

# PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY



Speaker: Hon. Francis (Buck) Watts

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## Standing Committee on Education and Economic Development

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**DATE OF HEARING:** 20 FEBRUARY 2019

**MEETING STATUS:** PUBLIC

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

**SUBJECT:** BRIEFING ON REGIONAL ECONOMIC ADVISORY COUNCILS

**COMMITTEE:**

Alan McIsaac, MLA Vernon River-Stratford [Chair]  
Hannah Bell, MLA Charlottetown-Parkdale  
Hon. Paula Biggar, Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Energy  
Hon. Robert Henderson, Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries  
Sidney MacEwen, MLA Morell-Mermaid  
Matthew MacKay, MLA Kensington-Malpeque  
Allen Roach, MLA Montague-Kilmuir (replaces Hon. Robert Mitchell, Minister of Health and Wellness)

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:**

Hon. Robert Mitchell, Minister of Health and Wellness  
Hon. Pat Murphy, Minister of Rural and Regional Development

**MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:**

none

**GUESTS:**

Rural and Regional Development (John Jamieson, Amie Swallow MacDonald, Darryl O'Brien)

**STAFF:**

Ryan Reddin, Clerk Assistant (Research and Committees)



The Committee met at 1:30 p.m.

**Chair (McIsaac):** Welcome, folks, to the Standing Committee on Education and Economic Development.

I'm glad to see a good turnout here today. There's a few that couldn't make it, and one substitution. Welcome, Al Roach.

Cellphones, can we put them, at least, on vibrate or turn them down/off if you can.

We're pleased to have John and Amie and Darryl. I'll get you to do the official introductions.

First off, I want to ask for an adoption of the agenda.

**Ms. Bell:** So moved.

**Chair:** Thank you, Hannah.

Okay, I'm going to turn it over, then, for your presentation. It's about 15-20 minutes?

**John Jamieson:** Probably something like that.

**Chair:** John Jamieson, I'll turn it over to you.

Before you speak each time, I'd ask you to, for recording purposes, mention your name (Indistinct) good.

John.

**John Jamieson:** I'm John Jamieson. I'm Deputy Minister of rural and regional development, and I have with me Amie Swallow MacDonald, who is our director, and Darryl O'Brien, who is our policy analyst.

We've been asked to give a little presentation on the rural economic advisory councils and you have it in front of you, and it'll be on the screen here. Like you said, it'll be probably about 20 minutes.

**Chair:** Would you like to make the presentation in full before questions?

**John Jamieson:** I would. I would prefer to speak in full and then have questions at the end.

**Chair:** Okay, I can take a list of people. Come through the Chair with your questions, okay?

Thanks, John.

**John Jamieson:** So, just a little bit of background on the department, which was created in 2017; we have a dedicated department and minister responsible for rural and the mandate of the department is actually to work across government and across departments to advance rural interests.

There are four key areas that the department has been mandated to work in: Population growth; economic opportunities, which is sort of where the regional councils come in; social infrastructure, which we cover a lot through our programming; and to work on rural broadband.

In April of 2017, we had announced that we would be appointing four regional economic advisory councils and the chairs were named then and then there was a call to engage Prince Edward Island to fill out the membership of the councils, which I'll go through.

The mandate of the councils is to develop economic growth strategies for each region, and you see the regions on the map here on the slide, so the west council covers sort of from Lennox Island, Tyne Valley-West. The East Prince –

**Amie Swallow MacDonald:** West Queens.

**John Jamieson:** – West Queens is sort of from that Lennox Island area through to Breadalbane, Tryon – these are fairly fluid lines. Central is in that kind of central-queens area and then the east is kind of Kings County.

Again, develop growth strategies for each region, working with economic development organizations in each area, as well as municipal, federal government, kind of to develop a collaborative effort there.

Also, to identify platforms and clusters that happen to be in each region; food, energy, technology, bio, and advise on growth and investment opportunities in these sectors.

Support labour development and youth entrepreneurship activity in the region, enhance population growth, and advise on strategic infrastructure development that supports growth.

The way that the councils work is, in January 2017, there was an economic hub. The hubs were announced, so the council essentially takes advice from youth, community leaders and business leaders. For example, last week the west council met. I attended that meeting. They had a presentation from a tourism group that –

**Amie Swallow MacDonald:** It's the North Cape Coastal Drive (Indistinct) strategy.

**John Jamieson:** Yeah, the North Cape Coastal Drive that looked that looked at their strategic plan for the area.

So, they take advice from these groups. They in turn pass it through the economic hub, which in turn sends it through to Executive Council and also to the communities. We provide support through our economic development and tourism staff support, support through rural and regional development, our staff as well as workforce and advanced learning.

The council chairs that were named back in April 2017, the west is Jason Ramsay. Jason is a senior representative of McCain Produce and he's a community leader. Rick Kennedy is the chair of East Prince/West Queens and he's a chartered accountant and the current president of Curran & Briggs. Jennifer Dunn is the capital-central-regional council chair. She's a partner at Canadian Tax at BDO Canada and Scott Annear is the chair of east and he's owner and general manager of Morley Annear Ltd., and he is also involved in the tourism sector.

Again, the support staff that decide each of the four advisory councils; in the west it's Giselle Bernard, who is our community development officer with rural and regional development, and business development officer Steve Reaman. So, in East Prince/West Queens it's Kelly Mulligan,

who works in our department as a CDO, and Heather Rossiter. Capital central is Amie, and Preston Llewellyn with economic development and in the east, it's Chris Blaisdell and Kathleen Townshend.

If you look at the west group, they've met six times, including the most recent meeting on February 12<sup>th</sup>. The members of that council, again, Jason Ramsay is chair; Tammy Rix, who is the manager of the chamber of commerce in the area, Christine Batten, who is the owner of the Penny Saver; Ruby Arsenault is with – I forget what organization Ruby is with –

**Mr. Henderson:** (Indistinct)

**Amie Swallow MacDonald:** Yes, thank you.

**John Jamieson:** Terry Adams is a gym owner; Chief Matilda Ramjattan from Lennox Island; and Andrew Ramsay works in the hospital system up there as a policy analyst. Andrew is our most recent addition.

Their priorities that they have identified through their meetings are population growth and housing for the West Prince area. Again, broadband Internet, which is sort of a common thread throughout – and you'll see some common threads through their priorities – labour market development; community collaboration; leadership development; and post-secondary opportunities.

Again, with the post-secondary, they've had Holland College in a number of times to talk about their programs in West Prince, and Alberton in particular, and also around student housing is something that's been discussed there.

On the leadership, we've been working with Holland College and others in developing some training materials and leadership programming for folks in the non-profit and some of the municipal leaders in the area.

Labour market is something they have identified. They see that as a hinder to growth. We know that in aquaculture, farming and some of the communities, other community activities; they're struggling with finding adequate labour.

Broadband has been recognized as a struggle right across the Island, and population growth and housing has been recognized as their top priority.

One of the things they did do is that west group came down to the east and met with the east group and toured a number of businesses there. It's kind of a cross-collaboration piece there.

Our East Prince/West Queens group, the members are Rick Kennedy, who is the chair. Ramona Roberts is a business owner, as is Thane Smallwood; Ron Clow from Cavendish Farms; Donnie Arsenaault owns a service station in the area. Mary Robinson is a business owner in the agriculture sector, and Jerry Bidgood from aquaculture.

They had seven meetings since they've been put in place. Again, their priorities are labour force development, retaining youth in the area, and broadband Internet. What they did was – one of the opportunities they had was they invited local business leaders in to help them set their key priorities.

The capital-central – Jennifer Dunn is the chair. Jillian Kilfoil with the women's network is a member; Jacinthe Lemire, with the Acadian –

**Amie Swallow MacDonald:** She's actually no longer with them. She's doing a private consulting business now, but she was with CIF previously.

**John Jamieson:** Yeah, and Dawn Allen and Christina MacLeod are members there.

They've had five meetings. I think Chief Brian Francis was also a member of this committee prior to his appointment to the Senate.

**Amie Swallow MacDonald:** They currently have two positions posted on Engage PEI to look for some new members. One was for Senator Brian Francis, now, I guess.

**John Jamieson:** Yeah.

Their priorities are broadband Internet, housing, transportation, labour market development and CADC.

The east group is chaired by Scott Annear. The members there are Audrey Shillabeer with the –

**Amie Swallow MacDonald:** Wood Islands –

**John Jamieson:** – Wood Islands Development Corp.; Meredith Hoerig in St. Peters –

**Amie Swallow MacDonald:** Bohemian Findings.

**John Jamieson:** – Bohemian Findings, the manager there; Mike Cheverie is from Souris; Ray Keenan is a farmer from Rollo Bay; Charlie Fitzpatrick is a business owner; and Kerry Taylor, who is an engineer, a civil engineer.

They've met five times. Actually, I think they may have met six. We've met since that September meeting, I believe.

**Amie Swallow MacDonald:** Yes, we did. Yeah.

**John Jamieson:** Yeah, so they've met six times. They host at a town hall to receive feedback on their regional priorities.

Again, theirs were labour market development, broadband Internet, the continuation of the Northumberland Ferry contract, regional collaboration and training.

With the next steps for all of the four groups will be, where we will bring the four regional groups together as a group to share information and set goals for the coming year, and they're also working on regional profiles and asset mapping. They are being developed for each of the regional councils.

That's kind of an overview of what the councils are; who is involved, what they do and we would be happy to entertain any questions now.

**Chair:** Sid MacEwen.

**Mr. MacEwen:** Thank you, Chair.

Thanks, John, Amie, and Darryl, for coming in. We appreciate it.

Most of us MLAs are all, as you know, very active in the community and active with a lot of these volunteers that have been there and we're almost defacto community development officers, or we should be, anyway.

I just have to say, I've worked with Amie in her previous roles a lot and a lot of the names you have up there, and there are a lot of really good, quality people in there; we really appreciate them stepping up and doing it.

I'm part of our own local development corporation, and all those priorities ring true and we had our – we did a survey last year and we presented it last fall. They all ring through.

A number of questions, but the first thing I need to get off my chest is our local community rink project, John. I want to raise it to your attention. You probably know what's going on. In 2010, long before I got into politics, we had a really good community group that approached this government, your government, and they said: Yeah, it's a great idea. We were looking at either a renovation or a new rink and they said: Do you know what you need, you need a business plan. So we said: Yeah.

We went back to the community and we hired a consultant and we got that business plan done. We went back to your government, and they said: No, that's fantastic. Now, what we need you to do; we need you to show that you guys have the money. You're going to have to go out and raise that money ahead of time and we'll be there for you.

So we went back. We went out and we raised that money, and we went back again. We didn't have success in finding a partner. So, now we've gone out and we've raised hundreds of thousands of dollars. We did our first phase one at the rink renovation in Morell – it's not just Morell. It's the larger community of all around, the North Shore there. A \$1.1 million phase one – \$830,000 worth is community raised – community raised.

At that time, being an MLA, we approached government and quietly they said: Okay, 30,000 we can give you. The 30,000 actually

got cut to 25,000. So, we're talking approximately 180 and change of HST. We know that there's a provincial portion of that that would be taxable, right? So, \$25,000 to us when we know that the money that we've invested in it, the community, taxable going back to the province, is way more than that.

Don't worry. We went back to them again and they said: Don't worry. Do you know what? We know. We'll be there for you. We'll be there for you – and this is a continuing theme. This year we did it again, and we were excited about the new program that you guys have this year in rural development, and it was max 100 and we were hoping for that. Then, it came back 75. We pushed back again and luckily, just before the end of the year, the 100,000 was committed.

That still – and that was for phase two, mind you. Phase two is \$400,000, so we're up to 1.5 million now of a really, strong, local project – everybody involved. It's all the things that this government wants to invest in.

My question to you, first of all, is: Is this kind of a project important to the regional economic advisory councils in PEI? And is it important to your government? We know there's an election in the air. I can guarantee you that if government changes – I have no idea if it will or not – it will be a priority if it changes, but I need to know from you.

This is a big –

**Ms. Biggar:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. MacEwen:** Absolutely.

This is a real, big thing in our community. We've done everything that's been asked of us. And when I say 'us', you know what I mean, there's a team of people long before I got into politics we were involved. But, it's always limited within that kind of program and I have all the numbers of what's been given to rink projects in the past 10 years – millions of dollars in some cases, hundreds of thousands in other cases, and to keep getting thrown crumbs is frustrating for these people, and they've been so good about it. We've been trying to work within the rules.

My question to you, John, is: What do we do and is this a priority for this government?

**John Jamieson:** Well I think when you talk about the regional councils, they've identified the social infrastructure – and I don't think they've actually identified this particular project – but they've identified that social infrastructure is important in our rural communities.

We have a rural infrastructure program that we have some funding through, and I think we funded roughly 137 to 140 projects through our programming in the current year. The max that we could fund on any particular project is 100,000. We don't do multi-year contracts, but we do have projects that we would expect that come back year after year.

To say it's a priority to have social infrastructure in rural communities, that's a given. We also look – because our max contribution is 50%, you look for a certain amount of interest and contribution from the communities as well.

**Mr. MacEwen:** I know the days of the one-third, one-third, one-third - 7, \$8 million rinks; they're not here right now or anymore.

The community of Morell where the rink is located, and all the groups around it, made that decision at the time. They knew that wasn't there, but to at least come up to where the taxes that they're paying – the provincial tax that they're actually paying on the project – not even to come close to matching that kind of an investment, it hurts.

It's not fitting, and we've seen the significant investment in other places before and your saying today that you can't commit any more than 100,000 because it's within this project –

**John Jamieson:** Yeah, the programming I have –

**Mr. MacEwen:** – within this program.

**John Jamieson:** – only allows 100,000 as a max contribution from our department.

**Mr. MacEwen:** Do you see it as a priority for your department to try and increase that?

**John Jamieson:** Well, we did increase, I think, from – I can't remember the numbers now.

**Amie Swallow MacDonald:** It was 25,000 we could do the previous year.

**John Jamieson:** The previous year we could only 25,000 and then this year we're up to 100,000. I know the total budget envelope certainly increased in 2018-2019, but again, we have more requests than we have dollars for. I think the 100,000 is fair, given the size of our program.

**Mr. MacEwen:** Thanks, John.

I know you're constricted by budgets, and we've heard that over the last four years in my time and you hear it from the workers. They've got all kinds of great projects and I know they're always at you guys to say: Give us more money; we can make these projects work.

I hope, and I'm confident, that you're lobbying hard every budget cycle looking for these projects.

But there was a time when we did get these community projects built and there was significant investment. You feel like Chase the Ace has replaced the community development funds and that's hard volunteer hours that are earning this money and we're not seeing – I'm not seeing it matching that way. I want to stress to you again, this type of a significant project in a rural community that's really only 30-35 minutes from major hubs all around, I think, should be a priority for your government and I hope you take that back too, to the deputies and to the ministers.

Thank you.

Thanks Chair.

**Mr. McIsaac:** Hannah Bell.

**Ms. Bell:** Thank you, Chair.

I have four questions, so would you prefer me to start with one or two and then come back afterwards?

**Chair:** No, do the four, that will be (Indistinct)

**Ms. Bell:** Well thank you very much, Chair.

Thank you very much for the presentation; it's great to see you here today. I'll dive right in: Could you give us an update on the status of CADC and its mandate, including its properties given that it got changed a couple of years ago and it hasn't been obvious what's happening with (Indistinct)?

**John Jamieson:** I really can't; I just know that the council in central has identified that. The way we split up the councils is that I attend the meetings in the east and the west and deputy minister Keedwell attends the two central ones. I believe his office is involved in CADC. I really honestly have no insight into that at all.

**Ms. Bell:** I appreciate the clarity. (Indistinct) who else to go and ask next. Thank you very much.

Following off on that, how does the work of the regional economic advisory council's interact on (Indistinct) the housing strategy? Particularly given its municipalities and NGOs and even private developers who have kind of the bulk of the potential CMHC funding relationships? Is that kind of part of the ongoing –

**John Jamieson:** I think it's all part of the population strategy and our staff are involved in the housing strategy. I think the councils – for example, the next meeting that we have with the west council we plan to have folks from the population strategy and the housing folks in to discuss where their activities are with them and then I think the council would essentially interact with them, what I may call an amplifier again, to identify where there may be gaps or opportunities.

**Ms. Bell:** Certainly we see with some of the business expertise that you've got represented, the people who are on those councils that does give that opportunity to kind of provide that bridge because it requires that private sector and the NGO sector to be stepping up into that space. I would ask that it would be very helpful to sort of have that aspect be clearly – (Indistinct) to report or sort of talk about how that piece is being reflected. Because on a provincial basis it would be very helpful for those who aren't directly

involved in the day-to-day on the housing strategy just to know that that work is happening because that's often what we get asked: Well, we're not hearing anything what's going on? We know that there's a lot happening but it's how do we collect that information together for the public, that would be very helpful. So, just the potential –

Number three – lost my train of thought – where am I? What's the timeline for updates on the broadband RFP? Given we've got a copy of the letter here which says: I get, all things considered including federal funding we were hoping to have negotiations and it should be happening now, but obviously it's not. So, do we have any idea about what's going on with that?

**John Jamieson:** Again, sorry I can't –

**Ms. Bell:** I saw the head shaking over here.

**John Jamieson:** – that's another department as well. I think the piece is, all four councils has identified broadband as a priority and I think there are departments responding to that. It's not necessarily our department, but we can collaborate with others.

**Ms. Bell:** So then following up from that, the clarification is that you're ensuring that that pressure is there and is not being a priority because of coming through the councils –

**John Jamieson:** Again, I think the councils, their role is to identify where there's gaps and then it's whatever department is responsible is to help kind of respond to that need.

**Ms. Bell:** My last question is: You had showed an organizational chart earlier and there was the economic hub; could you just clarify what the role of the economic hub is? Is that space in between the area I see as in Executive Council?

**John Jamieson:** It is – well it's a partial space. The economic hub is chaired by our Premier and the members on that hub committee are myself, from rural and regional development and our minister and the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries; the economic development and tourism

minister and deputy sit on that; finance and I believe workforce and advanced learning.

**Ms. Bell:** So, rural development, economic development, finance and agriculture and fisheries and the Premier?

**John Jamieson:** Yes.

**Ms. Bell:** There we go; that was speedy.

Thank you.

**Chair:** Matthew MacKay.

**Mr. MacKay:** Thank you, Chair.

Thank you, John, Amie, and Darryl for spending your afternoon here with us; we appreciate you coming in.

The main, I guess, issue I get in my rural riding, my district, is the Internet issue. There's probably not too many days go by that I don't get at least one call, if not two. It's great to see and hear that the four councils have all addressed it as a priority, but where are they at with it? I know as far as the RFP goes, there's nothing to be said about that, but have the councils sat and discussed with you folks about the ideas they come up with and presented to anyone on their behalf at all?

**John Jamieson:** I think they've identified it early through the economic hub that rural broadband is important and that it's important both, for quality of life for the people that are living in the rural communities, but also for economic opportunities. Opportunity for someone to run a small business from home is – rural broadband is important.

I think that our staff have communicated – for example, each of the councils as they meet, minutes are collected. I think what we'll probably do is post all the minutes from all the council meetings here in the next little bit. Again, our staff work with them, economic development is also involved with each of the councils and that information goes back to the minister responsible.

**Mr. MacKay:** One thing I notice when we were going through the councils and the names there's a lot of brilliant people on

these councils and I think the minutes are a great idea, because I would love to hear what they're saying. Some of the best ideas probably come from a roundtable, a group discussion, so I think that would be great if the minutes were provided and we might be able to pick up some ideas.

**John Jamieson:** We can post those in the next week or so.

**Mr. MacKay:** That's great.

Thank you, Chair.

**Chair:** Allen Roach.

**Mr. Roach:** Thank you, Chair.

Again, it's great to have you all here today and welcome.

I know that over the last, probably couple of decades, it's certainly been a priority for Minister MacAulay to ensure that the ferry service continues down in the east end of the Island and I know that he's come through for us each and every time. Again, like others have stated, I'm really impressed by the quality of people that you have on all these councils across the Island. It's great to see that we have such quality people that have committed to come out and serve on councils and really do what they can to drive the issues in their individual areas. I know that the council in the east were certainly involved quite a bit in the ferry service.

I'm just wondering if you could provide any update on what's taking place with the ferry service now and how far along they are with the RFP process on that?

**John Jamieson:** Again, I'd have to come back. (Indistinct) I'm not sure if you have any information on that?

**Amie Swallow MacDonald:** No, the last one I got was in the early fall and it was the fact that they had had put out the expressions of interest at that time and were reviewing the process of how a long-term contract could go forward in the future. They didn't feel like it was something they could – they wanted to look into it further and see the best ways forward, but that was the last update I had on that. It's probably

something we'll try to get an update for the council on again.

**John Jamieson:** The other important piece is that all these folks on the councils are all volunteers; they don't receive any per diem or any remuneration of any kind. They're there – they take time out of their business and most of them are business owners, or involved in non-profits or whatever, and they take time out of their day to present their ideas, which I think, is fairly admirable.

**Chair:** Allen Roach.

**Mr. Roach:** Thank you, Chair.

I know that the council in the east, I know that they took a very strong role in dealing with the issue with the ferry and we certainly appreciate the time and the effort that they take. I know that they did a lot of research, the council itself, prior to making any recommendations or statements that they may do.

Do you see when you go to meet with them again; do you see this as being something that that council will continue? I know it's reached the point that the expression of interest has gone out, but do we still have the council there pushing in every direction that they possibly can?

**John Jamieson:** Yeah, I think you'll see them continue to lobby hard on this. There are two key things that these groups have identified, one of them being the ferry service; the other being labour. We had planned to meet with them last week and some of them had other commitments. We planned to have someone in, both from the labour side and immigration side to talk to them about it. Is there some potential for a pilot project around labour in the east that they could look at? I think those are the two things, along with rural broadband. But I think the ferry service and labour are two things that you're going to see that council continue to push fairly strongly on.

**Chair:** Allen Roach.

**Mr. Roach:** Thank you.

I know that labour is an issue in many different areas, but I know that at least in the

last 18 months, I know that the job force in our area down there – if I could say the Three Rivers area – the job force has really increased. There have been a number of businesses that have kind of come out of the wood work and are growing. As I understand it, that they have not had difficulty in filling positions in about three or four new businesses.

I'm wondering if the council down there has had much conversation on the labour force in the fishing industry. I know that the new company that's been growing down there over the last couple of years, Montague Bay Foods, I understand that their workforce is about to grow. They've put in a couple of lines over the last year that require labour for sure. They're processing the very large crab that came out of Alaska.

**John Jamieson:** King crab.

**Mr. Roach:** The king crab. I know that they were processing for about roughly four months last year. I understand that they've put in a \$2.5 million shrimp line. I don't know where that's at right now, but I know that they've been building that for some time now and that they're going to be processing shrimp 365 days a year, it's going to be a year-round operation there.

So I'm wondering how, if the council is involved in any of that growth that's taking place? Or, has that been a discussion that's on the plate? And, are we seeing any difficulties between that? I know there's a lot of welders required down there of late. I'm just wondering if you could kind of touch on that labour force and how that's working out and are we having good success there or not?

**John Jamieson:** I think you're right. I think you're seeing a lot of success in businesses in rural communities and the east is doing, I think, particularly well. I know when we talked to Montague Bay and other processors around Prince Edward Island; they have an interest in the potential for red fish. I think what the council is seeing, is that as these opportunities continue to grow, there are a couple of things that have to happen. We need to make sure that we retain our youth and also, that we look at population growth; and then again, on maintaining good labour numbers.

I think they see there's opportunities. We know when we met in the west last week they talked about potential growth in tourism; they talked about aquaculture, in particular around oysters, where there is significant opportunity there. We know in the east with some of the fish processing with potential red fish coming on, some new crops in agriculture and in other opportunities, we know that there is going to be a need for labour as we go forward. I think the connection between labour, housing and youth retention and population are something that they see intertwined.

**Mr. Roach:** This will be my last question, Chair, and we'll come back hopefully later.

The other thing and it's something that's talked about a lot in my area and I'll just give you a couple of things there, but it's the ability to attract labour in the construction industry. Just if I could go back to the old Brudenell community before it became part of the Three Rivers. We probably have just in the last year pretty close to – I'd have to say – 8 or \$9 million in new construction just in that small area. I know that that industry are crying for labour and I know we have a lot of people from the west that are kind of not working right now in the west and I'm not sure what's going on – if they're here in the east – or if we are trying to transition any of those workers into the labour markets where we know there's a need now. No question, they're not going to get paid the dollars they got paid in the west, but a lot of these are good paying jobs and the work is there.

Has there been any work by the councils to kind of try to identify that labour force and try to convert that labour force into the areas that we are crying for here now in PEI? We know we have a labour shortage, but I guess for some of them, it's back home; it's not as costly to live as it is in Edmonton or Calgary and these sorts of things. I'm wondering; are we really grabbing a hold of that potential?

**John Jamieson:** So our next meeting in the east council, actually, they have representatives from workforce and advanced learning to come and discuss that particular issue. How do you attract workers back to Prince Edward Island and how do you retain the ones that you have? How do you create pathways for someone? There's

been discussions with Holland College about increasing trades training and opportunities. I think that's something that's been recognized.

**Mr. Roach:** Thanks, Chair.

**Chair:** Mr. Henderson.

**Mr. Henderson:** Thanks very much, Mr. Chair.

From my perspective I have about three questions here. I guess the first (Indistinct) and I'll follow up a little bit about what my colleague from the left talked about, as MLAs we become development officers and that is true. From my perspective as a former, actually, development officer that was actually paid for by the Central Development Corporation, I had the opportunity to work with a lot of these organizations and groups. Minister Biggar and I were on the Tyne Valley and Area Development Corporation. I've been on the Western Development Corporation at one time and now I work with these groups like the West Point Development Corporation and I got the O'Leary and Area Development Corporation. There are a lot of these development corporations out there.

I'm sort of wondering: What's the role that the advisory councils play with all these other; almost like subsidiary development corporations? I guess I look at the groups that I've been involved with in the past in Tyne Valley and O'Leary (Indistinct) West Point. They're actually probably really good groups for taking an idea and developing it and making it a reality. They really struggle with running them afterwards, or the management part of it afterwards. It seems like the luster wears off. There's a sense that they're always – make the time commitments, they're running their own businesses, they're active in their communities but then they got to deal with the day-to-day operations of say, the Catch Kitchen + Bar or the West Point Lighthouse, or things of that nature. That becomes a challenge.

So how do you see these advisory councils supporting those groups or enhancing their situations as they move forward? I'm just kind of curious to that?

**John Jamieson:** I think that kind of picked up on it, it's around that leadership growth and that's something the council has identified to us that we need to have that strong leadership and strong collaboration. Also need to have folks who sit on these development corporations, or other non-profits, understand the governance around these organizations which is why we're working with Holland College to provide some of that training that we see is needed in, not only in rural communities right across PEI and Canada, in particular.

**Mr. Henderson:** Do you see the advisory councils helping these groups with almost like an exit strategy? I think of when Minister Biggar and I were with the – we were involved with the Britannia Hall and that whole project and when you're involved in those, that's kind of your idea or our idea, you get it going –

**John Jamieson:** (Indistinct) transition (Indistinct)

**Mr. Henderson:** – but the running the risk as boards change, then that's not their so-called baby anymore and they're not really – now they're dealing with the mundane duties, maintenance and things of that nature. Do you see that? It's a sub question of my three questions.

**John Jamieson:** Yeah, and I know one of the things that the councils have said is that we need to kind of find these partners or owners, or whether you can transfer something to a for-profit business or somehow, again, to transfer that.

You and I have some experience in our own department, on ag and fish with volunteers having a fair piece of pie that they have to deal with every day.

**Mr. Henderson:** Well, they have big assets. They have million-dollar assets.

**John Jamieson:** Yeah, and very little capacity in some cases –

**Mr. Henderson:** Yeah.

**John Jamieson:** – to manage those assets. So how do you transition? I think that's something that the councils have identified,

and who do you find in the communities to pick that up?

I know the – for example, we have Alberton development corp have done a review of West Prince and they've looked at some things in their area that they see as opportunities, and aquaculture being one and –

**Amie Swallow MacDonald:** Tourism.

**John Jamieson:** – tourism, green energy, and – I forget what the fourth (Indistinct) –

**Amie Swallow MacDonald:** Post-secondary.

**John Jamieson:** – post-secondary.

So how do we support them? I know we're looking at possibly hiring someone to take that report and move it forward. The other thing that would be is how do you find those key partners to pick up on that?

They were quite pleased last week when the North Cape Coastal Drive came in. It was tourism groups from all over West Prince, essentially from Summerside west, who all said: We see an opportunity here; how do we take it forward?

They're talking about branding; they're talking about upping their game in terms of marketing. You know, some things just (Indistinct) – one of the discussions we had around was most people when they want to go somewhere, the first thing they do is look at TripAdvisor. So how do you get the tourism businesses in West Prince to really use that tool to their advantage?

Again, they had a really good discussion with the council, and the council was kind of supporting them in where they were going, but also providing them with some new ideas and opportunities there.

**Mr. Henderson:** Do you ever see the councils kind of recommending some sort of supports? When I say supports, hiring some management staff or facilitating staff to manage even all of (Indistinct)? Like, if I use Tyne Valley, O'Leary and the West Point development corporations, what if there was one manager that kind of helped manage those? Would that take the burden

off? Does this have any mindset (Indistinct)  
–

**John Jamieson:** Oh, I think that's something that they'd look at. One of the things I've identified is collaboration, and how do we get the communities and the organizations working together, and maybe you have someone who gets up in the morning and says: This is my job.

That would probably move some of these pieces forward, because everyone has their work to do in their private lives, and then you have your volunteer life, and there's only so many hours and minutes in a day.

**Mr. Henderson:** And that's what I'm trying to get at.

**John Jamieson:** Yeah.

**Mr. Henderson:** It's either going to be an exit strategy of these people getting out of these corporations and selling them to convert them to the private sector, or there has to be some staff to manage that to a certain degree. I don't know what the volume or the numbers and stuff like that would be. Anyway, that's just some of my thoughts on it.

**John Jamieson:** Yeah.

**Mr. Henderson:** So that's one off the table.

The other one, as far as the council (Indistinct), it's interesting and I know Alan might have an interest in this, too. Obviously, John is a deputy minister, both of agriculture and fisheries, as well as regional and rural development, and I've heard some of the mindsets of that, there didn't seem to be a lot of emphasis on agriculture. You'd mentioned aquaculture a little bit, but whether – in every way, shape or form, agriculture is the backbone of this province. It's our number one industry. I'm a little baffled that the – and I think there's potential for expansion of those sectors, the agricultural sector, especially in the livestock sector and in the shellfish sector.

**John Jamieson:** Yeah.

**Mr. Henderson:** Those are the two that we've talked a lot about; but I'm a little baffled at why that didn't seem to come out

in some of the regional economic councils in their goals and objectives.

**John Jamieson:** I think their goals and objectives are kind of cross-cutting when they talk about population and they talk about housing and labour; I think within that is the recognition of the opportunity in agriculture and aquaculture. I know it's been brought up. It just may have not been reflected in the deck here; but they certainly recognize that in the rural communities, the primary sectors are the drivers, and that's where the opportunities are.

I know early on, I think one of the first or second –

**Amie Swallow MacDonald:** First, I think.

**John Jamieson:** First council meeting, the thing I did for all four of them was go in and give an update on where we're at with ag, fisheries and aquaculture; talked about Montague Bay, for example, what's happening in the shellfish sector in oysters and mussels. We talked about diversity in ag, how we have some new crops coming on now.

I think, as Amie says, the very first meeting, the whole meeting was dedicated to agriculture, fisheries and aquaculture. So I think they recognize that, and these – the recommendations or the priorities they set are to kind of continue to drive rural growth and (Indistinct) –

**Mr. Henderson:** But I will say you're right, and I know Alan – it's almost like it's the too obvious one. It's the one that's right in front of us. It's the one that we generate the most of our economic wealth in this province from, but if I took some of their goals and objectives, it wasn't even mentioned – I don't think any of them, in an agriculture perspective, and I look (Indistinct) –

**Unidentified Voice:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. Henderson:** Oh, well, all those things are supported.

**Amie Swallow MacDonald:** And a lot of the labour conversation has been around the primary industries.

**Mr. Henderson:** Yeah.

**Amie Swallow MacDonald:** I think that's kind of where that conversation went a lot of the time is when we did talk about growth, in both fisheries and agriculture, was that labour aspect –

**Mr. Henderson:** Because when you –

**Amie Swallow MacDonald:** – being so important for the growth.

**Mr. Henderson:** Because when you look at the diversification, if you take what's happened in Lorne Valley there with the asparagus and the high bush blueberries and things of that nature, that's creating a lot of activity, a lot of economic wealth that's generated in that.

**John Jamieson:** I think they had 45 employees here last fall.

**Mr. Henderson:** Yeah, so it's a very obvious one, and I just think it seems to be underutilized as far as what its potential for really to do the growth, versus trying to create something from scratch.

The other final one I have is that we talked about infrastructure, you talk about rural broadband and things of that nature, but another one that impacts agriculture quite a bit and fisheries is the issue around three-phase power. I find that's an issue that seems to crop up a lot from a rural development perspective.

**John Jamieson:** Yeah.

**Mr. Henderson:** I get it in the West Point area. We've had it in the Lot 11 area, which is somewhat resolved, but it's still becoming almost a necessity, it's of pieces of infrastructure. Once again, I haven't really heard much about that, and I've had calls from –

**John Jamieson:** Three-phase has been discussed at all the council meetings.

**Mr. Henderson:** So are there things that your department as the rural development side of the equation can – how do you go about saying that there should be supports for three-phase power or working with our utilities out there to make that more of a

mandatory thing? The technology's there. There's nothing hard about doing it and delivering it. It really comes down to a money issue.

**John Jamieson:** Yeah.

**Mr. Henderson:** And I get it's like rural broadband. How far do you push it out to every house, every business or what have you, but I just think there's something – so maybe you can comment a little bit on that.

**John Jamieson:** Yeah, so our job is to essentially take the information from the councils because they're advisory in nature, and then to kind of disseminate that, again, to the rural economic hub, which looks at all those particular issues, and to the department kind of responsible. Three-phase has been something that's been brought up by – essentially by the – certainly by the west and by the east for sure.

**Mr. Henderson:** Well that's where it's – yeah, that's where it's mostly prevalent because they're more remote areas and it costs a lot. I just go back to saying that in the end, we really have no programs. At one time it was through the infrastructure program. It's not currently, I'm told.

Then there's – Maritime Electric has a small program for just is you're going a short distance or something to give some supports, but to go any amount of distance you're into the hundreds of thousands of dollars and if you're really wanting to grow these businesses in these more rural areas, it's almost an essential, I would say.

**John Jamieson:** Yeah.

**Mr. Henderson:** So I just want to emphasize that, to maybe lobby that to your minister as well as other departments and see what they can do to allow that to happen.

**Chair:** Thanks, Minister Henderson.

You cut into my questions pretty well.

**Some Hon. Members:** [Laughter]

**Mr. Henderson:** We think agriculture (Indistinct)

**Chair:** Minister Biggar.

**Ms. Biggar:** Thank you; and thank you, John and everyone, for coming in.

Just kind of expanding a little bit more on some of the topics specific around the smaller development corporations in our communities and some of the groups that are running programs, whatever it is: That board development piece. I know you've done some with one particular group, but expanding upon that – you mentioned that the advisory councils are working with Holland College.

I guess I would just make a point that if we're working with that, we can't expect those groups to go to be at Holland College.

**John Jamieson:** Oh, no. No, no.

**Ms. Biggar:** We have to do the other way of –

**John Jamieson:** Yeah.

**Ms. Biggar:** – you know, to engage with them, to – if we're presenting a board development, something to make sure that we're going out into the community not expecting them to go up –

**John Jamieson:** No.

**Amie Swallow MacDonald:** No.

**Ms. Biggar:** – somewhere, take another night out, a couple of hours out of their night when we know what it's like, having run those facilities that we helped develop and then you're kind of doing the, you're doing the HR, you're doing the accounting, you're –

**Mr. Henderson:** Selling tickets.

**Ms. Biggar:** You're selling tickets and doing the marketing – we've all done it, I'm sure. I guess we'd just make a note of that.

**Amie Swallow MacDonald:** We are taking the program that we're working with Holland College on to the two different areas across the Island and a lot of it's online. We're trying to make it as user-friendly as possible because we work with these groups all the time so we understand their time commitment. So, that's one

approach we're taking right now and we're looking at other options.

The CDOs can do a little bit of training themselves with some of the groups just on smaller topics like effective meetings and stuff like that, and then we kind of saw this Holland College opportunity as a next phase or somebody who wants more in-depth information, and then looking at what else we can do for the groups, because we know it has to be a continuous process and we fully understand the amount of work that they do and the assets they own.

**Ms. Biggar:** Yeah.

**Amie Swallow MacDonald:** Yeah, it's challenging.

**Ms. Biggar:** More of a train-the-trainer type of program would be good.

Just expanding, too, talking about the labour force challenges that we have; how much – or you may not know, but reaching out to have collaboration with the sectors themselves – have the advisory councils met, for instance, with the construction association?

I know we are working with workforce and advanced learning, but having that inter-connectiveness with the actual sector themselves; whether it's the shellfish sector or – how much collaboration is happening there? I think that's a key piece to identify where their shortages are or their challenges are.

**John Jamieson:** Yeah, some of the councils have reached out to the particular sectors and had them in to speak to them about their specific challenges.

**Ms. Biggar:** I want to commend the work that the West Prince council did in lobbying for the after school bus. It's something – minister to my left here – when we were not in these chairs, lobbied ourselves that that after school connection from Tyne Valley area from Westisle certainly has been a challenge. We used to have it. It was cut, and then to having that come back now, I think is a – I just want to commend the council, but also, the department, for working together with the region on that and thank them for that.

**John Jamieson:** Thank you.

**Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Biggar.

Sidney MacEwen.

**Mr. MacEwen:** Thank you, Chair.

I would like to comment on how ironic it is that we have the minister sitting at a very peaceful committee questioning his own deputy.

**Some Hon. Members:** [Laughter]

**Mr. MacEwen:** And I love that. I love that about PEI, actually. It's good. It's how we get things done here.

Speaking of that, John, you've been on the outside of government and then came into government looking in and Amie, I know you've been the same way before you came into your position. I'm not sure, Darryl, your background, but rural development has come through many changes, whether it's fisheries and rural development or part of economic development, and now in its rural and regional affairs portfolio.

Be honest with us right now, what do you see as things that have been good changes? Be political to all political parties. We're going into a time where, sometime in the next eight months, we're going to have an election.

What's your advice for parties trying to form a policy or how to form departments? Is it a silo like not being a part of economic development, or workforce and advanced learning? Or are we – some would say the department of rural and regional affairs is symbolic, but does it have sway?

I would appreciate candidness from all of you, advice going forward, because we could all use it. The last thing we want is any sort of bureaucracy or – I know nobody wastes money in this department – it's tough because you want to get that money to communities, but what have you seen in your guys' experience going forward?

**John Jamieson:** I think what the key piece of having a department kind of dedicated to rural is the message that it sends to the people in the rural communities of Prince

Edward Island, that you're important, that your concerns are valid.

It also allows the minister to have a certain amount of autonomy for when he goes to speak to transportation or economic development or some others about a particular issue, and he doesn't have any competing interests if you're already attached to economic development or some others.

It also – I think our staff have a singular focus. Now, a lot of our work in the department, because of our programming, is with non profits. But, if you look at the value and the contribution non-profit organizations make across Prince Edward Island, it's significant. You talked yourself about the amount of money that the folks in Morell, with the singular focus on that rink, have done.

So, to have that dedicated piece, I think, is a good thing. Again, I think it allows the minister to have a certain amount of autonomy that – he's not overshadowed by having – if it was attached to fisheries or agriculture or something like that. You know, you may have a bigger piece that you have to think about during the day.

We're fully staffed now, which is a good thing. Darryl is our policy analyst for the department, which I think is an excellent piece. We just filled this position here a little while ago. We do know that the feds have also named a minister responsible for rural, and we've reached out and we'll be meeting with her in the next little bit.

I think to me, the biggest thing about rural communities is the people in the areas having the confidence that they can move forward. I think having a department that is dedicated to that and having someone that they can call – and we can kind of triage to a certain degree. Okay, we may not have some funding in here, but we can connect you with someone else.

I think it's an important piece.

**Mr. MacEwen:** Anybody else?

Thoughts on improvement or going forward?

**Amie Swallow MacDonald:** Well, just as being a department, I find there's a lot of opportunity for working across departments and being there to be able to represent rural and being a rural voice.

So, getting to participate in – I was on the – I got to participate in the inter-provincial working committee for poverty reduction, housing, population. I find we've gotten to work with a lot of new topics and a lot of new departments, so it's been really beneficial that way, which is great because when you're talking rural, you're talking about a lot of different topics.

**Mr. MacEwen:** Darryl, any thoughts?

**Darryl O'Brien:** I've only been around for about three weeks so I don't really want to –

**Unidentified Voice:** You're fresh.

**Mr. MacEwen:** That could be a good thing though.

**Darryl O'Brien:** – (Indistinct) my comments – hold onto them for now.

**Mr. MacEwen:** As far as internal processes that may have changed or that are going to change as a result of these committees, are they able to affect change? Are you changing anything internally as far as policy because of the work that they're doing?

**John Jamieson:** Well, I think the mandate of the committees is advisory in nature.

I think when they come to the economic hub or when we provide a report to that committee, which the Premier chairs, it kind of underscores that labour is important in rural communities and we're missing out on some opportunities.

If an aquaculture company – and we've heard this – says: I'm going to probably not go to some new trade shows this year because I'm not sure that I can get the product in because I'm struggling to find people. Or, that you know when there's a population strategy, that there has to be a focus on rural communities and we've seen some of the stuff we've done with welcoming communities in the rural communities – that there has to be a focus on that.

I think the councils do effect change, and they are very influential people and you look at the membership – they're leaders in their communities. So, I would think that their opinion and ideas and the work that they put into forming those ideas should have a significant impact.

We're seeing it as we develop – as Darryl works on policy or as we inform other departments about what needs to happen in rural communities. I think that underscores what we're doing.

Again, I like to call them, to a degree, amplifiers, because they amplify what's happening in the rural communities, they amplify what needs to happen in the rural communities, and they provide confidence to folks that government is listening and that there are opportunities, and there certainly are.

**Mr. MacEwen:** Just one last comment, Chair.

**Chair:** Sidney MacEwen.

**Mr. MacEwen:** Thank you.

Listening to Paula and Rob talk about – good questions about development corporations setting up things that they might not have a long-term plan for, and I do think that I know the people that I've dealt with in rural development the last number of years are putting those things through that kind of a lens, too. I think they're doing a good job of – it might frustrate some people, but saying: Are you sure we need that infrastructure? Or: Do we have a long-term plan? Who's going to take care of that? Because you know what those things are. I think that's important, too. We can't be duplicating those things in rural PEI; but at the same time, I mentioned infrastructure needs that are there, and I think when people are doing their due diligence, that in some cases, our government needs to be there.

My other comment is, of course, on the labour. I can't stress that enough. The old joke was years ago people always went to their MLAs for jobs, and now you've got so many good companies coming to you: Do you know of anybody? I need good people

to work. I know the MLAs hear that over and over again.

I reinforce the council's commitment to labour, and I think – I know they expanded that market lab our portfolio under workforce and advanced learning a little while ago, and I think we need to get on that with our trades, or whatever it is, with our post-secondary institutions, because we're just missing that a little bit. So I just add my voice to that. That's what we're hearing.

**John Jamieson:** We've done a couple of things that I'll get Amie to talk about: the SEAM and STAR program, what we've done with some youth.

**Amie Swallow MacDonald:** There's a couple of things actually came to mind when we were talking about this. One is SEAM and STAR, which are programs kind of focused at youth that have potential to be at risk. They may not be at risk, but potential.

We supported a number of the projects across the Island. I think there was five last year, and it was through – we supported it through Jobs for Youth and with some staff support and it's a great opportunity for the kids to get introduced to post-secondary. They may be kids that never considered post-secondary, but they've gone to tours and they've had guest speakers in and they get to do a lot of training, and then they get to do some on-the-job training, they get confidence building. It's a really phenomenal program.

**Mr. MacEwen:** It is fantastic, yeah.

**Amie Swallow MacDonald:** And it is, it's getting that generation to look at some of the options that are here and seeing it.

Another one that I'll mention, too, is – it was – originally when it got started, it was the Harvest and Prosper project. Now I think it's just Prosper because they've actually expanded the target area. It initially got started to help find workers for the agriculture industry, but they've expanded to tourism and construction. It's working with the newcomers association, social services, social assistance and EDA to try to help identify people to fill some of those labour positions, which is a great opportunity.

Even this year, too, we partnered with social assistance, social services, to try to get some clients into the private sector and we helped support them with a little bit of a wage subsidy to do that, because we know that there's more opportunity for long-term employment in the private sector than with the not-for-profit, so we tried to do some stuff like that.

So we're trying to figure out different ways, and it's something we're definitely having a lot of conversations on, on how to help with the situation.

Some of them have been very good.

**John Jamieson:** One of the things we talked about today, we had a senior management meeting with my other half, with ag and fisheries, and we were talking about how we're working to create some training for – at a request of some farms, they're saying, you know, when you make, when you –

Take a farm manager, for example. It's usually someone who's really good at doing what they do in the field, and are a good worker who's reliable and has some aptitude, and then you make them a manager; but they may not have the background or the skills to manage people and to deal with some of the challenges around managing people, so the department is coming up with a training program that'll help transition those folks who are really reliable and good at what they do and help them transition to be managers on farms. We see that also as an opportunity and it helps develop that labour piece.

Some of the stuff we've done with Team Seafood and Farm Team, again, creates pathways for folks to work in the primary sectors, and the primary sectors are not what they used to be years ago.

On a livestock farm, your chances are you're dealing with high-end nutrition, you're dealing with artificial insemination, you're dealing with stuff that – you know, very science-based. It's interesting; it's a career opportunity, so how do we create those pathways?

**Mr. Myers:** Thank you.

**Chair:** Thanks, Sid.

Allen Roach.

**Mr. Roach:** Thank you, Chair.

I guess just to go back a bit to workforce, and to support what a few others have said: I'm getting calls, obviously, from the construction industry, but I'm getting calls from farmers looking for labour; I'm getting calls from fishermen looking for corks. So it's interesting to see that some of our very primary industries here are still looking and trying to find that labour.

But one conversation that came up was brought up by Minister Henderson and that has to do with agriculture. It was interesting, because over the last several months, I've had conversations with a dairy farmer and with a potato farmer and both are looking not too far down the road that they want to exit the industry. The issue that both are having is that in both of those farms, there's no family that are interested at all in taking over the farming operations.

That seems to be an issue not just in Canada, but it's an issue around the world. I recently saw – I forget – Discovery Channel or History Channel or one of those, where they did about a two-hour segment on farming in eastern Russia. They're not getting anyone to take over the farms in some of these areas, and they're bringing in Chinese workers to come in and run those farms. Some of them are really, really large operations.

I met a dairy farmer from New Hampshire recently; no family members to take over the operation, they were bought out by a large corporation. I was amazed with the number of cattle that that corporation were milking; it was just unbelievable.

I'm wondering, if, when we're looking at the agriculture industry, if we're looking at ways to assist with exit strategies and ways to bring in or train or develop from within Islanders who are looking for jobs to help them develop in such a way that they can take over and run that farm. I know that you talked about managers. Do we develop them to the next stage? Do we assist them in taking over a large farming operation?

I'm just wondering where you are in terms of our councils out there. Maybe that's

something we should put the bug in their ear about to start thinking about more, is ways to – because we'd like to see our farmers exit, the ones that want to, and exit properly, and get their dues when they leave, so to speak, that's coming to them and see that farm continue; because, as the minister, pointed out, primary resource.

**John Jamieson:** We do have – on the ag side, and on the fisheries, we have a Future Fisher/Future Farmer program, and often on the Future Farmer program, in particular, it's someone who is developing a succession plan and they've identified someone who may or may not be a family member; and some of these farms, because they're so large, they need to think about – it can take years to transition that complete ownership, and you can do it in stages.

Our Future Farmer program certainly works with that, and we have a number of clients now who are in the process of transitioning to that ownership, maybe 10 years down the road, but they do have some income now, and there's also some programming under economic development, Finance PEI, on purchasing land.

So there is some work being done around that transition piece. The big piece is for farmers to think ahead far enough to start thinking about that transition piece, because you can kind of stage that ownership so that when the time comes that you're ready to step aside, because it's really hard to find someone that can take over some of these operations here – have significant assets that they need to – and I think it's something that we have to think about.

Average age of farmers is somewhere between 55 and 60, very similar in the fishing industry, and we know what fishing fleets are going for now. It takes some creativity to be able to transition.

**Chair:** I might just add to that.

There's a program in New Zealand that's been going on for years now. It's called the share worker program, where you come out of agriculture college or whatever and you go into a 19% share – you take that responsibility for the milking and at 29%, you have more responsibility – you share the milk cheque in the same way and because

the farms are getting so big, a young fellow just can't get into the industry.

But, he can get in through this process of taking on a certain responsibility to different levels and eventually you grow into it. I think the last step is you put all the cows in and you get a 50/50 split, and then you can take that 50, go and buy a property and start on your own. But, it relieves responsibility from the farmer who has no one coming on. It gives the opportunity for a young person coming out of college with a farm management background to move in, and that's what they do down there and may it's something we need to do here.

The future farmer thing is fantastic, but that is the program they use in, at least New Zealand and maybe Australia, as well.

**John Jamieson:** I know on Saturday I'll be going to the young farmers of PEI annual meeting, and many of them are transitioning to that larger piece of ownership, but it's often –

**Chair:** If you can step it like that –

**John Jamieson:** It's a staged approach because of the size of the operations.

**Chair:** Another question, Mr. Roach?

**Mr. Roach:** Yes, thank you, Chair.

That's my question on agriculture. My next one has to do with the fisheries.

One of the things I hear from time to time in the fishing industry is that when the lobster season is over, we have fishermen who have talent on the water and we have the corks who have talent on the water in the fishing industry, and we have other fishing industries that could use that talent in different ways.

It certainly may not be the huge amount of monies that are made in that two-month period, but in particular, I guess I would refer to the corks. Is there any thought given to transitioning that talent skill that they have in the lobster industry into other fishing industries, whether it's aquaculture or, whatever it may be, to extend that work time from being two months of the year to

being six months of the year, or four months or five months?

**John Jamieson:** I am not sure if that's something that's been explored. It certainly makes sense because I know the mussel folks have told me that they have a need for boat captains or folks on their – I know they told me last year – one of the companies told me they certainly had a shortage of people that they could put on a boat, and you would think that that would be a trained group that would be ready to move on that. That would be something we really should look at.

**Mr. Roach:** Well, the reason why I say that is we know – when you look at the people that are standing and working in the fishing boats behind the captain, they all have to have the basic training to be on the water. I know that there are certain training programs that they have to get through Holland College up in Summerside before they're valid to get in the back of the boat and those same skills, or that same training, is required in many other areas of aquaculture.

So it would seem to me that – I just heard recently that one person in the aquaculture industry wanted to do some expansion this year and was unable to do so because they couldn't get the workforce to go out there and do it for them.

I guess I'll go back to where I was almost with the people from the west. When you have the workforce that's there, how do we bring those over to work in those other industries that would enhance, not only the industry, but provide meaningful employment to those people going forward? At the end of the day, we're talking about increasing our enhancement to our economy, enhancement to the industries.

I think these are areas where we're half way there, but what does it take to make the push to kind of just do things differently? Just because we did it this way since 1900 doesn't mean we can't change in 2019 our way of looking at things, because the world is changing and maybe when it comes to workforce, the workforce has to adjust a bit.

But, I don't know how you make that happen but I think it's a great challenge.

**John Jamieson:** There's a gentleman I know and he works at the lobsters in the spring and then he'll go and he'll work on a blueberry farm later on and he'll work on a potato farm in the fall. So he has three or four jobs, but when you put it all together he pretty well works year-round.

How do you replicate that worker into other areas?

**Mr. Roach:** Well, thank you.

I guess you've made my point. If we have people out there that can do it on their own, what kind of a push is required to get – even if we got 50% of them or 60% of them, what that would do for our economy.

**John Jamieson:** Yeah, because you have about 1,000 lobster boats on the water in the spring. Everyone has at least one and sometimes two employees, and how do you transition them to some other opportunities?

**Mr. Roach:** Yeah, thank you, Chair.

**Chair:** Hannah Bell.

**Ms. Bell:** Thank you, Chair.

Just a quick follow up on – you've been discussing earlier (Indistinct) the support for non-profit groups, in particular with board governance, which is already an ongoing theme in any aspect of NGO.

I met with Holland College last week and it came up during that conversation as well about the approaches of training. I don't know if it was on your radar, but on Valentine's Day last week the community sector network of PEI launched with –

**Amie Swallow MacDonald:** (Indistinct)

**Ms. Bell:** Yeah, I thought I saw you.

**Amie Swallow MacDonald:** Yeah.

**Ms. Bell:** That connection of there being effectively what is a sector council for non-profit associations in PEI is really that kind of natural step in terms of where that training and liaison, not only in terms of the delivery mechanism, but also filling those gaps and who is it – as my colleagues

mentioned – who is it that's going to step up into these spaces.

You had mentioned just the scale of that sector and it's something we've talked about in the House before, (Indistinct) 1,100 organizations and six and a half thousand employees – it's the third-largest sector, so that kind of relationship for the economic advisory councils to help to be cognizant of that, but also really seeing it that as a potentially valuable partnership is one that could certainly help address some of these kind of challenges.

Also, in terms of that labour market piece and working with partners like Holland College primarily as that community college partner for delivery, is there an opportunity for the findings that are coming out of these councils to inform, sort of, what that long-term planning of where the programming goes? Is that part of that engagement for skills development? Because I know workforce and advanced learning and skills development programming is part of their financial mandate, as well as the delivery partner. Is that part of that long-term plan as well or is that something that is under consideration?

**Amie Swallow MacDonald:** Yes, I would think so.

At a number of our meetings we've had somebody from workforce and advanced learning participate, either bringing information to the council and then also hearing their thoughts back.

Then the second last council meeting up west, Holland College actually came to the meeting and there was a lot of discussion about opportunities there for Holland College and education is something that's come up a number of times at all the councils – the importance of education, how do we introduce youth into different sectors that we know there's demand for? Even going right to making sure that youth have real skills, that's been a big topic at a couple of them too, so that's something that we have had a lot of conversation about and I know Holland College is open to hearing more from what the councils are talking about and areas that they could receive focus from.

Regarding the community network, I'm really excited that the group has come together. I've met with Andrea a couple of times and I think it's a great opportunity to be able to provide some support to the not-for-profit sector and yeah, I'm looking forward to being able to work with her and the whole group. I think it's great.

**Ms. Bell:** Just a follow up to that one is: One of the things that we have heard, where there are sector councils, strong sector councils for sectors and they can get labour market development assessments done and get an idea of that space, but where there isn't a sector council, where – as, for example, there hasn't been till now for that sector – we tend not to have good data.

The last time there was an assessment of any kind done on the non-profit sector in PEI was in 2011 with a 2012 report, which is – those numbers are getting a bit thin, given it's seven years later. So it would be really encouraging if the councils could consider sort of that coordination of that labour market assessment data for a bit more of a holistic picture –

**Amie Swallow MacDonald:** Yeah.

**Ms. Bell:** – rather than a piecemeal.

**Amie Swallow MacDonald:** I agree, because that report that you're referring to, it is getting quite dated –

**Ms. Bell:** Yeah.

**Amie Swallow MacDonald:** – and we would like to see it – when I've talked to (Indistinct) about potentially updating that information, because it's very valuable information on all levels of the community not-for-profit sector, so I'm hoping we'll be able to do that with her.

**Ms. Bell:** That's great.

Thanks very much.

**John Jamieson:** We do have programming –

**Amie Swallow MacDonald:** Yeah.

**John Jamieson:** – that's a capacity-building program that we have that would fund that type of activity.

**Ms. Bell:** Exactly, and it's one of those pieces of – it's an investment worth making, because then we can actually make more informed decisions about are we building training programs to the right gap. You mentioned about what we call essential skills, but those critical skills are one of those pieces that we actually have a real gap for, particularly youth coming through, that can be trained to do fundamental hands-on but they may not have communication skills or some really fundamental pieces.

We don't know that often until it's too late, and turning that story around is a big piece of that, how we can address things before they become a crisis, so that's really encouraging. Thanks very much.

Thank you, Chair.

**Chair:** (Indistinct)

**John Jamieson:** That's one of the reasons – sorry –

**Chair:** Go ahead.

**John Jamieson:** – that we brought someone like Darryl on, who's a policy analyst that can help give evidence to inform our programs and policies and the like.

**Ms. Bell:** So I'll just bug him about that.

**John Jamieson:** Yeah.

**Chair:** Minister Biggar.

**Ms. Biggar:** Thank you.

Just following up, too, on the workforce: I know you're engaged quite a bit with workforce and advanced learning and with the councils; one of the things – and I attended the chamber of commerce dinner yesterday in Summerside, and Sandy MacDonald was speaking from Holland College – one of the things, and actually I was speaking with an employer last night, when you are hiring electricians that don't have the Red Seal and they have to go back into the classroom so that takes them out of that employer's workplace, and I was

excited to hear that one of the things Holland College are looking at is being able to do that in the workplace with that employee so they don't have to leave that employer for – whether it's a six-week period to go back and get more hours in the classroom, but I just want to bring that up because I really want to see that stay on the radar.

I know Holland College is working on it, but within all our departments that are connected with that, I think it's a very key piece to getting their Red Seals and yet keeping them in the workforce while they're working on that. So I just want to commend Holland College for making those changes, but also want to keep it on the radar with you folks who are working closely with workforce and Holland College and the employers.

**John Jamieson:** Our councils have had extensive conversations, with Sandy in particular on – we have new models of education now that we don't necessarily need to have someone go to a spot, that you can do it in a workplace –

**Ms. Biggar:** Yeah.

**John Jamieson:** – and it works for the employer and it works for the employee as well.

**Ms. Biggar:** Yeah, great. That's all.

**Chair:** Thank you.

My questions have been picked up a lot, but I want to just touch on a couple of things there. Hannah had talked about it a lot, and some of the other members as well, and that's the cooperation and collaboration between the departments.

Last week I was at the agriculture sector council on behalf of Minister Gallant, and to see what was happening there and the training is going on and the connection that they have with Dalhousie Agricultural College. Dean Gray was over from there, and the workers and the trainers that they work collaboratively back and forth with our group here, and they were celebrating 10 years of this program.

To hear some of the labourers speak, a couple of them came up and talked about their job and the training they had and they weren't from agriculture at all; but like Minister Henderson says, you see the list of council members, and members from ag, members from fish and aquaculture, it's great.

You go down to a question like, say I have a project or an idea that I want to fit in. It happens to fit in agriculture or it happens to fit fisheries or whatever. Do you act like a kind of a clearing house so that: Well, you know, that doesn't really fit under mine, we've got a lot of projects, but here, you can go to workforce and get some help or you can go to fisheries.

The amount of projects that you've talked about already, to make sure there's no duplication of efforts, or double funding, or maybe double funding is what they need, but there must be a lot of that collaboration going on. Hopefully there will be.

**John Jamieson:** There is a whack of collaboration that goes on. I know Amie sits on probably four or five cross-department pieces, and when you do that, you create that personal connection that when someone comes to you with an idea, you say: Well, it doesn't really fit our funding, but there's a program here or there's a program here, and actually our community development officers are trained in that as well and they're often there in the rural action centres where there's an ACOA presence or a federal presence of some kind, as well as a presence from economic development and tourism.

So there's that opportunity to, when someone comes in with an idea, that you're able to send them in the right direction.

**Chair:** I don't know if there's training per se, but I know you have some pretty fine experts coming in to serve on these councils. Do they have any training, or are they well-versed in what else is going on in the different departments?

I guess the other big question is: How long are their terms? Have we identified an area that we're missing on these councils that we need some more expertise in?

**Amie Swallow MacDonald:** Their terms are two years. We will have to have some discussion about putting some to three years, so we kind of stagger. We don't want everybody going at the same time because we have great people on the board.

A lot of what we did the first year that the councils were in place was bringing information to them. We had presentations from agriculture and fisheries, workforce and advanced learning, immigration – I'm trying to think of more.

**Darryl O'Brien:** Economic development.

**Amie Swallow MacDonald:** Economic Development and Tourism, so a lot of what we did that first year was bringing information to them so they could have a good understanding of some of the stuff that's happening, and then to help identify some of the gaps.

Then something that the councils have also done is identify additional information that they would like to have in order to provide good advice. For example, the East Prince/West Queens (Indistinct), they have started bringing in some community groups to hear some of their priorities and some of the stuff they're doing, like Summerside port, Central Development Corporation, stuff like that, so they're doing that.

The group in the east did town hall sessions, so they invited the municipalities and the development corporations in the area, and they had a really nice, good brainstorming session, so they're making a good effort to make a collaborative – having a collaborative approach to what they're talking about.

**Chair:** So are they limited, then, to a two-or-three-year term, or can they be reappointed?

**Amie Swallow MacDonald:** Yeah, they can be. Yeah. They can be reappointed. (Indistinct) yeah.

**Chair:** And I guess the last question I have is: Is there an assessment on the work done by the council at the end of year one, two or three, or a reporting of some sort that says: Hey, this is really valuable but we need to change this, or that sort of thing?

**John Jamieson:** Yeah, and that's what Darryl will be doing, so through some of his policy analysis; and we had an interim report on the recommendations from the council that was – last fall, was it?

**Amie Swallow MacDonald:** December.

**John Jamieson:** December that we issued that; and again, I think what we'll do, probably within the next week, we'll put the minutes online of the council meetings and then we'll continue to look at what the recommendations are and how do you have them in action.

**Chair:** Yeah, I know. Minutes are one thing. It's just assessment of actually what's been accomplished (Indistinct) –

**John Jamieson:** How do you define success –

**Chair:** Yeah.

**John Jamieson:** – is essentially what we'll be looking at.

**Chair:** (Indistinct) at the end of every two or every three years, whatever.

**John Jamieson:** Yeah.

**Chair:** Super.

Any other questions from the members?

I want to thank you all so very much for coming in.

**Amie Swallow MacDonald:** Thank you.

**Chair:** This is awesome, and we'll likely have you back in again; but for today, thanks for the presentation; lots of good questions and I look forward to a summation of how your first couple of years have gone.

**Unidentified Voice:** Thanks.

**Amie Swallow MacDonald:** Thank you.

**Chair:** Thanks so much.

We'll take a couple-minute break until they can clear their desks, and then we'll go on with our further schedule.

[Recess]

**Chair:** – update and scheduling of work plan.

Ryan, do you want to take us through that (Indistinct)

**Clerk (R. Reddin):** Sure.

So you have a work plan summary document in front of you. There were two subjects that the committee had identified as top and second priority. We just heard the top priority; the economic advisory councils and then the second priority was input on Bill No. 100, *An Act to Amend the Employment Standards Act*.

There was a meeting scheduled last week that was cancelled due to the weather and it would have been on that bill 100, so I sent out some dates to the committee members for possible rescheduling. It looks to me that of the responses that I got, it looks like March 27<sup>th</sup> would be the best day for most of the committee on that.

Beyond that, that's –

**Ms. Biggar:** March 27<sup>th</sup>?

**Clerk:** Yeah, I can confirm that through email after this.

**Chair:** And that will be on –

**Clerk:** that would be on bill 100.

**Chair:** Is that still the highest priority for our group, bill 100? Is that there you want to go?

**Ms. Biggar:** Do we have – who do you have confirmed to come there? Do we actually have the chamber of commerce coming?

**Clerk:** The PEI Federation of Labour has confirmed to come. The Greater Charlottetown Chamber of Commerce is thinking about it. They had a bit of a conflict with the schedule date last week, but they're considering. They're going to get back to me on whether they will come in.

**Ms. Biggar:** Is there any other chamber of commerce, then, that we could get if they can't?

**Clerk:** The committee had put out invitations to all of the chambers of commerce back when it agreed on this, and no other responses were received.

**Ms. Biggar:** Of interest in appearing?

**Clerk:** Yeah.

**Ms. Biggar:** Or just conflict?

**Clerk:** No interest.

**Ms. Biggar:** No interest from any of the chambers of commerce?

**Clerk:** Yeah.

**Ms. Biggar:** I see.

**Chair:** So do you want to continue on with that as our highest priority (Indistinct)

**Ms. Biggar:** Well, I'm not sure if – looking at some of these other ones.

**Ms. Bell:** Some of these things have moved on as well (Indistinct)

**Ms. Biggar:** Yeah, there have been some developments on some things, too, perhaps.

**Ms. Bell:** Like, this is a year old.

**Chair:** We have prepared what, the 27<sup>th</sup>?

**Clerk:** The 27<sup>th</sup> (Indistinct)

**Chair:** The 27<sup>th</sup> is open for enough members, so I just want to make sure we have an agenda item when we get there.

**Ms. Biggar:** Well, I guess the question is, if we're going to another topic we may not be able to get somebody for that date if we already have the federation of labour confirmed.

**Clerk:** I should clarify; too, the 27<sup>th</sup> is the day that seems to work for most committee members and the federation.

**Ms. Biggar:** Yes.

**Clerk:** There are other days that might work for the committee that didn't necessarily work for the federation, so I didn't put them

out. So if there are other dates, certainly, you could look at.

**Chair:** Matt MacKay, do you have a comment?

**Mr. MacKay:** Yes, Chair, thank you.

I noticed here back, January 26<sup>th</sup>, MLA Bell had mentioned about the children's assessments. That's one thing I think we should get up on the list as well. It seems to still be a big concern.

I met with parents last week on it and if there's an update on that and the department is available to come in, I'd like to see that happen.

**Chair:** Would you like to see that come in?

**Ms. Biggar:** Yeah.

**Some Hon. Members:** (Indistinct)

**Chair:** So maybe we can do two presentations, one with the –

**Ms. Biggar:** On the 27<sup>th</sup>.

**Chair:** On the 27<sup>th</sup>, yeah.

**Mr. MacEwen:** Or we could do that one earlier.

**Chair:** Well, we can't get together earlier, apparently.

**Mr. MacEwen:** No, I think he just said the federation couldn't come til then.

**Clerk:** Yeah.

**Ms. Biggar:** (Indistinct) schedules too (Indistinct) the 27<sup>th</sup> mostly.

**Clerk:** Yeah, but see I only put out three dates because those are three dates that would also work for the federation. There could be other dates that would work for the committee and not the federation, so you could have –

**Chair:** Do we want to try for a meeting prior to that, then, and deal with the assessments if someone from the department –

**Ms. Biggar:** Tuesdays and Wednesdays are when my schedule is open in the afternoon, usually.

**Chair:** There's also a storm day there (Indistinct)

**Ms. Biggar:** Tuesdays and Wednesdays are storm days?

**Chair:** (Indistinct)

**Ms. Biggar:** Are they? Not in my book they aren't.

**Chair:** They were.

**Ms. Biggar:** Not in my schedule.

**Ms. Bell:** This year it's Wednesday mornings, right?

**Chair:** This week is Wednesday.

Okay, we could try that and try to get an earlier date then and deal with the assessments and have someone from the department come in.

**Ms. Bell:** And also keep March 27<sup>th</sup> for the one for the briefing?

**Chair:** Yeah.

**Ms. Biggar:** Well, maybe they can both come in that day.

**Chair:** Okay, we can try that.

**Ms. Biggar:** Try that.

**Chair:** Anything else?

**Ms. Bell:** Chair?

**Chair:** Yes?

**Ms. Bell:** There are a couple on here that I would – that we may be able to pull off just because things have moved on, certainly the one regarding the cultural strategy, number two, in the requests that I had originally submitted, that's moved forward significantly since then, so I'd be comfortable with removing that from the schedule, unless anybody else wanted to see it remain, but as the mover of that one –

**Chair:** Okay with that?

**Ms. Biggar:** Yeah, number seven, Chair; I'm not sure what – whether that's something that the UPEI student union would still want to do.

**Ms. Bell:** There is a new briefing now –

**Ms. Biggar:** Yeah, I know.

**Ms. Bell:** Yeah, so we may need to check with them.

**Ms. Biggar:** Maybe just check back with them on that because there's been quite a few things that have happened there with some of the legislation that went through and different things.

**Chair:** Okay, well –

**Ms. Biggar:** See if they want to still appear.

**Chair:** We'll try to get an earlier meeting than the 27<sup>th</sup> to deal with education and maybe have the chamber in at that one as well and then we can deal with the next date after that.

**Ms. Biggar:** Yes.

**Ms. Bell:** (Indistinct) consideration, Chair, (Indistinct) it's just item number six which was around pay scales for early childhood educators would align with education if we are bringing somebody in from the department. That may be another relevant one to have on the same day.

**Ms. Biggar:** I think those are pretty big pieces to have on the same day, really.

**Ms. Bell:** They are.

**Chair:** (Indistinct) in one day?

**Ms. Biggar:** I don't think so.

**Chair:** I think we do (Indistinct)

**Ms. Biggar:** I think you need time to discuss those.

**Chair:** Okay.

**Ms. Biggar:** Not that they aren't –

**Chair:** Well we can move it up higher on the list though.

**Ms. Bell:** Yeah.

**Ms. Biggar:** Yeah.

**Chair:** Okay, good.

Anything else folks?

Motion to adjourn.

**Mr. Henderson:** (Indistinct)

**Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Henderson.

Good, thanks folks.

Make it official, great.

Thank you.

The Committee adjourned