

HANSARD

NOVA SCOTIA HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

COMMITTEE

ON

RESOURCES

Thursday, February 23, 2012

COMMITTEE ROOM 1

**Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture
Coastal Zone Management**

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Resources Committee

Mr. Sidney Prest (Chairman)
Mr. Jim Boudreau (Vice-Chairman)
Mr. Howard Epstein
Mr. Gary Ramey
Ms. Lenore Zann
Mr. Leo Glavine
Mr. Andrew Younger
Mr. Alfie MacLeod
Mr. Chuck Porter

[Mr. Mat Whynott replaced Mr. Howard Epstein]
[Mr. Leonard Preyra replaced Mr. Jim Boudreau]
[Ms. Michele Raymond replaced Ms. Lenore Zann]
[Mr. Allan MacMaster replaced Mr. Alfie MacLeod]

In Attendance:

Ms. Jana Hodgson
Legislative Committee Clerk

WITNESSES

Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture

Mr. Paul LaFleche, Deputy Minister
Mr. Greg Roach, Associate Deputy Minister
Mr. Justin Huston, Coastal Zone Coordinator

HALIFAX, THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 2012

STANDING COMMITTEE ON RESOURCES

9:00 A.M.

CHAIRMAN
Mr. Sidney Prest

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay, I guess we'll get started here with our meeting, it's a little after 9:00 a.m. I want to say good morning to everyone and welcome everybody here. It's going to be a fairly full meeting here and probably very interesting.

First of all, I would like to say that the first round of questioning would be trying to keep to 10 minutes for committee members and also, if they could keep the questioning focused on the topic and not alter from the topic.

We'll start with the introduction of our committee members and then we can let the staff from the Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture introduce themselves.

[The committee members introduced themselves.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: We will start with the presentation from the staff of the Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture.

MR. PAUL LAFLECHE: I am Paul LaFleche, Deputy Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture. Thank you for inviting us here today. I've known several of the MLAs here for a long time. Mr. Ramey I met on the first day I was in Nova Scotia. In fact, I think he gave me a lecture.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Are you asking for an apology? (Laughter)

MR. LAFLECHE: No, no, he did a good job. He was one of the speakers at a two-day workshop I had to orient me to Nova Scotia, with several of my colleagues. It has worked out well, Gary. Of course Allan and I met, when I was at the community college, on a bus in Port Hawkesbury many years ago, touring the Stora plant, I think, in 1999, so I am pleased to be here.

We have a long history in the coastal area in Nova Scotia. I should say we represent fisheries, we are fisheries here, but we represent many, many different departments and agencies. Greg Roach actually started this project many years ago so I'm going to allow him – he's our Associate Deputy Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Aquaculture. He is going to speak about some of the history and then Justin Huston will give you an update on where we are on the coastal strategy itself. Greg.

MR. GREG ROACH: Thanks, Paul. I'll just go back to set the stage a little bit. Coastal zone management is something that we've discussed within Nova Scotia for a number of decades. The last real run we took at this was in the mid-1990s. We had a concept document called *Coastal 2000*. The idea was that by the year 2000 we would approach an integrated management type - I guess forum - among all users in the coastal zone in Nova Scotia.

Now that was led by the Department of Environment and the Department of Fisheries. We released the document and we did consultation around the province. People didn't really get it, they didn't understand what it was that we were trying to do with this coastal management. There was no resourcing and it was just two departments. The other departments were not really partners at the time and we couldn't really do much without the full partnership of all those with regulatory mandate in the coastal zone, so it kind of just petered out and then became quiet for quite some time.

In the late 1990s, the federal government introduced Canada's Oceans Act and that all of a sudden brought a focus on the oceans and on coast for integrated management. They asked Nova Scotia to be a partner on some of the discussions and there was a federal-provincial oceans task group. We in Nova Scotia thought it wasn't appropriate just to bring a fisheries voice to that task group, that we should really bring a government voice or multi-department voice. We created what we now call the Provincial Oceans Network - PON is what we call it, so if you hear PON, we're talking about the Provincial Oceans Network - which is actually a committee of all provincial departments that have a mandate or an interest in Canada's oceans or coasts. PON would bring our provincial perspective to the federal groups.

Under Canada's Oceans Act, the federal government then became interested not just in distant waters and large ocean management areas, but actually in coastal management areas. At that point we were saying, just a second, that's getting very close to the provincial domain. We manage many of the activities in the coastal zone and the federal government were moving there with the very difficult challenge of trying to manage a large ocean area offshore. It's obscure, what are you managing? Is it oil and gas?

Is it fisheries? But when you get into the coastal zone where all the users interact, there is a lot more material to start to work on there, but it was, we believed, largely a provincial domain. Then we said, okay, we've got to get our own house in order as far as a coastal plan, coastal strategy, whatever you wish.

PON, our Provincial Oceans Network, which was largely dormant, came to life and we took on some strategists to work on the coastal file. Justin led that group and worked with PON to start developing our coastal work. From that background, I'm going to turn it over to Justin and he can tell us how it has gone from there.

MR. JUSTIN HUSTON: Again, I guess to echo others, thanks for the opportunity to be here to present to the standing committee. I'm going to try to provide a quick overview of the process to date to develop the coastal strategy, and highlight some of the things that are in the proposed coastal strategy as well as the consultation we've undertaken to date.

Again, just to highlight the Provincial Oceans Network, I serve as the chair for that Provincial Oceans Network, which represents 15 different provincial departments and agencies - as Greg had mentioned - that have either a mandate or an interest in coastal issues. This group, PON, was relatively dormant until we started getting more active on the federal file. We quickly realized as a government that we were very reactive and we were dealing with issues along our coast in a very sector-based or one-off approach. So things like coastal water quality, Environment would look at it from one angle, we would look at it from a different angle in Fisheries, Tourism would look at it from a different angle, and we really weren't taking a comprehensive or coordinated, strategic approach.

In 2008, government released a Coastal Management Framework, which was the first of its kind across the country, which really highlighted some vision, mission, goals, and kind of high-level stuff about how we were going to move forward on coastal management. One of the key things it did was instead of just saying at a high level that we love the coast, we want good, sustainable jobs and a clean environment, we also wanted to take action on priority issues along the coast and so it called for the development of a coastal strategy. This coastal strategy was to really take coordinated action on priority issues.

The first step of that process for the strategy was to develop a State of Nova Scotia's Coast Report. Instead of talking about where we want to be in the future without any kind of baseline, we first undertook a major report - again, the first of its kind in the country - to really get an assessment of the baseline of priority issues along the coast. I'll talk about those priority issues in a little bit but things like water quality, public access, coastal development, sea level rise, storm events, et cetera.

That report was released in 2009, and along with that release was also a commitment to do broad consultation across the province and with key stakeholders and levels of government, so that took place in 2009.

We did a series of open houses across the province; eight across the province. We met with key stakeholders and interest groups. We had on-line surveys, written submissions were accepted. We also did a phone survey of 600 Nova Scotia households to get their take on some of these priority issues, as well as meeting separately with levels of government – municipalities through the union, meeting with all the federal departments that have a role in coastal and oceans management, as well as through the Mi'kmaq, through the KMKO and negotiation office.

Now during that consultation we heard specifically what people thought about - well what do we want the future of the coast to look like 10 or 20 years from now? We asked them specifically about those issues - what are you concerned about when we say “public access”, what are you concerned about with public access to the coast, or coastal hazards such as erosion and flooding? What are you concerned about and what can we do, collectively, as a province, as Nova Scotians, to address those issues?

There were two things that we heard during that round of consultation which stood out. One was that one of the issues we didn't include was the issue of governance. People wanted to focus in on how we make decisions along the coast and how community groups and interest groups are involved with that decision-making process. So governance was raised as one of the issues. We listened and we incorporated that into our draft strategy going forward, so governance became a key issue.

The other key thing we heard was that people wanted to see the draft strategy. They wanted an opportunity to comment on a draft strategy before we were to make it final. The original process was that we intended to take people's feedback, incorporate that in and then release a final coastal strategy. People said they wanted to see a draft, so we released the draft in October 2011. Then we had a two-month consultation period which wrapped up just before the holidays - I think around December 16th.

Through that process we posted the report on-line and we allowed for folks to complete a survey. They could provide written submissions or they could contact us and we could come out and talk to them in their communities. Really the purpose of that consultation was, first and foremost, to honour our commitment that we would listen. When we went out with that first round of consultations, we said to people, tell us what you want and we're going to work to incorporate that in the final strategy. One of the key things they said was, well we want to see if you've actually listened to us, so we want to look at this draft strategy.

It was also to confirm the priority issues and direction that, as government, we had set and to make sure that we had a sounding board from Nova Scotians and it was to further prioritize what we're going to do. If you think of an issue like sea level rise and storm events, it's a huge, huge complex issue. The challenge with coastal management is to focus in on the key things that need to get done that will result in the most benefit and the most effective use of our resources to address those issues.

We also wanted to reaffirm the approach that we've taken all along, to be very collaborative with other levels of government, key stakeholders and the general public in moving this forward. These issues are so complex that we really are going to need everybody on board here to move them forward.

I want to highlight that, again, we spoke with those same groups - interest groups, the public, different levels of government - and we also made a commitment to post all our feedback back on-line, so you can go to our Web site, gov.ns.ca/coast, and you can see all the verbatim comments that came in from the different groups that provided feedback.

We haven't posted any of the information that was submitted through municipalities, through the Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities - we heard back from 17 individual municipalities - because that is government-to-government and we're not going to make those public, as well as our consultations with the federal government and with the Mi'kmaq, but all the public feedback is up on-line.

I want to take a little bit of time to highlight what the coastal strategy is about. Again, it's about coordinating action on these priority issues. Those priority issues - again, it's governance, coastal development, public coastal access, working waterfronts, coastal hazards such as sea level rise and storm events, coastal water quality, and sensitive coastal ecosystems.

We focused our efforts on identifying clear objectives for the next 10 years for those different issues, as well as specific actions to move us towards those objectives. For example, some of the key actions that we've identified in the draft strategy include coastal development standards along the coast. That's talking about where and how people build along the coast. Other key actions - looking at inventorying our public access sites and doing a better job communicating to the public about where they are in their rights and responsibilities as coastal stewards, about how to take care of the coast. Other key things: working in partnership with municipalities about planning strategies in coastal areas, as well as adopting water quality standards that have been developed by the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment. Those are just some high-level examples of some of the key actions.

I think I'll leave it there for now and maybe open it up for questions. I think a lot of people have a lot of questions about what this strategy is about, so I'll leave it open for now.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you for your presentation. As one of our committee members was late coming in, I will let him introduce himself.

MR. ANDREW YOUNGER: Andrew Younger, MLA, Dartmouth East.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Just the same as our usual meetings, Andrew, we'll try to make the first round of questioning at 10 minutes. Also, we'll focus the questions on the topic at hand, not deviate from it.

Our first gentleman for questions is Mat Whynott.

MR. MAT WHYNOTT: Thank you for your presentation. Justin, I know you and many people from the department have worked hard on this. I know it's still in the draft form, but thank you for everything that you've done on this file.

I guess maybe a quick snapper is, can you give some examples - and I know you talked a little bit about stakeholders - of who those people are, just a few, to give us an idea?

MR. HUSTON: Sure. I'll highlight some of the key stakeholders - levels of government, which we've been very good about engaging with municipalities, both through the union and with individual municipalities. As to be expected, some are more active and interested than others, but certainly the bigger municipalities have been very active in this process, as well as federal departments we've engaged at both the RDG level as well as staff level, and through the Mi'kmaq through the KMKNO.

In terms of stakeholder groups, I'd say the most active voices have been through the NGO community, so groups like the Ecology Action Centre, the Coastal Coalition of Nova Scotia have been quite active. Also, a lot of individuals actually; we've been quite pleased and surprised that individual homeowners along the coast have taken the time to respond and write in both their concerns, as well as their praise or their interest in seeing this move forward.

RDAs have been quite engaged, especially in the first round of consultations. We heard a lot from regional development associations. I'm trying to think of some of the other key groups. For the first round of consultation we heard a lot from harbour authorities, the fishing industry. The second round of consultation we didn't hear as much and I think that was because some people really wanted to see that second draft and other people were, I think, let's get on with it and release the strategy.

MR. WHYNOTT: What makes you think that you can harmonize all of the existing approaches to coastal use and development, and somehow reconcile so many diverse interests?

MR. HUSTON: I think that's always going to be a challenge and I think the key is that this won't be a silver bullet that's all of a sudden going to solve these complex issues along our coast. By its inherent nature, the coast is a complex area and we've developed and have been using the coast for hundreds of years. What I think is key is that this strategy will help to get everybody pointed in the same direction and while pursuing departmental

or sectoral mandates, we all have a common vision of, well, here's what our end goal is for protecting the coast, but also making sure that it supports good jobs and a strong economy.

MR. WHYNOTT: So I know for a fact that there have been groups out there, like the Coastal Coalition of Nova Scotia and the Ecology Action Centre, that have said we as a province really need a coastal Act, so a piece of legislation that actually formally recognizes the coast. Why doesn't the strategy recognize that and include the establishment of a coastal Act?

MR. HUSTON: The thing with a coastal Act is, a piece of legislation is a specific tool and the question that we've always asked back - because we're in close communication with the coalition and the EAC - is, what would you want the Act specifically to do or to protect, as they say we need an Act to protect the coast? What are we protecting? Is it public access? Is it sensitive ecosystems? Is it strong economy? Is it all of the above? I think it's a bit about putting the cart before the horse in terms of, well, we need an Act. I think legislation is very important and it's very key, but I think it needs to be targeted to be effective. In the strategy, we have identified the need to review and amend or possibly have new legislation. But I think at this stage, with the draft strategy, I think it's premature to say that what we need is the solution as the end result. Certainly it's still on the table, that idea.

MR. WHYNOTT: Okay, so it's not ruled out yet?

MR. HUSTON: No, no, absolutely.

MR. WHYNOTT: But it's an idea that can be . . .

MR. HUSTON: Yes.

MR. WHYNOTT: Okay. Nova Scotia is moving forward with a lot of different strategies in regard to natural resources, the water strategy. Then we hear plans about an aquaculture strategy, the marine renewable energy strategy and all these different things. How does that kind of fit into the puzzle of where we're going as a province, and really trying to protect the environment and protect our province for the future?

MR. HUSTON: Yes, it is sort of the era of strategies. There are a lot of strategies going on in government. Just first off, we've been working very closely with those different departments that are leading those strategy processes. So we have our Provincial Oceans Network - where we meet on a monthly basis and we're meeting with the same people who are leading those initiatives - as well as we have even ad hoc groups where the different leads of the different strategies meet on a regular basis to talk about how we can make them connect.

That's happening in sort of a theoretical or operational perspective but it's also in the actual strategies. For example, in our draft strategy we have around the water quality

objectives and actions, they are the same as are in the water strategy, and as well as natural resources, we made sure that we're using the same language and we're really linking in. We're being very careful not to overlap but to be consistent and to build on each other's strategies.

MR. WHYNOTT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm good for now.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Mr. Younger.

MR. ANDREW YOUNGER: Thank you for your presentation. I think I heard this being alluded to a little bit when I walked in the door - and I apologize for being late - 19 years ago my first job with Fisheries and Oceans was working on the coastal zone management strategy with the Gulf of Maine Council and the federal government. That report, which was about two feet thick, still sits on my desk at home and nothing has happened with it and that is 19 years ago.

I guess the first question is, now there's sort of a provincially-led strategy, if you will, what's going to make this one any different?

MR. HUSTON: A good question. When I started, I worked with the Gulf of Maine Council - I'm one of the provincial leads for that. When I started this work, I inherited two file boxes full of stuff on Coastal 2000 and that work as well. So I certainly know - as Greg alluded to, there's a 30-year history of starts and stops with this.

What I think is different this time around are two key things - well, I'd say three. One is that the public interest has never been higher in coastal issues. So if you look at the paper pretty much any week, especially in the summertime, there's always a story about a beach closure or people don't have access to the coast anymore, or there's an erosion. The public interest and awareness is much higher than ever before and I think that translates to political will as well.

The other piece is that in years past, I think we had focused on sort of this theoretical around governance and how we needed to change as governments in the way we manage the coast. Learning from past experiences, we really tried to focus in on concrete things, which is why we focused in on the issues. So if we can focus in on making positive changes to specific issues along the coast, then I think things follow in behind that.

The other piece, too, is I think that we've seen a really strong commitment from within government, across departments, at both the staff and the senior level, that really wasn't there before. Before, we had tried to do Coastal 2000, which is around the same time, and at the end of the day only Environment and Fisheries and Aquaculture were prepared to move on it.

Learning from that, we really worked on building this Provincial Oceans Network, to make sure that while it's our department leading it, we're only coordinating and

facilitating it. DNR is really heavily involved as well as Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations and ERDT. So I think that's a bit different this time around as well.

MR. YOUNGER: So what's going to happen? Obviously this crosses a lot of jurisdictions, I mean you also alluded to the Gulf of Maine Council, so once you get on that side you're into some issues there. There's obviously a federal jurisdiction issue here as well. In fact, some of it becomes a bit of a grey area, in terms of who exactly is responsible for certain things. For example, there was quite a lot of work being done for a little while on inshore spawning areas, which couldn't be identified through regular trawl surveys because obviously the water depths were too low so you couldn't get the research trawlers in to do that work. That was being done by collecting fishermen's local knowledge and there were a number of reports that were done by scientists out of the Bedford Institute on that, but that obviously crosses into federal jurisdiction.

So unless you have the support of the federal government - which at the moment I would be hard pressed to say is an environmentally focused federal government - I can't say that's where their focus is. What has the response been like from them at I guess as much a political level as it is at a science level?

MR. HUSTON: Let's see if I can make this relatively simple. We've been able to build a very good relationship with the feds, I would say over the past five or six years, especially at a regional level. Government to government we were able to sign an MOU, the first in this country on coastal management with the Government of Canada - DFO as the lead and ourselves the lead - and the Government of Nova Scotia on coastal and ocean management and a commitment to co-operate. We have that on paper and in operation it's actually very good in terms of our collaboration, our ability to work together and our willingness to work together.

One of the key challenges that I think we have always faced as a province is that we were always reactive to what direction the wind was blowing for the federal government. With this strategy we've been able to articulate very clearly well, you guys might be interested in doing these things or not doing these things, but here as a government is where we're prepared to work and we're prepared to focus. With that has come a much clearer understanding and willingness on their half to be able to work with us on specific things and understanding why we're not prepared to work on others.

Now, having said that, the recent budget cuts coming from the federal government will severely impact their ability to operate at a regional level. They have direct cuts in staff and funding to the programs that we've worked on with them collaboratively, including the Gulf of Maine Council. So that will be a challenge for us going forward and in some areas where there is that shared jurisdiction it's going to be more of a challenge.

In other areas of coastal management where we have much clearer jurisdiction - land use planning for example and activities along the coast - we don't necessarily need their collaboration as much. (Interruption) Environment Canada and DFO have gone

through processes recently to identify what they see as priority areas for coastal management and they've borrowed actually heavily from what we've done in Nova Scotia because we got out in front and we said here is what we think the issues are.

MR. YOUNGER: And that's good to hear, I'm glad you mentioned the cuts because that's one of the things I was next going to go to. With those cuts at the science and the monitoring level - I guess we won't know for another month or so how bad they will be, but if you talk to most of the people over there it looks like there could be fairly severe cuts in the scientific and monitoring workforce in Nova Scotia in particular, on coastal and offshore areas anyway. My fear will be that they'll say, go do what you want and then five years from now - if they have more money or there's a different government or if the priorities change - all of a sudden they're going to be real interested and you will have moved in a direction that they don't support and which ultimately they have control over either through various conventions or whatever the case may be.

One of the other jurisdictions you mentioned was land use planning and there's no doubt in reading through the strategy, but also hearing that people have said that coastal zone access is an issue. If you go to Eastern Passage, there was a big thing recently with surfers, a few years ago it was divers down here and then it's people just going to the beach. That is another jurisdictional issue and I guess the province is in charge ultimately, but it's also municipalities and how they choose to determine parkland dedications and that through regional planning strategies. How have you or are you engaging the municipalities in terms of rolling that sort of thing, those access requirements, into their land use strategies?

MR. HUSTON: In terms of the access specifically, maybe I'll talk a bit broader about that land use planning. We heard it through the direct consultations with municipalities that, as might be expected, they want to see provincial leadership, but they don't want downloading and they don't want sort of dictatorial - you do this and we're not going to give you any support or resources to do it.

It has been very interesting over the past three or four years that I've been working on this file - about 10 years now. When I first started, municipalities didn't want to have anything to do with talking about coastal planning and there has been a real sea change - pardon the pun - of the recognition that we need to think more practically about where and how we build along the coast. That is mainly related to things like flooding and erosion and being prepared for impacts from climate change. However, that also recognizes some things like public access and protecting sensitive areas at the same time.

In terms of working with municipalities, we have been very careful about not going too far down the road of saying, here's what shall be done, but rather the commitment from the province to work in partnership with municipalities to come up with new approaches to address challenges of land use planning along the coast. What was proposed in this strategy is for the development standards or working with municipalities on by-laws or planning strategies is to work in close partnership with the municipalities themselves.

MR. YOUNGER: My personal view is that obviously it's better to have the municipalities on board with it, but there's a certain point where we don't want all the access, or significant access, to the coastline to be gone from public access and there is a certain point where the province is going to have to say, either you guys get it in your land use planning strategies to protect access at reasonable points or the province says, too bad, we're doing it. Yes, they'll see that as downloading, I'm sure, but they can ask for leadership, but they only want leadership when it's what they agree with sometimes. I think there is an issue there where I'm willing to bet that the vast majority of Nova Scotians would want to see - not that they necessarily expect to have every bit of the coastline public, I don't think that's reasonable, but that there is reasonable access to the coastline.

The last thing I want to ask about that in this round is, I know the province over the years has given HRM, for example, \$50,000 towards their LiDAR mapping of the coastline, which they were doing more for how close can you build a home to the ocean and stuff with climate change and sea level rise. Are you looking at partnering similarly in other coastal municipalities around the province to get a proper LiDAR map of the coastline?

MR. HUSTON: Let me respond a little bit to the access piece and then the LiDAR. I think one of the key challenges with the access piece as well is that upwards of 85 per cent to 86 per cent of coast is privately owned and so other than municipalities or the provincial government buying more coastal land, one of the key things for access is to be working with private landowners to work with them that if they are interested in providing public access to address things like liability - are they going to be sued if someone hurts themselves on their beach? There are issues around that that we're going to have to focus on as well and the strategy does identify some of those areas.

In regard to mapping, and specifically LiDAR, certainly, that's an area that the strategy has outlined as a key area to work on. Some of that work is already going on and so it's going to be building on that and moving forward definitely in terms of both mapping and vulnerability assessments for communities.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. MacMaster.

MR. ALLAN MACMASTER: It's good to have a chance to ask some questions today. I represent an area that probably has as much or more coastline as anybody in the room so it's certainly an important issue in my area. If we could touch a bit on aquaculture to start, there has been a number of events in the last couple of weeks. There is a report by the Friends of Port Mouton Bay that claims that a fish farm polluted the bay. There has been a large outcry on the Eastern Shore about three proposed fish farms there. There was also the cull of two pens of salmon by Cooke Aquaculture recently.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. MacMaster, I'm going to have to ask you to withdraw that question. We're getting away from the point, from the focus, of the coastal strategy. This is more in line with the fisheries.

MR. MACMASTER: I guess if there's no connection, but I thought there might be a connection between what the coastal strategy might have to say about aquaculture. Would that be relevant?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, but as far as getting into the details of fisheries or the production of aquaculture . . .

MR. MACMASTER: I guess I was thinking of the impact of aquaculture on our coastline and if the strategy has had anything to say about it thus far.

MR. HUSTON: I can speak a little bit to that. One of the things that we were very clear from the outset with this strategy was that we weren't going to focus on specific industries or sectors. So aquaculture is not a focus of this strategy. We have an aquaculture strategy that's in development, just as we have a tourism strategy or plan or a renewable energy strategy. The key is that we've decided to focus on issues that are cross-cutting, so issues like coastal water quality impact or are impacted by different industries like tourism, aquaculture and renewable energy, et cetera. So the strategy does touch upon these but it doesn't focus in on any particular industry or sector.

MR. MACMASTER: All right. What about – does it focus anything – I'll give you an example. I know in the Margaree area there was a lot of flooding about a year ago and of course those waterways are all along the coast and moving towards the coastline into the ocean. Was there any discussion and strategy about mitigating the impact of flooding and the impact that it has along the coastline?

MR. HUSTON: Yes, definitely, the strategy does focus in on looking at ways to both better understand the risk to things like storm surge and flooding along the coast, as well as tools, capacity-building for communities to be able to mitigate, adapt to and respond to those events.

MR. MACMASTER: Could you touch on some of the ways that the strategy reveals how communities can help prepare for those kinds of events or help to mitigate the impact of those events?

MR. HUSTON: Yes, the strategy itself doesn't get into that kind of detail, in terms of some of the specifics around that. I can talk a little bit about – there's a project going on now in the province, called Atlantic Climate Adaptation Solutions project. It's across Atlantic Canada, the four Atlantic Provinces, through funding from NRCan and they're working on specific projects in about six or seven different communities across the province, I think, to look at specifically very detailed mapping of their communities, how to respond specifically to threats to their communities, based on flooding or erosion. Whether it be planning, so proactive, or looking at ways, if you have to protect infrastructure, what's the best way to protect that infrastructure that's not going to end up costing you more money or resources down the line? That type of stuff will be built on in the strategy.

MR. MACMASTER: That's great to hear because the province, as you know, put a lot of money into refurbishing bridges along the Margaree River and, of course, I know you can't control nature necessarily but I know that the cost to fix the provincial infrastructure and, of course, the disaster assistance relief program that helped a lot of property owners repair damage done to their properties cost a lot of money. It's good to see that the strategy might look at ways where government might be able to reduce the impact of future storms or events. I'll be following that with interest.

There were some concerns, and I know you've touched on them a little bit, but I think the feedback to the work you were doing with the strategy was positive but you mentioned there were some concerns. Can you kind of outline some of those concerns that were raised?

MR. HUSTON: Sure. Some of the concerns - in the second round of consultations that we just concluded, I would say that one of the concerns, as you noted earlier, was some groups wanted to see aquaculture explicitly singled out in the strategy, which isn't different from what we heard from the same groups in the previous round of consultation as well. What we also heard was that people wanted to see clear deadlines or targets for some of these things. It's understandable, people are a bit anxious and they want to make sure that we're going to implement these things and achieve them.

I'm trying to think of some of the other key things that we heard back, in terms of potential concerns or criticism. I'd say those are probably the two biggest. I would note that we were quite surprised, and pleasantly surprised, by the quality of feedback we received. In general, I'd say if you are to summarize the response it was, it looks good, let's get on with it and here are some ideas we have to make it better. Everyone was quite supportive, we were quite pleased in that regard, in terms of overall approach.

MR. MACMASTER: Mr. Chairman, how much time do I have left?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Oh, you have a few minutes yet.

MR. MACMASTER: A few minutes? Good, okay.

AN HON. MEMBER: A very liberal Chair.

MR. MACMASTER: That's right, thank you, Mr. Chairman. My next question is, I guess, a little bit - just give you a chance to speak about vision. I guess the agreement was signed in March 2011 for the Coastal and Ocean Management Agreement. What do you see happening along Nova Scotia's coastlines 25 years from now with that agreement in place and with this coastal strategy?

MR. HUSTON: You mean this federal-provincial agreement?

MR. MACMASTER: Yes.

MR. HUSTON: I think the whole purpose of that in terms of federal-provincial is that we have really moved quite a ways, in the past three to five years working with the federal government, in that it has been much more collaborative. My vision would be that 25 years from now we would be working much more seamlessly with the federal government in that we're agreeing on joint priorities, programming, work plans for managing the coast.

As was noted before, it really is a complex mishmash of different jurisdictions so the more we can work together, I think, it's better for the protection of the environment, creating good jobs, good development along the coast, and I think that's the biggest piece. I think that's why people were so interested in seeing us emphasize governance because I think everybody recognizes that it's - so that's where I see 25 years from now, where we truly are the way that most of the public thinks the government is; it's just government, it's not different levels of government, it's government working together to achieve what needs to get done.

MR. MACMASTER: Would there be areas in the province you would see maybe set aside for commercial activity in other regions of the province that would be banned or outlawed?

MR. HUSTON: Perhaps. Some jurisdictions around the world have gone that route. It's one of those things that's kind of much easier said than done and the jurisdictions that have done that well, tend to be small island states. It's a finite resource, very small, there's not a lot of work or research required to actually do that work and coming up with very detailed plans, but certainly some jurisdictions have done that.

I think in Nova Scotia what's really unique about the province is that it is so diverse in terms of the landscape. Naturally there's a process of some things are going to work well in some areas versus others. So I think our coastline will sort of take care of that.

MR. MACMASTER: I have one other question, I hope I'm not departing from the focus of the agenda, but I think it's related.

MR. CHAIRMAN: It will have to be a quick one.

MR. MACMASTER: And that's science for the biomass in the ocean which, of course, connects right back into the coastline because whatever is happening on land is moving into the ocean, and as we know, the ecosystem really is all one. Have we been encouraging and working with the federal government to ensure that any studies of the biomass are done in the Springtime? I think that's when the studies are most accurate - I hope I'm not diverting too much.

MR. HUSTON: Perhaps a little bit. I can't speak to too much in terms of the fishery side of things, but maybe one of my colleagues or bosses could answer that one. In a general sense it's one of the things we push the federal government on a lot, their role for us

is the science. To some comments that were made earlier, we are certainly concerned about the funding cuts or lack of good science to support good decision making along the coast and in the offshore. So it is a big issue and we continue, whether it's through fisheries or coastal management, to make that a big push.

MR. MACMASTER: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Ramey.

MR. GARY RAMEY: Thank you for coming. One of the advantages, I guess, you have if you wait awhile in the questioning is people have asked bits, parts and pieces of your questions already, but just to pull some things together here. First of all, I'm glad the strategy is taking a considerable amount of time. I know that's the opposite of what probably some people out there are pushing you for, but I think time spent on the front end is time well spent. I think there have been too many strategies over the years, at all levels of government, that have gone too fast and, as a result, we've inherited a whole bunch of problems afterward, and then you have to go back and fix it again; it's like releasing software before it is beta tested or something.

I'm just trying to get in my own mind the history of this and I think I have it from what you said already. PON, which you coordinate, came about as a result of the Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture 2003 response to the national Oceans Strategy, is that correct?

MR. HUSTON: Yes.

MR. RAMEY: In 2008, under the previous government I take it - and I think this was a good thing - the government released its Coastal Management Framework.

MR. HUSTON: That's correct.

MR. RAMEY: Then in 2009, the State of Nova Scotia's Coast Report - which, I take it, was based somewhat on the research that was done before, plus new consultation - the report was written by . . .

MR. HUSTON: The report was written by CBCL and it was about a nine-month process. It was essentially pulling together all the information that existed from various sources on each of those issues and it identified, here is the current knowledge on this; here are the current knowledge gaps on these issues; here are some key considerations for thinking about how to manage these issues more sustainably. We released that in a large technical report, like 150 pages, but it was also with FAQ sheets, two to four pages that were easily digestible by the public, as well as a summary report, and that was all on-line.

MR. RAMEY: I know this is going to lead to many, I think, good things, but if nothing else, it has probably taught Nova Scotians - at least the ones who weren't paying

attention and I'm sure a lot of them were - that our coastline is probably one of our most, if not one of the most valuable assets, perhaps our most valuable asset from a tourism, commercial, and every other point of view that you can think about. It's my understanding then that - did you say 15 departments . . .

MR. HUSTON: Yes.

MR. RAMEY: . . . are involved in working together finally, which is a good thing. Out of all that then, are we going to try - and I assume there must be, I don't want to say hundreds of pieces of legislation, but maybe it is hundreds of pieces of legislation from various departments of those 15 that have something to say about bits, parts and pieces of things that happen on the coast. Am I correct in this?

MR. HUSTON: Right.

MR. RAMEY: Is it my correct understanding that what you will try to do in talking to these 15 departments is consolidate all of that mishmash of stuff into a comprehensive, easy-to-understand - or relatively easy-to-understand - and straightforward legislative package?

MR. HUSTON: I'm not sure that we'll go quite that far. We certainly could, but we have made a commitment in the draft strategy that we will look at reviewing all the legislation that's out there. We already have done some of that work that relates to the coast. So, for example, when we have, perhaps, pieces of legislation that are overlapping or in conflict with others or being used for purposes that they weren't originally intended, we would look at those more clearly to figure out how to harmonize those. Whether that's through some sort of overarching legislative package, that might be the right solution, or it might be just to sort of go in and amend a specific piece of legislation or create new legislation where it's missing.

Certainly, not to get too theoretical, but some of the literature that's out there has said very clearly that the key is in how well government works together operationally. That's the fundamental thing because some jurisdictions have put in an Act over the top of others and it doesn't change anything. If you do that, you really do have to make sure that at the operational level and the program delivery level it's working in concert, and that's a really key point.

MR. RAMEY: The other thing is, one of the things that I notice as I drive the coast, including in my own constituency - and I think this has been alluded to before by Mr. Younger - sometimes we see houses or buildings - sometimes they're not houses - that belong to fishermen or something and are perched in very precarious places. Sometimes they're new construction and they are on promontories that extend out into the sea, and in the tropical storms and hurricanes that we seem to be getting now that come up the coast, they are in very precarious places. I know for a fact that real estate companies are in the business of making money, selling real estate, and I know some of those pieces of real

estate that belong to private people - I think you said 86 per cent of our coastline is private - are very valued pieces of land. People want them, and especially people who don't understand the power of the ocean or haven't lived here, they want to get as close to the ocean as possible.

I think Mr. Whynott alluded to this, too, but I'm wondering how we're going to keep private developers and real estate companies from really pitching those pieces of land to people and getting us in trouble when people build there and suffer the consequences of having done so.

MR. HUSTON: One of the key actions proposed in the draft strategy was to develop standards for coastal development. This is building on what a lot of municipalities have already done or are starting to do around the province, which is putting in place regulations around how close to the coast people can build. For example, municipalities such as HRM, the region of Queens, Cumberland, they have already put in place setbacks that tell landowners, you can build here but not here. This strategy has proposed a commitment to say okay, we're going to do that across the province, in partnership with municipalities.

The other key thing is in terms of how you build along the coast is equally as important. You can build but it's the construction techniques and the way that you build that is also very important, in terms of protecting people and property but also the environment. So that's another piece of this, the coastal development standards as well.

MR. RAMEY: Do I have time for one more, Mr. Chairman, if I go quick?

MR. CHAIRMAN: You have a couple of minutes left.

MR. RAMEY: Okay, so I guess my final one then is this - Mr. MacMaster talked about his coastline. He's got one of the most beautiful coastlines probably in the province and I've got a pretty good chunk of it. Mr. Preyra over there, who everybody thinks is in Halifax, has Sable Island in his constituency. (Interruption) He's got quite a lot and it's beautiful, too, or so I hear, I've only seen pictures. I've never been out but I'd love to go.

My question is related to that because we have a lot of islands and other pieces of property. Some of them are owned by the Crown, some of them are owned by municipalities and a lot of them are privately owned. They are accessible by boat, obviously, but they are totally unregulated. The one I always think of is Cape LaHave, which is the biggest island in the LaHave islands, which has at least nine or 10 beautiful beaches on it. It's very close to Green Bay, Rissers Beach, provincial parks, so people can look out from the park and say, God, that looks beautiful out there, how do you get out there? They get a boat and off they go and they camp there. Some people are very responsible and clean up everything and you can't tell they've been there and other people start cutting down the trees and making fires and doing all kinds of horrible things, leaving beer cans and all that sort of stuff.

I realize what an almost impossible task it is to police that, I do, but does the coastal strategy have anything to say about those uninhabited but, in the summertime, often-frequented pieces of property? Even McNab's out here.

MR. HUSTON: It does, in a general sense, in the sense that we heard very clearly from Nova Scotians, I'd say it was probably the number one sort of issue that resonated the most, that people were concerned about public access. That tended to be that they wanted to ensure that they continue to have access to the coast, to do whatever they like to do. But, at the same time, people also said we want to make sure that the coast is taken care of, so a big piece of this strategy is about education awareness for coastal stewardship. That is educating Nova Scotians, working with Nova Scotians, communities, groups that already exist, in terms of being good stewards of their coast.

Now whether that is Community Watch, Beach Watch, that does exist in some communities already . . .

MR. RAMEY: Yes, it does.

MR. HUSTON: . . . or that's just working in general education awareness campaigns. I think that would be a key thing because with access comes great responsibility, in terms of being good stewards of that area. So they'll have to go hand-in-hand with any kind of public access campaign.

MR. RAMEY: Thank you very much, I really appreciate that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Glavine.

MR. LEO GLAVINE: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and thank you for coming in today. I know this is a topic that, in fact, many Nova Scotians have engaged in, through the public consultation process and many observing what will take place. It's a monumental project as you know, but it is now - I guess looking at the timeline that has been presented here this morning - really somewhat 20 years in the making. Is it definite that we will see it in 2012, in its final version?

MR. HUSTON: I certainly hope so and plan. I mean that's what I'm working on and I don't see any reason why not. There have been delays and I think the recent delay was really because we heard very clearly from folks that they wanted to see a draft. We recognized that was going to push us back several months, but as was commented earlier, I think it really builds into that sort of sense of nothing is getting pulled over our eyes here and we're part of this as much as just the provincial government.

So yes, I'm working 24/7, I'm making sure this thing comes out in 2012.

MR. GLAVINE: That's great. You know, I've had some e-mails from people who have definitely appreciated the fact of having a draft that's very readable and very

understandable. I guess one of the proposals is that there be a citizens' advisory group that will remain as an ongoing body to look at the implementation of the strategy. I'm just wondering if you see that as a key component of the strategy.

MR. HUSTON: In our draft strategy we did identify the need for ongoing engagement with the public. For example, it could be a ministers' advisory group or a citizens' advisory group. That's certainly one thing we did hear that folks were interested in, that ongoing engagement.

One of the things that we've also been looking at in addition to that, or perhaps in place of that, would be engaging multi-stakeholder groups, the public, on specific actions. For example, when you think of this strategy, it's very broad. You have things like public access to things like flooding and erosion, and it's sometimes very difficult to find the right number of people who could provide good feedback on that whole range of issues.

One of the things, too, that we heard is that some people couldn't care less about some issues and they really are passionate or very knowledgeable about others. So, for example, actions like around development standards, it might be more effective and better engagement if we specifically target municipalities, developers, real estate, insurance companies and bring those folks together for a concrete purpose, in addition to or instead of sort of an overarching, multi-stakeholder group.

MR. GLAVINE: The area I represent is along the Bay of Fundy. We are now experiencing the reality of coastal erosion. Over the past year, the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal has had to procure land to, in fact, change one of the areas around Canada Creek, for example, it has been in the news. Will there be some specifics that will actually, hopefully, guide future planning and so on? It does look like a greater reality for us, with climate change - we may get the federal government to say the words "climate change" eventually. But that being said, we're seeing it in a big way along the coast and perhaps there's going to have to be considerable purchase of private land in order to maintain a coastal road, for example. Will there be some specifics, for example, along that area?

MR. HUSTON: In the draft strategy we've identified some areas, some specific things like mapping and assessments, which are already happening now, that we'll build on, be working to build on and strengthen going forward. So things like vulnerability assessments for infrastructure for communities as a whole because I think everyone - again, it seems like it's in the past five years or so there has been a real change, that everyone is realizing that just going in and repairing things, the way they've always been, doesn't make sense over the long term.

The challenge with that is that you often need to get some good information so you can make good decisions. That's what the strategy is a lot about, too, is taking resources that already exist, programs that already exist and targeting them towards getting good

information into the hands of decision makers, whether it be provincial decision makers or municipal or even landowners.

I think of some good examples that are going on now with this ACAS project that I mentioned earlier, really great flood modelling, so that you can sit down with a computer or map on the wall, click a button, and you can see under different scenarios exactly how your community might be flooded in a storm event. Then you can take approaches to sort of plan for the future and say okay, if we don't want this to happen, what do we need to do or what do we need to prepare ourselves for if this were to happen?

MR. GLAVINE: Related to that, of course - as the Agriculture Critic, I've been up to walk some of the dyke lands in the Amherst area and of course we also have a tremendous system deep in the Bay of Fundy as well. Again, will that kind of consideration be there that it's a fragile and vulnerable area and I feel we need to make sure that we commit to maintaining that.

MR. HUSTON: In the strategy itself, it doesn't single out agriculture like it doesn't single out other industries, but one of the key areas that we have sort of looking inward to the provincial government is looking at incorporating better knowledge about coastal processes into our decision making. Whether that be policy or funding, it's looking at understanding better how the coastal processes like erosion, sedimentation are working so that we can make decisions that make the most sense for those areas and not sort of reacting on an ad hoc basis.

MR. GLAVINE: You talked about 15 different departments involved in working to coordinate and bring their knowledge and expertise into the strategy. Have you been dealing with the field of energy? We know that renewable energy - whether it's small close-to-the-coast tidal projects such as we may see in the Digby area - wave technology, of course, is becoming a location of wind turbines in the offshore as well. Are you having some, again, general parameters or criteria as part of the strategy for that area?

MR. HUSTON: Specific to renewable energy, no, but they have been very active in the creation of the strategy process. Again, whether it be marine renewable energy or aquaculture or agriculture, it's looking at some of those fundamental objectives. Are we working towards the same objectives for protecting the environment, making sure that jobs are good for our coastal community? That's going into and helping to shape strategies like the Marine Renewable Energy Strategy, which is much more focused on the specifics of that energy, but certainly are consistent with what's in our coastal strategy.

MR. GLAVINE: I guess I have time for one more. In terms of the 12 per cent goal of protecting land as outlined in the Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act, are there any very specific goals and actions? I mean, the strategy is a broad framework, but would there be a goal that we do need to move from the 85 or 86 per cent perhaps down to 75 per cent that would create greater access? This is something that we hear a lot about; we know the kinds of things that Prince Edward Island did many years ago in terms of

foreign ownership, for example, of coastal areas. I know it's much tougher to work from where we are down rather than to have started 30, 40, or 50 years ago. Is there going to be any kind of target here that is in line with the 25 per cent, we would say that part of this really does need to be coastal? I know in the past three years there have been at least one or two significant purchases of coastal lands. Is that going to be dove-tailed with the 12 per cent goal?

MR. HUSTON: The short answer is yes, in the sense that work is already actually going on. One of the actions that we have in the proposed strategy is to target more coastal lands through that 12 per cent commitment. That work is actually already happening now with the Department of Environment in their current effort, through this process of the strategy. They've already incorporated that piece.

The challenge with acquiring more coastal land is that it's the most expensive land in the province and certainly because people value it so much for residential development. Currently the strategy has no specific target for acquiring a certain percentage of coastal lands, other than what is in the 12 per cent commitment already.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Preyra.

MR. LEONARD PREYRA: Thank you for taking on this project. It's amazing the reach of the strategy and certainly I don't think we expect to see the accomplishment of all of those goals in our lifetime, but it's certainly great to see the building blocks being put in place. I want to thank Mr. Ramey and Mr. MacMaster for acknowledging that I may well have the most coastline. It includes two islands, I should add. We're all very proud of our coastal zones and our coastal heritage. I think we're starting to appreciate that it's not just a playground; although that in and of itself would be good enough for me. It is an important asset on which our economy is built, we earned our livelihood from the ocean and we need to protect that asset, if only for that reason.

I began my political career really around the Northwest Arm Coalition, which was a group that we formed and Ms. Raymond was involved with it, on the other side of Halifax Atlantic. Really it was about infilling on the Northwest Arm and I think one of the first things I learned, we learned, is I think what you're telling us as well is that people care deeply about coastal access, about having the ability to walk along the waterfront with their children and collect seashells or whatever it is that people do but there is an emotional attachment to it. You did mention viewplanes but that, too, is an important consideration for a lot of people, that is that there are heritage viewplanes that people want to see protected and we see some of that happening.

So I do commend you for taking on that task, especially on the governance side because even in that small little area on the Northwest Arm, there was a huge dispute about who was responsible below the high water mark and who was responsible above the high water mark and was this a navigable water or a fisheries or a Port of Halifax issue or a

municipal issue. I don't know where that issue is still but I understand from that one little piece of the pie that this is a complex issue.

I did want to say a little bit about the question on provincial leadership on oceans issues. I think we shouldn't confuse the development of a strategy, which is what you are engaged in, with what is actually happening in particular areas of government responsibility. Just to give you an example, the government has just completed its sector analysis for oceans, looking at the oceans sector - a huge project at Dalhousie, in partnership with a number of international agencies, on mapping and looking at tides and doing an inventory of species. All of those other things are underway and the oceans has been identified as one of those key clusters where we're going to develop a cluster of excellence in oceans research. These things are happening alongside the strategy and I think you've rightly pointed that they are developing in parallel but it's not to say that initiatives are not being taken as you do your work.

Similarly, with the question on energy and wave technology, if you look at what FORCE is doing in the Bay of Fundy, it's not just looking at tidal energy, it's looking at best practices around how we could or should or may be able to exploit tidal energy and what we can do to protect the environment at the same time. So there is an ocean strategy developing as we speak and I think what we're trying to do here is to bring all of those things together, to make sure that they don't conflict with each other. I'm thinking again about the moratorium on oil and gas exploration on Georges Bank, the point being that strategies are not going to prevent the government from taking initiatives in areas that are considered critical and as you go along, more and more will be identified.

On the land purchases - I know this is well outside your area of jurisdiction - there are criteria being developed around land purchases and why we would acquire certain land, what is the value of that land. I think the strategy will, in fact, inform some of that and how we identify it. The whole impetus for the 12 per cent land purchases is precisely what you're talking about, to move away from - well, to secure access to the public, to protect sensitive environments and to change that balance between private and public and I should say that Sable Island National Park is part of that and I'm happy to do it.

The general point being that it's wonderful that the strategy is being developed and public policies are being informed as we go along. It seems to me that part of this process is developing a shared understanding of what it is we are trying to do and why we should do it and build some legitimacy around it, but it seems that it's very difficult to get consensus on those issues apart from the governance issue. How effective do you think this consultative process has been? I know it's a huge undertaking. You've got two rounds and I assume this round is now complete, the next round?

MR. HUSTON: Yes.

MR. PREYRA: But how effective has it been at building legitimacy and building consensus?

MR. HUSTON: I think it has been quite effective in one sense because we moved - we really tried to take an evidence-based, science-based approach to informing policy in the strategy development. A good example of that is we're moving from sort of rhetoric and anecdotal information. For example, we always used to hear, well, 95 per cent of the coast is privately owned, but when we actually did the analysis we realized it was closer to 85 per cent, 86 per cent, which is still a lot; it's a big number. However, it really helps to change the dialogue. That's an example. It helps to change the dialogue so that people aren't arguing over what the facts are. They're more arguing about this is where we're at today, but where do we want to be in the future? I think, as well, it has been very good at building a common understanding - I'm not sure consensus - of the issues.

Often when you get around the table, you realize that what you have is an entrenched view that you think is the world view, and this is what must be correct, and then you hear from somebody that you respect and you acknowledge as another coastal citizen is saying something completely different, you realize where government is in terms of trying to balance those different interests. I think we have done a very good job about getting that out there and having people understand what the spectrum of opinion is, as well as helping to identify, well, if you are here and you're here, where can we agree?

The coastal development is a great example. Some people might say we should have no development on the coast, and others, we should have a lot of development, but everyone can agree we want to make sure that however we develop on the coast is that it's safe, it's sustainable, and it's not going to cost lives, money, or a sensitive ecosystem. I think we've done a very good job about coming from the polarized ends and coming to a common ground.

MR. PREYRA: One of the things that impressed me certainly in the Northwest Arm Coalition - I want to come back to this question of private land - is that when we started talking about infilling and setbacks and the need for it, people said, well you know, those private landowners along the Northwest Arm are never going to agree with you because that's going to affect their rights to their property. The truth was exactly the opposite. Most of those people came down and said, we want to establish regulations around there because it's going to affect our land; if someone is allowed to build on this outcrop there and ruin the viewplane or ruin the waterfront or prevent our ability to walk, we don't want that to happen there so we're not going to do it ourselves. It was very encouraging.

Also, people are concerned about future generations. Especially the generation that owns that land is aging; the population generally is aging and they want to leave something behind. I'm very encouraged by the attitude of a lot of private landowners to the coastal zone management and I don't think we should put it that public land is pristine and private land is not, or that public authorities are pure and private ones are not. I think there is much more of a consensus on what we need to do.

There are, as I understand it, a number of rules around the “exploitation” - if I can use that word - of private lands anyway. The fact that the land is privately owned doesn't mean that there aren't public authorities that will govern and so it's not a useless exercise to go through it and say, even though we don't own 85 per cent of it, we're going to set that aside and just work with what we have.

MR. HUSTON: There is certainly everywhere from by-laws governing how people can develop their land and use their land, to provincial legislation and regulations; there is certainly a whole suite of things. This gets back to one of your earlier points that when people say the province isn't doing anything in coastal management, actually the opposite is true. I mean, we're a coastal province. Everything we do relates to the coast and the ocean. It's not that there's a lack or absence of it. There's a lot of it going on. It's just that this strategy is focusing on coordinating all of those different pieces of legislation, regulation, activities, actions so that we can do a better job about addressing those key things that we care about as Nova Scotians.

MR. PREYRA: Thank you very much, I appreciate the effort. I wish you complete success.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Ms. Raymond.

MS. MICHELE RAYMOND: Thank you very much and I'm really very pleased to know that this is moving forward because as a Nova Scotian and having lived on the coast pretty well all of my life, I certainly see that there seemed to have been significantly more aggressive and frequent efforts to modify the coast in a very permanent kind of way, so I would guess that you are seeing considerably more interest in this process now than you might have done in the first place.

It's one of the things, and as Mr. Preyra was mentioned, the question of infilling and so on and the creation of new lands from the bottom of old land, from the bottom of the ocean floor is a rather permanent change. One of the things that I am wondering about, though, is whether you could comment on any kind of common threads that you have seen since the first attempt to develop a strategy, the Coastal 2000? Any commonalities, any theme which have become stronger or, in fact, any real distinctions, any significant changes that you've found in public opinion and stakeholder engagement as well?

MR. HUSTON: That's a big one. Let me think a little bit. I think, as I stated earlier, one of the key things I think is - I wasn't around Coastal 2000, you were around Coastal 2000, but one of the things I think has changed a little bit is the level of public interest, I think. Just generally speaking, it's key.

I remember you were saying you go to some public meetings and there would be like five or six people there.

MR. ROACH: I think one of the things that really changed is how much the focus moved from just those wanting to protect coast to those who use the coast, protect the coast, address threats from rising sea levels, address threats from storms, the development standards, the modelling that Justin spoke about, to see what can happen in extreme storm events. Then that can play into the development, so basically now a lot more people are interested, rather than just a very small group in society, so it has grown.

MR. HUSTON: And along this, too, kind of on the other side of the coin is I still think we have a long way to go as a province, in terms of acknowledging that we are coastal people. We would hold open houses in Wolfville or in Truro and people would ask, why are you holding it here, we're not coastal? Yet you could see the salt marshes right out the window of where we were meeting.

I think because we're such a coastal province, we tend to think well, if you live right on the coast, then you live on the coast and you are a coastal person, but if you live inland, then you are not, whereas relative to other people in the country, someone from Alberta would think of anywhere east of Montreal as coastal, so I think that's something.

I think one of the other key things that has changed in the dialogue is the whole awareness about sea level rise, erosion and flooding. Two things have happened: one is, I think obviously it has become a much bigger issue, in general, and people do seem to be seeing some accelerated changes along the coast. As well, there has been a much greater amount of residential development happening along the coast in the last 10 to 15 years than there was previously. So it's not that the coast all of a sudden is changing, it has always been changing, it's that more people are living there and feeling the impacts when they have developed an area that perhaps shouldn't have been developed.

MS. RAYMOND: Well that is a question I was going to ask and I was glad to hear that you mentioned the insurance companies. Are they sort of engaged at a uniform level? I know they've done some mapping of sea level rise and so on but are they having any effects at all? I mean the insurability of different structures and homes and so on, is that having any impact on people's practices?

MR. HUSTON: Well we've talked a little bit with the insurance industry and they've been engaged in some projects. The interesting thing that not a lot of Nova Scotians know is that currently homeowner insurance doesn't cover any flooding anyway, water over land. So as a result, in some ways the insurance company isn't too worried about it because they're not at risk as it is now. That's why I think it's critical for governments to be of interest because if people aren't insured and houses and properties are damaged, then often it comes looking back to levels of government for assistance and help in terms of disaster relief.

MS. RAYMOND: So that lack of insurance presumably is something which will become more publicly known, I guess, as a result.

Do I have time for one more quick question? Okay, a very quick one. I know Mr. Preyra mentioned the Northwest Arm Coalition. One of the things that came out at that point, of course, is that there was a huge multiplicity of jurisdictions, all these different agencies and so on and one of the things that can happen sometimes is that things fall between the cracks, between jurisdictions. I think that there was mentioned at one point the possibility of creating an agency which could, in fact, hold the jurisdiction or hold the powers of an agency of all three levels of government so these cracks would not be available. Is that something which is likely to come out of this do you think?

MR. HUSTON: In terms of a lead body, yes, the strategy has identified a lead body at the provincial level.

MS. RAYMOND: I'm thinking of the CNSOPB which holds all this jurisdiction.

MR. HUSTON: I don't see that happening based on some of the discussions earlier with the challenges for engaging for example with the federal government or even with municipalities on. I don't know any examples of that that have happened in the world that have happened effectively. The only places I can think where it has happened are small island states in the Caribbean and I think some in the South Pacific.

MS. RAYMOND: And they're not federations.

MR. HUSTON: Right, so it's bit different of a context. I think surely that issue about falling through the cracks and the need for something similar to what we have now, but perhaps at a more formal level at the provincial level is making sure that there is a department or body that is responsible for making sure that things don't fall through the cracks and coordinating provincial engagement response.

MS. RAYMOND: Changes can be very permanent and they can end up obliterating public rights and public use and so on. Okay, thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Ramey.

MR. RAMEY: I think you said there were seven areas that the coastal strategy focussed on: governance, coastal development, working waterfronts, public and coastal access, sea level rise and storm events, coastal ecosystems and habitats, and coastal water quality. Those are the ones, right?

MR. HUSTON: Yes.

MR. RAMEY: There are two of them that I'm particularly interested in, working waterfronts is one and the other one - and believe it or not I think it's totally related to it - sea level rise and storm events. I'm thinking that most of us probably think of working waterfronts as the Halifax Shipyard over here on Halifax Harbour or the Shelburne Shipyard or the Lunenburg waterfront which has a number of draggers coming into it and

all that sort of thing. In my constituency - and I suspect in some of the others, maybe Mr. MacMaster's - we have wharves that used to be controlled by the federal government and a lot of people refer to them saying, I'm going down to the government wharf. The government wharf was the wharf in the community, Mr. Glavine would probably have some too on the Bay of Fundy. These wharves - at least in my area - were usually constructed out of 10 x 10 timbers with boulders fired down between the cribwork. They were usually treated with creosote which I'm sure is a real no-no now, putting creosote into the ocean, but that's the way they were built. For years - and I'm thinking of the one on Dublin Shore which is very close to Bridgewater - they were absolutely fine and I guess they were designed to withstand anything but the super storm that comes once every 100 years.

What we're finding down the South Shore is that the super storm that comes once every 100 years is more likely to come once every 20 years or maybe once every 10. We're getting some real bad storms and surprisingly enough it's not always wind - the wind used to be the thing people worried about. It's the storm surges we're getting and in a couple of cases it's taking these wharves, which were good all of my lifetime - and I'm getting up there now - until very recently. They are still in pretty good shape structurally, but they just can't take the storm surge. I have a few of them that are now actually tipped on an angle because of this.

The plan is, I guess, over time various agencies - I think it is the federal government that is looking at putting armor stone around the outside of some of these on a deflective model to deflect the sea up and other to protect them. My question relates to those that are working waterfronts in my opinion because the fishermen still tie their boats up there and increasingly now they've been devolved from the federal government down to a harbour authority. I don't know if that is happening in anybody else's jurisdiction, but in mind that's what's happening. There is a group of people - usually the fishermen but not always - who are sort of in control of this and increasingly now, because more and more people in my area are getting into boating like yachts and motor launches, we have the public tying up at these wharves too, including people who are visiting the province who come in on a sailing vessel or on a motor launch and tie up to them. It is becoming a real issue, the storm surge in relation to these, I guess, what I call working waterfronts. I was wondering how this strategy affects these smaller waterfronts like I just described.

MR. HUSTON: Well, it's actually focused primarily on those smaller waterfronts. The term working waterfront - we sort of borrowed from New England and the U.S. where they refer to working waterfronts as essentially any place where marine-dependent industries use it to earn a living. So working waterfronts not only refer to the wharf, but also refers to adjacent parking lots, the beach shed, the infrastructure that is needed for people to carry out their jobs on the coast. The majority of harbours along our coast are those small craft harbours or those small working waterfronts. It is a big issue with investiture from the federal government or the management of those two harbour authorities or even if they're classified as harbours that don't support commercial fishing,

that they're divested completely to the municipality or even to private landowners. So it is an ongoing issue.

I think our challenge as a province is, what is our unique role in that? I certainly don't think we want to get into taking over federal responsibility - their responsibility for maintaining these infrastructures - but we can play a role in looking at what other jurisdictions have done about helping to get small craft harbours, the harbour authorities, the users, the municipalities to work together to plan and respond to some of these vulnerabilities related to storm surges and flooding, but also new economic models of how to use some of this infrastructure, so looking at creating infrastructure for supporting tourism, for example, in addition to industries to help offset some of those costs.

I think there is a lot of work that we can do provincially to facilitate some of that work and from what we heard through our consultations, I think industry and municipalities are quite interested in that. We are working directly with small craft harbours on a project right now to look at vulnerability assessment tools for use in small working waterfronts.

MR. RAMEY: I'm really glad to hear that because I certainly know in my area the demand from the tourism side or from the recreational person side is definitely going up in relation to these. I mean, years ago it was fishing boats only. I don't even think private boat owners ever would think of going anywhere near the thing to tie up and now there's a demand for it actually. Managing that wisely could be very beneficial to several different government departments and then to the people. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you Mr. Ramey. Mr. Glavine.

MR. GLAVINE: Mr. Chairman, I know you cautioned us about dealing specifically with aquaculture, but as part of the coastal management plan, is it okay to ask in terms of a general sense of where it fits into the strategy?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes. I guess what I was meaning was that we don't get into the fisheries part of it, because it would entail a different topic completely.

MR. GLAVINE: I really want to know how it does fit into the development of the strategy. We know its significance - there are over 300 sites and so on in the province - but also some guidance in terms of perhaps future location and so on. Does that fit into where the strategy may have some broad directives or criteria?

MR. HUSTON: Yes, specifically the strategy will not - it's not going to be a plan that's sort of reference-related that's going to say, here's where certain development should happen or should not happen. This is not a coastal zone plan. Where aquaculture does fit in is things like coastal water quality where we've identified certain objectives and actions that are looking at identifying priority areas that are important for marine harvesting, whether that be fisheries or aquaculture and looking at ways to focus efforts to

clean those areas up so we have a cleaner operating environment for those industries and for the public. Again, the aquaculture isn't being singled out, but it does fit very clearly in with some of these issues such as water quality.

MR. GLAVINE: It's good to hear that because we know that the place of tourism in our coast is absolutely critical, so I'm pleased to hear that at least there will be some broad guidelines and directives around that area.

I guess there was one other question to go back to and that was LiDAR coverage of the coast. Now what kind of an investment would be required to do that to the fullest degree so that it would also have the derived benefits from something like that initiative?

MR. HUSTON: I don't have the exact number offhand, it's something I can work to find and get. It's a bit of a process to come up with that estimate. Some jurisdictions have already done it. For example, Prince Edward Island has flown the entire province, though it's a relatively small province, and New Brunswick has made a commitment also to fly their coastal zone.

Believe it or not, a good percentage of the province has actually already been flown and there is LiDAR coverage for it, and especially some of those projects I was talking about, some of those ACAS projects have added to that as well.

You know it's multi-millions of dollars and it's an investment that would have to be considered in terms of what you would use that information for. LiDAR is considered sort of the Cadillac of coastal mapping when it comes to flooding or modelling, but it isn't always required. I mean there's some common sense, you can rely on the knowledge of locals who have lived in the area for a long time or even things as simple as, if everybody knows that the Groundhog Day flood came this high on the Tim Hortons or the liquor store or whatever, then you know that's probably where your flooding is going to be if you get another major event.

While LiDAR is a great tool and it really helps to drive the point home, it's not always required to make good decisions.

MR. GLAVINE: Thank you, that's all.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. MacMaster.

MR. MACMASTER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. So just to confirm, I guess the purpose of this strategy is not to go back to government and specify certain areas where you can do certain things versus outlaw certain activities along the coastline, that's not the purpose of the strategy.

MR. HUSTON: That's not the purpose of the strategy.

MR. MACMASTER: Okay. I guess part of the strategy, though, is to consult with the public to find out their thoughts, which may be concerns about the coastline they may inhabit. That is part of the strategy.

MR. HUSTON: Yes, in terms of the consultation.

MR. MACMASTER: Should the government be granting fish-farm licences right now, while we're still waiting until the strategy is complete?

MR. HUSTON: Well, I think that kind of gets to Mr. Preyra's comment that there are a lot of things going on in parallel. I want to emphasize that we have not been working on this strategy in a vacuum or in isolation, we work very closely with the other departments and other programs, provincially, that are going on, and certainly aquaculture or other industries are not inconsistent with where we're going with this strategy.

I think I also want to take the opportunity to highlight because we keep talking a little bit about aquaculture and concerns around aquaculture. When we did a survey we certainly have heard from groups that are concerned about aquaculture and they have their concerns, but when we did a household survey of Nova Scotians and we asked them what were their concerns with coastal water quality, our response rates - and you can find this all on-line - less than 1 per cent said they felt aquaculture was a concern.

About 70 per cent, I think it was in the 60 per cent or 70 per cent, felt there was a concern with things like sewage or household waste. I think that speaks a little bit, in terms of the context, about where aquaculture fits in the overall picture of the strategy.

MR. MACMASTER: Sure, and I know it has probably showed up as a small component. But certainly in the areas where it's an issue, it's very important to those people, because when you look at sewage systems, they are something that's controlled by government. Whereas an aquaculture operation is a private development and may not be - while it may be held to a set standard, maybe the population doesn't have the same confidence in that kind of an operation that the environment is going to be protected as they would with a sewage system, where they know the government is really mandated to set it up safely and work with, say, the local municipal government to ensure that it's operating properly and so on.

MR. HUSTON: I think that, but also the fact that everybody flushes a toilet, too, and it's easy to point at your neighbour or another industry that's causing impact. But when it comes down to it, probably the biggest impacts to the marine environment are from us loving the coast too much and wanting to be on the coast and just are living just along the coast.

I mean, to say that the government regulates sewage is certainly true, we do, but it's still individuals and private individuals who utilize that and have to keep it up and upkeep it. So I think it's a little bit of - sure, I think there are concerns around different industries,

aquaculture being one, but I think it's always a lot easier to sort of point the finger at what your neighbour is doing. I think that comes along the lines of the development along the coast. People want to make sure their neighbour doesn't put armor stone along the coast but I don't want my rights to be impacted, too. So there's a bit of that, I think, going on.

MR. MACMASTER: I do have one last question and it's, I guess, how would people who are living in Margaree who are impacted by the recent flooding there - if they want to have input on the future of government policy to mitigate the cost of the impact of such storms, how would they participate in this strategy going forward?

MR. HUSTON: That's a great question, a good leading question there. I mean when we release this strategy this isn't going to be the end of the process. In fact, we're going to be identifying a number of key initiatives that will be launched with the release of the strategy. For example, the proposed actions for coastal development standards - that will be done in close partnership with municipalities, in consultation with Nova Scotians, landowners, about their concerns and their issues around how development should occur or shouldn't occur along the coast.

It will be an ongoing process and folks will have plenty of opportunity for input and feedback and participation.

MR. MACMASTER: Okay, thank you very much.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any more questions? I don't have any more on my list. If not, we will let the witnesses have some closing statements and then move on.

MR. HUSTON: I don't really have too many closing statements. I would just sort of reiterate that, again, thank you for having us here and a chance to talk a little bit of the coastal strategy and provide an update. I would also just remind you - I mentioned it when I was talking earlier - that if you haven't had an opportunity for yourself or your constituents to go to our Web site - gov.ns.ca/coast - there really is a wealth of information there. I would encourage you that if you have any questions, don't hesitate to contact myself or any of my colleagues.

MR. LAFLECHE: I would like to add that we have eight MLAs here and there are 52, as I recall - am I right? So if you or any of the other 44 have specific concerns which we really didn't address today in your riding, don't hesitate to give Justin or myself or Greg a call and we can perhaps sit down with you and go over those specific issues that relate to day-to-day things.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much.

We have a little bit of committee business.

[10:38 a.m. The committee recessed.]

[10:40 a.m. The committee reconvened.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right, we'll move on. We've got March 1st for our next meeting date. It's the only date we could come up with in March that we could fit in there, so it's kind of close.

MR. GLAVINE: You're working us pretty hard, Mr. Chairman. (Laughter)

MR. YOUNGER: But I think that's what we agreed to, it gets it out of the way.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's right. You never know where we might be at the end of March.

Okay, the meeting is adjourned.

[The committee adjourned at 10:40 a.m.]