

Department of Environment, Energy and Forestry

2011-2012 Budget highlights

- Under the PEI Energy Accord, Islanders will save \$50 million in electricity costs over the next two years.
- Protection of water quality will continue with significant levels of funding to watershed groups.
- Environmental stewardship will be strengthened with Forest Stewardship Council certification for public forest lands.

The Department of Environment, Energy and Forestry enhances the connection between Islanders and their environment. The department works in close cooperation with Islanders to establish standards, to ensure compliance for the protection of our natural environment, to encourage development of energy from sustainable local resources and to lead by example on environmental issues.

Major accomplishments 2007-2011

Environment

The department is working with 27 watershed improvement groups to enhance local streams, involve landowners in watershed protection practices, and engage the whole community in activities to protect the environment.

Support for watershed groups has significantly increased from \$120,000 in 2006 to \$850,000 in 2010.

In May 2008, government implemented the *Beverage Container Act* and established the Beverage Container Program to ensure the responsible recovery, reuse and recycling of used beverage containers. The program is among the most successful in North America. Recent studies show a reduction in the amount of beverage container litter on PEI. Approximately \$4,500,000 is disbursed in consumer refunds and service fees for beverage container recovery, recycling and inventory control. Approximately \$2 million is

returned to environmental protection programs, including \$1 million to the Alternative Land Use Service and \$850,000 to watershed groups.

New legislation was introduced to restrict the sale and use of a number of lawn-care pesticide products.

Based on an early recommendation from the Commission on Nitrates in Groundwater, the department offered free nitrate testing clinics across PEI in 2007, 2008 and 2009.

The department expanded mandatory buffer zones from 10 to 15-metre-wide vegetated zones to protect watercourses and wetlands. These measures, combined with new requirements for grassed headlands in all fields where row crops are being grown, serve to protect the Island's waterways and wetlands.

The department partnered in an industry-led program to recycle electronic equipment.

The department is streamlining a number of regulatory requirements and activities to allow newly-licensed contractors to conduct their work in accordance with provincial regulations. Under these new licensing programs, the contractors provide direct services to clients limiting government involvement. Government continues auditing activities in these areas to ensure compliance with regulations.

Developed in consultation with science, the public and industry, the Climate Change plan outlines an approach aimed at limiting Prince Edward Island's contributions to climate change. The plan recognizes the need to anticipate and adapt to challenges associated with a changing climate.

The department is also working with other Atlantic provinces and Natural Resources Canada to take a strategic approach to addressing and adapting to climate change. The department is providing in-kind services to a three- year program which ends this year. This year, funding will increase by \$100,000 to \$415,000.

Energy

The new PEI Energy Accord has been established to reduce energy costs. The five-year strategy will lower electricity rates an average of 14 percent and stabilize prices, ending unpredicted monthly price spikes. The Energy Accord is one of the major accomplishments of the present government.

Savings through lower electricity rates over the next 2 years	
Seniors	\$4 million
Single parents	\$1.3 million
Couples with children	\$10.2 million
Singles and couples with no children	\$9.2 million
Business and municipalities	\$25.3 million
Total savings	\$50 million

The Office of Energy Efficiency was opened in January 2008. Since then, it has invested \$4.3 million to assist approximately 5,000 clients to reduce energy consumption and costs, while helping reduce dependence on fossil fuels and green house gas emissions.

Forests, Fish and Wildlife

The Forests, Fish and Wildlife division of the department works to raise awareness of the value of the Island's natural resources among private landowners and the public and helps people take action to enhance those resources.

In the past year, the division invested \$1.6 million in grants to private landowners and in 67 completed private land management plans.

The department manages 50,000 acres of public land and it has begun the process of seeking internationally-recognized certification for all its public forest lands. PEI is the first province to seek certification for its public lands.

The department recently signed the first ever forestry co-management agreement with the Abeqweit First Nation, recognizing the environmental, economic and cultural traditions of the Aboriginal community.

The Forests, Fish and Wildlife Division also provides technical support to non-government organizations, including watershed groups. It implements wildlife surveys, deals with nuisance wildlife, and offers many public education courses and events. It collects forestry and land use information, provides GIS mapping services to government and non-government groups. It also administers hunting, fishing and trapping licenses. Every year, the division produces approximately 1 million trees of 22 species native to PEI.