

Fisheries, Aquaculture and Rural Development

2011-2012 Budget Highlights

- A review of the Fishers Low Interest Loan Program to ensure that it has met stated objectives.
- Continued efforts to support a sustainable lobster industry through investments in industry led rationalization and seafood market initiatives including a pilot project to ship live canner lobster to China.
- Strategic investments under the rurally focussed Island Community Fund.
- An extension of the Rural Jobs Initiative to support rural businesses and rural workers.

In 2007, government established a separate department to focus on the fisheries and aquaculture industries. Subsequently, the department was moved to Montague as part of the provincial government's rural development strategy. In 2009, the Rural Development Division was added to the department. In 2010, the department released the Rural Action Plan, the first of its kind in Prince Edward Island to bring a government-wide focus to the development of rural communities.

Fisheries and Aquaculture Facts

- Lobster accounts for 60 percent of the value of fish landings in the province.
- In 2010, lobster landings reached an all-time record high of 23.8 million pounds.
- The global economic downturn has resulted in lower demand and prices for lobster. The landed value of lobster declined from roughly \$100 million in 2008 to \$75 million in 2009. In 2010, the landed value rose to \$84 million. Stronger markets and prices are forecast for 2011.
- From an experimental fishery in the 1970s, mussel production now accounts for close to 20 percent of the harvested value of fisheries in the province.
- Mussel production rose from 100,000 pounds in 1980 to over 41 million pounds today.
- The harvesting and processing of fisheries products provides more than 9500 jobs.
- The estimated value of the fishery is upwards of \$350 million.

The 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 Rural Action Plan built on the record of the provincial government's initiatives in rural Prince Edward Island since 2007.

The first Rural Action Centre, which brings together the resources of all social and economic development programs, has been established in Montague. Work is also 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.

The department partnered with other levels of government and the industry to develop new and expanded markets. It participated in trade missions to China, Europe, United States and key domestic markets.

Support was provided to industry-led initiatives to develop sustainability plans for the three Lobster Fishing Areas in the province. In LFA 25, 34 licenses were voluntarily retired.

To better manage the problem of aquatic invasive species, the department, in cooperation with Fisheries and Oceans and the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, committed over \$1.2 million since 2007 for industry-led projects to evaluate new technologies, equipment and practices. A total of 82 projects were developed and completed. Prince Edward Island is now a world leader in the use of these kinds of measures.

There are major increases in support to the oyster industry. In 2008, the department initiated the Quality Oyster Aquaculture program to increase the quantity and improve the quality of oysters grown on leases. In 2009, in cooperation with ACOA, a new three-year program, the Strategic Oyster Aquaculture Renewal program, was initiated with a budget of \$1.0 million. The program is administered by the Prince Edward Island Aquaculture Alliance, and supports equipment for seed collection, nursery growth operations and harvesting on leases.

The department provides \$100,000 annually to the Prince Edward Island Shellfish Association to carry out oyster enhancement activities on public fishery grounds. The long-term commitment of the department to the enhancement of the public oyster fishery has resulted in increased landings and opportunities for some 750 oyster fishers (active).

The Future Fisher Program was established in 2009 to support new entrants to the fishery with an annual budget of \$100,000. In the first two years of the program, over 40 new entrants participated.

The department provided support in 2010 to the Prince Edward Island Fishermens Association to conduct a pilot catch and release project in the tuna fishery.

Rural Development

The department established a rural development strategy for Prince Edward Island in 2010. The Rural Action Plan is the first of its kind in the province to bring a government-wide focus to rural development issues. The Rural Action Plan has seven broad goals and 40 corresponding actions to renew and revitalize the rural economy, stimulate business activity and strengthen infrastructure.

To date, 30 actions have been completed or are underway, and measures are being developed for the other 10 actions.

Some highlights to date include the establishment of rural action centres; the extension of rural broadband to all areas of the province; new investments in the primary industries; expansion of Holland College to west Prince; and a \$27.5 million Island Community Fund to address infrastructure needs of rural communities over six years.

The Employment Development Agency contributes to labour force development through short term job creation, wage subsidy, and employment matching. Financial resources, available through the Employment Development Agency, assist non-profit organizations and private businesses to provide jobs for summer students and match those that have employment challenges with jobs.