

# **HANSARD**

## **NOVA SCOTIA HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY**

### **COMMITTEE**

#### **ON**

### **PUBLIC ACCOUNTS**

**Wednesday, June 15, 2022**

#### **LEGISLATIVE CHAMBER**

**2022 Report of the Auditor General: Follow-up of 2017, 2018 and 2019  
Performance Audit Recommendations Regarding:**

**November 1, 2017 Report of the Auditor General,  
Chapter 3 - Climate Change Management**

## **Public Accounts Committee**

Hon. Kelly Regan (Chair)  
Nolan Young (Vice-Chair)  
Dave Ritcey  
John A. MacDonald  
Melissa Sheehy-Richard  
Trevor Boudreau  
Hon. Brendan Maguire  
Claudia Chender  
Susan Leblanc

[Hon. Kelly Regan was replaced by Fred Tilley.]  
[Nolan Young was replaced by Kent Smith.]  
[Susan Leblanc was replaced by Lisa Lachance.]

### **In Attendance:**

Kim Langille  
Legislative Committee Clerk

Gordon Hebb  
Chief Legislative Counsel

Kim Adair  
Auditor General

### **WITNESSES**

#### **Department of Environment and Climate Change**

Lora MacEachern,  
Deputy Minister

Jason Hollett,  
Associate Deputy Minister

Nancy Rondeaux,  
Executive Director, Climate Change Division



**HALIFAX, WEDNESDAY, JUNE 15, 2022**

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS**

**9:00 A.M.**

**CHAIR**

Hon. Kelly Regan

**VICE CHAIR**

Nolan Young

KIM LANGILLE (Legislative Committee Clerk): Good morning, everyone. I'm going to call the meeting to order. As you can see, I am clearly not the Chair or the Vice Chair, and I haven't turned into an MLA overnight or anything like that. (Laughter)

As neither the Chair nor Vice Chair are here today, what that means is that the committee needs to elect an acting Chair from among the members who are present today - just for this meeting only.

I'm going to open the floor for nominations. Mr. Maguire.

HON. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: I'll go with MLA Lachance.

KIM LANGILLE: Ms. Sheehy-Richard.

MELISSA SHEEHY-RICHARD: I nominate Dave Ritcey.

KIM LANGILLE: Are there any further nominations? I don't know if you can have more than one. (Interruption) Sorry, are there any further nominations? Okay, we'll have to have a vote, then.

I will call each member by name, and they will state who they would like to nominate between Mx. Lachance and Mr. Ritcey.

**LACHANCE**

Hon. Brendan Maguire  
Fred Tilley  
Lisa Lachance  
Claudia Chender

**RITCEY**

Trevor Boudreau  
Melissa Sheehy-Richard  
John A. MacDonald  
Dave Ritcey  
Kent Smith

KIM LANGILLE: We have 5 for MLA Ritcey, and 4 for MLA Lachance, so Mr. Ritcey will be chairing today's meeting.

[Dave Ritcey assumed the Chair.]

THE CHAIR: Good morning, everyone. I'm going to call the meeting to order. This is the meeting on Public Accounts. My name's Dave Ritcey, I am the acting Chair, but the MLA for Truro-Bible Hill-Millbrook-Salmon River. I would ask everyone - a reminder - to please put your phones on silent. Masks are recommended but not required.

I'm going to, starting to my left, ask the committee members to introduce themselves, beginning with the NDP caucus.

[The committee members introduced themselves.]

THE CHAIR: Please note that we do have officials from the Auditor General's Office, Legislative Counsel, Hansard, and Legislative Committees' Office in attendance as well.

I'll go right into the agenda, and on today's agenda we have officials with us from the Department of Environment and Climate Change with respect to the 2022 Follow-Up Report of the Auditor General Report, relative to the 2017 Climate Change Management Audit.

I would like to ask the witnesses to introduce themselves, beginning with the deputy minister.

[The witnesses introduced themselves.]

THE CHAIR: Thank you. I'll start it off by inviting the deputy minister to make her opening remarks.

LORA MACEACHERN: Thank you, everyone. We appreciate the opportunity to speak today on the Auditor General's follow-up report on climate change management. As was introduced, joining me today are two senior officials from the department who have significant experience in the area of climate change: Jason Hollett and Nancy Rondeaux. I am fortunate to work with such a committed, passionate, and qualified team who are focusing their careers on this important issue.

I'd like to also thank the Office of the Auditor General for their recommendations. We respect their critical role and appreciate the recommendations made to help our department fulfill our mandate. At the time of the 2017 report, the department committed to implement all 10 recommendations. As reported by the Auditor General in April, one of the three recommendations relating to climate change management remains outstanding.

We are pleased to be here today to provide an update on this outstanding recommendation, which is to regularly review Nova Scotia's climate change risks to determine if the ratings have changed and identify any new actions required to address the changes. We have not lost sight of this important recommendation. To the contrary, it is now required by law. In 2021, as part of the Environmental Goals and Climate Change Reduction Act, government committed to update the risk assessment in 2022 and then again in 2025 and every five years after that.

I am pleased to report that this work is in the process of being completed. We have taken more time to implement this recommendation than originally anticipated. However, the work we've been doing will result in a stronger response to this recommendation. For example, we've leveraged federal funding, which has allowed for a more in-depth risk assessment that is based on data, research, and best practices.

This will be the first provincial climate change risk assessment since 2005, and although it is still being finalized, I can speak at a high level to some of what it will cover. The new risk assessment will present a clear picture of the current impact of the changing climate on this province and what Nova Scotians can expect the impacts to be over the next 80 years if action is not taken. Nova Scotians, municipalities, communities, businesses, and government departments will be able to use this information to plan and take advantage of opportunities - for example, with renewable clean energy.

As you are aware, we are already experiencing the impacts of climate change. It's getting warmer, storms are becoming more frequent and intense, sea levels are rising, precipitation patterns are changing, and our oceans are becoming more acidic. These are things we know, and the impacts are being felt every day. For example, rising sea levels and coastal erosion are impacting our archaeology sector. In response, the Department of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage is working with the sector to plan for these changes and take measures to protect sites of cultural and historical importance.

The information from the latest modelling and risk assessment is helping us plan, be prepared, and adapt to the changes we are experiencing now and those that are yet to come. Our work will underscore that we need to take a holistic view and recognize that climate change affects us in many ways.

The risk assessment will also identify areas of concern, opportunities, and priorities for action - for example, addressing root causes of systematic inequities so that those who have been traditionally racialized and marginalized are not at greater risk for climate change impacts. We also know we need to act to respond to priority hazards that Nova Scotians are experiencing now, such as flooding and heat stress on individuals and what that means for cooling our buildings. We need to protect critical systems and critical resources such as health care, food supply, housing, infrastructure, forests, and wetlands.

For example, flooding is an issue faced by municipalities and will continue with climate change. In response, Municipal Affairs and Housing is investing in a new municipal flood line mapping project to help municipalities plan developments outside of future flood zones. In addition to their department adaptation planning, Natural Resources and Renewables is working to explore the risks and adaptation options for coastal parks and the electricity sector. My department is working on a similar departmental climate adaptation plan, along with a focus on the water sector, to protect this essential resource.

This holistic approach to climate management enables government departments to work on adaptation strategies with their stakeholders and sectors. Once finalized, the risk assessment will be invaluable in developing the climate plan and informing the department's day-to-day work.

All of this is part of our holistic integrated approach forward to fulfill our mandate of addressing climate change, improving the well-being of Nova Scotians, and ensuring that the environment is healthy and clean. We are taking the time to do the risk assessment well with more community engagement, reaching out to marginalized communities, bringing in community advisers - all to ensure we have the right base for continuing this work out to 2030 and beyond.

Understanding what to expect in the coming years and decades is one step. The climate plan will then lay out the actions we must collectively take to meet our greenhouse gas reduction targets and to help our province respond to climate change and its impacts. We look forward now to answering your questions.

**THE CHAIR:** Are there any other opening remarks from any of the other members? Seeing none, we will start the first round of questions with the Liberal caucus, which will have 20 minutes, followed by the NDP and then the PC caucus. If I need to cut you off after the 20 minutes, I'll call for order - I want to apologize if I do that and apologize on this side too. We try to wrap up between 10:40 a.m. and 10:45 a.m. in respect to questions.

So what I'll do now is I'll start with the Liberal caucus with their questions. It's 9:12:15 a.m. MLA Maguire.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: First of all, thank you for coming here today. I've got a ton of questions, so I'm going to try to keep my questions brief.

During the last session, we heard and saw that there were health plans and timelines when it comes to health and costing and deliverables. The government had said that a plan was coming. In the Fall session, over and over they kept telling us a plan was coming, but the health care plan that came out was more of an advertising document. There were no real timelines. There was no costing. There was nothing associated with it.

Will the Climate Change Action Plan include costing and timelines, yes or no?

LORA MACEACHERN: We're working hard on the climate plan right now. We're not able to provide any kind of details on the contents of it just yet, but we're getting close to completion of it, as was indicated in the Legislature. We know from the Environmental Goals and Climate Change Reduction Act that there is a commitment to have it in place by the end of the year, and we're hoping to do that sooner than that.

We're spending a lot of time and putting in a lot of effort to make sure that it's fulsome and that it's detailed. We think that Nova Scotians will be pleased with what they see in the climate plan, will feel that it provides a good, strong action plan and a positive step forward in a plan for the future as we try to combat climate change in Nova Scotia.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Nova Scotians under the previous government were given a cap-and-trade system and not a carbon tax. What was the cost on fuel with the cap-and-trade system? What was the extra cost?

LORA MACEACHERN: Actually, I'm going to turn that one over to Jason Hollett. He focuses on carbon pricing models for the system.

THE CHAIR: Associate Deputy Minister Hollett.

JASON HOLLETT: As designed, the cap-and-trade program results in a price on the average price of gasoline of around a cent - maybe a cent and a half per litre, depending on how the market plays after any given auction.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: That is considerably lower than the national average when it comes to carbon tax. Just a yes or no - is that deal set to expire, the cap-and-trade system? I'll just stick with Mr. Hollett if that's okay.

JASON HOLLETT: The federal government has published new guidance for carbon pricing. That came out last year. It was given to provinces and territories. We're

currently working our way through that new guidance and negotiating with the federal government on what carbon-pricing plans will look like in the province going forward, but unfortunately we are unable to share any details on that at this time.

[9:15 a.m.]

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: I'll answer that. We know that it is set to expire and that we have to come up with a new system. That is public knowledge. Can Nova Scotians expect the same kind of deal - a 1-cent increase only at the pump - when it comes to the new system? Or, better yet, are we going to be able to keep our cap-and-trade system in its current form?

JASON HOLLETT: The federal guidance allows for provinces to implement one of several carbon-pricing systems. Cap and trade is included in that, carbon tax is an option, and a hybrid system that has some elements of both of them is permissible within them. The stringency under the new benchmark has been increased in terms of the cost. Again, I think it's public knowledge that in 2023, the carbon tax price has to be \$65 per tonne. Right now it's \$50 per tonne, and it increases to \$170 per tonne by 2030. Those are some pretty significant increases over time.

In the designing of a cap-and-trade program, we have to provide reductions that are commensurate to those carbon tax prices that you would see. Again, it's a process that we're working on with the federal government now to determine what that will look like or what the options are for Nova Scotia.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: The reason I ask that is because in the most recent House sitting, the minister let it slip that carbon tax is coming. That's what he said: a carbon tax is coming to Nova Scotia. Because we're in a cap-and-trade system, we were a little surprised that before negotiations have been completed - or maybe negotiations on the political side have already been had. But the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board said that Nova Scotia is going to get a carbon tax and that it will be much more expensive.

I know that you are involved in the cap-and-trade system. Is the minister right? Is this a foregone conclusion? Are we getting a carbon tax over a cap-and-trade system, and will it be considerably higher than what people are paying right now?

JASON HOLLETT: I can't speak to what members were saying in the House, unfortunately. I can only reference back to the federal benchmark guidance that we're given as the Province, which will have higher carbon tax prices as a guideline for us to design whatever system that we do put in place post-2022.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: So you're involved in the direct negotiations with the federal government. Yes or no, do you think we're going to be able to keep our cap-and-trade system?



JASON HOLLETT: Cap and trade is an option under the federal benchmark. There may have to be some changes to the cap-and-trade program to deal with the new federal government stringency requirements that they have in the benchmark. I'll be happy to share those with the members. The federal government benchmark is publicly available and it does provide the guidance to provinces and territories.

I know we are one of several provinces that are currently in discussions with the federal government on what those systems will look like going forward.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Will the cost to Nova Scotians be considerably higher on fuel and gas under the new system?

JASON HOLLETT: Unfortunately, I'm unable to comment or provide any information about that until we've finalized the details of our program.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: The reason I'm pushing this is because you're negotiating with Nova Scotians' money and Nova Scotians' future. People get frustrated when they hear things like "unfortunately, I can't comment" or "unfortunately, I can't tell you" - and then all of a sudden they're hit with a considerable increase.

We know that the price of everything has gone through the roof. We know that it looks like we're headed toward a recession. We know that this current government is doing nothing when it comes to the cost of fuel to decrease Nova Scotians' burden when it comes to the cost of fuel - and I'm not just talking about gas. They continually tout the \$150 one-time payment. I filled up my minivan the other day and it was \$140.

Nova Scotians need to know and need to be prepared if there is a substantial cost increase coming. For the last few years, we've led the country when it comes to carbon pricing and carbon taxes. We've seen a substantial increase in every other province, but Nova Scotia has stayed at one-and-a-half cents. What we're hearing today is that this government is negotiating on behalf of Nova Scotians with Nova Scotians' money and Nova Scotia's future, and we aren't allowed to know anything that's happening until they're hit at the pumps.

I'll ask you again: Can Nova Scotians expect a substantial increase in what they've been paying over the last few years on fuel and gas under this new agreement that's being negotiated by the department on behalf of the people of Nova Scotia?

LORA MACEACHERN: We certainly appreciate the interest in knowing more details about the progress of how we evaluate the options around carbon pricing going forward. I can certainly tell you that the best interest of Nova Scotians and affordability are top of mind in our considerations. We do have to work within increased federal stringency requirements going forward, so the circumstances within which we're working for this new

process going forward is a bit different from the circumstances that were in place when the original cap-and-trade program was put in place.

Having said that all of that, we're engaging well with the federal government. We're looking at all of the options, and definitely affordability and the best interest of Nova Scotians are top of mind. I can also say that knowing the concerns and the issues around affordability, this is where the energy and efficiency programming comes really into play and is very important.

Nova Scotia is a leader in energy efficiency across the country. We've invested a significant amount of money from the Green Fund, which is the fund that is available to the province as a result of the cap-and-trade program. Seventy-four million dollars of investments to combat climate change have been made out of the Green Fund since it's been put in place just a couple of years ago, many of those to energy efficiency programs which are really helping Nova Scotians.

**BRENDAN MAGUIRE:** While I appreciate the comments, affordability is not at the top of mind with this current government. The affordability to Nova Scotians and their ability to pay bills is not at the top of mind for this government. The proof is in the pudding. Words are great, but nothing has been done on the cost of fuel. Nothing has been done on the skyrocketing costs of food.

You quoted a number - well, I can quote a number back. Nova Scotia Power is looking for a 10 per cent increase, and that's before the carbon tax that this government is about to bring in kicks in. We know that when that carbon tax comes in, whenever that is, Nova Scotia Power will be going back to the UARB looking for that money in return.

We know that Nova Scotia Power - as part of their agreement - has now asked for 50 per cent return on any extra money that they have, which used to go directly back to the ratepayers and the people who depend on Nova Scotia Power, so affordability is not top of mind.

It may be for your department, but in the end, this department - like every other department - takes direction from the Premier. A Premier who has decided that Nova Scotians can shoulder the load of everything and not be able to pay their bills, and that's what's happening here. It is a bit frustrating when we know that we were able to negotiate the best carbon pricing in all of Canada, but we can't get a simple answer in this committee about how much it's going to go up or what the trajectory is.

I'm not asking for details. I'm just asking for your honest opinion - you've all been around for a long time. Will Nova Scotians see a substantial cost in the carbon pricing? It's a yes or no question and that's all I want. I just want yes or no: Will Nova Scotians bear the cost of higher carbon taxing than we currently have now?

LORA MACEACHERN: We understand the purpose of the question, and definitely we respect and understand the desire to have more information. We certainly want to make that available. At this point we are examining all of the options. We're looking into all of the details.

As I said before, we are really focused on what's in the best interests of Nova Scotians. As soon as we have more details and we have more information about what the impact will be, we'll provide that information. Please know that we are definitely considering the best interests of Nova Scotians as we work through this process.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Can Nova Scotians expect the exact same pricing, the exact same cap-and-trade program, that they have now? I'll throw that to Mr. Hollett. You were involved in the original. Can they expect the exact same program with the exact same pricing? Yes or no?

JASON HOLLETT: Again, I can reference the federal government's carbon-pricing benchmark, which is more stringent and has different requirements for provinces and territories as they put together the new carbon-pricing programs. There is still some flexibility for provinces to put together a program that's in the best interests of their province. We're working our way through that. Again, as the deputy minister said, we'll share those details as soon as we're able to.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Again, I'm not looking for details. I'm not looking for details on the negotiation. I'm not looking for details on what's being said. I'm just asking a question. In your experience, can they expect the exact same program with the exact same pricing of a one to one-and-a-half cent increase? Or will that go up?

JASON HOLLETT: I do appreciate the question from the member. Again, until we can land on a negotiated deal with the federal government on what carbon pricing will look like in Nova Scotia, it's difficult to share any details of what exactly the impact will be.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: I think there is a disconnect between the department, which I think does an extremely good job and works their tails off, and what the government is saying. There's a disconnect here in this room. We had a Minister of Finance and Treasury Board saying that a carbon tax is coming. We had a Minister of Finance and Treasury Board saying that the prices are going to increase.

I guess what I don't understand is that the brains, the vision behind the scenes who do all the heavy lifting can't say one way or another if this price is going to increase, and yet we have a government saying it is going to increase. Maybe they're hoping that it increases so that they can use some of that money to pay off some of the large deficits that they're going to run. I see that as the same thing with the gas prices, the fuel prices in Nova Scotia. As the prices go up, they collect more money.

The response from the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board and the Premier was, well, people are going to drive less. I'm sorry, but I just drove in from Herring Cove today and the rotary was packed - backed up almost all the way to Sobeys in Spryfield. People aren't driving less. People are driving just as much, if not more. Nova Scotia is not a cycling- or walking- or public transit-friendly province. I can't catch a bus to New Ross and I can't cycle to New Ross. People are driving more, or at least the same.

It's frustrating to me that we have a government that's saying one thing publicly and a department that is, by all means, I would say is probably more grounded and knows what's going on behind the scenes.

When will Nova Scotians know? When will they get the big surprise at the pump?

LORA MACEACHERN: The new requirements come into place in 2023. They extend from 2023 through to 2030. There is some lead time in advance of that that's required in order to set up the program. We anticipate sometime between the Fall and the end of the year that there'll be a program that's known and publicly understood.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: So we'll get an announcement in the Fall, basically, about the plan and what it looks like, and then ultimately we'll get the PR machine running from the government saying we're going to blame the federal government: They did everything, not us. It's their issue. This is why prices have increased.

I'm just going to help you with your media release because this is how it's going to go. It's going to be: Blame the feds, not us, we tried our hardest. Yet what we've heard here today and what we've heard from this government, the government in particular - I think this department is working hard, but the government in particular doesn't seem to be paying attention. They're not paying attention to what Nova Scotians are saying, and what they're saying is that we're struggling at the pump.

I find it troubling that we were able to negotiate the best deal in all of Canada and I'm willing to bet we won't even be anywhere near that. I hope - and I think the department will work hard for that - but I think there's going to be a bit of, "we need to recoup and get extra money to help pay for some of these promises we've made." I hope that doesn't happen, but we've already - again, I'll repeat - we've already seen that with fuel and the cost of fuel in Nova Scotia where this government refuses to side with Nova Scotians. They're siding with their pocketbooks - their pocketbooks.

We've seen this with Nova Scotia Power. We know that there were presentations made to the Progressive Conservative's caucus months in advance of the power increase, yet the Premier stood in this Legislature first and denied that he had spoken to them. Then he said: Maybe I have. Then he said: Oh yeah, I think I have - I can't remember what was said there. You can see why Nova Scotians are tired of this. It doesn't feel like this government is fighting to keep prices low. I hope, Mr. Hollett and deputy minister, that

you keep this in mind, and I know you do: whatever price increase that comes from this is going to hurt. It's going to hurt, so I hope you keep that in mind as you negotiate.

[9:30 a.m.]

THE CHAIR: Order. The time for the Liberals' first round of questioning is up. We'll now move it to the NDP caucus at 9:32:26, and we'll start with MLA Chender.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: I kind of like following MLA Maguire. I feel like it makes people like me more. (Laughter)

I'm going to try to get back to the topic at hand which is climate change management. I want to start by addressing the climate plan. Deputy minister, you mentioned that it would be done by the end of the year. Really, based on the kind of legislative guidance, we should have had this plan years ago. As early as 2018 we were overdue on updating EGSPA and the goals there, then in the SDGA which is a predecessor to the current EGCCRA, there was a climate plan that was not filed. Now we have a new piece of legislation.

It's past Spring. I mean, I can read out the numerous places where the Minister of Environment and Climate Change said that we would see this plan in the Spring. My Spring flowers are gone. This is how I've measured it. I've talked about crocuses in this Chamber, I've talked about tulips, I've talked about daffodils, and now the rhododendrons are here and Spring is almost over. I understand that there's lots of shifting priorities, but I also understand that governments change but the department continues.

I would like to understand what the delay is in this climate plan because every month or day or minute of delay we have makes it, de facto, more difficult to meet our - I think we would all agree - very ambitious climate plans. I follow this pretty closely and I still have to confess that I don't have confidence yet that we can meet those goals. I know that we can, but I don't have confidence that we will. I want to understand what the delay has been and when we can expect to see that plan.

LORA MACEACHERN: We absolutely feel the commitment to the climate plan. We are working on it very, very hard. It will be coming soon. We know that the commitment in the legislation is for the end of the year, and we've been focusing on it and are hoping to have it completed in advance of that, for sure. It's a really important plan and we want it to be detailed. We want it to be able to provide a good, strong foundation going forward.

I also want to emphasize that we're working really hard in the department and a lot of things are being accomplished. I have an amazing team and so many people behind them who are just working so incredibly hard every day. We have a lot of support from government in terms of being able to accomplish the goals in the legislation and for the

work that we're doing every day. I've got a few notes in front of me of - just all that we have been able to accomplish.

Despite the fact that you're not seeing the product of the action plan at this moment, we've done things with great investments out of the Green Fund. That \$74 million has gone to excellent projects and programs. We've got excellent partners like Efficiency Nova Scotia, Clean Foundation, Divert NS, and the municipalities. They've taken those funds and developed excellent programs that are really making a difference on the ground. We've got a Clean Leadership Summer Internship program that Clean Nova Scotia delivers, and we've got 121 young leaders that are in internships right now as we speak all across the province.

I could go on at length, and I won't take up all the time to do that, but there's significant work that's under way. That action plan will add to all of the work and will create that additional vision going forward, but there's significant work that's happening right now.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: I don't doubt it. I'm very familiar with many of those projects. I know that the team is working hard, but will the Green Fund continue to exist? I think that one of the reasons that MLA Maguire was grilling your team in the way that he was is that we just don't have certainty on really anything going forward. I think we're hoping that the climate plan will give us some of that.

I just want to reiterate my initial question, which is whether you can specifically speak to the delay. We've been looking for these targets in one form or another, this interim plan, for at least four years. Why has it taken so long?

LORA MACEACHERN: I can't speak to the last couple of years. I'm going to turn it over to my colleagues here if they want to speak a little bit about the history, but what I do know is that since I've come to the department and since the government has passed the new legislation, there's been significant commitment to achieving the 28 goals that are set out in the legislation, and the work is well under way to complete the climate plan. We do anticipate it soon, and we anticipate it'll be well-received. I'll turn it over to my colleagues to see if they have anything to add there.

JASON HOLLETT: Just to build on a bit what the deputy minister said, EGCCRA is really a piece of legislation that doesn't exist anywhere else in the country. It was a groundbreaking piece of legislation when it first came out in 2007 with all-party support that really codified provincial goals and objectives in terms of where we wanted to reach environmental targets.

The new version of EGCCRA has a 2030 GHG reduction target that is the most aggressive in the country. It codifies our need to get to net zero by 2050, which is where the science tells us we need to be if we actually want to make a meaningful contribution to

addressing climate change. Not only that, 24 of the 28 goals are specific to climate change and provides lots of good direction on things like building codes, energy efficiency, and gets into areas like climate change adaptation and resilience that are really important for us to start to look at. That has provided a lot of work for our team to get into. It provides a lot of emphasis and support for things that will work into the climate plan as well.

Climate change is complex, multi-departmental, and multi-government. It needs to involve communities, businesspeople, and not-for-profits, so we're taking the time to make sure we get it right, that we incorporate the goals and the intent and the principles of EGCCRA, and we're excited to get it out.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Thank you, and I won't belabour it. That does shed some light that there's kind of a more detailed set of criteria that you're working with, I guess is what I'm hearing, Mr. Hollett, and that it creates a different set of deliverables and work. I just want to make the point that notwithstanding our ambitious goals, we collectively still don't know how we're going to get there. That's what we're looking to the climate plan for, so the sooner the better.

We noticed that in this last budget there was no increase for climate. We asked about this in Budget Estimates and we were told that it would be happening across departments - that this was a collaborative effort and there wasn't a single budget line. We actually couldn't find any budget line. We asked numerous departments, and everyone said, oh, we're doing that, and we said, well, where do we see it, because that's the process of Budget Estimates. No one could tell us.

I'll return to kind of the original question that was asked this morning: will the risk assessment that we are ostensibly here to talk about include costs? There is a financial aspect of this work, of course, and as much as sometimes climate work is painted as too expensive, we know that it's actually too expensive not to work with right now - not to address right now - and that there is actually lots of opportunity, particularly from green jobs.

I guess I want to ask, is there a calculation of the cost specifically of the climate adaptation and mitigation work that needs to be done in the update for this plan?

LORA MACEACHERN: In terms of our budget, just to kind of speak to that first, we as a department feel quite well placed to be able to work on climate change issues and to advance the issues that are before us with the current budget. Just prior to the budget we were allocated a number of additional positions within our climate change division, so we have additional staff - quite a few. Nancy will be able to speak to it in better detail, but a number of additional staff who are in our climate change division and focused on this work. So that was a real positive for us.

As was mentioned a couple of times, we've utilized the significant amount of money that is available in the Green Fund in order to fund some positions and some internal work, but also to farm out those resources to programs and initiatives that really do have a positive impact on the ground. Government also gave \$57 million through the Department of Natural Resources and Renewables budget in the past year toward energy efficiency programming, so that's quite significant as well.

So there were a number of investments that were made that are really quite significant and we think definitely around the many millions of dollars that were put into it. As we move forward to the climate plan, our risk assessment is not really envisioned as the kind of document that would - it's really a resource document, so we can talk a little bit about what we see the risk assessment as being.

As we look forward to looking at the climate plan, we'll be taking a look at what kind of resources are required to achieve the plan.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: It sounds like there won't be costs associated, but we know that they will likely be high. Again, I just want to put an asterisk next to the Green Fund, because to the last line of questioning, we don't know that the Green Fund is going to continue to exist. We don't know at any given juncture how much money is going to go into the Green Fund. That's the way it operates.

I'm glad it was set up. I think it's been used really well. I think it's wonderful that it exists. But it's also not the same as a departmental budget line in that it fluctuates, and its existence may change depending on how we go forward with the new federal requirements.

I want to ask a little bit about municipalities. In 2013, municipalities were required by the NDP government of the day to create municipal climate change action plans as part of the federal gas tax agreement. They involved vulnerability assessments of infrastructure - a lot of the stuff we were talking about - general assessment of economic, social, and environmental impacts of climate change. A study that was done afterwards found that they were very successful, actually, in just shifting the focus because so much of this cultural change within different orders of government, we know.

It seems like it was quite successful in doing that, so my question is - and this is kind of reaching back into the annals of history, I suppose - why wasn't that work an impetus to update the province-wide risk assessment? We had all these municipalities that did these risk assessments, but we know a provincial risk assessment hasn't been done since 2005.

Was that collated somewhere? Is there a reason? Do we understand why that wasn't expanded into a provincial risk assessment?



[9:45 a.m.]

LORA MACEACHERN: I'll just speak for a few moments and then turn it over to my colleagues Nancy and Jason to give more of the history because this is a bit of a historical question, it seems.

I did want to mention that as we worked toward the risk assessment - I mentioned in my opening comments that one of the reasons why the provincial risk assessment hadn't been done earlier is that there was an opportunity to leverage some federal funding. That was leveraged and really taken advantage of to create a more in-depth product with more data and more resources embedded into it.

I think when it is released, it will be a much more usable resource, not just a data set but something that people can really take and look at and use to inform their next steps. That's the reason for the provincial risk assessment just being at the cusp of being ready to be made available.

In the meantime, we had in 2019, rolled out the Climate Adaptation Leadership Program, and that is a program that has evolved working with several other departments, including the Department of Municipal Affairs and Housing and including municipalities on some specific risk assessment work. That perhaps is building on some of what you've just mentioned here, but we're really proud of that program and would love to have the opportunity to talk about it a little bit more.

I will turn it over to Jason and Nancy. They might be able to speak a little bit more to the 2013 work.

JASON HOLLETT: Thank you, member, for the question - it's a great one. Our municipalities and our communities are really on the front lines of the impacts of climate change. It's important to work with them closely to make sure that they've got the information and the tools that they can use to prepare for the impacts and to also reduce their own greenhouse gas emissions.

The municipal climate change action plans were a great project. It really did a lot, as you say - changed the culture of how communities were engaging in the topic. Climate change is such a big issue that it can seem like it's out there in the ether and really difficult to get your head wrapped around, but this was a process. So, going through conversations with all 55 municipalities at the time, to walk through the impacts and the implications to the municipalities, was successful in terms of getting municipalities engaged and making actual changes in their communities on what it is that they can do.

To the deputy minister's point, we built on that information in the collated report that came out there. Our partners at the Department of Municipal Affairs and Housing used those outcomes in their work, in their support for municipalities and how they worked with

them on infrastructure funding - applications to the federal government for major infrastructure funding programs, for example. We use those findings to help put together our Climate Adaptation Leadership Program. Again, you can provide information, you can provide the data and the science to folks, but you really have to teach them how to use it and how to integrate it into the work that they're doing.

Our approach to climate change adaptation has been evolving with the science and the best practices and approach that's brought us to where we are today. The risk assessment itself is going to be really comprehensive. It's taking a well-being framework, so it's going beyond just the data and the science. It's who's impacted, how are they impacted, and do they understand how climate change will be impacting them, and to be able to build on that.

Going forward, as the deputy minister said, we've got legislation that requires us to update it in 2025 and again in 2030, and that matches up - we did that intentionally to match up with the updates to the science. The international science community gets together and they provide updates on those five-year increments, and that also links well with the census data. So we're actually able to get down into the census regions of the province and provide more relevant, useful information to the communities.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: I know I only have a moment. I want to thank you for that. I hope the updates actually happen.

I'm just going to cut to the chase. We know that the Sustainable Communities Challenge Fund is investing \$15 million over three years for municipal climate change adaptation. Is \$5 million per year for the entire province, for every municipality, enough? The deputy minister mentioned leveraging federal funding as the reason some of this work can finally be done. Can the municipalities do the work they need to do with that level of funding?

LORA MACEACHERN: I'll turn that over to my colleagues to see if they've got anything to add.

THE CHAIR: Associate Deputy Minister Hollett.

JASON HOLLETT: Thank you for the question. I'll start and pass it over to Nancy, who's a little bit more familiar with the details.

Fifteen million dollars in the Sustainable Communities Challenge Fund is, I think, a welcome investment from communities on the topic. It's not the only pot of money that exists, that's out there. There are federal funds - either directly through the federal government, or there's also the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, which runs the Green Municipal Fund, which has hundreds of millions of dollars that are available to them.

There are some significant programs through our partners at the Department of Natural Resources and Renewables, and the Department of Municipal Affairs and Housing, and Efficiency Nova Scotia, and a lot of financial tools that are out there as well. PACE financing tools are a way that municipalities can work with the residents to help encourage energy efficiency and renewable energy investments on your own properties and finance that through your property taxes, are also really important tools.

Nancy, I don't know if you have anything to add?

THE CHAIR: Ms. Rondeaux.

NANCY RONDEAUX: I think it's going to be a gamechanger. I think it is really going to help municipalities to focus, to develop applications for federal funding. I think about the Investing in Canada Infrastructure program . . .

THE CHAIR: Order. Sorry. The time for questioning by the NDP has elapsed. We will now move to the PC caucus. We'll start with MLA Boudreau. The time is 9:52:44.

TREVOR BOUDREAU: Thank you to our witnesses for coming. I appreciate the questioning from my colleague from the NDP on the topic at hand here today.

I'm pleased to hear from the reports from the deputy minister that we're committed to updating the risk assessments this year and again in 2025. Looking forward to seeing that. On that topic, what are some of the considerations that need to be factored in when updating an assessment of climate change risks?

LORA MACEACHERN: I think I might turn that one over to Jason and Nancy, just to get a little more detail.

JASON HOLLETT: The approach that we've taken for this risk assessment is a bit different than what we've seen take place in other provinces and territories. I think I mentioned earlier that there's a lot of great information out there on the science and the data of the impacts that are taking place nationally.

We've taken a multi-phased approach to this, which includes updating that information and downscaling it to Nova Scotia so that we understand what the impacts are - not just at the provincial level, but working on the census data level or at the county level, so communities can have more specific information on that.

We also are incorporating a well-being methodology. That's taking a look at the social capitals, the financial capitals, the infrastructure capitals that are out there and examining the vulnerabilities or the resiliency that exists in our communities so that we can take the impacts and then translate that into who is impacted and how they are impacted.

There are some in our society for whom climate change will happen and they'll be able to adapt, because they'll have either the financial means or live in strong communities and have strong family supports and are able to deal with those things. There are others who aren't able to do so, either because the impacts will be more extreme or they come from marginalized communities. We will be required to work more closely with them to make sure that they both understand and are prepared for that.

We also took the time to reach out to a lot of our stakeholder groups to get their input, to make sure that the information that we're gathering is relevant to what they need. We were looking for that feedback on that. Then we worked closely with other departments and agencies across the province to make sure, again, that the information was relevant and useful in the work that they do.

Again, we are the Department of Environment and Climate Change, but the issue really is a government-wide issue, and all departments and agencies, all communities, businesses and citizens need to be able to work to address those issues.

NANCY RONDEAUX: I might add as well around the time frames that we'd be looking at. We're looking at the 2030s, 2050s and 2080s, and how things will be shifting over that time period - the risks that will change and the prioritization of those risks over those time frames as well.

TREVOR BOUDREAU: It's great to hear that it's not only going to be examined at a provincial level but also at that regional or local level, to get an understanding of how it's impacting communities and the people right where they are. You talked a little bit about the updated risk assessment and how it's going to change, but what are some of the expected benefits of actually having that updated risk assessment? What do we expect to get out of it? We talked about not just having data, but what are those expected benefits?

LORA MACEACHERN: Our hope is that this risk assessment will be a really usable source of information for communities, for departments, for sectors as they identify the risks that relate to their communities, to their areas of work and can really make those strategic, important changes that are needed now or in the near future to help adapt and mitigate those effects of climate change going forward.

The intent of the document is not just a piece of data or something that's put on the shelf and forgotten, but something that is really usable for people now and going forward so that they can really take the positive steps that are needed with the support of government and others to adapt so Nova Scotia can adapt to the impacts of climate change.

TREVOR BOUDREAU: We've talked about - the last time this actually happened was 2005. So with the Environmental Goals and Climate Change Reduction Act, we've committed to reviewing the assessments in 2025 and again every five years after that.

Given that we haven't done that in a very long time, how will this improve our response to the effects of climate change compared to not doing it for a number of years?

LORA MACEACHERN: First point on that is, I think it is really important and critical that government has made that one of the goals and requirements that it be regularly updated, because having it enshrined in legislation really does focus the minds of everyone to ensure that it happens and continues to happen going forward. That is a really positive step and one that we in the department are really happy to see in place.

In terms of having those regular updates, it's possible and helpful to be able to see the changes that are occurring over time. Because of the nature of climate change, the impacts will change over time. As we take steps to try to mitigate the impacts of climate change, we'll see what kind of changes that has and the trajectory of it. The regular updates are really important, and it helps all those that I've listed - the community departments and sectors - to be really able to best adapt to the changes.

I'm going to turn it over to Jason and Nancy. I think they have more to add.

JASON HOLLETT: Not foreshadowing anything that's in the risk assessment, but we know it's getting warmer, wetter and stormier here in the province and around the world because of climate change. A lot of our standards, a lot of our practices, a lot of policies are based on the climate that we had in the past 30, 50, 100 years. A lot of our infrastructure has been around for hundreds of years and was built for the climate that existed but it's not existing in the future.

The risk assessment is really going to help us narrow down what it is we need to change, where those risks are that are happening that are right in front of us, and how we start to prepare for those things. For example, our physical infrastructure - our roads, our bridges. Are we building those to the standards that are going to be able to be robust to the impacts that we're seeing in the future? Are homes being built in a way that can withstand those?

You saw recent examples of that here in the province. We had floods in eastern Nova Scotia just last Fall which were very substantial, and on a more extreme basis, what happened in B.C. last year, where they had extreme heat followed by extreme floods. Those extreme events are happening more often and more frequently, and they're having a bigger impact, so it's in all of our best interests to make sure that we not only understand what the impacts are but are starting to change our practices and our approach to that.

NANCY RONDEAUX: I might just add it'll also help prepare our industries. Fisheries, agriculture, and tourism are some of our major industries. This information is going to help them to also prepare for the changing climate and how they may need to adapt some of their practices to be more resilient in the future. I think that's really important as well just to highlight.

[10:00 a.m.]

TREVOR BOUDREAU: I envision - this is kind of how I look at things - but the idea that you're looking at 2030, 2050, 2080, and then in five years you look and you say, how does 2080 look five years from now than what it does today, and in five years from now, has that changed for the better or for the worse? You can take that long-term approach while focusing on how you deal with infrastructure or industry in the interim to get to that level. That's all fascinating stuff to me and a good way to approach it.

In order to meet our emissions reductions and energy generation goals - and I think you've mentioned this already - energy efficiency will be very important. Energy efficiency initiatives help lower bills for individuals and for businesses, so what are we doing to ensure that as a province, we are becoming more energy-efficient?

LORA MACEACHERN: I mentioned at a high level some of the investments earlier on, so I'll just state those again and turn it over to Nancy Rondeaux, who really knows our programs inside out and can provide and highlight a few of them.

Government really has invested in energy efficiency programming: \$74 million of investments in the Green Fund, but \$21.5 million in programs delivered by EfficiencyOne in 2021/22. For example, \$8 million in the SolarHomes Program, \$1.5 million in the Solar for Non-Profits Pilot Program, \$8 million in the Home Energy Assessment program - a number of excellent programs, many of them targeted and beneficial to low-income Nova Scotians through these investments.

As well, as I mentioned earlier, there was a \$57 million investment in energy efficiency programming through Natural Resources and Renewables in the last year, and, of course, that \$15 million Sustainable Communities Challenge Fund, which can also lead to additional investment through what the municipalities bring forward.

Lots to highlight here, and maybe I'll turn it over to Nancy to just focus in on a couple of them that might be of particular interest.

NANCY RONDEAUX: The deputy minister mentioned the HomeWarming program. I think that is really the centrepiece of the programming that we have to help low-income Nova Scotians to adapt and to prepare for the changes to come. It's a program that offers a retrofit at no cost and really gets at the core issue of the efficiency of their home and provides long-term savings.

It's really important for us to be able to fund these types of programs. A homeowner who participates in the HomeWarming program saves around \$900 a year on their heating bill. At current energy prices, that would be about double, so \$1,800.

The other program that we have that I'd like to highlight is the Affordable Multifamily Housing program. That provides an incentive for a landlord who offers below-market rental rates funding to help do retrofits. We follow the CMHC rental rate guidelines in terms of who is eligible for that program. It really makes substantial impacts for folks who are living in affordable housing. They save around \$500 a year.

That was last year, and at current energy prices it would be about \$1,000 a year in energy bills. It's making a significant change and impact for Nova Scotians. I just wanted to highlight those programs.

TREVOR BOUDREAU: How much time do I have left, Mr. Chair?

THE CHAIR: You have seven minutes.

TREVOR BOUDREAU: I'll have one other question, and then I'll hand it over to my colleagues. We know our government is committed to protecting 20 per cent of our land and water by 2030. I was glad to see that in my constituency of Richmond, the Province used federal funding to purchase 248 acres of land near Fourchu and another 23 acres of land near a lake in that area. This land will eventually become part of nature reserves, wilderness areas, provincial parks, and other protected areas. It's great news for my area.

Overall, what are we doing to meet the target of protecting 20 per cent of our land and water by 2030? How are we determining which pieces of land we are protecting?

LORA MACEACHERN: Thanks for the opportunity to speak about that important area of the work we're doing. The decision of government to move to the 20-per-cent protected level was quite significant, and good news to many Nova Scotians. It provides exciting opportunity for our department to work with the Department of Natural Resources and Renewables to advance that goal.

At the moment, we're working on completing the existing Parks and Protected Areas Plan, so that's in place. We're nearing the end of that, and our next step would be to develop the plan for the go-forward. Work's heavily under way, and of course the announcement yesterday about the intent of government to protect Owls Head - when that designation is made - will add to the list of protected areas, and add to our goals and efforts there.

TREVOR BOUDREAU: Thank you for the answer. Thank you, Chair. I'm good with my questioning for now. I'll pass it on to my colleague.

THE CHAIR: MLA Sheehy-Richard.

MELISSA SHEEHY-RICHARD: I like this topic - it's near and dear to my heart. I was a member of the Municipal Climate Change Action Plan Committee in my municipality. MCCAP is much easier to say than trying to say the name of my committee - the action plan I was working on with the municipality. So it's relatable now to be on the next level, and working together with municipalities is key.

In many communities in the province - I'm just going to change gears here - such as the ones in my constituency of Hants West, agriculture is the backbone of our economy. Can you discuss some of the impacts that climate change is having on our agriculture industry and what we are doing in terms of our adaptation to these changes?

LORA MACEACHERN: I agree on the importance of the agricultural industry to Nova Scotia. I'll start and then turn over to my colleagues to provide a bit more detail.

As we mentioned earlier, at a high level the impacts we're feeling in terms of climate change in Nova Scotia are around increase in precipitation, increase in temperatures, differences in storms - more storm and weather events. As you can imagine, those types of changes would have a particular effect on the agriculture industry, given the outdoor nature of the work that's happening there.

With that also comes a bit of an opportunity. With the increased temperatures, there is the possibility and the opportunity for a longer growing season going forward. That can extend the ability of agricultural crops to grow in Nova Scotia, and potentially some different kinds of crops to be able to be grown in Nova Scotia than have been able to be grown in the past.

With that, there are also some cautions, because it can lead to different kinds of pests, and the weather events can lead to the potential for increased storms, which can affect agricultural crops. So there are definitely some opportunities there and some risks to be mindful of, as well, and that's where the committee that you've been a part of and others in the future are really important. It's about understanding those risks and opportunities, and really taking a strategic approach as a sector to adapt and take advantage of the opportunities that exist and to adapt to the risks.

I'll turn it over to, if it's okay, turn it over to Jason and Nancy who may have more.

JASON HOLLETT: Absolutely, agriculture is extremely important. As a matter of fact, our Department of Agriculture was one of our earliest partners in our Climate Adaptation Leadership Program. We've been working with them for a number of years on making sure that we understand the impacts and the opportunities going forward. It's a very diverse sector, so there's not a one-size-fits-all for impacts and solutions.

We've taken the approach to work with them on three specific sectors to dig into the issue more deeply, and as the deputy minister referenced, we're hoping to have those



strategies out this Fall. We're working on the horticulture sector, cattle and sheep sector, and the Christmas tree farming sector to really get into what the impacts are in terms of the science and climate change - how that impacts the complete value chain of the industry, and what we can do to prepare for those impacts as well. That's just an example of one way that we're working in the sector.

MELISSA SHEEHY-RICHARD: I don't know if I'll get the answer for this, but I saw recently the department shared some more information about identifying blue-green algae. What can we do in these situations, and can you elaborate why this is key information given the changing climate, why we should be looking out for these things and alert?

LORA MACEACHERN: I appreciate the opportunity to talk a little bit about this issue because blue-green algae does seem to be on the rise in Nova Scotia, likely because of the effects of climate change. We experienced our first report back at the end of May in the Shubenacadie area, and then there's been a couple of other reportings since then. Because of the risks associated with blue-green algae, we really feel that it's important to focus on public awareness and understanding.

THE CHAIR: Order. The time has elapsed for the PC caucus line of questioning. I will now bring it back to the second round of questioning, starting with the Liberal caucus. You'll have nine minutes each to play with.

MLA Tilley, it's 10:13:10 a.m.

FRED TILLEY: Thank you to the witnesses for answering our questions today. I'm going to bring us back to carbon and the potential carbon taxes that we're looking at in Nova Scotia. I would like to know what Nova Scotians under our current cap and trade system, what are we saving per litre at the pump compared to the federal benchmark?

LORA MACEACHERN: I will turn that one over to Jason Hollett to answer.

JASON HOLLETT: Under the federal government carbon pricing system, the price at the pump is around 10 to 12 cents per litre at the \$50 per tonne cost. Here in the province, again, we're seeing the impact of the cap-and-trade program is between one to two cents per litre depending on the market and how our auctions play out on a twice-a-year basis.

FRED TILLEY: In Nova Scotia, on average we're saving between eight and 10 cents per litre compared to provinces with a carbon tax under our current cap and trade system that's about to expire?

JASON HOLLETT: In terms of carbon pricing, I can offer up that information. Gas pricing is definitely something that's a little bit more complex - it's outside my area of expertise. The price at the pump that we're seeing is influenced by a lot of different factors, I think, but those are the costs that we're aware of.

[10:15 a.m.]

FRED TILLEY: I'll rephrase that. If we were under a carbon tax system now, we would be paying 10 cents to 12 cents more, or 8 cents to 10 cents more per litre, just based on that carbon tax.

JASON HOLLETT: If we were under the federal government's program - if the federal government were implementing their program, the cost would be estimated to be around there. Some jurisdictions operate their programs in different ways, which have different impacts at the pump. Quebec, for example, has a cap-and-trade program which has a different price. I know in some other provinces, they've chosen to reduce the fuel tax price to mitigate some of those costs as well, so the price that you see may be a little bit different depending on where you are.

FRED TILLEY: There's definitely a significant difference between cap-and-trade and carbon tax.

You mentioned in previous questioning that under the federal guidelines, there's going to be increases in the per tonne amount. Based on those increases that are forthcoming, what do you see as the increase per litre based on those? At \$50 now - I think you said - as we move forward up that line, what will the increases be on a carbon tax?

JASON HOLLETT: At \$50 per tonne, it's about 12 cents per litre, \$170 per tonne. Please don't quote me as exact. I think it's around 35 cents per litre, and that would be the price in 2030.

FRED TILLEY: So significant increases in per-litre costs. Ontario, Manitoba, Alberta, and New Brunswick all have two things in common: they all have a carbon tax, and they all have Progressive Conservative governments. So we can probably expect a carbon tax to hit us here in Nova Scotia based on what we heard in the Legislature in the last session.

In the negotiations that are currently under way, we know that there are many options - or several options at least - one of which is cap and trade. Knowing that the cost per litre is significantly higher under a carbon tax system versus a cap-and-trade, it just seems like a no-brainer that we would stay with a cap-and-trade as opposed to moving to a carbon tax. Would you say that my analysis is correct in that?

JASON HOLLETT: Yes, and thank you for the question. There are three options that are available to provinces and territories under the federal government benchmark. You can do a straight carbon tax program like British Columbia has adopted and has had in place since 2007. You can do a cap-and-trade program such as the one that Quebec is a membership of, and Nova Scotia has one in place right now.

There are some slight differences in how we've designed our programs. Quebec is a member of WCI, which means that they're linked to California. Or you could do what's called a hybrid system where you regulate industry with a cap-and-trade-type system, and then you have a fuel levy that's put on the fuels as well. The price can be different depending on how you implement those programs in between those different provinces that are there.

I've explained the cost of the carbon tax, the \$50 per tonne. The latest information that we have from the WCI market, I think the latest market closed around \$40 per tonne, so there are different prices depending on how you design and how you implement those carbon pricing systems that are out there. Even under a carbon tax system, the price can fluctuate depending on the market, and the market depends on the stringency and the availability of allowances, so that also can change over time.

FRED TILLEY: How much time do I have, Mr. Chair?

THE CHAIR: Two and a half minutes.

FRED TILLEY: Two and a half, perfect. I'll be quick.

Thank you for that answer. With regard to the cap-and-trade system, the revenue that comes from that, does that go directly to the Green Fund?

LORA MACEACHERN: Yes, it does go directly to the Green Fund. The Environment Act has provisions that explain how the cap and trade system work, it sets up the Green Fund, it sets out the parameters by which the monies in the Green Fund can be used.

FRED TILLEY: And with regard to a carbon tax, if there was a carbon tax implemented, would that fund go directly to the Green Fund, or could that go into general revenues?

LORA MACEACHERN: We would be looking at the Environment Act and determining what kind of changes would be required based on any system that was put in place going forward.

FRED TILLEY: Based on that, based on the legislation that gets put forward, those increases could be used to offset things like deficit spending as opposed to going directly toward improving environment.

One other quick question that I have is with regard to coal and the idea that we want to be off coal by 2030. What communications have been happening between departments around transition for so many workers who are involved in the power generation system

and how they're going to be able to transition their roles as we move away from coal in the next number of years?

LORA MACEACHERN: Certainly, a really important issue. As we make this transition to a cleaner economy, we do want to ensure that we don't leave people behind, and that people do have the opportunities for work in the new economy. An important consideration . . .

THE CHAIR: Order, the time has elapsed for the Liberal caucus. We'll now move to the NDP caucus. The time is now 10:22:20. MLA Lachance.

LISA LACHANCE: With my nine minutes, I'm going to go a bit rapid fire and not dwell too much on some of the background that I wanted to bring forward. I'm really pleased to hear the commitment to an all-of-government approach, to a multi-government approach. Obviously, this fight, this response involves all of us, so I think that's really important. I was also pleased to hear the well-being lens that's being taken with the development of this work.

You're working with the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Natural Resources and Renewables. How are you working with the Department of Health and Wellness and the Office of Addictions and Mental Health in terms of looking at the health impacts of climate change which we know are growing? The prevalence of Lyme disease is a perfect example, but we know there have been and will be others. At the same time, our health system is strained, budgets are limited, so I'm wondering if you can comment on your work with the Department of Health and Wellness and the Office of Addictions and Mental Health?

LORA MACEACHERN: I think I might turn that over to Jason and Nancy to answer.

JASON HOLLETT: We do work closely with all departments and agencies, obviously. We have been engaging with the Department of Health and Wellness on the impacts of climate change. First, I would just offer that they are experts in their field. They do spend a lot of time monitoring potential future impacts and bringing those in. I know they've done a lot of work on both the risk of Lyme disease associated with ticks and a heat risk index, especially in areas of our Valley to help provide forewarning for folks when we do have some extreme heat events which do contribute both to physical and mental health impacts.

I would just also mention that the risk assessment will also delve into those details and present some of those opportunities for us to continue to work with them on ways that we can improve our responses to those future impacts.

NANCY RONDEAUX: I might add as well that our programs that help people with their energy bills also help with mental health, in terms of the stress of handling those bills. Getting to the core of energy use in homes really can help in that respect as well.

LISA LACHANCE: In the risk assessment, can we expect that those risks going to be identified and linkages made in the risk assessment?

JASON HOLLETT: The well-being framework is really meant to be comprehensive and is meant to take a look at things from a holistic perspective. We'll look at impacts based on vulnerability. We'll look at physical impacts. We'll look at impacts based on communities across the province.

LISA LACHANCE: Great, thank you. I'm going to switch gears. We are still awaiting the Coastal Protection Act, along with this risk assessment. Thinking about our coastlines, which of course we have always known are especially vulnerable to the effects of climate change - we've seen in various jurisdictions the issue of pre-Confederation water lots come up. It is a jurisdictional issue that folks are passing back and forth, but I would argue that it's a real-time climate change risk that we're not properly addressing.

I'm wondering, in your view, is the in-filling of pre-Confederation water lots going to continue? I know the federal government also invited the Minister of Environment and Climate Change to be part of discussions on this issue. I'm wondering if you can confirm if those discussions have taken place.

LORA MACEACHERN: Definitely, protecting Nova Scotia's coastlines is very important. Part of what makes Nova Scotia Nova Scotia is our beautiful coastlines.

In terms of the pre-Confederation water lot issue, I don't have the details on any kind of discussions between the federal and provincial governments. We do have a small team that focuses on coastal protection and the Coastal Protection Act. They're not the group that's with me today. We can take that away and get some more information.

I will tell you that we're working actively on the regulations associated the Coastal Protection Act. We just released the *What We Heard Report* and hope to have those regulations in place in the near future.

LISA LACHANCE: Great, thank you. And just to circle back, I had corresponded with the Minister of Environment and Climate Change around this invitation from the federal government to participate in discussions. Can you confirm if the minister has participated with federal counterparts on pre-Confederation water lots?

LORA MACEACHERN: I don't have that information with me today, but we can certainly look into it for you.

[10:30 a.m.]

LISA LACHANCE: I'll switch gears again. When we were talking about the well-being framework that's guiding all this and talking about vulnerable communities and populations - obviously vulnerability and marginalization can be defined in many ways, but writ large, how are you reaching out to engage with the most vulnerable communities, by different measures, around the climate change risk assessment?

LORA MACEACHERN: I'll turn it over to Jason.

JASON HOLLETT: It's an important aspect of the work that we're doing. We reach out through different communities both through our partner departments and stakeholders that we work with directly. We've made a concerted effort on the work that we've done on the risk assessment to reach out to the Mi'kmaq, to youth, to seniors, and to people with disabilities to share both the approach and the information as it's being developed. That's to make sure we're gathering information that's useful to them in a way that will be relevant to them and that can be used, so that that can guide our decision-making, our policy-making, and how we approach the issue going forward.

LISA LACHANCE: In terms of the well-being framework, can you clarify if you are looking at the issue of environmental racism as a risk as well?

JASON HOLLETT: The well-being framework does consider historical impacts of the environment and the history that's associated with the communities. I can't speak in any detail on how deep that detail goes at this time, but we'll see more details on that when the full risk assessment comes out.

LORA MACEACHERN: I'll just add one point. As you know, there's a commitment in the Environmental Goals and Climate Change Reduction Act about establishing a panel on environmental racism by the end of this year and doing work in 2023. We're working with the Office of Equity and Anti-Racism Initiatives on that as we speak.

LISA LACHANCE: But obviously the need to engage and consider those issues is now, in terms of the climate change risk assessment as well.

I think I only have one minute, so I'm going to ask my question really quickly. Are there flood maps available to Nova Scotians, and is the department looking at options to help Nova Scotians . . .

THE CHAIR: Order. Sorry. We will now pass it on to the PC caucus at 10:31:32. MLA Sheehy-Richard.

MELISSA SHEEHY-RICHARD: I'm just going to finish up. I have one more question, and then my colleague MLA Smith will have a couple for you.

We hear a lot about the opportunities for green technology. I think that this is an area where Nova Scotia has a tremendous amount to offer. What can you tell us about job opportunities - particularly those in rural areas - that will arise when we transition to a greener future for our province?

LORA MACEACHERN: It does seem to be quite an exciting time in terms of opportunities for Nova Scotia as it relates to renewable energy. By that, it's wind, solar, tidal, and also green hydrogen. The Department of Natural Resources and Renewables is actually the lead on this issue, but we can kind of speak a little bit high level to that.

You'd be aware of the recent RFP around 10 per cent renewable resources that came out of the Department of Natural Resources and Renewables. That's a really positive step forward. Government has indicated a real interest around green hydrogen technology here in Nova Scotia. We've had interest from a number of companies looking to establish here, and a new ADM has been appointed to focus on that. All really positive signs, and with that increased interest and opportunity comes the likelihood of job opportunities for Nova Scotians. It's a really positive thing.

In terms of our role at the Department of Environment and Climate Change, of course we shepherd the overall legislation of the Environmental Goals and Climate Change Reduction Act, so we're interested in terms of achieving that goal of 80 per cent renewables. As well, as a regulator for these companies that are potentially coming to establish here in Nova Scotia, we're really focused on having modern, streamlined, and easily understandable and clear environmental pathways so that companies know that they can come and what the rules are to apply and to get the approvals that they need in compliance with our Environment Act and our environment standards.

JASON HOLLETT: The job-creation potential is great in Nova Scotia. Renewable energy projects will be located in communities across the province, absolutely. A lot of the wind farms that we have in place right now create jobs both in the construction and the maintenance there.

Energy efficiency spending right now has created about 2,500 jobs across the province. Really, that work is just as concentrated in rural communities as in urban ones. Our homes exist everywhere. They need to be upgraded and refitted.

I'll also mention that just this past Monday, Sustainable Marine Energy launched a tidal energy technology that connected to the grid for the first time in Nova Scotia. That took place on Digby Neck, which is an exciting development, in partnership with FORCE, the tidal facility that we've constructed in the Minas Basin.

NANCY RONDEAUX: I would just like to add a couple of other notes of some start-up companies that have really grown and are actually exporting now. We have CarbonCure, which you've heard about - the concrete company. We've also got a lot of research going on in the battery lab with Jeffrey Dahn, as well as LED roadway lighting, which is exporting to several countries. Great success stories that are built on the foundation that we've set in terms of EGCCRA and clean growth.

MELISSA SHEEHY-RICHARD: Thank you very much. I'll pass the floor to my colleague, MLA Smith.

THE CHAIR: MLA Smith.

KENT SMITH: Thank you to the witnesses for the great answers we've been hearing today so far. My questions are going to focus on communication and collaboration. You've already referenced it a couple of times in working with the Department of Agriculture, the connections that were made between the Department of Health and Wellness, and Addictions and Mental Health.

There was a report in 2018, which said that without effective coordination, governments might overlook important opportunities or challenges, or develop a redundant or contradictory policies. I'm wondering if we can elaborate a little bit more on the work that's being done between your department and other departments to effectively reduce climate change?

LORA MACEACHERN: I appreciate the question. I think there's a lot that we can talk about there. There's one area that we haven't had a chance to highlight yet. I'll just take the opportunity because it's a really positive collaboration amongst the Atlantic Provinces, and it's CLIMAtlantic. It is a new regional data hub that has been set up through funding that we've provided, as well as some funding from the federal government. You can check out their information available on the website. They also have people who are available to offer proactive information, support research projects, really provide good usable information about the risks of climate change and areas to focus on as well.

We're really pleased. We've got a new staff person who is working between that organization and our department, and has been doing presentations everywhere across the province to provide this very helpful information - some of which we've talked about, but in greater detail. I wanted to mention that.

I'll turn it over to my colleagues who I know can talk a little bit more about some of the inter-departmental work.

JASON HOLLETT: As the deputy minister said, we've talked a lot about our Climate Adaptation and Leadership Program, which is really an integration of work between the departments on adaptation and making sure that's being rolled out. We have a



strong history of working with our Atlantic Provinces as well, as the deputy minister mentioned on CLIMAtlantic, but on other issues of climate change - both the regional tables like the New England Governors and Eastern Canadian Premiers.

Natural Resources Canada leads up what's called the adaptation plenary. That brings together all provinces, territories and stakeholders on a regular basis to talk about updating science, updating practices, policies, and procedures so that we are consistently applying what it is that we do across the country.

We do have informal networks and informal discussions almost on a daily basis with departments, communities, stakeholders, some strong partners with Efficiency Nova Scotia, the Clean Foundation, the universities, the community colleges. It's nice to see that these connections are increasing and deepening as the issue becomes more well known and people become more interested in it.

KENT SMITH: How much time is remaining?

THE CHAIR: You have less than a minute.

KENT SMITH: Less than a minute? I'll go quickly.

Just a quick update on the Environmental Goals and Climate Change Reduction Act. One of the goals is to have 30 per cent of vehicle sales in place by 2030. What action have we taken to facilitate greater sales of electric vehicles in our province?

LORA MACEACHERN: That area is led by the Department of Natural Resources and Renewables, but there are a couple of programs that we have funded, which are quite helpful: the Next Ride program and another one as well. I'm just going to turn it over to Nancy who can detail those.

NANCY RONDEAUX: Next Ride is a campaign to put people in the driver's seat of electric vehicles, to get them familiar with it, to answer questions, to dispel myths. It's been from one end of the province to the other, and I think it's really helpful to get people familiar with EVs and comfortable with them. That's one.

The other is we're offering an incentive for smart meters within condos and apartment buildings, and we're also providing supports to condo boards to help them make decisions and to chart the path on how they will implement and put in place the smart meters.

THE CHAIR: Order. The time has elapsed for questions from the three caucuses. I would like to thank the witnesses for joining us today and providing us with all the information and answering the questions of our members. I just want to ask if there are any closing remarks you'd like to read?

LORA MACEACHERN: We just wanted to say thank you very much for the opportunity to speak today. Although we've had some sobering conversation about the impacts we're experiencing now and will be experiencing in the future around climate change, we did want to end on a little bit more positive note by saying the story of climate change in Nova Scotia isn't fully written yet.

There are lots of positive things that are happening to combat the effects of climate change, and a lot that will be done in the near future and going forward to help combat that. It's really all of us working together to achieve that. We appreciate your time and attention today, thank you.

THE CHAIR: I'd like to again thank the witnesses for attending.

We have some committee business. We've had some correspondence through the clerk, and then we have a motion from our June 8<sup>th</sup> meeting that we need to bring back to the table. We will start with the request to change the date of our June 29<sup>th</sup> meeting. The MLA for Dartmouth North had sent a request about the possibility of changing the date of the June 29<sup>th</sup> meeting as there are a number of graduations that day which makes it difficult to find substitutes to attend the meeting.

I'll open up to the floor for discussion. I just want to read this part. The clerk has checked with the witnesses scheduled for the June 29<sup>th</sup> meeting on housing, regarding whether they would be available on July 6<sup>th</sup>, and they are.

We'll go with MLA Chender and then MLA Maguire.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Thanks to the committee for considering this request. I know that in Dartmouth, every graduation is happening not just in that week, but on that day, and specifically on that morning. Already we can't be in two places at once, but definitely not three places at once, and that seems to be true across HRM and our outside-HRM caucus members not travelling.

We would ask the committee's indulgence, particularly given that the witnesses are available, in moving that meeting one week.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: I'd just like to put a motion on the floor to move that to July 6<sup>th</sup>.

THE CHAIR: We have a motion on the floor. Can you read your motion?

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: I put a motion on the floor to move the June 29<sup>th</sup> meeting to July 6<sup>th</sup> so that members can attend graduations.

[10:45 a.m.]

THE CHAIR: We have a motion on the floor. Is there any further discussion? MLA MacDonald.

JOHN A. MACDONALD: They may be available that day, but I'm not available that day, actually. Because we weren't meeting, I am scheduled to be out of town.

Just to be clear, we're making an adjustment because an MLA can't be here. Mine happened to be in the afternoon. I'd understand, but if it passes, somebody from the PC caucus will have to be in my seat.

THE CHAIR: Okay. MLA Chender.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: I don't want to belabour it, but just to be clear, our entire caucus is unavailable, so it's not just one person, as well as Mr. Maguire - but I appreciate that, thanks.

THE CHAIR: MLA Maguire, you're calling the question? The question is called.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is defeated.

We will now move to MLA Maguire's motion from June 8<sup>th</sup>. I'll read what the motion was. It was left on the floor at last week's meeting. The motion was "To call Nova Scotia Power the third week of October regarding power rates, infrastructure costs, and bonuses."

We'll open up the floor for discussion. MLA Maguire.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Well, we know how this is going to go, because they just voted against us attending our kids' graduation, so we can probably just throw this out too. But we do know through a FOIPOP that we were misled in the Nova Scotia Legislature. The Premier did meet, and the caucus did have, months before the increases, a presentation from the Department of Natural Resources and Renewables on what was happening here.

Through that FOIPOP, it almost looks like government worked hand in hand with Nova Scotia Power on how to sidestep the issue of increases by distracting both the Opposition Parties and the media with the solar power increases.

Again, I'm going to put this motion on the floor. This will be the seventh or eighth time that this party, the Progressive Conservative Party of Nova Scotia - we could probably name it the Power Company Party of Nova Scotia - will vote this down. More and more is

coming out on FOIPOP's on their relation to this topic, and it's becoming abundantly clear why they're going to vote this down. But I'd like to put that motion on the floor.

THE CHAIR: MLA Chender.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: I'd like to suggest a friendly amendment to the motion, which is to add the Affordable Energy Coalition as a witness for the proposed meeting.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: I agree with that.

THE CHAIR: We have an amendment to the motion. MLA MacDonald.

JOHN A. MACDONALD: I was going to let it go and not bring up the point of order, but then of course we get listed as misleading in the Legislature, which we weren't. So for me, I'm declaring a point of order on this. This is not a substantial change. As the member said, he's going to continue to keep bringing it back, changing the date, making a tweak. Technically, in my opinion, that's actually what finished the meeting. It wasn't MLA Maguire's statement on his motion.

For me, where it finished off was to get a ruling from Legislative Counsel on whether this really is a substantial amendment or not. If we can get that, and if they believe it is, then fine to vote. But in my opinion, it's not.

THE CHAIR: MLA Maguire.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: There is a substantial change to this with the amendment. There is an amendment attached to it. That is a substantial change.

Legislative Counsel has ruled in the past that it is a change. Having a date change is still a change. I would like to call the question.

THE CHAIR: A request has been added by MLA MacDonald - he called a point of order. I'm going to refer it back to Legislative Counsel. Mr. Hebb.

GORDON HEBB: The rule is that it has to be substantially different. It's not for me to tell you whether you consider it to be substantially different - that's for the Chair to decide. As long as it's substantially different or there's been a significant change in circumstances since the previous motion.

I don't know the exact wording of the previous motions, but that's for the Chair to determine. That's not for me to tell you what you consider to be substantial.

THE CHAIR: MLA Chender.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: There has been a substantial change in circumstances since the last time this was raised on the floor of the Legislature. We've learned that Nova Scotia Power is seeking not to share details around their executive compensation with the NSUARB. We've also learned that the Progressive Conservative caucus did have knowledge of a substantial increase in profits, at least according to the Public Service, prior to our last sitting of the Legislature, and I think that that for our caucus is a substantial change in the context around bringing this forward.

The Progressive Conservative caucus has continued to say that we should wait until the Fall, and I think that this is a matter of urgency. I think this it's a matter of urgency for Nova Scotians who want information, want to understand the process that's happening, and are being continually met with obfuscation from Nova Scotia Power without any help from the government.

THE CHAIR: Is there any further discussion? I'd like to take a two-minute recess just to have a discussion. Fair enough? Thank you.

[10:51 a.m. The committee recessed.]

[10:55 a.m. The committee reconvened.]

THE CHAIR: Order. A decision on MLA MacDonald's point of order is not a point of order. It has changed with the witnesses being added to the amendment. MLA Maguire has called the question. Can we read the motion with the amendment?

There's been a recorded vote, but let's read the motion fully with the amendment.

KIM LANGILLE: What I have is to call Nova Scotia Power the third week of October regarding power rates, infrastructure costs and bonuses, and to add the Affordable Energy Coalition as a witness as well.

[The clerk calls the roll.]

[10:56 a.m.]

**YEAS**

Hon. Brendan Maguire  
Fred Tilley  
Lisa Lachance  
Claudia Chender

**NAYS**

Trevor Boudreau  
Melissa Sheehy-Richard  
John A. MacDonald  
Kent Smith  
Dave Ritcey

THE CLERK: For, 4. Against, 5.

THE CHAIR: The motion is defeated.

MLA Maguire.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Mr. Chair, I'd just like to say that as per the work that's been done with the Auditor General around non-partisanship and helping this committee move along, I think it's extremely disappointing.

We have witnesses who are willing to come in July and switch their schedule around so that MLAs can attend graduation ceremonies for kids in our communities who haven't had actual graduation ceremonies in years. The Conservative government - not the Progressive Conservative government - the Nova Scotia Conservative government has chosen to politicize graduations. They've chosen to make their vacations and getting out the door of Public Accounts Committee more important than doing the work of an MLA.

It's shameful that they would sit here and act like we're all holding hands on this committee and everything's going to be great, when the easiest of motions that was put forward by the NDP and my colleague from Dartmouth South was voted down so that they could not attend graduations. For the Auditor General and for anyone watching, this is your government.

THE CHAIR: MLA Tilley.

FRED TILLEY: Thank you, Chair. I just have to speak on this as well because when the public watches the way we work and the way we're supposed to be here for all Nova Scotians - we're supposed to work together. To make change of a meeting for a very, very valid reason a political issue, I think is just very disturbing.

I don't think the people of Nova Scotia would appreciate the fact that we can't come together on a small request like that. I'm just blown away, the way this committee has acted today in regard to that request. I need to get that on the record. Thank you.

THE CHAIR: I see no other hands up, so I will call this meeting adjourned.

[The committee adjourned at 10:59 a.m.]