

Rural Action Plan

2011-2012 Budget highlights

- The Rural Jobs Initiative will be extended
- Provincial efforts to ensure the long term sustainability of the fishery will continue
- Special measures will continue to be supported in sub-regions in West Prince, Eastern Kings and southeastern Prince Edward Island as recommended in the Rural Action Plan.

In January of 2010, Fisheries, Aquaculture and Rural Development Minister Neil LeClair announced a new five-year rural economic development strategy for Prince Edward Island. The Rural Action Plan brings a government-wide focus to rural issues in an effort to ensure that the needs and aspirations of rural residents are taken into account in all government policies. It is the first time that the future of rural communities is being addressed in a comprehensive manner.

The Rural Action Plan established seven broad goals and 40 corresponding actions. Of the 40 actions identified, a total of 30 have been completed or are underway. Plans are being developed to address the other 10 actions.

The first Rural Action Centre, which brings together the resources of all social and economic development programs, has been established in Montague. Work is nearing completion on the opening of centres in Bedeque and Alberton, with a presence in Souris and Wellington.

An Island-wide rural broadband system has been established. It provides full access to broadband services to virtually all residents of the province.

The rural broadband fund has been established in partnership with Bell Aliant to help businesses adopt innovation-based communications and information technologies.

Rural Action Plan Goals

- Enhanced business development
- Strengthened primary sectors and natural resources
- Expansion of tourism
- Environmental conservation and the rural economy
- Community development and capacity building
- Human resources, education and essential services
- One Island Community, One Island Future

The provincial and federal governments are helping Island farmers reduce energy costs and evaluate crops as sources of renewable energy. More than 100 applications have been approved to date, with an investment of \$1.5 million.

The Culinary Alliance has been established to promote Prince Edward Island cuisine to visitors and expand export markets for food products. As part of this initiative, a Culinary Trail and the Fall Flavours Festival have been developed to promote food businesses in rural communities

A low interest loan program has been established for all eligible fishers in Prince Edward Island who are facing increased costs and lower prices. A total of \$36 million has been committed under this program, with savings to fishers of more than \$10 million over the life of the program.

In partnership with the federal government, a \$4 million investment is being made in the development of new lobster products, processing technologies and markets.

The Future Fishers program has been established. To date, more than 40 new entrants have taken over existing fleets and are now actively involved in the fishery.

The provincial government is acting to protect and enhance the rural environment. The recommendations of the Commission on Nitrates in Groundwater have been adopted. Other measures include the expansion of the Provincial Watershed Program with funding of \$1 million.

Legislation was passed in 2010 to establish community economic development investment funds. These funds will provide income tax credits to leverage private equity capital to invest in rural businesses.

In order to increase access to development funds, the Department of Fisheries, Aquaculture and Rural Development is administering the six-year, \$27.5 million Island Community Fund to invest in the infrastructure needs of rural communities. To date, 165 projects have been approved with a total investment of more than \$11 million.

The Island Community Fund has leveraged investment of \$40 million from other provincial, federal, municipal and community partners.

Through the Rural Jobs Initiative, \$4 million has been invested in the past three years to help over 350 businesses hire over 450 employees and help them to gain broadened work experiences.

In support of the action to invest in educational opportunities in West Prince, Holland College has begun construction of a regional training centre in Alberton while maintaining its presence in Tignish and O'Leary. The delivery of adult education programs has been strengthened.

Rural Action Plan Highlights

Rural Action Centres are being established in Montague, Bedeque and Alberton, with offices in Souris and Wellington to support business and community development in rural PEI.

Rural broadband services are now available throughout Prince Edward Island.

More than \$1 million has been committed to support agricultural innovation and research.

A total of \$7 million is being invested in on-farm renewable energy projects.

Fishers will save \$10 million under the low interest loan program.

Under the Alternative Land Use Services program, \$1 million is available annually to reward landowners for the environmental benefits they provide in protecting soil and water resources.

A six year, \$27.5 million Island Community Fund has been established to address infrastructure needs.

\$4 million has been invested in the Rural Jobs Initiative.

Funding was provided to Holland College for the a new regional training centre for West Prince.

The Department of Fisheries, Aquaculture and Rural Development has relocated to Montague, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development to Summerside and some sections of the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal to Tignish.

The provincial government is committed to ensuring that all areas of Prince Edward Island must have greater access to economic development opportunities which reflect their distinct needs and strengths.