

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY



Speaker: Hon. Francis (Buck) Watts

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Standing Committee on Communities, Land and Environment

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

SUBJECT: BRIEFING FROM PEI POTATO BOARD ON LAND SPECULATION AND COST OF REAL ESTATE

COMMITTEE:

Kathleen Casey, MLA Charlottetown-Lewis Point [Chair]
Dr. Peter Bevan-Baker, Leader of the Third Party
Colin LaVie, MLA Souris-Elmira
Hon. Pat Murphy, Minister of Rural and Regional Development
Hal Perry, MLA Tignish-Palmer Road
Allen Roach, MLA Montague-Kilmuir
Brad Trivers, MLA Rustico-Emerald

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:

Alan McIsaac, MLA Vernon River-Stratford

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Bush Dumville, MLA West Royalty-Springvale

GUESTS:

PEI Potato Board (Greg Donald, John Hogg, Darryl Wallace)

STAFF:

Ryan Reddin, Clerk Assistant (Research and Committees)

The Committee met at 10:00 a.m.

Chair (Casey): Good morning everyone and welcome to the Standing Committee on Communities, Land and Environment. I'm Kathleen Casey and I'm going to be your Chair. I'd like to welcome all members back after the summer for our meeting. I would also like to welcome the hon. Member from West Royalty-Springvale to our meeting today and to each and every one of you, welcome to the committee meeting today.

Your agenda is before you and I would like to – before we introduce our group who are with us today – I'd like to call for adoption of the agenda.

Mr. Murphy: (Indistinct)

Chair: Thank you.

Today, hon. members, we are welcoming the Prince Edward Island Potato Board to our meeting and with us today is, Greg Donald, Darryl Wallace and John Hogg. They're going to be giving us a presentation on land speculation and the cost of real estate.

Hon. members, what I would ask you to do is, if you have a question, if you could raise your hand I'd be happy to add you to the speaking order. For the first time that you speak today if you could say your name so our sound people will be able to attribute your remarks to you and then we'll continue on from there.

What I'm going to do is on behalf of the committee, welcome the PEI Potato Board. I'm going to turn it over to you, Mr. Donald, for your presentation.

Thanks.

Greg Donald: Thank you very much, Madam Chair and good morning and a welcome.

We appreciate the opportunity to come to speak to the committee. I am Greg Donald, I'm general manager of the PEI Potato Board and I'll let the folks with me here introduce themselves.

John Hogg: John Hogg.

Darryl Wallace: I'm Darryl Wallace; I'm the acting Chair right now with the potato board.

Chair: Welcome.

Greg Donald: We do have a power point presentation along with what we're going to talk about and we do appreciate the invitation to talk – I know specifically about land speculation and the price of land. I'm just going to – I feel (Indistinct) –

Chair: I actually have it right here.

Greg Donald: Oh you do, oh great.

Chair: I do, I have it right here.

Greg Donald: Excellent.

The PEI Potato Board, we're the organization that represent the PEI potato growers and our mandate is to work together to ensure long-term profitability and sustainability through marketing, advocacy, negotiations and activities that support quality potato production.

Like I said, we were asked today to talk about the speculation and the rising price of land and we'd like to certainly talk about that, but we'd like to talk a little bit first about the industry itself, about some of the sustainability efforts that are being carried out by farmers. In particular, I'll say around – we can talk about a lot of areas but in particular, around soil conservation and soil health and then how that pertains to the topic of the issue that we've come here today to talk about. Then of course, the land challenges and concerns and then we also put together some recommendations for the committee. If I understand correctly, the intent is – hopefully the recommendations that the committee will take to the Legislative Assembly. That's what we're going to cover. I think we have about 20 minutes.

The potato industry is obviously very important to the economy here on PEI. A study that was done a few years ago showed that either directly or indirectly, over 8,000 Islanders are employed by the industry. The total economic output is over a billion dollars and it represents about 10.8% of

PEI's GDP. It's very important here to the economy.

Virtually all of our potato farms are operated – they're family farms – and we currently have about 186 potato farms on PEI. I'll add, most cases they're multi-generational farms that have been passed on through the generations. I'll add too, it's very rare that we have new entrants into the industry here on PEI.

This year we planted 84,000 acres and I added that that is about 14%. I know some of the other presentations, particularly, I think of the federation, they spoke about the number of farmable acres on PEI and I think it's around 600,000 acres. The potato acres represent, about any one year, 14% of Island fields. I stress that because sometimes it's referenced that a lot of the Island is planted to potatoes. In fact, I think another presentation this committee referred to it as mono-culture when it comes to potatoes, so it's important to note there's only 14% of our fields are planted in any one year to potatoes.

We produce – give or take – depending on the year, but the last number of years around two and a half billion pounds of potatoes and we are the number one potato producing province in Canada. Our markets – 60% of the production is sold to the processing market. The vast majority of that is right here on PEI to Cavendish Farms. They would be our largest customer there. On the fresh side, 30% of our production and 90% of that would be – or close to 90% – would be sold in Canada and the United States and it's roughly about half-and-half of that. That's our largest markets. But the Caribbean is a large market and we also export to many countries around the world. Seed would represent about 10% of our production and most of that seed is used right here on PEI. But we do as well export seed globally.

Shifting to the second item that I want to talk about is the sustainability efforts by farmers. Like I said, we could probably talk about a lot of areas but I'm going to primarily focus on soil conservation and soil health and then relate it to the issue of land speculation and rising prices. There's been a lot of efforts by the industry and I would say it's a culture of continuous – we were

talking about that this morning – continuous improvement and it's evolved, but there's a lot of efforts that are being done and I'm going to talk about some of those.

Farmers have a variety of tools that they use to improve their environmental sustainability. Some of them are legislated, many are not, but things like buffer zones, the ALUS Program, an excellent program that takes out environmentally sensitive land out of production and helps with that. That's very important. Many, or most farms, conduct nutrient management – or have nutrient management plans, environmental farms plans, strip cropping, terraces, berms and grass waterways, rotation, crop rotation, residue tillage equipment, newer lower input potato varieties and IPM, or integrated pest management is used. These are some of the tools and I'll talk more specifically about some of them in the next few slides.

The whole area of – like I said, I'll particularly – we talked about a lot of areas, but we'll talk in particular about soil health and soil conservation. Potato farmers take this very seriously and the issue of soil health, soil conservation and improving soil organic matter, without a healthy dynamic soil, it's impossible to profitably grow crops. Certainly, that's important, not only now, but in the future. We're working together with researchers at Ag Canada, with the province, with UPEI, with Dal ag school, industry partners and many other folks to work on this, to work together and stop and reverse declines in soil organic matter and soil health. It takes a lot of research education and new technology and investment and by all those folks that that's happening and I think the industry is embracing sustainable practices.

On the soil conservation side, PEI farmers annually spend hundreds of thousands of dollars in partnership with the PEI Department of Agriculture to build soil conservation structures like terraces, farmable berms and grass waterways and you can see some of them on your monitors or on the screen. Since the program started we know there's well over a million feet of diversion terraces, hundreds of thousands of farmable berms and well over 2 million feet of grass waterways. I know where I live I take great pride – I drive out my road from Kensington to my home and I can look in

both directions and virtually the whole area has soil conservation structures and I think it's very evident around the countryside all the work that's been done. There's still a lot of work that needs to be done, but there's a lot of effort being made in that regard.

We, the potato board contributes – one of our key focuses as an organization is research and we've contributed a stiff amount of research dollars in the last few years to research by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada on soil conservation practices, but also are associated with improved soil health and looking at things like nurse crops that could be grown with potatoes, fall cover crops planted, in particular, after the potato harvest to protect the soil and residue tillage management techniques as well.

Each year for the last number of years the percentage of fields with the fall cover crop planted after potatoes has increased and the board has brought in multiple experts in soil health to help carry this message. That was just an example of a story that was run last year, it's been noticed, I believe, the work that's being done there.

The board is supporting additional data analysis and fact sheet creation on the subject of residue tillage. This practice appears to be associated or its been shown, I should say, with reduced water and wind erosion of soils, increasing soil organic matter and improved yields. This would be an alternative primary tillage method then the traditional mobile or plows. Rather than using mobile or plow, this new equipment can – it's less intrusive, I'll say, on the soil, it leaves more residue on the surface and so on. This example is a syncro it's called, a particular piece of equipment used for that.

Organic matter, the board is also working with AFC on a new trial. Started over a year ago investigating the use of a series of cover crops, green manure crops for improving soil organic matter, as well as reducing soil-borne diseases in pests. Included some new rotation crops to PEI and we see a lot of them growing commercially now around the Island like sorghum sundangrass, corn, brown mustard and buck wheat. I know for example, the board conducted grower meetings each of the last two winters that have addressed methods to improve soil organic matter and the (Indistinct) is also

doing so. We're quite proud of the board's new agronomy site that's a tool for producers and it's at www.peipotatoagronomy.com, where we've been compiling; let's say a library of a lot of information around this area.

Sites specific to nutrient management; we have a project with UPEI School of Sustainable Design Engineering on using Precision Agriculture tools, such as measuring the soil electroconductivity yield mapping to create management zones within field for better application nutrients. That's a really – I'll say – a neat project, we're proud of that. We're one of the founding partners of the 4R initiative and that's in collaboration with the department of agriculture, environment, watershed group and yeah, this is an initiative, and we're quite proud of the work that it's been conducting.

This is just an example, this is from the government of PEI website and nitrates is an issue on PEI. Again, we're proud, this just shows without the legend there, is very small. I can't read it from here and these aren't political colours either. It changes. The red – if I could highlight, the 2000-2005 the map PEI on the left, see there's a larger red area. The 2012-2016 on the right there's a smaller red area and there's more – also I'll say – green showing up around. So just shows the red is the higher nitrate levels in ground water, it's decreasing. I think it's a good example of data that the efforts that are being done that you see around the countryside and a lot of efforts being put into, it's having positive results.

That is the section on talking about soil health and soil conservation and some of the sustainability efforts. But really want to stress the point that doing things that are good for the soil and the environment like some of the structures that we showed, the buffer zones, increasing rotation and many as the other practices, sometimes requires more land for a grower to keep the same level of production in the case of potatoes. I also want to stress that this is something that's desired by producers, by farmers, but it's also something that we know the general public feels pretty strongly about as well.

I'll turn over into the main what we're asked to come here today to talk about and what I

talked about relates very much to that. So, why is this a concern to potato farmers and increasing land speculation and rising costs and it's to ensure that there's enough land and to sustain current production, is like what we just talked about in some cases to be more sustainable and improve the soil and things like that, it sometimes takes more land to do that to have a better rotation and so on.

Just to sustain current production is a concern; in particular, like I said, improving crop rotation and/or crop diversification. That's an interest of producers. In some cases to expand production, obviously you need more land. The main reason that I hear, or we hear, is because of the next generation. Like I said, virtually all the potato farms on PEI are family farms and multi-generational farms. When there's a farm and their son or daughter wants to take over from the farm, sometimes the farm, it doesn't support those families so you need to expand. The availability and the cost of land is obviously a concern. Those are the four main issues, or reasons, that this is –

This shows in the last 20 years the change in the number of potato farms on PEI – 20 years ago we had 460, today we have 186. The number of acres has changed significantly as well. By the way, it's not unique – this isn't unique to PEI – it's something we seen right across our industry. But the point I wanted to make here is that we have fewer farmers and oh, and sorry, I want to dwell on that first point. It's not unique to PEI or potatoes and this is the same trend that we see right across agriculture and in Canada and globally. It's not unique to PEI, but obviously on PEI we want to address these things as far as the number of farms, but these are multi-generational farms and that's important as we look at the next few slides.

I'd also say that acreage back in the late 1990s was not sustainable. We had exceeded the capacity of the Island to grow potatoes. I would say the acreage that we're at today is – I'll put it this way – there are probably limited opportunities for increase for all the reasons that I talked about. You can see in the last, over a decade, actually, I could have took it back a little further – the acreage has stabilized around 85,000 acres give or take. On that, we find ourselves right now that

there's very good demand for fresh and seed potatoes and there's really a very high demand for processing potatoes. We're actually in a situation where I'll say the demand is exceeding the ability to supply. Our Island isn't getting any bigger; we can't necessarily grow more acres. But this issue is a concern and again, we'll talk more specifically why.

Cultivated land continues to increase in farmland values in all areas of the province. I know you've heard that and I'm sure you're aware of that from other presentations. Most of the demand we believe is in the potato sector itself in some parts of the Island where as more than one potato farm, if land comes up for sale would like to acquire that land, let's say, we're also seeing increased demand from the dairy sector and there's been increases in milk quota volume and that's been a factor. Then of course, we've seen pressures from purchasers outside of PEI and they continue to be active in acquiring farms and relocating to the Island.

Despite steady land prices on PEI, our land still, I would say, it's very inexpensive in Canada and also globally, it's still relatively low. These are taken from Farm Credit Canada. They do an annual farmland values report. This is just PEI, so the top is 2008, the bottom bar is 2017 and you can see in the last number of years, every year, the value of land in PEI has been increasing. In 2016, I think we were the highest increase in land values in Canada. Last year we were in the top three, let's say, I'm not exactly sure. That's a concern for local producers, but again, relatively speaking, our land is still relatively inexpensive compared to other provinces and other places around the world. This just shows the actual value per acre in Canada, a high of British Columbia in the Okanagan it's over \$90,000 an acre and then Ontario, in south central Ontario which would be – let's say a potato growing area would be over 15,000, Quebec over \$6,000 and then moving on to PEI the report shows between three and a little over \$4,000 an acre. That can make our land attractive to outside buyers quite frankly.

There is increasing concern. We're hearing from growers on concern over the sales of land to non-residents and it appears that some sales may not be aligned with the

spirit, intent and laws on the *Lands Protection Act, P.E.I.* There is concern that some land purchases are occurring without meeting residency requirements or exploiting loopholes to exceed land limits. Some lands may not have been publicly advertised before sales. Reports of unethical realtor practices and some sales have resulted in land being no longer available for agricultural use.

We've heard these concerns from potato farmers, and we've also had meetings with Scott MacKenzie with IRAC and he acknowledged that they're aware of these issues, and we've also had meetings with the minister as well to discuss our concerns around some of these issues.

I'll say, in a recent sale of land – large-block land – I think it was 2,800 acres and we discussed this with both IRAC and the province, with officials of the province, that was not recommended by IRAC and we learned that and it went to Executive Council and it was approved. One of the reasons that were given for – and we understand that is within the authority of Executive Council – but one of the reasons that were given by the minister was that they believed it was good for Island agriculture and the diversification of Island agriculture.

I guess the point we'd like to make there, that if government has a policy regarding land ownership and sales, and a vision for agriculture in PEI, and it may have even been a comment made that maybe we need less potato production on PEI, that if that's influencing the decisions on land sales then that's something that should be made public and it should be debated. There should be – if there's a policy around that – and I know we would like to be, certainly the potato industry and agriculture, I think, needs to be part of that development of that policy.

I don't know who said this, but PEI's land is rich in soil and generations of Island farmers are our most valuable resources and we need to protect them. We have this tremendous strength that's not only our soil, but the farmers that have passed on expertise from generation to generation – we need to preserve that and we have a market that there's more demand than we can produce. We need to do, I believe, what we can to our

policies and rules and regulations need to be supportive of that.

The last two slides are specific, having said all of that, our recommendations. Regarding the *Lands Protection Act, P.E.I.*, we believe there's an opportunity to better manage the *Lands Protection Act, P.E.I.* and its regulations that are currently in place. There are good rules and regulations that are there. They just need to be adhered to.

Advertising land if selling to a non-resident – we believe that was a regulation. It's not. It's a guideline. We'd like to see that – it's a little bit grey, actually, but we'd like to see it as a regulation.

Examples of that are we – I've heard of farmers that have farmed a piece of land for – I didn't mention it earlier about rent – for many years and it's part of their rotation, and they rented it and then they would learn that in the spring even at the last minute that: You can't rent that land anymore, it's been sold. In some cases, it's been sold to a non-resident. They had no idea and they would have liked to have had an opportunity to acquire that land.

What we're saying here is, and we hear, is not necessarily; don't oppose a non-resident from purchasing land. But, they want it to at least – and I think that's within the spirit and intent and also in the rules of the act, that they would like to at least have a fair opportunity to acquire that land and they weren't. That's where the main concern is.

Unethical real estate practices contrary to the act, we've heard stories of realtors that – and again, I'm sure the majority of realtors are very ethical and whatnot, but we've heard stories of having people buy land that are residents, rent the land to a non-resident until that person meets the residency requirements which are 12 months, I believe, now, and then they would sell them the land. Things like that happening, and then adherence to land holding limits.

The rules, I know, our industry supports the land holding limits and I know they also support that every few years they need to be revisited, and maybe they need to be increased or changed to meet the needs of running a farm business, let's say. But, we do support those regulations and if there are

loopholes and things like that then we don't potentially have all the answers how to do that, but we need to address them and better manage that.

Greater transparency with the approval process, including IRAC recommendations, we've asked and they will not share that. I think that would be a positive thing. Again, government needs to adhere to the spirit, intent, and rules of the *Lands Protection Act, P.E.I.*

The last slide we have, I think it's important. We don't currently have a clear land use policy and agriculture is a tremendous strength of the Island and I think we need a policy around land use when it particularly pertains to agriculture.

Evaluate necessary resources for land conservation work – there's a tremendous amount of work being done. You can see it all over the Island, but every year that program is fully exhausted. I would say there are limitations on the funding and also the people resources to help with that work. We think that's an opportunity.

The last recommendation is the ALUS program; excellent program, but it has become out of date. The payments, they are below market value for rented land. For example, the issue there is sometimes it's the landowner where the issue is. It may be a non-farmer. If they can – maybe they have land that is better to be taken out of production, and with the ALUS program they may not want to do that because they can make more money if they can find somebody to rent it from them. It needs to be ratcheted up or updated, I think.

Those are our recommendations. On behalf of the potato board, we welcome the opportunity to participate together with other interest groups in – like I said, we don't have many of the answers, but to work together with government to improve the situation.

Again, I'll just reiterate, we have this tremendous strength in terms of multi-generational family farms and there's been a culture, I'll say, of continuous improvement when it comes to environmental sustainability. You can see it. I think the results are also – some issues are speaking to

that. We need to, in some cases, to improve rotations. We need support in that we better manage the *Lands Protection Act, P.E.I.* and the rules and regulations that are already in place and to ensure that we – it's looked at, like I said in the beginning, as a real threat to the industry.

If it continues to – allowed to the way it's being managed right now, when the land is sold it can be out of agriculture production. It can be out of production forever, and it's a real threat to the industry.

With that, I'll close and thank you again for the opportunity today and welcome any questions.

Chair: Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Donald, for your presentation.

Hon. members, I have quite a speaking list here. People have indicated they have questions. What I would ask you to do first is, if you could identify yourself so the sound people can attribute your remarks. You just have to do that on the first time, and then I will introduce you after that.

First up, I have Bradley Trivers.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Chair.

It's Brad Trivers. I'm the MLA for District 18 Rustico-Emerald.

I wanted to thank you for an excellent presentation. First off, it was great to see that you're focused on sustainability and looking after the land, and how important the potato association – you realize the soil is. It's no surprise, of course, as well as the recommendations you've made are very much in line. I know what I'm hearing when I talk to farmers and others across the Island, very much in line with what we've heard at this committee from the National Farmers Union and it's great to hear you bring them forward to the committee.

In the PEI potato news back in April, it was referenced that you sent a letter to Executive Council. It said something along the lines of: We've heard from growers regarding the sale of agriculture land to non-residents without allowing Island farmers an

opportunity to purchase the land as we stated. The letter also requested that the provincial government provide more transparency regarding IRAC and Executive Council decisions on land purchases by non-residents to ensure that they are following the spirit of the *Lands Protection Act, P.E.I.* just as you stated today.

I wanted to find out if perhaps the committee could get a copy of that letter, and I wanted to find out if you've heard back from Executive Council at all to address those concerns. This was back in April, after all.

Greg Donald: We've had the opportunity to meet – to send that letter, but also with other officials, so we haven't had, I think, specifically to that inquiry, Mr. Trivers, a response. We did –

Unidentified Voice: We did meet with them.

Greg Donald: Yeah, and just gathering my memory here, we have not, but we have been told that there's in the works is to conduct – and I think it's been public as well, to do a review of IRAC, so that has been communicated, not formally in a letter and a response, but also that there will be a working group that will be formed that could involve people like the potato board or representatives from the federation or NFU and other organizations, to discuss, to get input on the matter.

But to this date, nothing, I haven't seen anything formal, just comments were made that that was going to happen.

Chair: Brad Trivers.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Chair.

One of the reasons I ask is if the Executive Council, including the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries, has been aware of this since April 2018, very explicitly, a lot of what you're asking – you're not talking about changes to legislation. We don't have to meet as a House and as an Assembly and pass those and debate them. We're talking about enforcing the current act – right? – and adhering to those guidelines.

These are things that can happen presumably immediately, and that's why I'm wondering if they've gotten back to you and committed to taking action, to just really enforcing the legislation that already exists. Have they said that? You met with them. Did they commit to better enforcing the legislation that already exists?

Darryl Wallace: All that they've stated to date is that they're going to do a review of the policy. That's all we've gotten to date.

Mr. Trivers: Did they give you any timelines as to when this working group would be formed and when the review of the policy would start and when it would be complete?

Greg Donald: Yeah, and we actually did get a formal response that they are committed to it – it wasn't specific, but committed to working together with industry on this issue, I guess. There was a commitment made, but there hasn't been anything specific in terms of timeframes yet. So we're eagerly looking forward to that because we'd like to be part of that.

Chair: Thank you.

Brad Trivers, I'm going to give you one more question and then I'm going to continue on, but I'd be happy to come back to you if you had more questions.

Mr. Trivers: Okay, thank you.

Chair: Brad Trivers.

Mr. Trivers: So your recommendations mostly are around taking the current *Lands Protection Act, P.E.I.* and adhering to the intent as well as the actual rules and regulations and the legislation itself. One potential exception was strengthening the guideline that land needs to be advertised to Islanders before it's sold to a non-resident, which was good to hear; but are there other – do you believe there are changes to the legislation that are needed and potentially changes needed to add new rules and regulations to strengthen the legislation on top of enforcing what's already there?

Greg Donald: On the first point regarding the – I understand that's a guideline that it has to be advertised, and our actual

recommendation is that it be made a regulation, so that would be one specifically.

Outside of that, there could very well be others. Like I said earlier, we don't have all the answers. We've expressed or shared our concerns, and we would like – and I also offer the opportunity that we would be part of, I guess, working together with other folks in the industry and on more specific, perhaps, rules and regulations that are needed as well.

Darryl Wallace: It would also help a grower that was renting a piece of property. When you're making plans for the spring and you plant the first week of May and then you find out the last week of April that the land is no longer in your possession, so if it was advertised 90 days prior to that, you could make your plans that you don't have it. It just helps with making your plans for your rotations and your crop for that spring.

Mr. Trivers: Yeah, and the reason – I've heard some farmers say they'd like to see the corporate land ownership limits increased because, for example, there may be brothers who are farming together or siblings and one of them passes away and they have a joint corporation. Suddenly there's only one and they've over the limit and these sorts of things. I think the department deals with exceptions like that; but you mentioned also –

Darryl Wallace: There is (Indistinct) –

Mr. Trivers: – the family farms and expanding and all that kind of thing.

Darryl Wallace: The land numbers or the farm numbers or advertisers (Indistinct) mentioned earlier of 400 and – what was the number, 480, 460? – and now it's down to 186. So the same amount of potatoes is being grown; it's just being grown by less people. That really shows you the difference right there. Things have to change.

Greg Donald: And Madam Chair, if I can make one more comment, if I could make one point, perhaps there are some new adjustments or changed regulations, but we already have a – the *Lands Protection Act, P.E.I.* already has, is a really good act and has a lot of rules and regulations. We need to start by making sure that that is followed,

and that's one main point we'd like to make today.

When we met with Scott MacKenzie, we had a list of concerns that – just things we're hearing. I can't validate them all, and sometimes people hear things or say things; but before we had an opportunity to go through them with him, he told us about all the concerns. So they're aware of the issues. We need to figure out how to address those.

Mr. Trivers: Action.

Greg Donald: Yes.

Mr. Trivers: Need some action.

Greg Donald: Absolutely, yeah, so both with IRAC, and also with the approval process at Executive Council.

John Hogg: It's very complex. It needs to be put in to protect the seller and the buyer but it's not just one way.

Chair: Thank you.

I'm going to move to the hon. Pat Murphy, but before I do that, even the presenters: When you are responding to a question, if you could say your name first –

Unidentified Voice: Okay, sorry.

Chair: – it just makes it easier for our sound people to make sure –

Unidentified Voice: Sure.

Chair: – that we're attributing the comments to the right person.

The hon. Pat Murphy.

Mr. Murphy: Thank you.

My question I guess is: What's the – there were 460 farms in 1997, now we're down in 2017 to 186 farms. Seems like a dramatic drop in farming. What is the size of a sustainable potato farm today in Prince Edward Island? How many acres of potatoes do you have to be able to plant to be sustainable?

Darryl Wallace: I know on our own farm I can go back 20 years and we were probably

growing a third or less than what we're growing today. The reason for increasing: we have more family members working in the same farm. You try to be more efficient with your equipment. The margins are very small, so the same thing with anything. You got to grow more of it with smaller margins to make your end cost. That's one reason or several reasons why the land or the farms are getting bigger.

When I grew up as a kid on a farm, there were probably a lot of 80, 100-acre growers, and all down the road there was 100-acre growers. Now a small grower's 500 acres and they're all going up. That's just an indication of where the farm size is today.

Mr. Murphy: So there's no way that farms could be smaller and be sustainable? Is that why there's less than half of what there was in 1997, is because they just couldn't make a go of it? Or is there retirement?

Darryl Wallace: Some of it would be age-related. Some of them fellows, just it was time for them to get out and retire, and then you get a younger generation with multi-generation farm, or family on the farm would increase. If you try to take a cheque out of a business, it's got to be there to take it out so it's just like any other business. You've got to get bigger if you want to support another family along with it.

That was no different than our own case. I started with my father, then I had a brother that came along with me and if you want to be able to live and run a home-family household, you have to get bigger.

Greg Donald: But as we said in the presentation, the trend is not unique to PEI or Canada, globally, or even agriculture, it's in business. In many cases, it's the economies of scale, particularly in, I'll say, in the processing part of the business. It's really important and it is in other sectors as well of the industry. But to answer the question, it's difficult too, because it very much depends on the individual and the operator and what market they're serving, and it does differ. But generally speaking, I think economies of scale are a big factor there.

Chair: The hon. Pat Murphy.

Mr. Murphy: Thank you.

Those 460 farms, are they all incorporated into the existing 186 farms? The farmers that are still farming, the 186, and the farms that are no longer – are those farms – 460, are they still mostly in production? Are the 186 farms that are still farming, are they using that farm land that was vacated by the –

Darryl Wallace: I would have to say yes, for the most part. I think that's right around when the peak was, too, when you seen one of the other slides –

Mr. Murphy: The late 1990s.

Darryl Wallace: Yeah, the late 1990s of the 112,000 acres, 113,000 acres. You obviously had more growers growing at that time, but I would say that a large percentage of that would still be in production.

Mr. Murphy: One more, if I may?

Chair: One more and then I'm going to go onto the next, but I would be happy to come back to you if you have more questions.

Mr. Murphy: Okay, no I was just wondering about 60% of it is in the processing sector now and we used to have a big seed market until – was it PVYn struck there? Is there any effort made or is there any ground made in regaining some of that seed production in the province?

Greg Donald: Absolutely, and we continually – we believe, as an industry, we have a stronger industry if we have a strong processing fresh and seed sector. Globally, those markets have changed a lot. There's fewer less bulk potatoes being moved around the world. There's more processed potatoes being moved around the world. The seed markets, there's more private, large international companies that there are with plant breeders right in the private varieties, and they license varieties to regional areas around the world, so that's changed the dynamics of seed movement around the world.

There's a lot of variables in play, but we continue to put efforts into – it's important to us that we have a strong fresh and also seed market. Seed, also, it's extremely

important that we have good quality seed and we also believe that locally-grown seed that's used on PEI for disease, and that we can manage it here is really important.

Just back to the land issue, too, is the current acreage – and like I said, there's probably limited opportunities for expansion into more potato acreage because of land availability, that's why this is such an important issue. The focus is intensely on: how do we improve the productivity, the yield and quality per acre.

That's always been a focus, but probably more than ever whereas in the past there's been consolidation and expansion to gain economies of scale. There's limited opportunities. Now it's more about focusing on doing what you do better, improving our soil, like getting better yields, and that's why if we're not managing the *Lands Protection Act, P.E.I.*, and if we're allowing land to be sold that's no longer going to be used in agriculture, let's say, for other reasons then that's why it's such a threat to the industry and to agriculture on this (Indistinct) PEI, this whole issue.

Chair: Thank you.

Allen Roach.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Chair.

I'd like to thank you for coming here today and I want to commend you for the work that you're doing with the growers, the producers, processors, and I know you work with the department of agriculture to ensure that – and working with UPEI, that's a great project, and I know it's all there to ensure that we have marketable potatoes and that we're protecting our soil, and that there's research and science there to support that, and that it's always not necessary to grow more acreage to get the yields that we need.

Having said that, I think it's important that we continue to have your board a partner with government and we do need to ensure that land transfers are done in the best interest of industry and the province.

I know that there is a working group that's going to be working together, and I'm sure that you're going to be a partner on that. So, with that, I'd like to know what you would

see as the terms of reference for the working group, and who would you see as the real partners that need to participate. Certainly, I would think that if that's the case that we'd want to see goals or something that could be accomplished; that you would ensure that, not only did you have that group put together, that there were going to be outcomes at the end of it.

Greg Donald: It's interesting you ask that because we've asked for the terms of reference for the review of IRAC and it would be interesting to see those, and we haven't been able to see those yet.

But as far as the working group, I know our interest would be to pretty much what we reviewed today. We've shared with you the concerns; is we'd like to, I think for a starting point, is with the current rules and regulations is why aren't those rules being – or sorry – those concerns, why haven't they been addressed or can they be addressed, and address those.

I know in particular, a particular concern is the advertising of land for sale to – if it's going to be sold to a non-resident, that it's been properly advertised locally. Like I said earlier, I don't think growers are opposed to land fairly being sold to a non-resident, but they'd like to have, I think which is within the spirit and the intent of the *Lands Protection Act, P.E.I.*, that they'd like to at least have the opportunity to do that, to acquire that land, and that hasn't been happening so we'd like to see that addressed.

Then, maybe it's a long list around what is the land use policy, in particular, for – I'm sure there's other reasons as well, but for agricultural use like land classification, we'd like to see that looked into as well. So, those are, I guess, the primary ones.

We think ourselves, representatives from the agriculture industry – but it's a public issue as well. I think there has to be – I don't know exactly who the right, Mr. Roach, stakeholders are but I think it has to be – it's a public issue and I think it needs to have good representation around the table from other interests as well.

Chair: Allen Roach.

Mr. Roach: Thank you.

I certainly would agree that getting the right people around the table and making sure that the right mechanics are in place, and I think it's important to communicate land sales to each other as the earliest possible convenience.

When we're talking about leasing, lots of times we hear of people that do lease-to-purchase. It would be nice to see that if farmers are leasing land, that also in that contract to lease the land, that there would be a requirement of right of first refusal in that and I think that would be an excellent way to, perhaps, stop that May 1st, I don't have it thing so that if there is interest that that farmer who has the lease on it, included in that lease would be that right of first refusal.

I'd like to hear your comments on that.

Darryl Wallace: I'd like to make one comment. I know we rent a lot of land from – I'm going to say elderly people, and as soon as I come with a piece of paper in hand to say sign this, they get all worked up and what am I signing and all this type of thing.

Their biggest concern is as long as I'm getting paid every spring – you know, them are the fellows you really don't have to worry about. It's the fellows that you can come to with the piece of paper and want them to sign; those are the guys that'll probably sell it out from underneath you.

So it's kind of a hard question to ask. We have multiple people that we rent from, and I know that's some of the concern. When you go to some of these people that you're renting maybe a 20-acre block or a 50-acre block from, they're small pieces, and get a little excited or a little worked up when you start showing up with pieces of paper in front of you.

Those aren't the fellows that are going to sell it out from underneath you anyway. It's some of these other people that have the big blocks and the big ticket items.

Mr. Roach: Okay.

Chair: Peter Bevan-Baker.

Mr. Roach: Chair?

Chair: Oh, sorry. I thought you said you were done.

Mr. Roach: Oh, no.

Chair: Sorry.

Mr. Roach: I'm not done.

Chair: Sorry. Allen Roach.

Mr. Roach: Thank you.

Earlier, we were talking about the exports with fresh, processed and seed, and where your sales were. I think you just kind of generally said 90% of our sales is Canada and the U.S. Considering what's going on with the U.S. right now, can you be a little more specific with respect to the amount of fresh and processed and seed that goes to the U.S. from Prince Edward Island? Do you have that number?

Greg Donald: Yeah. In terms of volume, of the two and a half billion pounds –

Mr. Roach: Yes.

Greg Donald: – so 60% is processing, and again, I'm going from the hip here a little bit, but somewhere around 80% of the processed products would go to the U.S. market; and then, of the fresh portion, which is 30% of that two and a half billion pounds –

Mr. Roach: Yes.

Greg Donald: – about 40, 45% of that is sold into Canada, and 40, 45% is sold into the U.S. So that's the specific quantities.

Mr. Roach: Okay.

Greg Donald: So as far as – yeah, so it's into the U.S. and including, let's say Puerto Rico, it's very significant. Dollar-wise, in terms of our export dollars, it would be right – it's very important.

Mr. Roach: Significant.

Greg Donald: Yeah.

Chair: Mr. Roach, I know you have a number of questions, more questions, but I'm going to go to Peter Bevan-Baker and I'll add you to the end of the list there and we'll come back to you.

Mr. Roach: Thank you.

Chair: Thanks.

Peter Bevan-Baker.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Chair.

Peter Bevan-Baker, the MLA for District 17, Kellys Cross-Cumberland. Thanks, Greg and Darryl and John, for being here and for your presentation.

I'm actually going to start by carrying on the theme that Mr. Roach was on there regarding the vulnerabilities that we may face, given the protectionist president in the country to our south. Clearly a large portion of what is produced here on Prince Edward Island, whether that's table or processed – not so much seed, but the bulk of what's produced here, a large portion of that does end up in the U.S.

We've already seen the appetite of the U.S. to impose trade tariffs. What level of concern – two parts to this question – what level of concern do you have regarding the potential for that to become a reality here? And secondly, what other markets are available should that become a problem?

Greg Donald: Yeah, so the level of concern is very high. I think like a lot of folks, I'll say in business, that the U.S. is a significant customer share that concern, and a lot of the times almost feel helpless as well.

In businesses, if there's an issue or challenge, it's always: Okay, what is it, understand it, get the information, and then what are you going to do about it. This one's a particular concern because it's outside of our – for the reason you said, it's a very difficult one because it's outside of our control. It's a huge concern because they are such a large trading partner.

Having said that, in the potato industry, there's a significant amount of business that's done back and forth across the border, particularly in the processing side of the

business. In addition to Cavendish, there's the other – Lamb Weston, Simplot and McCain have facilities on both sides of the border, and there's also a fair bit of trade that goes back and forth. That is a little bit – although it's a significant concern – that also gives a little bit of comfort that it's, perhaps it won't be something that will be significantly affected.

As far as other markets, we still do significant business internationally and there are opportunities there. One of our priority action items is working on market access. There is still – I said earlier that there's less trade of raw potatoes, but there still is and still are opportunities for export business; but to do that, we need more help on the market access side of things, especially when it comes to potatoes on phytosanitary issues.

When we have free trade agreements, that's all well and good, but then it's the details with things like potatoes are a lot different than grains because potatoes are produced in the soil, so there's soil and there's a lot of other issues and in many cases they're non – there are other trade barriers that are put up to protect markets but they aren't real, but they need a lot of work to open those up.

So there are other markets, but if we lost the U.S. one, that would be a pretty big hole to fill.

Chair: Peter Bevan-Baker.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Chair.

John Hogg: I'd just like to –

Chair: Oh, sorry.

John Hogg: – also to add that there is (Indistinct) shortage of potatoes in North America, so if they cut us out from the States and import them, there's a large market to Asia for fries and stuff like that, so if they looked after all their own, there still would have to be markets fulfilled elsewhere other than themselves; it would be work, but there's always more opportunities. Sometimes closed doors make bigger doors to open, so –

Greg Donald: Yeah, that's a good point.

Chair: Peter Bevan-Baker.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Chair.

It's been mentioned a couple of times that the global trend towards fewer and bigger farms and that's not unique to Prince Edward Island or Canada, it's a global phenomenon. The thing that prevents or protects for – if I can put it that way – Prince Edward Island from following that to its ultimate conclusion as it has in some other places with massive, massive farms is the *Lands Protection Act, P.E.I.* and also the geography of this place and the settlement pattern as well, but the *Lands Protection Act, P.E.I.* is there to keep Island land, particularly agricultural land, in the control of Island farm families. That's the purpose of the act.

We've heard now in this committee from federation of agriculture, from the potato board this morning and from the NFU previously that they all feel, you all feel, that the government is not upholding the spirit of the *Lands Protection Act, P.E.I.* as well as it should; and that's not a new call. If you look back at the commissions that have gone on from 1973, 1990, the Thompson report in 1997 and most recently the Carver report, they have all stated in varying ways that we need to be sure that we protect our land.

Recommendation #28 in the Thompson report was that a new – the reason I'm bringing this up is that you had a specific instance where a 2800-acre parcel of land was not recommended for sale by IRAC but that decision was overturned by Executive Council. The recommendation #28 in the Thompson report is to transfer that responsibility, that accountability from Executive Council back to IRAC and not allow for Executive Council to overrule that.

Is that a recommendation – now, there are many, many recommendations in the Thompson report, of course, that have not been implemented, but that's one very specific to the conversation we're having today and I'm wondering what your thoughts are on that.

Greg Donald: For that specific example, it just, again, it begged a lot of questions and I understand – I believe it is within the

authority of Executive Council to do that today.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: It is currently?

Greg Donald: Today, yeah it is. But I think the reason we brought that up because it was a block of land that was already owned by a company in Ontario and it was sold to another interest that was – or one of the partners, I'll say, was also out of province and it was just we were interested to know – it was believed that it was sold to a non-resident, and I guess that it was shown afterwards that wasn't the case.

But, it begged the question: Well why did, if IRAC is the knowledge, the expertise to make a sound recommendation in this case, why did Executive Council (Indistinct) – the reason we brought that up is because one of the reasons we were given was – or two reasons. One was that it did meet the residency requirements, and that's fine, but that's nowhere. We can't find that anywhere. We were just told that by one of the ministers and the other thing was that they thought it was good for PEI agriculture.

That was a concern of ours and, again, maybe it is. I'll put it that way. But if there is a vision of what agriculture should look like on PEI, and that's the basis of a decision that overturned – the expertise of IRAC, their decision, then that's, to us, that is very concerning and very important. What is the basis of that? What is the vision for agriculture and diversification?

When, like we've shown today, is that we have an industry that's very – a real strong industry, and farmers here that could very well want that land or need that land, let's say, to improve their rotation or maintain their rotation and so on and so forth. We don't know if that was part of the decision or not. That should be something that, I think, is up for – if it's part of a decision there should be a policy around that and it should have been one that was developed with proper input and debate.

I'm not sure if I answered all of your questions there.

Chair: Peter Bevan-Baker.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Chair.

I want to talk a little bit about soil organic matter. You mentioned it early on, Greg.

Greg Donald: Yes.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I want to take the opportunity to acknowledge all of the good things that are happening in agriculture to improve conditions here on Prince Edward Island, but we do know that when it comes to soil organic matter there's been a steady decline for the last, almost two decades, pretty much across the province. It's unusual to have a long-term study that is as clear as that.

You mentioned in your presentation that fall cover crops are being used more and more, and that's great, even with Russet Burbank that requires that longer season. With the way that the weather is changing, there appears to be more of an opportunity to plant those fall cover crops and for them to take before it becomes too late. You mentioned that fall cover crops have increased in use, but can you tell me what percentage of potato fields after they're harvested actually put a cover crop on them?

Greg Donald: I don't know. We don't have the – and that's an opportunity on PEI. We don't have a good record of account of acres of most crops. We do have potatoes, and that was an initiative of the potato industry and the province worked together. We have, under the *Plant Health Act* we have a registry.

Other crops on PEI, there's not a good measurement of what's grown but –

John Hogg: (Indistinct) two thirds, 60%.

Greg Donald: Yeah.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Okay.

Greg Donald: It's very significant –

John Hogg: (Indistinct) per cent.

Greg Donald: Having said that, I do know that we are going to take it upon ourselves this fall to survey potato growers and try to get a measurement of that because what we would like to do is get an accurate number of where we're at and then maybe set targets

and see what we need to do to improve on that. We know there is benefit to doing that.

The limitation is when falls are getting longer and more open, is there is a date that there's not a cover crop that's available that will properly germinate and establish the latter half of October, let's say, but we're also working on that and trying to find a crop that – so the later-harvested stuff, we can seed and still get established for winter.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thanks, Greg.

Greg Donald: And –

Chair: Colin – oh, sorry.

Greg Donald: Oh sorry, one more comment.

Chair: No, sorry. You go ahead.

Greg Donald: The issue of organic matter is it's like many things, we learn about it. We get facts, and then it's, like I said earlier, if we have an issue, understand it and what can we do about it? There's a real, strong effort, as you acknowledged, in the industry to improve on that.

And not saying, we want to be better on PEI than anywhere else in the world, but it is a trend in modern agriculture all over the world where there's food production, organic matter (Indistinct) been on the decline. I will say there are many farms on PEI that have been increasing as well over the last number of years. You're right with the trend, yes, there has been.

Chair: Colin LaVie.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Chair.

I want to thank you for coming in and presenting to us. This is many presentations I've seen, and I see a lot of changes from my first presentation to-date, and the work that you do for the potato growers of PEI is just outstanding, what you do for them and it's well appreciated.

When you're talking acreage, is the crop rotation counted into acreage also? Like when there's a field out in rotation, is that counted into your acreage for potatoes?

Greg Donald: The 84,000 acre figure that we gave was actual potato acres that were planted, for example, in 2018.

Mr. LaVie: So any land that's out for crop rotation –

Greg Donald: It would be additional to that.

Mr. LaVie: So that's not counted into this 186?

Greg Donald: Yeah, that's just the actual acres that have potatoes.

Mr. LaVie: Okay.

Greg Donald: Yes.

So for example, if a farmer had a four-year rotation with potatoes he would need, or she would need, four-times the acres, right? Or for the other three years, does that make sense?

Chair: It does.

Greg Donald: Yes.

Chair: Colin LaVie.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Chair.

So the 186, the rotation is not counted into that? That's actual potato –

Greg Donald: Sorry, the what?

Mr. LaVie: The 186,000 acres?

Chair: No, that's 186 farms.

Mr. LaVie: 86,000, sorry.

Greg Donald: Yes, it was 84,000 acres, yeah.

Mr. Trivers: But they've got 186 farms.

Mr. LaVie: Yeah, okay. What's the acreage?

Greg Donald: 84,000.

Mr. LaVie: 83?

Darryl Wallace: 83.2.

Mr. LaVie: 83,000.

An Hon. Member: Twenty-seven.

Mr. LaVie: So, is the rotation counted into that? Is that actually potato?

Greg Donald: Yes.

Mr. LaVie: That's actually potato.

Where do we find the land issue a bigger problem? Is it in Prince County? Queens? Kings? Is there a certain area across PEI that the land is a problem?

Darryl Wallace: When you seen the slide on the values, West Prince has got the highest value to-date, and I think it was \$4,200 or \$4,300 an acre. That's even higher than that now.

Greg Donald: That's the average, of course.

Darryl Wallace: Yeah, I guess that's the average but I would say West Prince is probably as hot an area as any and that would, as it shows on the price per acre.

Greg Donald: The other area of concerns we called about, I will say, is South-Eastern PEI.

Darryl Wallace: The two tips.

Greg Donald: For different reasons, yeah.

Like I said in our presentation, some cases it's pressure between potato farmers. In other areas it's with non-potato farmers and non-farmers. The two areas that I hear most about, or we hear most about, is South-Eastern PEI and the area Darryl indicated.

Chair: Colin LaVie.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Chair.

The non-resident issue for buying land, is this a problem right all across Atlantic Canada? Is it just PEI or is it Nova Scotia and New Brunswick having the same problem?

Greg Donald: How I would answer that is – and I think of Carver during that exercise. I remember looking at it myself at the time. He said, and we know that, there's

tremendous wealth around the world and we know that the global population's going to increase by two billion people in the next few – in the relatively near future, let's say. So food security is a huge issue globally. There's countries around the world that are buying vast areas of land for that very reason, on speculating.

Back to your question, I know you asked regionally. This isn't just a local or regional. We have to be thinking about – there are people that could buy a tremendous amount of land on PEI, and totally change the landscape, if you will, in our way of life and our economy here. That's one of the reasons that this legislation is so important.

I think we have to – I think it is an issue, Colin, in other regions and around the world, but I think we need to be most concerned about ourselves here.

Mr. LaVie: Yeah.

Greg Donald: Because we do have such limited land base here.

Chair: Thanks.

I have Brad Trivers and then I have Allen Roach, so: Brad Trivers?

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Chair.

Given the limited land base, as you say, on PEI, and the fact that the demand outstrips the supply for potatoes, you need to – one way is become more efficient at growing potatoes and increase the yield, and I know that some processors for sure have been pushing for irrigation to do that, well that helps with the yield. High-capacity wells, for example, but there's a moratorium on high-capacity wells for agriculture because Islanders, of course, very concerned about their water and we don't have *Water Act* regulations in place yet.

Of course, there's holding ponds that are being made in the interim to try and service that need for irrigation. Again, in the absence of *Water Act* regulations, it's hard to say what impact they're having on our water. I want to know what the potato board's approach to high-capacity wells is and what your membership feels on the issue.

Greg Donald: Thank you.

Again, I just want to clarify, because I don't know if I was really clear: we do send a number of letters out and what not, and we did – I just want to make sure, I think I said it in the end, but we did get a formal letter back from Executive Council. You had asked that. We did. I said it in the end there, but I just wanted to make sure for the record that we did get a response back, and it did state that they're committed to working with industry around this issue. So, I just wanted to make sure that was clear.

As far as, yeah, water, the position of the potato board hasn't changed. It's been the same on this issue, is that if – and I'll probably, before stating that, I'll make a couple of comments – is that there are many potato farmers that have no interest in irrigation. There's many that have been irrigating for years, and they're in parts of the Island that they'll say that they can't grow potatoes without irrigation, the sandiest – there's an area of PEI – and there's a number that are in between that don't currently irrigate but may want to, and they'd like to have the option if they do want to irrigate for a number of reasons.

And there are still a lot of questions around it in terms of, in some areas like if it's economically feasible; but our position has been the same all along, is we support access to water for supplemental irrigation. It's different here than – it's often compared to the Pacific northwest or other areas that get nine or 10 inches of rain year long; we get 46, it just doesn't always come when we need it, particularly between the middle of July and middle of August, and we saw that again. We ended up getting a lot of it in August, and we're seeing higher temperatures, and when we do get rain it's more extreme and what not.

But the position has always been that we support that, as long as it can be done responsibly. We've said that right from the beginning, for the reasons I've said, for those that wish to use irrigation. So we do support it, but as long as it can be done responsibly.

We know that there's a wealth of knowledge that's been accumulated over the years,

primarily from provincial government resources around the subject, but I know it's a significant public concern, so that needs to be addressed. I think I answered your question on our position. We do support it, as long as it can be done responsibly, for those that would like to irrigate.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you and thanks for bringing up that letter to Executive Council again.

Greg Donald: Yeah.

Mr. Trivers: I was wondering: Would you be willing to provide a copy of that letter to the committee?

Greg Donald: I don't know if there's any reason why we can't, yeah.

Mr. Trivers: Okay, thank you.

Chair: Allen Roach.

Mr. Roach: Thank you, Chair.

I'd like to follow up again on our exports to the U.S. That was part of – my next question was part of that question. Lots of times I go to the store and the only potatoes I can find in there is product of the USA. So how much potatoes – and I'm talking about in terms of back and forth – how much potatoes is imported?

I know we have companies on both sides of the borders. I don't care about that. I want to know how much potatoes are imported and that come to PEI from the United States.

Greg Donald: Yeah, I can – I don't have the – we do have those figures, Mr. Roach, but I don't have them today; but we can provide them.

Mr. Roach: Are they significant?

Greg Donald: On fresh potatoes (Indistinct) –

Mr. Roach: On fresh potatoes that are into grocery stores.

Greg Donald: Yeah. Significant is a relative term. I prefer to give you the actual numbers and –

Mr. Roach: Okay.

Greg Donald: – I don't have them today, but I'd be happy to provide those.

Mr. Roach: Thank you. I'd love to see that.

Greg Donald: Yes.

Mr. Roach: One of the slides that you put up there I found very interesting. It was on tillage. Are a lot of farmers using that practice or –

Greg Donald: Yes, and I can let these guys probably talk about that.

Darryl Wallace: There's getting to be more and more every year, and it takes – there's different practices that goes along with that whenever you go to that type of tillage. Your hay or the ground that you're tilling has got to be really, really short in order for it to work up properly. That was a learning curve, I think, when they first started that. There was a little bit too much residue on top whenever they started, and it was probably giving them a little more problem the following spring, but people are getting more and more used to that practice so there's more and more being used every fall.

Chair: Allen Roach?

Mr. Roach: Just two more.

John Hogg: I'd like to add to that a little, too. My father grew potatoes years ago. He grew 100 acres. We're growing 700 acres now with my two sons. He would cultivate the land with the fall plow, and he would go over it five times before he planted. He planted, and then he cultivated five more times, so every time you work the land you're beating up the organic matter.

Right now, we did a trial this spring where we have a row former on the back of the planter. We went into a fall plowed field, planted into it, we hilled it, it was one pass versus 10. So we're trying to do everything we can to retain organic matter and we're constantly trying to improve, either by tillage or new forage crops.

We're hoping to be – our goal would be 100% coverage in the fall. We're growing

some grasses now. We just work in the spring because it's not like a – the clover leaves big clumps, so it's hard to work in the spring, but we did some trials last year with some different types of forages. We went in with a sunflower. We did (Indistinct) – that's another form of tillage – and then planted.

If we could get 100% cover for the winter for wind erosion and water erosion – we're trying to evolve every day, doing a better job.

Mr. Roach: One of the things I was interested in was the chart on nitrates as well. I take it that when you go from red to dark, that's the reduction that we see in those years. So the more we get rid of red and yellow and the lighter green, the more we go to the dark, that's where the nitrates are, been kind of eliminated or reduced tremendously. Because you couldn't read –

Greg Donald: Yeah, (Indistinct) –

Mr. Roach: – what was on there, so I'm trying to guess at that, so are we doing a good job of reducing nitrates in our soil moving forward? Is that a trend?

Greg Donald: Yes, and I think that those show two blocks of years. I know the legend was – I couldn't read it on the screen there –

Mr. Roach: Yeah.

Greg Donald: – but thanks for clarifying that. The red is the highest level, and you can see it's getting smaller, and then it was yellow –

Mr. Roach: Yellow.

Greg Donald: – and then green, so we're seeing more yellow and more green in recent years, so the numbers speak for themselves. The levels are decreasing. Those are over a period of years –

Mr. Roach: Yes.

Greg Donald: So it's a factual trend that things are getting better and we're trying to correlate that to, I think, the farming community is doing, as John said, it's evolving and I believe, yes, that farmers are

doing a lot better job and it's reflected in the (Indistinct) –

John Hogg: The cover crops in the fall after potatoes, that's picking up leftover nitrogen that's not there, so that's not going down. We put in trials with willow trees. It's nitrogen scavengers that are in low lying areas that we don't farm, so that that sucks up nitrates before they get into (Indistinct) – we're constantly trying to do stuff to get –

Mr. Roach: Thank you and I recall as a young guy seeing a lot more willows around ponds and lakes and that sort of thing. You don't see them much anymore, so that's good to hear.

My last question is: I noticed that in the last year the value of land has dropped 8%. Was that in one of your slides?

Darryl Wallace: No, and it increased. It increased.

Mr. Roach: Well, when you had a chart up there –

Greg Donald: I can actually get –

Mr. Roach: Was that –

Unidentified Voice: It's at the top.

Mr. Roach: No, it was –

Greg Donald: This one?

Darryl Wallace: Oh, for –

Mr. Roach: Yeah, right there, you had 2016 –

Greg Donald: Fair enough.

Darryl Wallace: Okay, yeah.

Greg Donald: It didn't increase as much as –

Darryl Wallace: – as the year before.

Greg Donald: – as the year before. Yeah.

Mr. Roach: Okay.

Darryl Wallace: It still increased, though.

Mr. Roach: Okay.

Chair: Thank you.

Peter Bevan-Baker.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you, Chair.

Sustainability is a word that we throw around, and it's a sort of a mushy term. You mentioned earlier that you feel that we're at a sustainable place now in terms of the number of acres that we're growing potatoes, but when we were up over 100,000 that we weren't.

Currently we're about 14% as you said, Greg, of arable land. That would only have been a difference of three or 4%; so you felt that 18% of the land under potatoes was unsustainable but 14 is sustainable. So I'm just wondering if you can expand on exactly you mean when you say sustainable. Are we talking financially? Because that's an important part of sustainability, is economic sustainability. Or are we talking environmentally or both?

Greg Donald: Primarily was speaking from an environmental perspective, in to have – let's say a proper rotation, like with other crops, and with potatoes, and in particular that's what I was referring to with the number of sustainable acres, like the number of acres.

Economics, absolutely that's an important part of it. Some might argue it's more economically challenging, that lower level of acres than the larger one, but I would say maybe in the short-term, but not in the long-term, and we are in this for the long-term.

So it's primarily – I think the answer to your question or comment is, I was primarily speaking in terms of from an environmental, the land base to have a proper rotation, and also for those potato farms to grow other crops in rotation that diversify their farm and also have potential or contribute to the cash crops as well.

I'm going to add one other quick thing, too. Something that was mentioned earlier that I was thinking about is that we all get around, but the other parts of the country and the world, and whenever I come back home I always think that: Gee, relatively speaking,

we still do have very small – in the world of food production – small family farms in PEI, even our largest ones. We always get a little defensive when we hear them described as industrial farms and things like that. They are still vastly, almost entirely family-run operations; that in international terms are very small.

Also, I would say we are international leaders in environmental – the way we farm, in a sustainable way. With what's being done here with different cover crops and rotation crops and the way we farm, and we need to here. We need to keep getting better for a whole bunch of reasons.

Our soils here, we have a tremendous resource, but they are very vulnerable and the type of soil and the climate here and the rolling hills and our intermix with streams and – we need to, but we are leaders in that area and we need (Indistinct) internationally.

Darryl Wallace: I'd also like to make one comment to that, too. I know our own farm was bought in 1914, so we're over 100 years on our own farm. I'm a fifth-generation on our own farm.

When you go back to some of the numbers in 1997 when we had the 112,000 acres, there was a lot more open market potatoes grown at that time. When you bring the stuff down to the 84,000 acres that are growing now, a lot of that stuff or 90% of it now is contracted. Everybody knows where they're going.

I know on our own farm, we used to grow some open market stuff. You'd take your chance on the open market, table market and that kind of stuff. Now it's 100% contract. We don't grow any more than we know where they're going down the road.

There were a lot of cheap potatoes bought in 1997 by the processor, by the table market, so it makes quite a difference. You learn the hard way. Grow stuff and sell it at two cents a pound, you make no money. You lose money. So if you're contracted, you know where you're going. That's why the 84,000 acres is more sustainable now as well.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: You mentioned, also, Greg, about the ALUS program, and I think you put it, it needs to be updated. Again,

going back to the Thompson report, my sort of favourite tone to come to when I'm looking at land use, one of the recommendations there was to expand and review the ALUS program. Could you give me some details on what you would like to see in an expanded and updated ALUS program?

Greg Donald: Yeah. In particular are the ALUS payments per acre –

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Right.

Greg Donald: – and the dollar value. Again, in particular when one of the examples I gave, I've heard in a number of cases where it's a non-farmer or an ex-farmer that owns the land and there might be parts of that farm that it would be of value to take out of production, whether it's with soil conservation structures or otherwise.

That's a good example where it might – and maybe there's somebody that's elderly and it's an important part of their income, the rent from that land, so there's not an incentive for them to take it out of production or parts of it through the ALUS program because they can make more money by renting it, so they would resist making those changes. So that's one area that I think is an opportunity and a specific example why.

Darryl Wallace: I'll give you an example of some property that we have. We have a 25-acre field that we rent. The bottom end of the field goes right down to a creek. We took five acres right off the top of the hill down towards the creek that we never farm anymore. It's completely grassed over. I still rent 25 acres. I still pay for 25 acres. So I've taken it and put it into the ALUS program, and I lose money every year on that five acres that I've taken out of production, but I've done my part to try to improve the environment, try to improve what's around me.

I think that's where the ALUS program's got to pick up and come up to date where what we're paying for rent, if we want to take it out and do better for the environment, at least we're compensated for it.

Greg Donald: I think that's a really important point is if we can align as many of

the things that we have available to support. Growers want to be – no, they have to be if they want to be economically viable, but they also, I think, as much as anybody, want to maintain and improve the way they farm when it comes to the environment and we want to create a situation where it'll encourage more of that.

If we have these issues in the way, it might be – as we have challenges with – we're up against it when it comes to land availability, and if we don't manage, again, the *Lands Protection Act, P.E.I.* and some of the sale of these properties it's going to make it harder and harder to – it's going to put more pressure on not doing some of these things, let's say.

Chair: Peter Bevan-Baker.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Thank you.

I just wanted to pick up on Darryl's comments there, and thank you for your self-identified responsibility to do that.

I'm wondering where we have a buffer zone requirement now of 15 metres, which is pretty much consistent throughout the province, but as you all know, there are some areas that are far more vulnerable than others. Fifteen metres may be far too much in some areas and not nearly enough in others.

How would you feel about a buffer zone regulation being something which is more malleable, more sort of tailored to specific situations of a stream or a field rather than just having a blanket 15 metres?

Darryl Wallace: More site specific, you mean?

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Yes.

Darryl Wallace: Personally, I would agree to that.

John Hogg: Yeah, me too.

Darryl Wallace: That's as a grower.

I know this area that I had was really close to a crick and we seen the issue, and we did some environmental farm plans and which was identified by Tyler Wright, which is

who I work with, and so we took it out. I just started renting this field a few years ago so I took it out shortly after I took access to it but that cost me money.

Like you say, everybody wants to be sustainable and you can only do so much. The other comment – I know we had caucus up to Fox Island for a meeting in August, no July, was it?

Unidentified Voice: In July.

Darryl Wallace: July, and I made mention of some of the ones that were up there, to take a look at some of my property. I only live a mile from the fox farm and so anyway, I said to them: Take notice when you're leaving to go back to Charlottetown. That project took me two years to get that done at a cost of probably \$30,000.

I couldn't get in the first year because there was no money left in the ALUS program, so I had to delay it another year. Sometimes money is accessible in that year that you could do it, and I know I only paid a portion of that, but not every year that's accessible to do that project so I had to wait until the following –

Unidentified Voice: (Indistinct) land conservation.

Darryl Wallace: Yes, so I had to do it the next year.

If they could put more money even into that program to access it; it runs dry before people can access it.

Greg Donald: I think it's fair to say there's already many, many examples of where despite – or not despite – there are the 15 – like the regulated (Indistinct) where there's already much more than that (Indistinct)

We always kind of cringe a little bit about more rules and regulations to enforce, but –

John Hogg: We've got a farm that goes right onto the Wilmot River and there's a brook runs through it and we're well over twice the buffer zones just because. But there's another field that we can't put a headland in and there's no reason why we can't because it's downhill from where – I think there should be a little bit more give

and take because to be reasonable, there's land that could be used and there's land that shouldn't be used.

Greg Donald: We have tremendous resources in the land resource division within the department, I must say, to help with those sorts of things, and also watershed groups. Many farmers are part of those watershed groups. I belong to my own watershed group, and that's a tremendous resource and thing that I think as an Island we can continue to give more support to our watershed groups because they're working, not only with farmers, but fishermen and with localized solutions as well, so it's a great strength.

Chair: Thank you.

Allen Roach.

Mr. Roach: Thank you.

I think over the last number of years we seen a vast increase in farming in other crops as well on PEI and I'm not sure if that's having an impact on the potato industry or not. We see soy in particular, where a number of years ago you wouldn't see 1,000 acres and I don't know what the acreage is today but I think it's considerable.

You brought up something when you were talking about, in the next couple of decades we're going to have to feed two billion more people. We have 84,000 acres of potatoes on PEI today. What do you see, or what do you forecast that as the world needs more food, how many more acres of potatoes are we going to have to grow here on PEI to supply the markets?

John Hogg: Hopefully it's not more acres. Hopefully it's better yield per acre, if we could come that way. It's not all acres, it's soil health, varieties. There's more than one way to get more per acre of products.

Mr. Roach: So you don't necessarily see that we're going to need more acreage to supply that market?

John Hogg: Well we can only do what we can do, but we need to do better with what we have. Bigger isn't better.

Mr. Roach: Okay.

Greg Donald: If I can add, and that's a big point of our presentation today, is that we're close to capacity so that's why it's such a concern how we manage the sale of land and the *Lands Protection Act, P.E.I.* because we're only limited to how many acres we can grow on PEI.

So like John said, our focus has to be on: how do we get more per acre. Not only that, but also zero in on what particular needs of the marketplace, like what varieties for the fresh market or unique varieties, or how can we – and value-added and what other things can we do here in PEI to continue to be different, because we can't get bigger, so we're going to have to continue to get better and not bigger, and with more of a focus on differentiating ourselves in the market with products for the marketplace.

John Hogg: There are drought-resistant potatoes; there are scab-resistant potatoes. Every year there are new varieties coming out that suit different markets, so that's where we got to head for.

Chair: Allen Roach, do you have a final question?

Mr. Roach: Final question.

What would you like to see, or what do you hope to see, one or two items, that we would see from the IRAC review?

Darryl Wallace: I guess some of the rules and regulations that are there now; just make sure that they're enforced, to start with. Maybe increase the – we talked about the advertising, if that's just a guideline now, make it rules and regulation like (Indistinct)

Mr. Roach: Sure.

Darryl Wallace: That would be the second thing.

I really don't understand probably the reason for such – I don't know what the right word is – like; you don't know what's going on behind the doors of IRAC. There's no public –

Unidentified Voice: Transparency.

Darryl Wallace: Yeah, there's no public knowledge of what's going on behind that so maybe we can see more transparency. I don't know.

Chair: Thank you.

Well, thank you. Well that was a most informative presentation, thank you. It's always a pleasure and we appreciate your efforts in your soil health. It's nice to see the nitrates going down. But, your message today was loud and clear, that we need to ensure that there's enough land to farm.

I think if we all work together, we'll be able to assist you and us in keeping Prince Edward Island as the number-one-potato-producing province in Canada. I don't think anybody wants to drop to number two, so thank you so much for your presentation.

I do know that there was some requested materials; a copy of the letter and also the percentage of imported potatoes. If you could pass that information, Greg, along through our Clerk, Ryan, we'll make sure that the committee members do get that.

Hon. members, on behalf of – well, on behalf of all the committee, thank you so much for your presentation. You're free to leave.

Greg Donald: Thanks for having us.

Darryl Wallace: Thank you.

John Hogg: Thanks for having us.

Greg Donald: We appreciate the opportunity, and again, if there are opportunities for us to further contribute, working groups and things like that, we're welcoming the opportunity.

Thanks.

Chair: Great, thanks.

Mr. Roach: Thanks very much, guys.

Greg Donald: Thank you.

Darryl Wallace: Thanks for having us.

Chair: Hon. members, while the group is leaving we'll just continue on with our work

with regard to number four, review of the committee work plan. I'm going to turn it over to Ryan just to show us where we are and what maybe our priorities may be for the upcoming term.

Ryan, I'm going to turn it to you.

Clerk Assistant (R. Reddin): Sure.

Thanks, Chair.

You have a memorandum in front of you that has four documents in it. The first document is the summary of the committees work plan. As you can see there is three main areas, there's three subjects that the committee as already agreed from previous meetings to look into. The one we're looking at today the land cost and land use in the province. There are some other groups that the committee had invited in or had asked to come in, that could still be scheduled for that such as the PEI Real Estate Association, Vanco corporation, the Great Enlightened Buddhist Society and Cavendish Farms; then on the specific topic of the *Lands Protection Act, P.E.I.*; the Island Regulatory and Appeals Commission.

Also, the committee did agree to look into getting an update on PEI's approach to carbon pricing from the Department of Communities, Land and Environment.

Then the last subject there is a motion that was passed in the House in the spring on plastics reduction and plastics recycling. Just got the synopsis of the motion there where the actual full motion is on the next page over. So it's that the House commit to the Standing Committee on Communities, Land and Environment for study and public consultation the matter of how to take action to reduce all forms of plastics with an emphasis on single-use plastics and also ensure a high recycling rates of pre-consumer and post-consumer plastics of all plastic grades on Prince Edward Island.

The House has referred that to the committee for the committee to look into. Along those lines too, the other documents in this memorandum; this summer we put some research into some possible witnesses on that subject if the committee so chooses to call in witnesses and there's a list there; those are just suggestions.

Then the last document is kind of a jurisdictional scan on how other places in Canada and around the world have tried to reduce plastics, whether they're single-use plastics like the plastic bags or other forms and that's just for the committees' information.

Really, I guess for the committee to move forward, what would it like to do on those three topics? What would the priority be?

Chair: Brad Trivers.

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Chair.

I had a couple of items for the first land cost use in the province. One was: I was wondering if we could add the PEI Association of Appraisal Institute of Canada and get an appraiser's perspective on land cost use? I was talking to an appraiser recently and they said they're kind of caught in the middle because people want to get as much as they can for their property but they have to put a value on it that's consistent with the market and I think they have a valuable perspective. We've heard a lot and a lot of it's really been focused on agriculture at this point, but I think there's a huge part of land cost and use that has to do with more municipal land, I guess I'll call it.

Anyway, I wanted to see if it would be agreeable for the committee to add in an appraiser witness, that's the first thing?

Chair: Okay, thank you. We'll make sure we add that to the list.

Mr. Trivers: Then the second thing on that was back in October 2017, we had met with the then minister and they'd committed to bring me back some information for us regarding – well really regarding land cost and use. I wanted to see if there's been any progress on that if we've received anything as a committee from the minister? I just have the transcript here but I would assume that the clerk probably has a list of those things as well. Maybe even in a more sync'd form than the transcript.

Clerk Assistant: I'm actually not the regular clerk for this committee so I don't keep the file. But I would think that anything that the department provided to the

clerk of the committee would definitely be circulated to date, but I can go back.

Mr. Trivers: So Chair, maybe it's worthwhile for the committee to touch base with the Department of Communities Land and Environment and the current minister. The things are things like penalties in place for buildings that don't have a permit but they're already built, non-residents and residence that own below five acres and specifically development permits. The attributes that attract in the community, lands and environment's database against land ownership. Things like this. There's a few others as well. Those are the ones I'm talking about specifically

Chair: Mr. Trivers, would you be okay with Ryan having a consult with the regular committee clerk to see if there's been any information received back, and if there isn't, would it be okay if she resent another letter on behalf of this committee to ask again where the answers are to that information? Are you okay with that?

Mr. Trivers: Great idea.

Thank you, Chair.

Chair: Great. Okay. Thank you.

Anybody else? Mr. Roach?

Mr. Roach: Yes, I like to see that we're looking at carbon pricing and also that we're looking at plastics again. I'm happy to see that on the work plan, and I'm happy to see that there's a significant amount of information that's been supplied and researched for us to review.

One item that is on there that I believe has been dealt with in the Legislature on the 5th of April is the need for us to have the Great Enlightenment Buddhist Institute Society attend here. Questions were asked in the Legislature about the amount of land that they had, significantly below anything that we're looking at here with some of the larger corporations. In my view, I think those questions have been asked and were answered in the Legislature, so I don't see the need of bringing that group here.

Chair: Thank you.

Any further comments?

Peter Bevan-Baker.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: On the carbon pricing, it strikes me that that's almost a moot point. The federal government is going to make their ruling any day now. The provinces have submitted whatever plan they had, including Prince Edward Island, so I think we just have to wait for the feds to come back with whether they give us the thumbs up or not. So I'm not sure that that's even worth bringing back.

I absolutely would love to see discussion on reduction of plastic. It's a very comprehensive list. I see none of them is really a plastic expert, but on PEI we don't have such a thing. There's nothing on there that strikes me as being (Indistinct) group inappropriate, apart from Mr. Roach, of course.

In terms of the questions to the Great Enlightenment Buddhist Institute Society, I would like to hear from them. I know questions were asked in the House and I know they were answered by, at that time, Minister Roach, but – or maybe not –

Mr. Roach: No.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: No, you –

Mr. Roach: (Indistinct) The question was asked by Mr. Myers and saying that half the county was gone kind of thing and the answer was given by the minister, who indicated that they were within their land limits, they are residents of PEI and they have the right to acquire land like any other Islanders.

That questioning went on for some time. There were questions asked by the MLA from District 4 about the amount of acreage and that sort of thing. We learned through those questions and answers, that in total, one organization has roughly 700 acres and the other organization has roughly 600 acres, so that's significantly below.

So for any other reason, I can't understand why we want that group in here; and I have a fear – and it's in some of the way that some of the questions were asked – I have a fear that we're talking about immigrants

coming to PEI, and some of the tone of some of those questions was on the verge of something I don't want to talk about in committee.

As a member of the committee, I don't want to sit down and have somebody at some point in time say: The remarks that were made in that committee about why you brought that group here is totally inappropriate. I hope you understand where I'm coming from on that, and if you don't, I'll give you a quote about one of the questions that was asked – if anyone is interested –

Chair: No.

Some Hon. Members: (Indistinct)

Mr. Roach: – in hearing it.

Chair: No, we're good.

Mr. Roach: And I'm concerned –

Chair: I think we're good. We're good.

An Hon. Member: Yeah.

Mr. Roach: I'm really concerned about where this is going.

Chair: Thank you, Mr. Roach.

Peter Bevan-Baker.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I absolutely share your concerns about how this could be manipulated with the certain lines of questioning. My concern is to find out the facts about how much they own.

I have heard from various people that there are significant concerns about the institute itself and people attached to the institute who may own land. I don't know if it's correct or not, and I would like to find that out in a very factual, evidence-based, straight questions format, which is what these committees are for. So if there's no concern, there's no concern; but I would like to satisfy myself on that.

Mr. Roach: Chair?

Chair: Allen Roach.

Mr. Roach: I continue to have concern about anecdotal things coming to this committee. I have concern about us reacting to blogs, to what people are saying out there, that is so not factual. It's social media, and when it's brought to a place of this nature and we're going to literally more or less put them on trial and say: What are you here for, what are you doing here? The overtones of that, based on not only religion but on race, are of real concern to me, and I'm prepared to put a motion on the floor.

Chair: Response?

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Yeah.

Chair: Peter Bevan-Baker.

Dr. Bevan-Baker: I think it's everybody's responsibility as an elected official here not to go there, and I have faith and trust in everybody who is an elected representative in this House to treat this place with the respect that it deserves and anybody who comes forward as a witness similarly.

So I hear your concerns, but I have trust and faith in the people here that that will not be an issue. I just want to find out what the facts are. That's all.

Chair: Thanks.

Brad Trivers.

Mr. Trivers: Thanks, Chair.

I was just wondering what the status of the invites are. It was quite a while ago when we invited these three organizations Vanco, GEBIS and Cavendish Farms. We're talking about GEBIS right now. Did they actually respond and say they don't want to come? Or did you get any response at all? From all three of them, really.

Clerk Assistant: To my knowledge, none of them said that they don't want to come. I believe – again, Emily would have the records on this, but I believe they all acknowledged receipt of the invitation, and none said: No, we won't appear.

Mr. Roach: Is that correct? They haven't acknowledged –

Clerk Assistant: (Indistinct)

Chair: Let's check. If you could bear with us and let's check with the clerk, the regular clerk, to see what it is then we'll deal with this again at our next meeting. Then we'll either – we'll deal with it for the last time at our next meeting. Is that okay?

Do you know what I mean? Not the last time, but we'll make sure we have a resolution to it at our next meeting.

Brad Trivers?

Mr. Trivers: Thank you, Chair.

Perhaps you could just send out an email in the interim, just to let us know what the status of the requests are.

Chair: Okay.

Mr. Trivers: I mean the fulltime clerk, the regular clerk.

Chair: Sure.

Mr. Trivers: I'm more curious about what the status is, right? Did we contact Cavendish Farms and they said: No we can't, or we can but not this summer and wait till the fall – or any of them.

On the GEBIS, I've spoken with them myself, and I believe they are reluctant to come and speak publicly about their society. They have some very good reasons for that, I believe. Of course, the way that a standing committee's a great place to clear the air of those issues exactly, the issues that Mr. Roach brought about.

I think it's a great idea for Mr. Roach to bring that to a vote here today at the committee just so we can decide in a fair and democratic way whether we want that to happen.

Mr. Roach: Just to follow up on that, we don't ask any other church to come here; and there are churches in Prince Edward Island who own more acreage than they do. There are organizations, other organizations on Prince Edward Island that own more acreage than they do. We're not calling them here.

So to single out a religion, a religious group that are quite legal, or to single out immigrants, to me is not right.

Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Roach: I'm prepared to put a motion on the floor today.

Chair: Sure.

Mr. Roach: Or I'm prepared to wait.

Chair: Sure.

Mr. Roach: Whichever; but if Mr. Trivers wants a –

Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Roach: – motion on the floor, I'll put it on the floor.

Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Trivers, would you be okay with us finding out where it stands with the regular clerk of this committee? She'll send out a note to let us know where it is, and if we have to deal with it, again, we'll deal with it at the next meeting. Are you okay with that?

Mr. Trivers: That's great, thank you.

Chair: Awesome, thanks.

Anything else with the review of the committee work before we adjourn?

Mr. Roach: (Indistinct)

An Hon. Member: (Indistinct) then, vote.

Mr. Roach: I'm still prepared, Chair, to put a motion on the floor that – I'll put a motion on the floor that we not require the religious group that's referred to in the memorandum to come to this floor. I feel that that was satisfied in the Legislature on April 5th.

Chair: Is that a motion that you're putting on the floor?

Mr. Roach: That's the motion I'm putting on the floor.

Chair: Any further discussion on the motion?

Are you ready for the question on the motion that – are you clear what the motion was?

Clerk Assistant: Yeah, I would just paraphrase that the committee not require the Great Enlightenment Buddhist Society to appear before the committee.

Chair: Everybody okay with that?

Dr. Bevan-Baker: Yes.

Mr. Roach: As long as my remarks are definitely included in that.

Chair: Thank you.

Any further discussion on the motion? All those in favour of the motion, signify by saying 'aye'.

Some Hon. Members: Aye!

Chair: Contrary minded?

Some Hon. Members: Nay.

Chair: The GEBS will not have to come before this committee.

Thank you.

All right, any further – Brad Trivers.

Mr. Trivers: Yes, so I just wanted to say that I do think that the land cost use is still one of the highest priority items we need to look at, especially given the low-vacancy rate for rentals in the province and as well as the increasing price of land. It's something that I hear about all the time. I think the standing committee can probably provide some very valid recommendations to the Executive Council.

Along the same lines, people have been talking to me about the rules, regulations and legislation that govern lessors and leasees, like landlords and the people who are renting, and there are some rules that really seem to give problems for leasees. For example, if you decide to do renovations on a rental property then you can evict your tenants. But, there are also some rules that seem to be really big problems for landlords. For example, if they do – and they know there is a problem with a renter, they can't

actually evict them when they know they're destroying the property.

So, I just wanted to dig into that. I think it's an issue out there, especially with the low-vacancy rate that we see today. I would like to understand more from the department, perhaps, would be a good part to start. Communities, land and environment, I believe, is where that falls under; what the legislation is, how and if they are addressing those concerns, if there are reviews in place, those sorts of things.

I don't know if that goes under land-cost use, because that is a use of land, or if that has to be a separate topic on the committee's agenda.

Chair: Thank you.

Colin LaVie.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you, Chair.

Chair, on that vote, was that you breaking the tie? Is that how that went?

Chair: I did, yes.

Mr. LaVie: Okay.

Chair: Thank you.

Mr. LaVie: Thank you.

Chair: Allen Roach.

Mr. Roach: Chair, I have to agree with Mr. Trivers.

I've heard the same inquiries not only by the people who are renting and the people who rent, and I think we've seen many instances where it's been reported on the news where the trashing has taken place and the people who own the property can't get them out.

There was a young lady just recently out in Hampton area, I believe, and what they went through as renters and they had to completely renovate a home. I think there are definitely issues there and it's something that I would like to hear about as well. I think we need to ensure that the people that are renting and the people on both sides are being equally protected because I'm hearing for some that it's the landowner is the one

who's really not protected in many instances as well.

I'd like to hear more about that as well.

Chair: Thank you.

Clerk Assistant: You just mentioned having the department in to talk about this. I think IRAC is responsible for the residential rental property act so just in terms of the witnesses that –

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct)

Chair: Sure, Mr. Trivers.

Mr. Trivers: (Indistinct) clerk as long as they're – and they would be acutely aware of the legislation, so that's fine. I want to – my goal at standing committee is always to make recommendations back to Executive Council on changes to legislation and regulations that they can make and move forward and take action. So yeah, great. IRAC would be good.

Chair: Thank you.

Allen Roach.

Mr. Roach: I think there was also, I believe, associations out there that represent lessors and leasees, is there not?

Chair: Not that I'm aware of.

Mr. Roach: Can we look into that and find out if there are and if not, maybe we can bring in a couple of major landlords that could speak to – if we could dig into that, and people who are running into problems with rentals as well.

Chair: Okay.

Mr. Trivers: I would be agreeable to that, for sure, yeah.

Mr. Roach: I don't know if the real estate agency would have anything to do that with.

Chair: Thanks.

Anything else, hon. members, before we adjourn?

Mr. Murphy: What's for lunch?

Chair: Colin LaVie.

Mr. LaVie: We're on new business?

Can we see if we can bring somebody in from the dairy farmers association with the talks going on now between Canada and the United States?

Chair: Do you think that that might be more appropriate to have in the agriculture committee rather than this committee? I just don't want – what happens when we have subjects that come before us, the Chair always says: Where is this best to fit? I think that is probably best to fit in the agriculture committee rather than this committee. Maybe – are you on that committee? Are you on agriculture?

Mr. LaVie: Yeah.

Chair: Maybe that – do you mind bringing that up at the agriculture committee? Does everybody agree that that might fit better in the agriculture committee?

An Hon. Member: Agree.

Chair: You do?

Mr. LaVie: Okay.

Chair: Okay, thanks. Thanks, Colin, for that.

Mr. LaVie: I'm easy.

Chair: All right.

Any further business?

Brad Trivers.

Mr. Trivers: I just wanted to clarify what the priority order is then on our topics, if you could.

Chair: Okay.

Clerk Assistant: Well, as I understand it – I don't have necessarily a priority among those – well two subjects now, if what I understand is leaving the carbon pricing aside. But for the groups, aside from GEBS, the groups are already invited for that subject on land use. We can still attempt to get them in when possible.

Also, you mentioned an appraiser's input. That's another potential witness; and landlords and tenants. That may be a separate subject. I'm not sure if that fits under land use is related, but it sounds like the committee wants to hear from landlords and tenants as well, and IRAC is one of the groups invited for land use anyway.

Mr. Trivers: Oh, so that would be good to ducktail the two together, perhaps.

Mr. Murphy: (Indistinct) IRAC, (Indistinct) is that the same thing?

Clerk Assistant: I believe so, yeah.

Chair: Okay.

Clerk Assistant: And then there was the plastics. Would the committee like to simply send out a blanket invitation to the group of suggested witnesses and see who is interested in coming forward?

Chair: Why don't we – my suggestion would be is take this document that we have just seen today on plastics, review it, and maybe if we have any suggestions as to groups that we may want to see or a timeframe, that we send them back through the clerk and then we'll add that to our work plan. Is everybody okay with that?

There's a list here that I haven't even had a chance to –

Mr. Trivers: Yeah, I agree.

Chair: – look at yet, so –

Mr. Roach: (Indistinct)

Chair: And there may be others that we might want to have in.

Mr. Trivers: And then we kind of forge ahead with our land cost use and this new –

Chair: We will.

Mr. Trivers: – landlord, tenant's topic.

Chair: We will.

Mr. Trivers: Okay, great.

Chair: Motion for adjournment?

An Hon. Member: Motion.

Chair: Thank you.

Thank you, everyone. Have a great day.

The Committee adjourned