

During the sitting of this House last fall, I had the privilege to help announce that the Bonshaw Hills Public Lands Committee had submitted its recommendations to government for protecting and managing environmentally sensitive public lands in the Bonshaw Hills.

I would like to update the House on the progress made since then.

In January I appointed a subcommittee to follow-up on the committee's 20 recommendations.

The subcommittee is now working to bring the provincially owned lands covered by the report, under the Natural Areas Protection Act.

Beginning later this month, bio-inventories will be done that will support site-specific land management plans.

One of the committee's recommendations was to create an expanded wilderness-like park by connecting the current Bonshaw and Strathgartney provincial parks.

In order to realize this concept, negotiations are ongoing with private landowners to acquire additional environmentally important lands.

There is infrastructure planned, including a pedway under the existing Bonshaw Bridge and a new footbridge off the Green Road, which should be in place by October.

The committee is working with a consultant to site the future trail network – using the information from the bio-inventories – to assure that trails are not placed in sensitive habitat locations.

The Prince of Wales will get a preview of this trail network and its future recreational uses when he visits Bonshaw to help dedicate it on May 20.

In addition, the subcommittee is working with Tourism PEI to assure that an expanded wilderness-like park concept complements tourism's mandate and resource capacity.

Madame Speaker, I am encouraged by the progress that I have seen toward making the Bonshaw Hills Public Lands Committee's vision a reality.

I would once again like to thank the committee as well as the members of its subcommittee for their time and dedication to this project.

Today I am happy to recognize Jackie Waddell from the Island Nature Trust, who is here with us today representing the Bonshaw Hills Public Lands Subcommittee.

To Jackie and the other committee members, thank you for your vision, and for your work you are doing to make that vision a reality.

Thank you Madame Speaker.