

Mr. Palmer: Thank you, Chair.

I'm just looking for some education here, I think, on the geothermal systems. How much does a geothermal system draw as compared to – I guess I want you to equate it to an average house?

George Somers: Probably an average house and peek flow might be in the range of four or five gallons a minute. A geothermal system is probably more in the range of 10 gallons a minute and that would be moreless continuous. So, quite a bit more water than you would have from a regular domestic setup. Now at the same time, quite often you would use the same well to provide domestic supply and your geothermal needs as well.

Mr. Palmer: Oh, it's the same well that I use?

George Somers: Some people would use the same well for their water supply and for their geothermal system. There is a valve you need to separate the potable water from the geothermal system itself. So rather than having three wells on a property – say two supply wells and one return well – you could have a single well, pump water out of it. The pumping rate would be higher than it would for domestic needs because you'd be using it for your geothermal system as well.

Mr. Palmer: If I had a geothermal system at home, my domestic use in an average house would be 50 gallons a day, or 10 gallons a day and then what would the capacity be – or, how much would I use in a day in a geothermal system?

George Somers: It would be a great deal more than that. I can't do the math in my head at the moment. But if you compare when you're actually using water for laundry, flushing toilets and things like that, it might be a comparable pumping rate but for a very short period of time. Whereas geothermal, you'd be using it for a much higher proportion, and of course, seasonally, it'll make a difference as well. I can't do the math, but in terms of actual water consumption, the geothermal water is going back into the ground, so from a water balance point of view, it's kind of neutral.

Chair: Okay, so you don't have anybody in the neighbourhood that would run into any water issues if there's a couple of geothermal systems pop up in their neighbourhood?

George Somers: No, the code of depression for these wells would still be fairly small. But even still, it's offset by pumping water back into the ground. You get sort of a code of depression where you're pumping water out and you actually got it converted to the code where you're pumping the water back in and it should all work out to be more or less neutral.

Chair: Chris Palmer.

Mr. Palmer: No, I'm good. Thank you.

Chair: Brad Trivers.

Mr. Trivers: Thanks, Chair.

If I could just make a comment on that. My wife and I implemented a geothermal heating system about 13 years ago and I would say our water use approximately triples in the wintertime. It's our primary heat source, compared to our summer when our heating is off. Just by looking at the amount of electricity we use we can kind of estimate how much, I would say about triple.

My question has to do with the regulations themselves for this section. You mentioned that not a lot has changed in terms of how wells are going to be constructed. I was wondering, first of all, how long are these regulations we're talking about and what percentage of them came over from the EPA and what percentage are sort of new in this section?

George Somers: Sure. In length since we've taken all the water withdrawal part out they're considerably shorter. I don't remember the exact number of pages. There are very long appendices, or schedules, which tell the legal description of the restricted areas which were in the previous regulations as well. So, overall the length is not that much shorter, but it is actually shorter because of the removal of the parts and expiration permits and extraction permits. The new parts on geothermal wells are really two or three small (Indistinct). They're not very long. There are also additional schedules which list in more detail the standards for materials for well construction and specifically also for geothermal installations as well.

So, net thing, it would probably be three or four pages shorter than it used to be. The additions are fairly minor.

Mr. Trivers: To summarize, the vast majority of the regulations in this section already existed. You've added that short piece and actually, we're able to take some out and so it shortened it down a little bit.

George Somers: Exactly.

Mr. Trivers: I was trying to get a handle on when we actually get the chance to review the regulations. So we would – we already know most of them right now because they're existing – but when will these regulations be published?

George Somers: They're sitting right there. When we're finished you will have a copy of the regulations in two sets; our little plain language guide and some questions and answers. I believe they're probably online now or will be very shortly. As soon as we wrap up they're –

Mr. Trivers: That's it for this section; I have questions (Indistinct)

Chair: Thank you.

We'll turn the floor back to you to continue your presentation.

George Somers: Okay, thank you.

So the next section, the amendments to the drinking water and wastewater facility operating regulations. Again, we've changed the name; renamed them water supply and wastewater treatment system regulations. It's still quite a mouthful; if we can shorten it more we'll be happy to do that as well. I'm sure in common language it will be much shorter.

But these are again, a case of a lot of stuff coming over from the *Environmental Protection Act*, but a little more complicated, sort of migration.

Currently, under the *Environmental Protection Act* the authority to construct or operate a water or wastewater system falls directly under the act itself; section 13 or section 16, depending on what you're trying to do. Then, those approvals may have some of the conditions in terms of how you're going to operate; others are specified in the drinking water and wastewater facility operating regulations. So, it's a bit of a mix and match sort of thing, so we've consulted everything into one regulation. So, the *Water Act* itself just says you got to refer to these regulations to construct or operate a system. They also incorporate the things we previously had in the drinking water and wastewater systems.

A couple of other changes; everything that was approved was approved through a certificate of approval, a COA. So it didn't matter if you were constructing something, if you were moving sludge from a lagoon, if you were operating something or anything like that, all of them are called certificates of

approval, which is kind of different than a lot of other places. We've changed it so that, if you were going to construct something or modify something, say Stratford's wastewater treatment plant or whatever, you get a permit for that sort of construction activity.

On the other hand for operating something, you would get a license, a license to operate. One of the big changes here is that it will be for a fixed duration, a five-year period. At which point (Indistinct) we'd look at the performance of the system, the performance of the (Indistinct) of keeping records and all that sort of stuff and that review will be part of the renewal process.

Going from a whole bunch of COAs, we're going to permits and licenses. On the (Indistinct) doesn't make any difference, the same stuff is going to happen, it just kind of makes more sense.

Another great thing we've done – when I mention these certificates of approval – you might have a utility which has all kinds of experience and engineering staff and they still have to apply for a certificate of approval to extend, say a sewer line, by 50 meters or something like that. We're going to change that so that utilities, if they've got sufficient engineering expertise in house, can undertake some activities without applying for a permit. They still have to supply us with record drawings and all that sort of stuff, but it reduces our paperwork, it reduces their paperwork and for routine jobs where they're more than qualified to do, it just makes sense to go that route.

Some other things; in the past we had sort of ad hoc inspections for municipal systems or any systems. Not that they didn't happen and on a fairly regular basis, but there was nothing in the regulations or the act which require them. So, certainly when you go to other provinces they keep asking: Well, what's your inspection regime or whatever? We now have one. For municipal systems, every five years they will need to report to us on a series of different aspects how – their compliance in terms of effluent quality or drinking water quality, their compliance with even the sampling regime, the age and condition of their infrastructure and things like that. That will have to be signed off by an engineer. We'll have that as sort of a

routine rolling sort of review of systems and that will be very useful, also in terms of identifying potential construction projects of, cream money comes along or things like that, you're looking for upgrading systems. It'll be a useful tool for that.

The other thing, we've always used the guidelines for Canadian drinking water quality for drinking water analysis, but for wastewater effluent standards, those have been on a case-by-case basis. Now they generally flow federal regulations, in some cases they've been a little more stringent in fact. But rather than have to refer to the individual certificate of approval for a system, we will now have them in regulation directly. And so for the consistent regulatory standards, we've tried to make sure they match as closely as they can.

The wastewater system effluent regulations under the *Fisheries Act*, we've met and extensively interacted with Environment Canada prior to developing these regulations to make sure we understood and had sort of, buy-in for what we were planning to do. And so the standards part for this is essentially what you would see in a wastewater system, effluent regulations under the *Fisheries Act*.

The other thing, the old regulations these are replacing had provisions for well field protection and we're leaving them pretty much unchanged. They have some drawbacks. One of the biggest ones being that they really leave a utility or a municipality on its own in terms of controlling land use outside their jurisdiction, which is unique to PEI The perfect place to change that in the *Water Act* is under the water management plan area. There is a whole section that is based on well field protection areas and it will provide them with much better teeth and also a much more robust and transparent, sort of, consulting process or public engagement process.

We're not touching these in these regulations with the notion that as soon as we can get the water management plan area regulations going, we'll replace them with better regulations.

Chair: Continue and then we'll have the questions.

George Somers: So inside the regulations, so there is definitions and application much like in any set of regulations. One of the things we've tried to do here – and there was some discussion whether we'd have separate regulations for drinking water systems and for wastewater systems with that well. A lot of what we do is going to be similar, whether it's a drinking water system or wastewater system. What we see on this page here, the administrative processes, the operations assessment, corrective actions are common to all systems, whether its water or wastewater because we're doing essentially the same thing. And quite often it may be the same utility. You might be talking about the Charlottetown Water and Sewer Utility, whatever. So rather than deal with two sets of regulations, you've got a single regulation.

So part two, I'll discuss the administrative processes I need to go through, so it approves the need for construction. How they're going to register their facility and have a class – the classification part is important because this is where we look at the size and complexity of the system and say: Okay, based on that, this is what your sampling requirements are going to be, this is what your operator requirements are going to be, what level of education your operators need to have and things like that. That's under part two.

Part three is the operation facilities. Not the construction part. So it will be the licensing facilities and the whole bit on operator certification that dictates what sort of education requirements and training requirements and ongoing updates that operators are required.

Part four is going to look at the assessment and corrective actions. There are some differences whether it's a wastewater system or a drinking water system, but essentially the same approach whether to a municipal system or a system where we determined that there's a need for an assessment and sort of process they go through and a process by which they would indicate how they are going to correct things and under what sort of time frame.

So part five and part six is where sort of water and wastewater part company. In part five we're looking at the front of things, the

water supply systems. So a new section we have is on drinking water treatment requirements. In the past, we do this on a case-by-case basis and quite often it was a reactionary basis if their bacteria results were not great, we'd say: Oh, you got to do this, or if it was something else, you got to do that. We're trying to be proactive in this case and we're simply saying: Okay, up front, this is what you need in terms of drinking water treatment.

Monitoring requirements for – not essentially changed, except there are some parameters where we're going to say in more detail where the sample needs to come from, whether it's the source of supply or whether it's in the distribution system. The reporting requirements are pretty much the same except, we've also added provisions where if there is some sort of an emergency. So if your water treatment plant is experiencing some sort of problem or you've had a water main break or whatever, there are provisions in the regulation for them to notify us.

For the wastewater treatment systems, a couple of new things. A lot more of this was done on a case-by-case basis in the past. So requirements in terms of measuring effluent flows; I already mentioned the effluent quality standards. Those basically mimic or mere what the federal standards are. We have some additional ones, we look at bacteria, for instance, where the federal standards don't. A few things like that.

We also look at industrial and alternate wastewater treatment systems. There are some cases where the regular municipal supply – sorry, wastewater treatment approach doesn't make sense, either, because of the nature of the effluent or the scale or the location and things like that. We've got provisions for that. We also have procedures for by-passes. There might be occasions where you have to by-pass a portion of a treatment train to undergo important maintenance or some sort of a process like that, and sometimes it's – or there might be other occasions where simply, it's less environmental harm to by-pass part of a process than let the entire treatment plant get upset and take weeks to get back in proper operating order. We've got procedures for that as well, and of

course sampling and reporting requirements.

So the implications; strengthens the protection for drinking water quality. Generally, we're very pleased with the performance of our water systems anyhow, but this provides a more proactive approach to that. It'll have very little impact on daily (Indistinct) operations. If you're working for a utility, you probably won't know the difference, except for the fact that occasionally; a piece of paper will say it's a license rather than a certificate of approval. It does consolidate the approval and operating requirements on a single place and hopefully, it paves the way to harmonize our wastewater treatment regime, if you will, with the federal regime.

The approach there would be that if we can demonstrate to Environment Canada that our regulations have the equivalent effect to what their regulations do, then we can perhaps sign an agreement where their regulations would stand down and our utilities would only have one regulatory regime to look at.

That's it in a nutshell, so we'll say here, we welcome your comments and you can reach us at the address on the screen there, but as I say, there are packages there as well which have copies of each of the regulations, a quick, sort of a, cheat sheet in terms of a guide to the regulations and questions and answer, as well as a copy of the presentation itself.

Chair: Thank you for your presentation.

I have a question from Brad Trivers.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Chair.

I'll ask a question specifically about this section first. I guess it applies to all of them, but maybe it's in this cheat sheet, but I'm trying to figure out how the water supply and wastewater treatment regulations sort of map to the *Water Act* itself, because I'm looking at the sections of the *Water Act* – there's protection of water, water management areas, municipal water supply areas, well field protection areas, water withdrawals and water discharges.

The reason I ask that is two-fold. You had said, first of all, that in order for the act to actually be proclaimed, we need three sections of regulations complete and that's the well construction regulation, the water supply and wastewater treatment, and the high-capacity well section. I'm trying to figure out how close we are to actually being able to proclaim the act.

The other thing I'm trying to figure out is – and this is a concern that's raised to me – is without the act being proclaimed – and this could be a question for Bruce – are we doing enough monitoring right now that our water supply is not in danger? How urgent is it that we get these regulations in place so we can get the *Water Act* proclaimed? It was fall of 2017 when the act was passed in the Legislative Assembly.

So, I'm curious about regulations mapped to the *Water Act* and how urgent is it that we actually get these proclaimed?

George Somers: I can't recall the exact section of the act – I could find it in a minute – but there is a section that specifically says: You need to have the approval through the act, thus through the regulations, to construct or operate a water or wastewater system.

In terms of the urgency, as I mentioned at the very outset, it's not like we haven't been managing these things in the past. As we mentioned with the water well regulations and the drinking water and wastewater facility operator regulations, most of what we're doing we already did and have been doing for decades. It's not urgent in that sense. We just think this is a better way of doing it. It's less complicated with these regulations, for instance.

There are some other things we like in the *Water Act* which will have great benefit in the water management areas in particular – one of the ones I'm thinking of in that case.

The urgency is, I guess, more that we can get on with things like the water management planning areas, not that there are things that we are not doing now that put our water supply in jeopardy.

Mr. Trivers: With these two sets of regulations done, the well construction and

the water supply and wastewater treatment, how close are we to having regulations done for the whole act? What percentage approximately? You mentioned we know that we have to have the high-capacity well section before the act can be proclaimed, but are we about half way done of the regulations? Two thirds?

George Somers: We have those regulations ready to go as well for this same sort of process, the water withdrawal regulations. We thought this is enough to put on the plate right now, these two sets of regulations, and so we're proceeding with those and over the next couple of months, I expect, not my call, we will be going through the same process with the water withdrawal regulations.

Once that's done and they're approved, and again this committee – we need to provide you 90 days before actually implementing something – once that's happened, then the *Water Act* can be proclaimed.

Our first step after that will be to start working on these additional regulations for water management planning areas. That's not something urgent in a sense that we are missing anything. It's an additional thing beyond our normal sort of regulation and it's, quite frankly, additional to what most jurisdictions are doing.

We certainly want to get on with it, but it's not as if we're leaving ourselves vulnerable by not doing it. In other words, we're still managing under the old regime – water withdrawals and all that sort of stuff, water monitoring. There are additional features we can bring to the table once the act is proclaimed and so we're pretty close. In terms of the leg work, we have a draft for the water withdrawal regulations. We have the same plain language and stuff and all that, which we will roll out once we've got a head start on this.

There are only so many things we can accomplish at one time, so these are kind of foundational things. The actual infrastructure by which we get water and use water and treat water – we want to get that under our feet and once that's done, then we can move onto the water withdrawal part which will certainly be an interesting – there will be lots of thoughts on that.

This is – I don't want to call it low-hanging fruit – it's kind of fundamental stuff we have to have in place. We have to have an approach for how we are going to approve systems, how we're going to monitor systems when they're (Indistinct) that sort of stuff, so this is kind of foundational stuff.

This is the first (Indistinct) moving that over from the *Environmental Protection Act* to the *Water Act* – same thing with the well construction stuff so they can actually function, and then the next set of regulations are, as I say, we just want to deal with these, get them out of the way so we're not overwhelmed and then we can get on with the water withdrawal ones.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you.

I'm trying to get a handle on the timeline here. We've got the first draft of these two sets of regulations, which we're going to get after the meeting. Those are going to be online and available to the public, and I assume there's going to be public consultations scheduled and then we're going to – like you said, you're pretty close to having the water withdrawal regulations ready as well so again, those will have to be presented to the committee again going to public consultation.

We're looking at what? Getting the act proclaimed and these regulations in place and actually managing our water under the new act by what, next fall or a year from now?

Mr. R. Brown: Next fall would be appropriate, yeah.

I'm anticipating that these regulations will, when they do go – they're online now and when the consultation period goes and the comments go, I think these regulations will go relatively quick because they are – the contractors – there are a few contractors. We can negotiate and work with them pretty quick. The wastewater – the WWF regulations – I think we can work with the utilities across Prince Edward Island and get those regulations put in place relatively quick and then we will have some additional science in place for the well extraction permits that are going to be required under the *Water Act* too.

But as Bruce said, we want to get underway now to speed up the process. We didn't want to wait for all the regulations to be put online at one time and have a big series of discussions. We'll have two blocks of discussion now and then we'll go into the third block which is the extraction permits.

Mr. Trivers: Okay, that's good, Chair.

Chair: Colin LaVie.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Chair.

Thanks for your presentation, but Brad asked my questions.

Chair: Peter Bevan-Baker.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Chair.

You mentioned that there's going to be a certificate of approval license, which will be a five-year license for new work. You also said that there would be certain types of work for which that license would not be required and I'm wondering what the criteria for deciding whether that will indeed need a COA or not –

George Somers: Yeah, certainly.

This would be for the construction part, not the licensing part. I can't remember the exact distances, but it's something like 50 or 150 metres of extension of a water line or a sewer line. It's very specific in the regulation. I can't remember the exact distance. That would be at least as a starting point of what they'd be allowed to do. The other provision is that they would have to have a licensed engineer on staff that would be responsible for ensuring that work was done properly. That's what it is now.

Down the road, if the capacity is there then it may be able to expand to broader things, but it's the fairly routine sort of – we're extending a waterline into a subdivision, or we're extending a sewer line, rather than – if they know how to do it and all that, they have to tell us what their generic sort of approach for this construction activity would be and show that they've got an engineer license to oversee it and we would say: Fine, show us the records when you go through with it.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: That makes perfect sense to me. We don't want to create red tape where none is required.

Just to be clear on that George, this would be for an addition to an existing system? It would never be for a new piece of work?

George Somers: That's correct.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Okay, great.

The new supply, new water supply to Charlottetown – let me go back a step.

Section 36 of the act allows municipalities to remove an amount of water that actually exceeds the limit of a supply. That concerned me during the debate on the act itself, and I made a suggestion that we make that allowance for removing more than the limit would allow something that would have a timeframe on it.

So, okay, we understand that Charlottetown has to do something about its water supply and Winter River is in trouble now, but we can't allow them to do that indefinitely; but the way the act is written now, it does actually allow them to continue to overdraw on a supply indefinitely. So I'm wondering whether this license, which expires after five years, will that, in practical terms, provide the safety that I was hoping the act would?

George Somers: That won't. Again, that's a piece there, the part you're referring to would be something that would fall on to the other regulations, the water withdrawal regulations. This would be – if I've got this sort of physical plant, do I operate it or not in terms of a license. It'd be under the water withdrawal regulations that would be addressed.

Having said that, the intent there would be – and it is, admittedly, somewhat broad – in developing a water management plan area, where we're looking at, say, the future water supply for the next 50 or 100 years or whatever, it's not a given that we're going to say: Yeah, have more water or less water or over certain periods of year or for a certain number of years, things like that. That's something that would have to be negotiated as part of the public engagement process for the part of the plan area.

If you look at – I can't remember the section, but if the general regulation for developing these plan areas, it's got a strong public engagement portion, all that then would have to come to cabinet, in fact, to be approved. So we're not being super-specific, but it's not something where Charlottetown could sneak a quick one and get away with something that wasn't broadly discussed and approved at a high level and with a level of stakeholders.

So there's nothing – I guess, in putting it together, we're not ruling out the possibility someone might say that, but it's not the intention. It's really that we would plan what's the most flexible way of dealing with the priority of municipal water supply while respecting the environmental conditions in that area. It could be that within some small area of a broader watershed area, you could do something that might exceed some of their piece, provided the fish populations weren't affected on a broader scale.

All this is unwritten at this point. We don't really know. The important fact is that it won't be done without public consultation and without approval of cabinet. It's not something that we can just say: Oh, yeah, we'll write you a permit for 50% more than we would otherwise.

Mr. R. Brown: I guess (Indistinct) –

Chair: Peter, the minister has an intervention.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you.

Mr. R. Brown: Thank you, Peter, and you bring up a good question there.

In 2010, leading into 2010, it was quite obvious that the city of Charlottetown was going to exceed its water usage in the Winter River and the Brackley Point area, and at that point in time, the province, the department, requested the City of Charlottetown seek new water supply because of the impending over-usage in that area. It was quite evident. Permits were issued at that time – first ever, I think, for extraction in the municipal systems.

George Somers: Well, not first for municipal systems, but the first for the Winter River because those well fields were

constructed prior to the existence of the department for that matter.

Mr. R. Brown: And so, you know, in that area we let them exceed until they get their new well system in place. That's not to say, like, now the city has three separate areas, or other jurisdictions would have separate well heads in separate areas in order to supply its municipality. One of those systems may go down, and there may be a requirement for maintenance or stuff like that.

Those are the kinds of situations I, as the minister, would only entertain as short term, or the requirement that a new system, an addition to the system is needed right away, and that it's going to take a number of years to fix. Those would be the – there'd be definite time limits on it. The days of allowing extraction of water at unlimited amounts are over in a particular area, and I think we owe a lot of that – or them requirements to the watershed areas that are out there protecting these watershed areas, and they'd be the ones that would be lobbying government to speed up the process of fixing the overuse of water in a particular area.

Chair: Peter Bevan-Baker.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Chair.

I appreciate your intervention, minister, and unfortunately the act doesn't – you say the days are over when we cannot over-extract from a supply, but the act currently allows that –

Mr. R. Brown: Yeah.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: – which is one of my major concerns with the act (Indistinct) –

Mr. R. Brown: And I'd say that would be used in an emergency situation, I'm hoping, and the regulations will spell that out.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I wonder if you can give us an update on the new supplies to Charlottetown, because I know there have been delays with that.

Mr. R. Brown: Yeah, and I was talking to Charlottetown, the water Richard at the other night. They're working diligently. It's a new system. They have had so many

problems leading into this, but I understand that they are on track and getting it going relatively soon. Is that correct?

Anyway, that's what Richard told me there the other night, and they are working on it. We're hoping that they get it done as quickly as possible. That's basically what I've told him: You have to get this done as quickly as possible. I do not want the spring – those well fields have to be open before the spring season and the summer season of this year. We don't want to affect the area any longer, the Winter River basin.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Yeah, okay.

Mr. R. Brown: And you know, it is a complicated system. You may think it's easy, but they're trying to balance the water areas from three different locations now in order to make all watersheds viable instead of sacrificing one.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: George mentioned that the regulations for the water extraction aspect of this bill are actually ready, but that you didn't want to overwhelm us with information. You know, when we pass an act in this House we don't do it in bits and pieces. We pass the whole act. I'm wondering why you felt that the regulations attached to this act, which presumably will be far less voluminous than the act itself, that we couldn't cope with all of that in one go.

Mr. R. Brown: We're waiting for – one thing during the discussions in the new *Water Act* and the lead-up to the *Water Act* and why the *Water Act* was initiated in the first place, was Islanders' concern for the supply of the quantity and quality of water.

One thing we heard, I guess every member in this Legislature, during those hearings and during those discussions, that we want any decisions to be based on science and not on politics. It's important that we get the science done in time for the regulations. We don't want to be doing a set of regulations and then have to change them all when the science comes in.

We are working with the rivers institute now. We are signing an agreement with them, I understand, to extend their research into the broader requirements of water

across Prince Edward Island. So we need a little bit more time to get a little bit more science to bring those regulations forward.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: So just to be clear, I think George said that the regulations are ready to go.

Mr. R. Brown: Yeah.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: So are they ready to go or are they not ready to go –

Mr. R. Brown: Well –

Dr. Bevan-Baker: – on this third part?

Mr. R. Brown: Yeah. There is a set of regulations. I'm going to ensure that the science is behind the regulations. I am not convinced or satisfied that we have all the science we need for the regulations at this point in time.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: We talk about the science as if it's some sort of static thing, but science is changing all of the time.

Mr. R. Brown: Yeah.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Particularly today, in terms of climate change and rainfall patterns here on Prince Edward Island. We also don't have the baseline data from which to –

Mr. R. Brown: Yeah.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: We have some data, but it's very spotty as I understand it. So again, to talk about once we've collected the data, whatever is being collected currently, and we'll have the science as you put it, that's just a snapshot in time. If we keep waiting to have all of the science that we need in order to put these –

Mr. R. Brown: Yeah.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: – bring these regulations forward, we'll never do it.

So I'm wondering, a related question – it's not somewhere I was imagining I would go today, but the data that we are collecting, the science as you put it that we're collecting to support the regulations on high-capacity wells, and I understand we're not going to talk about that today, but that data that's

being collected, are we taking into account the impact that climate change will have on rainfall patterns here on Prince Edward Island?

Mr. R. Brown: Go ahead.

George Somers: Actually, Bruce would probably be a better person to look at this, but yes. It is, certainly, and there are two aspects to that.

One, Qing Li actually has done a fair bit of work looking at – in terms of climate modeling and groundwater modeling what the implications are. The second thing is the way we're looking at things would be that it's sort of almost like, I hate to use the term 'adaptive management', but what rules we set are based on what we're actually seeing in terms of the habitat – not a certain (Indistinct)

So if climatic conditions change, then the rules would have to change to respect what we think needs to be in a stream, for instance. So, it sort of automatically – there's feedback in the sense that the regulations – more of a performance base, if you will, so that what's in the stream is the important part, not sort of what's happening in terms of a particular number of extraction. Your extraction rate would be based on that so if conditions change, then your extraction rate would have to be changed as well.

Mr. R. Brown: Peter?

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Yeah.

Mr. R. Brown: You bring up a good point, but I think there is a lot of science and there will be a lot of science. But, I think the test of the system – this test of what we've done to date will come this year when the new well system for the City of Charlottetown is in full production.

With that, I don't want to see dry streams. I don't want to see habitat destroyed or abolished through too much water extraction. We put a lot of science – we put a lot of work into this new well system for the City of Charlottetown. I was the minister at the time when things were put together originally. We were – this is it. This is going to save – or the Winter River base – those three systems – it's going to balance it out

properly and I want to make sure that that happens.

If any regulation changes have to be done out of this system going live, I want to make sure before we go any further with the deep-water wells anywhere, that this system works and it works good. We're going to learn quite a bit from it – and it better work.

Thank you.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I appreciate that, minister, but I think it's also really important that we understand that when we study one watershed, we know about one watershed. We can't extrapolate that necessarily to every watershed across the Island so no matter what results we get and data we get from the situation with the new Charlottetown wells, we can't assume that a similar extraction rate somewhere else is going to produce the same results. I think it's really important we get that –

Mr. R. Brown: But it would be the baseline data we require to go with other places.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Okay, all right.

Mr. R. Brown: (Indistinct)

Chair: Let's come through the Chair.

Mr. R. Brown: Thank you. Sorry.

Chair: Thanks.

Peter Bevan-Baker.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you.

Public consultation on these regulations – can you give us some sense of what the meeting schedule, the timeframe, will be for that?

George Somers: It's going to vary a little bit by the regulation.

A large part of it for the well construction regulations, which really involve an industry comprised of, say, six companies, will be a face-to-face meeting with them and then the presence on the website in terms of soliciting comments that way.

For the water and wastewater system ones, it's a slightly broader audience because of the number of utilities. We have made initial requests to get on the agenda for the annual general meeting of federation of municipalities. We will be communicating through Engineers PEI with the consulting sector and again, everything will be posted online as well. There should be a media release going on as well.

As we get into the water withdrawal regulations, we see broader public interest in that but these regulations, when you read them, are really something that is of interest primarily to a utility or the people they answer to, to operators, so our focus would be there. We'd certainly be open to anyone in the public to comment on, but we see the key interest areas being in those sort of areas – probably also people like the tourism sector, fisheries in terms of the wastewater, MCPEI – you know – groups like that would be the sort of groups that we'd be trying to engage in this.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: So there was a very satisfying and robust public consultation process when we developed the act, for which many Islanders were extremely grateful.

What I hear you saying, George, is because of the restrictive – not restrictive – the nature of the regulations here and the people they impact, that we're not going to embark on a similarly wide angle consultation process for these regulations. Is that fair to say?

George Somers: Yeah, I think that's fair.

One of the elements in this – the consultation for the *Water Act* was soliciting the public's opinion or concerns on a whole range of issues. The *Water Act* provides their concerns or agenda, if you will, on some portion of those and other portions are carrying on into the regulations themselves.

We don't see the need to go out and ask the public again what they want to do in terms of wells. When people provided input to the *Water Act*, they didn't distinguish between 'act' and 'regulations'. They said: This is what we want. So, we're still taking the same marching orders, so really, it's more the implementation part. Who do we need to

talk to in terms of the nuts and bolts of implementing, say, the well construction regulations? Well, that's the water well drillers.

When it comes to operating a wastewater system or a drinking water system, it's the utilities that we need to talk to.

The general notion of what we want or what the public wants, we still take the *Water Act* consultations as being our marching orders in that regard.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, I appreciate that.

One final question to the minister.

We were at a recent event regarding reduction of plastic waste and I noticed that today for the first time ever I had a glass of water delivered. I don't know if you did that yourself, minister.

Mr. R. Brown: Yes, no. I melted the snow.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Anyway, I just wanted, for the record – and we corresponded after that and I wondered whether the government would develop a policy on removing all plastic bottled water from public – from government services and from government buildings. I'm wondering where you are with that.

Mr. R. Brown: I want to thank you for your –

Dr. Bevan-Baker: It's a bit naughty; I realize it's not exactly on this topic.

Mr. R. Brown: No, no. It's perfectly well. We're talking water and we're talking a serious issue of plastic waste and the need for plastic bottles in general.

After that discussion, I've gone back to the department. We have prepared letters under the *Environmental Protection Act* to my colleagues, especially the minister of tourism. One of the first things the minister of tourism and I discussed was the visitor information systems using the blue water symbol across Prince Edward Island. You're working on –

Mr. Palmer: (Indistinct)

Mr. R. Brown: Chris is working on that right now as we speak on getting prices for all of our visitor information centres to have those dispensers and we saw the other day – the Colonel Gray and Prince Street School – the schools are well advanced here in terms of installing these units.

I've asked the department of transportation also to put the blue water mark in all of our access sites – to get refilling stations in all our access sites. I've even asked in the government buildings down here to have the refilling stations. But not only for departmental use – there are people that are walking around the city that our government buildings – the people's government buildings should be open and they should be allowed to come in and refill their bottle.

We are pricing those units out. We're trying to get a volume discount and see right away where we can go. It's a great concept, the blue water symbol, and we saw the presentation in Lunenburg – fantastic. We do have a number of sites here on Prince Edward Island. If you go to their website, it does show a number of sites.

Although I have the authority under the *Environmental Protection Act*, I've gone the first step in asking my colleagues and my colleagues have stepped up to the plate in terms of saying: Okay, we got to get rid of bottled water – giving out bottled water or using plastic bottled water and put filling stations in.

I know the Treasury Board now; we have jugs of water there. You know? It's pretty simple. I was criticized – I went to a meeting in Toronto and my comment was simple: We have the cleanest water in the world, I'd say, in Prince Edward Island, and there's no need for us to import bottled water from someplace else on Prince Edward Island. It's a great initiative and we're moving forward to it and I'm hoping that we can do that as quickly as possible; get those refilling stations in across Prince Edward Island.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, minister.

Mr. R. Brown: Thank you.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thanks, Chair.

Chair: Thank you, hon. members.

I don't see anybody else – oh.

Brad Trivers.

Mr. Trivers: This is off topic, Chair. I'll tell you that right away.

It would be at the minister's discretion. It's on a different issue, but the minister was here at the November 1st, 2018, meeting and we talked about a land ownership report that the department had produced and was working with IRAC –

Chair: That is way, way off topic –

Mr. Trivers: I know it is, Chair.

Chair: It's way off topic.

Mr. Trivers: Humour me. This is for the –

Chair: Maybe you can ask –

Mr. Trivers: This is for the minister, so he committed at this committee, in the committee, that he would bring it back by – around the January timeframe. We're a little bit past January now. It's March so –

Chair: Way off topic.

Mr. Trivers: I mean, minister, and I understand if you don't want to answer this, but I just was wondering what the status of that report is and –

Mr. R. Brown: Yeah, and another issue with the people of Prince Edward Island is land. The report, I have a report done by IRAC. The department is reviewing the report; but you know, I'm going to say one thing. I am not going to use the *Lands Protection Act P.E.I.* as an immigration act. I am not going to limit, use land protection as a way to not issue permits to people that want to come to PEI or do things.

There's too much talk nowadays about limiting immigration or diversity and that, and I'm not saying it's coming from here. It's too much talk about that. I was disappointed when I heard in the meeting, that when people brought up GEBS, that there was cheering in the room.

You know, we all have a right to live in this planet. We all have a right to immigration.

We've got to be cautious here when we talk lands protection. It's about protecting the land for Prince Edward Islanders, but that also includes new Islanders and that also includes religious groups and places like that.

So we have to be careful, and I want to be careful, but we are protecting the land here on Prince Edward Island for Islanders, and that includes new Islanders, and we will have the report to you once we have the analysis done and back to us. I can say that over the last year, the rejection of land permits for Prince Edward Island has increased. I want to make sure that people that are purchasing property here on Prince Edward Island are moving to Prince Edward Island. I made sure that the advertisement requirements are there and they have to be there. I want to make sure that the people that say they are going to come and live on Prince Edward Island and want to purchase land, that that protection is there also.

Chair: Thank you, Minister, for your indulgence to that question that was off-topic, but we appreciate that.

Seeing no further questions on this topic. I would like, on behalf of the committee, to thank you, Minister, and your team who came here today to enlighten us about the regulations for water. Anytime this committee has had to deal with the team from your department, Minister, we always know we're getting the best information possible and the public can have confidence in what you are doing with regard to water for the province. Your department does speak with authority on water, and thank you to your team in the work that they are doing.

Hon. Members, we're going to let the presenters leave. We have one more item on the agenda.

Mr. R. Brown: (Indistinct)

Chair: Thank you.

We have one more item on the agenda. That is number four. It's review of the work plan, and Emily is going to speak to that, where we are and where we're going.

Clerk Assistant: (E. Doiron): Thank you, Chair.

I thought I would just update the committee on the topics that are still before the committee and kind of ongoing as part of the committee's work. So, that is the topic of land use in the province. That's one that's still ongoing.

In the fall, there were two other new topics that were brought up, one being landlord and tenant rights, and then also the broader discussion on water in the province which we have done today with the minister appearing. Also referred to the committee last spring was the topic of single-use plastic in the province.

So, those are just kind of some of the topics that are for the committee, and I just wanted to keep the committee up-to-date.

Chair: Thank you.

Brad Trivers.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Chair.

Indeed, we've been considering the – I think it was land speculation was the original topic that was brought up a couple of years ago, and I would like to continue along that front. I'm not sure what specific actions were next on the work plan for that, but I know at that November 1st meeting the minister was here for that and brought up how the department was looking at the land registry act versus the land assessment act and some ways that they don't necessarily work well together.

So you can sell a piece of land and you can – how does it work now? You could register it, but you don't (Indistinct) – or, sorry, you don't have to register it, and so you don't actually know who the owner is for a certain amount of time with the deed, these sorts of things.

I just wanted to see if there's appropriate to add a witness on there that can talk about maybe how land transfer works right now and what the different timelines are for putting a name on a deed and registering who owns the land, as well as maybe understand what sort of checks are done after that. You know?

So if I buy a piece of land and I move to Timbuktu, well, does the land registry ever get updated? Or as far as I'm concerned, I move to Timbuktu and that land's still sitting there and I'm paying my taxes and no one ever looks at it again.

There's probably a ton of different scenarios and questions we could ask. I don't know what the proper witness is for that. I think IRAC is probably the one who administers that, so probably having a representative from IRAC in would be the way to go.

I know that sometimes when it comes to that sort of strict, just looking at the procedure of how things work, that could be the purview of the public accounts committee as well, so I wanted to bring that before this committee just to see. I know IRAC is potentially coming before the public accounts committee, so I wanted to bring that up here and just to see what you guys think.

Clerk Assistant: If I could just interject?

Chair: (Indistinct)

Clerk Assistant: IRAC was also invited to talk about the *Lands Protection Act P.E.I.* to this committee, so is that something that I could maybe ask if they were also willing to discuss this land transfer, or the land registry? I guess I'm just wondering if that would be the appropriate place, if that's what the committee would like to hear.

Mr. Trivers: Sounds reasonable to me.

Chair: Maybe we can seek who would be – maybe between Emily and the department, we could seek out who would be the best possible body to come to give us the advice on that, on the land transfer? There may be somebody right in the departments that are actually doing that in land assessment.

Are you okay with that?

Mr. Trivers: I think that sounds pretty reasonable.

One of the concerns I have is we have had this land use on our plate as a committee for quite a while and we're making some progress; but there are some witnesses we called that haven't even responded to letters, for example.

I think it's important we make some progress on this file, and if any one of the witnesses that we have on our list right now is available for the next meeting, I'm not sure it – we can set a priority order, but I would like to see us prioritize the ones who's available next to come in as opposed to waiting any longer.

Chair: Thank you.

Peter Bevan-Baker.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you.

I'd like to speak to what Brad just mentioned as well, and it's about the glacial pace at which we're moving through this. I know it's almost 18 months now since we invited Cavendish and Vanco, and back then it was GEBIS, too, but they've since been removed from that list.

I'm wondering where we stand with the invitation to Vanco, and at what point do we, you know, a year and a half after the invitation goes out, do we – what other measures can we take to ensure that they comply and come in as witnesses here?

Clerk Assistant: At this point, they confirmed that they received the letter. I haven't heard any further update, but if that's something that the committee wants to pursue further, I could (Indistinct); and according to the Chair, it would be another letter of invitation to that group?

Chair: And what, again, is it that we want them to come and talk to us about?

Dr. Bevan-Baker: About their land holdings, the nature of their land holdings, in the same way that Mr. Irving did to talk about the Cavendish land holdings – albeit that was a truncated presentation, as we know – but at least he came, and I'm just wondering at what point can this committee flex its muscles a little bit more and insist that these people come in.

Chair: Okay. Is everybody (Indistinct) – oh, Alan McIsaac.

Mr. McIsaac: Thank you, Chair.

I think we should have IRAC in and go over the ground game first on how the land

transfers from one to another – I know there's lots of different areas – before we have Vanco in and find out: Oh, well, if we had checked with IRAC, it's quite understandable how such a thing could happen. Myself, I think we should have IRAC in before we force Vanco or someone else to come here, and we'll find out the ground rules for the whole committee at that time.

Chair: Peter Bevan-Baker.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I'm – Cavendish was here prior to IRAC. I'm not sure why we should make any exception for anybody else; and I'm not picking on Vanco or GEBIS or anybody else. I just think they would have the same opportunity and be able to do it without us hearing from IRAC prior to that.

I also – and the housing issue here is critical. We all know that. Part of IRAC's mandate is the *Rental of Residential Property Act*, and that's an element of – it's not, of course, the only thing, but it's an element of the housing issue that we have here, and I think that was also in our work plan. Was it not, Emily?

Clerk Assistant: Oh, yes, I can speak to that. It was, and they were also issued an invitation on that front.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Okay.

Clerk Assistant: So they're aware of both those two requests from the committee.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Sure.

Clerk Assistant: One on the *Lands Protection Act P.E.I.*, and the other on the – I'm not sure of the name of the act, but the –

Dr. Bevan-Baker: *Rental of Residential Property Act*.

Clerk Assistant: Yes.

Chair: Minister Brown?

Mr. R. Brown: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I live in a constituency that is under extreme pressure from the effects of the rental (Indistinct) act. I can tell you that IRAC is extremely busy right now. I'm not making

excuses for them. There are a lot of transactions occurring and there are a lot of people appealing their cases to IRAC.

I have two more places this week I'm trying to stop from being evicted and to me, the housing side of IRAC is extremely busy right now trying to make sure that people's hearings are heard in time and that the process is carried out – or the protection of these rental areas are there and –

Mr. LaVie: (Indistinct)

Mr. R. Brown: What?

Chair: Minister, if I could just intervene?

Mr. R. Brown: Sure.

Chair: I do know this rentals and housing issue was discussed at our Public Accounts and they're on the invite list to come in and discuss this same topic. So do you think it's necessary to have the same topic being discussed at two committees?

Peter Bevan-Baker.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Chair.

I wasn't aware, actually, that IRAC had been invited to speak to public accounts. Is it specifically on the *Rental of Residential Properties Act* and –

Chair: Yes, and we're actually having – I think the request is to have the person responsible for that from IRAC into our Public Accounts committee.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Okay.

In that case – and I think, speaking to the minister's remarks a minute ago, I think the fact that they are very busy indicates that it's even more essential that they come in here. It's only a couple of hours. I realize there's preparation time, but compared to the land holding situation, the housing issue a far more acute problem affecting people's lives today –

Chair: They are.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: So I absolutely don't want to duplicate the work of Public

Accounts, so as long as that's moving ahead that's fine.

Thank you.

Chair: It is.

Thank you.

Any further discussion?

Mr. Trivers: I just wanted to speak to that since I –

Chair: Brad Trivers.

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct) Chair of Public Accounts, just a piece of information.

In fact, correct me if I'm wrong, but that is our priority at Public Accounts. That's next on the list.

Chair: It is number one.

Mr. Trivers: We should have a meeting ideally within the next couple of weeks where they're going to be in. It will be a bit of a truncated meeting because we have other business we're working with, but I would expect they will be there for at least an hour.

Chair: Thank you.

Any further business?

Motion for adjournment?

Mr. R. Brown: (Indistinct)

Chair: Oh, sorry.

Mr. R. Brown: I just want to update the committee on the plastic bag legislation. It's being forwarded. We're working extremely hard on it. We will be at the home show this weekend and the legislation is coming in, so just a reminder to all members on the committee, we are going from plastic bags to recyclable bags so I'll be passing I Love PEI bags out to the members and tell your constituents it's coming. Tell your constituents it's a very important part of the environment, getting rid of plastics.

Thank you very much.

Chair: Brad Trivers.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trivers: Thank you for that, minister.

I know I had posted to Facebook things are changing, it's coming in July. People did have a lot of questions and concerns. I can't believe they weren't tuned into the Legislature for our debate. Imagine that.

But my actual point I wanted to make was, I think what was referred to the committee – I just wanted to clarify that I think it was looking at plastic reduction on PEI in general, not just one-time use plastic, but just how do we reduce plastic across all areas? Industrial plastics – I just wanted to make sure that was the case because it's my understanding that in fact, single-use plastic bags are a piece of the puzzle. Straws, plastic straws, are a piece of the puzzle, but when you get into some of the plastics that are industrial use and things like that, that's where we can make some real inroads in plastic reduction.

Chair: Appreciate that, thank you.

Being no further business, I look for a motion for adjournment.

Mr. Palmer: (Indistinct)

Chair: Thank you, Mr. Palmer.

Thank you, hon. members. I appreciate your input.

The Committee adjourned