



# Mental health promotion policy: An evaluation assessment

April 1, 2019 to March 31, 2020

Strategic Policy and Evaluation Division  
Department of Agriculture and Land  
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## Executive Summary

### **Purpose**

The Strategic Policy and Evaluation Division at the PEI Department of Agriculture and Land (DAL) completed an evaluation assessment of the DAL's Mental Health Promotion Policy to understand its relevancy, performance, and impact. The results of the assessment are intended to inform future mental health policy development.

### **Background**

The Mental Health Promotion Policy represents a \$67.8.K investment in seven (7) inputs during the 2019-2020 fiscal year. Through programming, awareness, and collaboration, the Policy aims to improve mental health and resiliency in PEI's agriculture community.

### **Methodology and Scope**

The project assessed the Policy over the period of April 1, 2019 to March 31, 2020. Three primary lines of evidence were used: policy documents, files, and feedback from stakeholders. Other information considered during the course of the assessment included media reports, peer-reviewed literature, reports from industry, and reports from federal and provincial departments and committees.

### **Findings**

#### ***Relevance***

All seven of the Policy's inputs were found to be responding to a need. Reports from industry, standing committees, and feedback from stakeholders showed that there continues to be a need to promote mental health in agriculture in PEI.

#### ***Performance***

This assessment has found that all of the inputs included in the Policy have been completed. The Policy's performance in terms of achieving its long-term vision of improved mental health and resiliency in PEI's agriculture community is not yet known (due to the relatively short period of time covered by this assessment).

#### ***Impact***

Long-term impacts were not identified due to the relatively short time period covered by this assessment. Preliminary impacts have been identified including:

- Stakeholders from across the country participated in activities related to the Policy;
- The Policy increased connections among FPT Departments of Agriculture to promote mental health;
- Tens of thousands of individuals were exposed to the various communication tools developed under the Policy (e.g., the #FarmersTalk campaign, YouTube videos, [www.farmerstalk.ca](http://www.farmerstalk.ca), etc.);
- Industry and client support staff at the DAL increased their awareness of mental health;
- Over 250 counselling sessions were provided free of charge to members of PEI's agriculture community; and
- There were several media reports featuring the Policy and the resources available to support members of the agriculture community in PEI.

### **Recommendations**

- Continue a financial commitment for the #FarmersTalk Campaign
- Institutionalize formal partnerships with stakeholders
- Leverage Canadian Agricultural Partnership (CAP) funding for mental health promotion and partnerships with other Departments of Agriculture
- Integrate evaluation into the delivery of activities under the Mental Health Promotion Policy
- Review the content of communication activities to ensure that the tone and tools used are responsive to the communication preferences of industry
- Invest in a comprehensive study of mental health and resiliency in PEI's agriculture community
- Investigate mental health training that is informed by individuals with expertise in medicine and/or psychiatry

# Sommaire

## Objet

La Division des politiques stratégiques et de l'évaluation du ministère de l'Agriculture et des Terres de l'Î.-P.-É. a procédé à l'évaluation de la politique de promotion de la santé mentale du ministère afin de comprendre sa pertinence, son rendement et son impact. Les résultats de l'évaluation ont pour objectif de contribuer à l'élaboration de futures politiques relatives à la santé mentale.

## Contexte

La politique de promotion de la santé mentale représente un investissement de 67 800 \$ échelonné sur sept (7) intrants au cours de l'année financière 2019-2020. Par l'entremise de la programmation, de la sensibilisation et de la collaboration, la politique vise à améliorer la santé mentale et la résilience dans la communauté agricole de l'Î.-P.-É.

## Méthodologie et portée

Dans le cadre du projet, la politique a été évaluée au cours de la période allant du 1<sup>er</sup> avril 2019 au 31 mars 2020. Les trois principales sources de données utilisées sont les suivantes : politiques, dossiers et rétroaction d'intervenants. Parmi les autres renseignements utilisés au cours de l'évaluation, mentionnons les rapports médiatiques, les documents évalués par les pairs, les rapports de l'industrie et les rapports de ministères et de comités fédéraux et provinciaux.

## Constats

### *Pertinence*

Il a été déterminé que les sept intrants de la politique répondaient à un besoin. Les rapports de l'industrie et des comités permanents ainsi que la rétroaction des intervenants ont démontré que le besoin de promouvoir la santé mentale dans le domaine de l'agriculture à l'Î.-P.-É. est toujours existant.

### *Rendement*

Cette évaluation a permis de conclure que tous les intrants inclus dans la politique ont été réalisés. Le rendement de la politique en termes d'atteinte de sa vision à long terme d'amélioration de la santé mentale et de résilience dans la communauté agricole de l'Î.-P.-É. n'est pas encore connu (en raison de la durée relativement courte de cette évaluation).

### *Impact*

Les impacts à long terme n'ont pas été identifiés en raison de la durée relativement courte de cette évaluation. Les impacts préliminaires ont été identifiés et comprennent ce qui suit :

- Des intervenants d'un peu partout au pays ont participé à des activités liées à la politique.
- La politique a augmenté les liens entre les ministères FPT de l'Agriculture pour ce qui est de la promotion de la santé mentale.
- Des dizaines de milliers de personnes ont été exposées aux divers outils de communication établis dans le cadre de la politique (ex. : la campagne #FarmersTalk, des vidéos sur YouTube, [www.farmerstalk.ca](http://www.farmerstalk.ca), etc.).
- L'industrie et le personnel de soutien à la clientèle du ministère sont davantage sensibilisés à la santé mentale.
- Plus de 250 séances de consultation ont été offertes gratuitement aux membres de la communauté agricole de l'Î.-P.-É.
- Il y a eu plusieurs rapports médiatiques sur la politique et les ressources disponibles pour appuyer les membres de la communauté agricole de l'Î.-P.-É.

## Recommandations

- Poursuivre l'engagement financier envers la campagne #FarmersTalk
- Institutionnaliser des partenariats formels avec des intervenants
- Mobiliser des fonds du Partenariat canadien pour l'agriculture pour la promotion de la santé mentale et des partenariats avec d'autres ministères de l'Agriculture
- Intégrer l'évaluation dans l'offre d'activités dans le cadre de la politique de promotion de la santé mentale
- Revoir le contenu des activités de communication pour assurer que le ton et les outils utilisés correspondent aux préférences de communication de l'industrie
- Investir dans une étude exhaustive sur la santé mentale et la résilience dans la communauté agricole de l'Î.-P.-É.

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## **Acronyms**

<b>AAFC</b>	Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada
<b>ADM</b>	Assistance Deputy Minister
<b>DAL</b>	Department of Agriculture and Land
<b>DHW</b>	Department of Health and Wellness
<b>DM</b>	Deputy Minister
<b>FAP</b>	Farmer Assistance Program
<b>FPT</b>	Federal, Provincial Territorial
<b>PEIFA</b>	PEI Federation of Agriculture
<b>TB</b>	Treasury Board



## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

This Evaluation Report provides a formative evaluation assessment of the relevance, performance, and impact of the Department of Agriculture and Land's (DAL) Mental Health Promotion Policy. The assessment covers activities from April 1, 2019 to March 31, 2020.

### 1.1 Description of the Mental Health Promotion Policy

The DAL's Mental Health Promotion Policy represents a \$67.8K investment<sup>1</sup> in seven (7) inputs which aim to improve mental health and resiliency in PEI's agriculture industry and community, shown below. The Policy committed the department to monitoring relevance, performance, and impact.

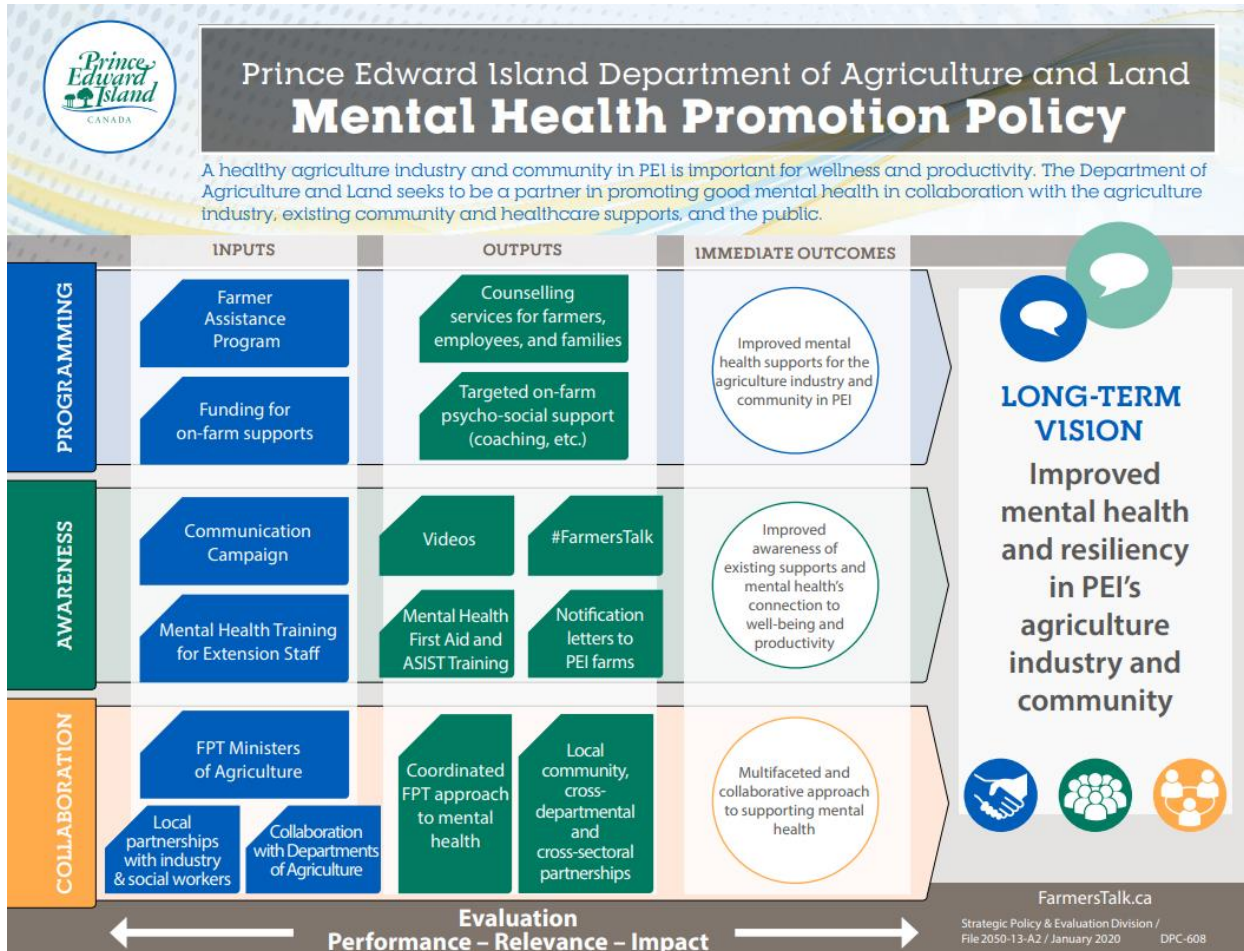


Figure 1. Mental health promotion policy.

#### Programming

##### 1.1.1 Farmer Assistance Program

The Farmer Assistance Program (FAP) input is a counselling program that provides free, confidential counselling services to farmers, their families, and employees.

##### 1.1.2 Funding for On-Farm Supports

Funding for on-farm supports covers projects that provide support and coaching to farm families to implement mental health best practices on the farm. For example, this may

<sup>1</sup> 2019/20 fiscal year

include tools for managing stress and crisis, modifications to business practices to reduce stress, and other approaches to promote healthy behaviours on the farm.

### *Awareness*

#### **1.1.3 Communication Campaign**

The communication campaign input consisted of YouTube videos, mail-outs to PEI farms and FPT Departments of Agriculture, and the implementation of the #FarmersTalk campaign in February, 2020 (the campaign encouraged individuals to post mental health key messages using the hashtag #FarmersTalk).

#### **1.1.4 Mental Health Training for Extension Staff**

DAL staff were provided mental health first aid training. This training aimed to improve the capacity of participants to provide assistance to people developing a mental health problem or experiencing a mental health crisis.

### *Collaboration*

#### **1.1.5 FPT Ministers of Agriculture**

This input involves discussions, presentations, and communication between FPT Ministers of Agriculture regarding mental health promotion in agriculture. The aim is to support a coordinated approach to mental health policy in agriculture.

#### **1.1.6 Local Partnerships with Industry and Social Workers**

This input involves discussions, communication, and meetings between the DAL and organizations or individuals with a mandate to promote mental health (e.g., social workers, agriculture organizations, the Department of Health and Wellness, Health PEI, etc.). The aim of these activities is to establish a network for mental health promotion in agriculture.

#### **1.1.7 Collaboration with FPT Departments of Agriculture**

This input involves meetings, communication, and presentations to officials in Departments of Agriculture in other provinces or territories. The aim of these activities is to promote FPT collaboration around mental health policy.

## **1.2 Policy on Performance Monitoring**

This assessment is responsive to Treasury Board (TB) policy as well as the mandate of the Strategic Policy and Evaluation Division at the DAL.

#### **1.2.1 Treasury Board Policy**

PEI Treasury Board policy includes that understanding the performance of programs and policies is important. The Deputy Minister of a department is accountable for establishing performance criteria to ensure that measurable performance indicators and expectations are in place.

#### **1.2.2 Strategic Policy and Evaluation Division Mandate (DAL)**

The Division is mandated to complete performance monitoring, measurement, and program evaluations using multiple lines of evidence.

### 1.3 Evaluation Assessment Scope, Methodology, Analytical Strategy, and Limitations

An evaluation of the Policy using a performance monitoring framework, a survey with stakeholders and clients, and key informant interviews was planned for March and April of 2020. However, the COVID-19 pandemic posed significant limitations on the capacity of the Department to implement these evaluation activities.

Due to capacity constraints, the findings of this report is limited to what could be assessed from program documents, eight (8) key informant interviews<sup>2</sup>, and relevant contextual information (e.g., media reports and studies). To support a rigorous approach to qualitative research, these lines of evidence were triangulated through comparisons and interpretation to develop key findings and recommendations. This report also received a quality assessment from an external credentialed evaluator.

There are other initiatives, policies, programs, and services outside of the DAL's Mental Health Promotion Policy that may impact mental health and resiliency in PEI's agriculture community and industry. These other factors were not considered during the course of the assessment, as the scope was limited to the inputs and outputs of the DAL's Policy.

In addition, given the relatively short time period between the implementation of the Policy and the assessment, changes (or impacts) related to the Policy's long-term vision cannot be identified. Therefore, this report represents an *assessment* of the Policy as opposed to a formal evaluation.

#### 1.3.1 Over-Arching Evaluation Assessment Question

The following over-arching question guided the assessment: What was the performance, relevance, and impact of the Mental Health Promotion Policy's inputs and outputs during the period of April 1, 2019 to March 31, 2020?

### 1.4 Key Concepts and Terms

This report provides a formative evaluation assessment of the relevance, performance, and impact of the DAL's Mental Health Promotion Policy. Using key informant interviews, policy files, and secondary sources, the assessment triangulated these lines of evidence to arrive at results and findings.

#### 1.4.1 Assessment

Assessment considers value, merit, worth, significance or quality. It may examine expected and achieved accomplishments, processes, and contextual factors related to a policy or program. The process involves the identification of relevant standards, some investigation of the performance of these standards, and finally some integration or synthesis of results.<sup>3</sup>

#### 1.4.2 Evaluation

Evaluation is the *systematic* assessment of the design, implementation or results of an initiative for the purposes of learning or decision-making. For an evaluation to be systematic requires that it be methodical, informed by social research methods, and results in conclusions that are both empirical and normative.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Feedback was received from eight (8) stakeholders: One individual involved in social media and website development, one director involved with policy implementation, one manager involved with policy implementation, two individuals involved with provincial health policy, two individuals with the Canadian Mental Health Association (PEI), and one individual with the PEI Federation of Agriculture.

<sup>3</sup> Canadian Evaluation Society (from Scriven, 1991; OECD, 2010)

<sup>4</sup> Canadian Evaluation Society (adapted from from Scriven, 1991; OECD 2020; Rosse, et al, 2004; and Fournier, 2005).

#### 1.4.3 Formative Assessment

Formative assessment is intended to support the process of improvement. It is completed during implementation to improve delivery. Formative assessment is different than summative assessment (the latter is completed after implementation, to provide decision-makers with evaluative conclusions).<sup>5</sup>

#### 1.4.4 Performance

The assessment provided in this report understands ‘performance’ as the extent to which the Policy achieved the inputs and outputs as described in the Policy.

#### 1.4.5 Relevance

The assessment provided in this report understands ‘relevance’ as the extent to which the Policy responded to a need.

#### 1.4.6 Impact

The assessment provided in this report understands ‘impact’ as changes that occurred that are likely as a result of the Policy.

#### 1.4.7 Key Informant

A key informant is often considered a person who is knowledgeable about a program, the program’s setting, and/or whose insight is helpful in understanding what happened during the program and why.<sup>6</sup>

#### 1.4.8 Triangulation

“Triangulation is one method by which the researcher analyzes data and then presents the results to others to understand the experience of a common phenomenon.”<sup>7</sup> It involves the application of multiple sources of data, beyond the personal opinion of the program evaluator or researcher, to study a policy or program in more than one way.<sup>8</sup> There are different ways to triangulate (for example, *methods triangulation*, *triangulation of sources*, *analyst triangulation*, and *theory/perspective triangulation*).<sup>9</sup>

#### 1.4.9 Mental Health

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), “mental health is defined as a state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community.”<sup>10</sup>

#### 1.4.10 Upstream Strategies

“Upstream interventions and strategies focus on improving fundamental social and economic structures in order to decrease barriers and improve supports that allow people to achieve their full health potential.”<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Adapted from Patton, M. (1996). A world larger than formative and summative. *Evaluation Practice*, 17 (2), 131-144. Note: Scriven (1996) discusses ‘formative’ and ‘summative’ in the context of evaluation, not assessment.

<sup>6</sup> Adapted from Patton, M. (2002). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications (p. 321)

<sup>7</sup> Fusch, P., et al. (2018, p. 20) Denzin’s paradigm shift: Revisiting triangulative qualitative research. *Journal of Social Change*, 10 (1), pp. 20-21 (referring to Denzin, 1989)

<sup>8</sup> Adapted from Fusch, P., et al. (2018)

<sup>9</sup> Patton, M. (1999). Enhancing the quality and credibility of qualitative analysis. *Health Services Research*, 34 (5, Part II), 1189-1208.

<sup>10</sup> WHO. (2020). *Mental health: A state of well-being*. Available at [http://origin.who.int/features/factfiles/mental\\_health/en/](http://origin.who.int/features/factfiles/mental_health/en/)

<sup>11</sup> National Collaborating Centre for Determinants of Health. (2020). *Glossary*. Available at <http://nccd.ca/resources/glossary/>

## 2.0 FINDINGS

### 2.1 Relevance

Based on document file reviews, feedback from industry, federal standing committee reports, and key informant interviews, this assessment has found that the Policy is responding to a need in PEI. Therefore, the inputs, outputs, and long-term vision associated with the Policy are relevant and do not require immediate adjustments.

### 2.2 Performance

This assessment has found that all of the inputs included in the Policy have been completed. The Policy's performance in terms of achieving its long-term vision of improved mental health and resiliency in PEI's agriculture community and industry is not yet known (due to the relatively short period of time covered by this assessment as well as limitations associated with the assessment's methodology).

### 2.3 Impact

The extent to which the impact of the Policy can be understood is limited due to the relatively short time period covered by this assessment (and due to limitations associated with the assessment's methodology). Nevertheless, preliminary impacts have been identified including:

- Stakeholders from across the country participated in activities related to the Policy;
- The Policy increased connections among FPT Departments of Agriculture to promote mental health;
- Tens of thousands of individuals were exposed to the various communication tools developed under the Policy (e.g., #FarmersTalk campaign, YouTube videos, [www.farmerstalk.ca](http://www.farmerstalk.ca), etc.);
- Industry and client support staff at the DAL increased their awareness of mental health. Over 250 counselling sessions were provided free of charge to members of PEI's agriculture community; and
- There were several media reports featuring the Policy and the resources available to support members of the agriculture community in PEI.

## 3.0 ASSESSMENT RESULTS

### 3.1 Relevance

This section provides results to understand the extent to which the Mental Health Promotion Policy responded to a need.

#### 3.1.1 Farmer Assistance Program

The PEI Federation of Agriculture has reported that there continues to be a need for the FAP to support the mental health of members in PEI's agriculture industry. Community mental health partners also have reported that there is a continued need for mental health promotion in agriculture (and that they have received positive feedback from clients of the FAP in terms of its relevance to PEI's agriculture community).

#### 3.1.2 Funding for On-Farm Supports

Industry has reported that there is a need for mental health first aid training in PEI's agriculture industry.<sup>12</sup> Deaths by suicide in PEI's agriculture industry further confirm the need for mental health supports for agricultural producers in PEI.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Davis, T. (2020 Jan 03). P.E.I. Federation of Agriculture wants to offer mental health first-aid training. CBC PEI.

<sup>13</sup> Yarr, K. (2018 Jun 19). Group urges farmers to reach out, after two suicides. CBC PEI

### 3.1.3 Communication Campaign

A study from the University of Guelph found that approximately 40 per cent of Canadian agricultural producers say they would feel uncomfortable seeking help for mental illness due to possible social stigma.<sup>14</sup> In a report from the federal Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food (2019), it was recommended that governments “contribute to building capacity in mental health awareness and prevention so that ... farmers are informed of the challenges they may face.”<sup>15</sup> The federal government has promoted dialogue about the mental health challenges faced by farmers, ranchers, and producers as “essential for creating an environment where these issues can be discussed openly and with compassion.”<sup>16</sup>

Furthermore, during a Policy Hack Case Competition in 2019, an interdepartmental working group found that there was a need to increase awareness of mental health supports available to PEI’s agriculture community.

### 3.1.4 Mental Health Training for Extension Staff

The federal Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food recommended investments “in educating business partners and other stakeholders who work with farmers to detect the signs of psychological disorders and distress in order to refer them to resources that can help them.”<sup>17</sup>

### 3.1.5 Collaboration with FPT Ministers of Agriculture and Departments of Agriculture

The federal government has indicated that there is a need for FPT collaboration to address mental health issues in agriculture. The federal government “committed to working with the provinces, as well as industry partners, to support the mental health of farmers, ranchers, and producers. ... AAFC supports action through federal/provincial cost-shared funding under the Canadian agricultural partnership, which can be used by provincial governments to tackle issues that are creating challenges and stress for the producers in their jurisdictions. This funding can also be used by provinces to directly support mental health initiatives in the sector, including farm stress lines and crisis counselling for individuals, youth, and families living on the farm.”<sup>18</sup>

### 3.1.6 Partnerships with industry and social workers

Research on agriculture producer’s mental health suggests that networks among agricultural agencies and mental health service providers is important. Joint service planning can promote the development of networks<sup>19</sup> and inter-organizational relationships can help farmers’ mental health, emotional health, and ability to cope with stress-related problems.<sup>20</sup>

## 3.2 Performance

This section provides results to understand the extent to which the Policy achieved the inputs and outputs as described in the Policy.

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<sup>14</sup> Tait, C. & Leeder, J. (2019 May 21). With high stress, anxiety and depression, 40 per cent of Canadian farmers uneasy about seeking help. *The Globe and Mail*; See also Jones-Bitton, A. (n.d.). Submission to the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food: Strengthening Canada’s Agricultural Sector - A Canadian Network for Farmer Mental Health.

<sup>15</sup> *Mental Health: A priority for our farmers*. Report of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food (2019 May), p. 27.

<sup>16</sup> Rosser, T. (AAFC ADM, Strategic Policy Branch). Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food (June 13, 2018), p. 2

<sup>17</sup> *Mental Health: A priority for our farmers*. Report of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food (2019 May), pp. 26 – 27.

<sup>18</sup> Rosser, T. (AAFC ADM, Strategic Policy Branch). Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food (June 13, 2018), p. 3

<sup>19</sup> Fuller, J., et al. (2009). Service network analysis for agricultural mental health. *BMC Health Services Research*, 9 (87), 1-8.

<sup>20</sup> Fuller, J., et al. (2007). Use of social network analysis to describe service links for farmers’ mental health. *Australian Journal of Rural Health*, 15, 99-106.

### **3.2.1 Farmer Assistant Program**

The Farmer Assistance Program (FAP) was supported by a \$21.5K investment from the DAL in the 2019-2020 fiscal year. Community mental health partners have reported that the FAP is performing well, in terms of supporting clients in receiving support.

### **3.2.2 Funding for On-Farm Supports**

During the 2019-2020 fiscal year, one on-farm project was implemented as a pilot. This pilot project focused on providing supports to improve mental health, resiliency, and other wellness supports. Project clients reported that the these supports performed well, in terms of supporting wellbeing and farm operations.

### **3.2.3 Communication Campaign**

From January to March of 2020, the Department coordinated a #FarmersTalk communication campaign to encourage local and national dialogue on mental health in agriculture. The communication campaign included e-mails to FPT colleagues, letters to stakeholders and farmers, presentations, meetings, news releases, YouTube videos, and social media promotion (see Appendix A for a selection of communication material).

Table 1  
Key Communication Campaign Activities

Description	Activity	Date
Letter from the DAL to all farms on PEI regarding the Farmer Assistance Program	Letters	Aug-Sept, 2019
E-Mail from DAL DM to DAL staff encouraging participation in and promotion of the #FarmersTalk campaign	E-Mails	January 30, 2020
E-Mail from DAL Minister to all FPT Ministers of Agriculture encouraging participation in and promotion of the #FarmersTalk campaign	E-Mails	January 30, 2020
E-Mail from DAL DM to all FPT DMs of Agriculture encouraging participation in and promotion of the #FarmersTalk campaign	E-Mails	January 30, 2020
E-Mail from DAL ADM to all FPT ADMs of Agriculture encouraging participation in and promotion of the #FarmersTalk campaign	E-Mails	January 30, 2020
Letter from DAL Minister to all FPT Ministers of Agriculture encouraging participation in and promotion of the #FarmersTalk campaign	Letters	January 30, 2020
Letter from DAL Minister to provincial stakeholders in agriculture and health encouraging participation in and promotion of the #FarmersTalk campaign	Letters	January 30, 2020
Mental health awareness YouTube videos developed and posted online	Videos	January 30, 2020
E-mail to GPEI Departments encouraging participation in and promotion of the #FarmersTalk campaign	E-Mails	January 31, 2020
Government of PEI News Release: "New resource gives Island farming community more mental health support"	News Release	January 31, 2020
Launch of the <a href="http://www.farmerstalk.ca">www.farmerstalk.ca</a> website	Website	January 31, 2020
DAL Minister presentation of #FarmersTalk campaign at the PEI Federation of Agriculture AGM	Presentation	January 31, 2020
Distribution of mental health policy promotion items at the 2020 International Potato Technology Expo	Promotional items	February 20, 2020

### 3.2.4 Mental Health Training for Extension Staff

Fifty (50) DAL staff completed mental health first aid training in 2020.

### 3.2.5 Collaboration with FPT Ministers of Agriculture

During the 2019-2020 fiscal year, FPT Ministers of Agriculture received presentations on DAL's mental health promotion policy and were encouraged to participate with the DAL's #FarmersTalk campaign.

Table 2  
Collaboration with FPT Ministers of Agriculture Activities

Description	Activity	Date
DAL Minister presentation to FPT Ministers of Agriculture, Quebec	Presentation	July 17-19, 2019
E-Mail from DAL Minister to all FPT Ministers of Agriculture encouraging participation in and promotion of the #FarmersTalk campaign	E-Mail	January 30, 2020

### 3.2.6 Partnerships with industry and social workers

Relationships with industry and social workers were developed through a series of meetings and communication.

Description	Activity	Date
DAL DM Letter to DHW DM regarding communication of the FAP to Health PEI's Island Helpline	Letter	June, 2019



Mental health policy planning meeting with DAL and DHW	Meeting	June 7, 2019
Mental health policy planning meeting with DAL and DHW	Meeting	December 12, 2019
Mental health policy planning meeting with the PEIFA, social worker from the FAP, DAL, and DHW	Meeting	December 18, 2019
The DAL, PEIFA, ADL, Dairy Youth Trust of PEI, Farm Credit Canada, and the NFU created a partnership around the FAP.	Partnership	N/A
Consultation with PEI Mental Health Association regarding the mental health policy	Meeting	January 24, 2020

### 3.2.7 Collaboration with Departments of Agriculture

There were ten (10) unique activities completed to collaborate with other Departments of Agriculture.

Table 3  
*Collaboration with Departments of Agriculture*

Description	Activity	Date
Presentation to FPT Policy and Regulatory ADMs of Agriculture, Ottawa	Presentation	April 17-18, 2019
DAL Minister promotion of mental health policy at 2019 FPT Ministers of Agriculture meeting, Quebec	Presentation	July 17-19, 2019
Presentation to FPT Policy and Regulatory ADMs of Agriculture, Ottawa	Presentation	October 24-25, 2019
Mental health policy planning meeting with DAL and NS Department of Agriculture	Meeting	January 10, 2020
E-Mail from DAL Minister to all FPT Ministers of Agriculture encouraging participation in and promotion of the #FarmersTalk campaign	E-Mails	January 30, 2020
E-Mail from DAL DM to all FPT DMs of Agriculture encouraging participation in and promotion of the #FarmersTalk campaign	E-Mails	January 30, 2020
E-Mail from DAL DM to all FPT ADMs of Agriculture encouraging participation in and promotion of the #FarmersTalk campaign	E-Mails	January 30, 2020
Letter from DAL Minister to all FPT Ministers of Agriculture encouraging participation in and promotion of the #FarmersTalk campaign	Letters	January 30, 2020
DAL DM promotion of mental health policy and distribution of promotional material at 2020 FPT DM Retreat, Toronto	Presentation	February 11-12, 2020
DAL Director of Policy presentation on mental health policy and distribution of promotional items at the 2019 FPT CAP Partnership Event, Ottawa	Presentation	February 25-26, 2020

## 3.3 Impact

This section presents results to understand the impact of the Policy.

### 3.3.1 Farmer Assistance Program

There were 280 counselling sessions provided to members of PEI's agriculture community from April 1, 2019 to March 31, 2020.

### 3.3.2 Funding for On-Farm Supports

Feedback from participants during an on-farm support pilot project reported that the project was successful in improving their ability to manage stress on the farm.

### 3.3.3 Communication Campaign

*Media Coverage of the Mental Health Policy*

The mental health policy was featured in at least five (5) media stories.

• Walker, A. (2020, Feb 19). New programs highlight resources to help farmers deal with mental health issues.

*Island Farmer*, 46 (4).

- Top Crop Manager. (2020 Feb 03). *P.E.I. introduces new program to support farmers' mental health.*
- The Guardian. (2020 Jan 31). *New program helps farmers with mental health.*
- Cape Breton Post. (2020 Jan 31). *New P.E.I. program helps farmers with mental health.*
- CBC PEI. (2020 Jan 31). *New website aims to help P.E.I. farmers open up about stress.*

#### *Farmers Assistance Program Website and FarmersTalk.ca Website*

Between April 1, 2019 and March 31, 2020, the DAL's web page for the Farmer Assistance Program<sup>21</sup> received 549 views. The majority of views were locations registered in Charlottetown (248) and were directed to the site following a Google search. The FarmersTalk.ca website was launched on January 30, 2020. Between the launch of the site and March 20, 2020, there were 3758 page views from 1751 unique users. In total, the Google Ad for the FarmersTalk.ca website was viewed 21,944 times.

#### *YouTube Videos*

Four YouTube videos promoting the Farmer Assistance Program launched on January 31, 2020. In total, there were 448,484 "impressions" made by the videos (i.e., the videos were displayed through searches 448,484 times). In total, the videos were viewed 2,132 times. The viewers of videos watched 74.3% of the video content (average across all four videos). The most popular video featured a farmer discussing his experience with mental health (1,817 views).

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<sup>21</sup> <https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/en/information/agriculture-and-land/farmer-assistance-program>

### Industry Promotion of FarmersTalk Campaign

Industry groups in PEI and elsewhere promoted the FarmersTalk campaign. A selection of industry-promoted communication is shown below.

#### CEO Amalgamated Dairies Limited – Chad Mann



#### Farm Credit Canada



#### Atlantic Beef Products Inc.



#### PEI Cattle Producers



#### Cows Ice Cream and AAFC



Figure 2. Industry promotion of the FarmersTalk campaign.

### 3.3.4 Mental Health Training for Extension Staff

Based on key informant interviews, the impact of the mental health training for staff was primarily an increase in awareness of mental health. The impact of the training on increasing participants' ability to provide mental health first aid to clients was more limited.

### 3.3.5 Collaboration with FPT Ministers of Agriculture

Several FPT Ministers of agriculture participated in the #FarmersTalk campaign. A selection of social media activities is shown below. This is in addition to discussions that occurred among FPT Ministers at several FPT events.

#### NB Minister of Agriculture – Ross Wetmore



#### ON Minister of Agriculture – Ernie Hardeman



#### BC Minister of Agriculture - Lana Popham



#### Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada – Marie-Claude Bibeau



Figure 3. FPT Ministers of Agriculture, promotion of the FarmersTalk campaign.

### 3.3.6 Partnerships with industry and social workers

The impact of partnerships with industry and social workers is to be determined.

### 3.3.7 Collaboration with Departments of Agriculture

The impact of collaboration with Departments of Agriculture is to be determined.

## 4.0 RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS OF FINDINGS

The following recommendations for the Mental Health Promotion Policy are made based on an interpretation of the Policy's performance, relevance and impact results as well as feedback from key informants.

### **Recommendation 1: Continue a financial commitment for the #FarmersTalk Campaign**

A minimum and stable amount of funding over a three- to five-year period will likely improve the effectiveness of the campaign. This will increase the ability of the campaign to contribute to the Policy's vision of improved mental health and resiliency in PEI's agriculture industry as well as allow for better evaluations of impact. Messaging through mental health promotion campaigns should be "upstream" and focus on preventing issues before they occur.

### **Recommendation 2: Institutionalize formal partnerships with stakeholders**

Partnerships that are made formal by tools such as Memorandums of Understanding between the DAL, health care administrators, and agricultural stakeholders will institutionalize the Policy and will help to build networks that are important for mental health promotion in the agriculture industry. One such network that could be investigated is the potential for a peer support model for the agriculture community.

### **Recommendation 3: Leverage CAP funding for mental health promotion and partnerships with other Departments of Agriculture**

The delivery of mental health projects under the CAP will help to entrench mental health into discussions and agricultural policies that traditionally aim to improve profitability and competitiveness. Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada has committed to allowing provinces and territories to leverage funding through the Canadian Agricultural Partnership (CAP) to support mental health in agriculture. Furthermore, the current CAP agreement allows provinces and territories to implement joint projects under a Regional Collaboration mechanism.

### **Recommendation 4: Integrate evaluation into the delivery of activities under the DAL's Mental Health Promotion Policy**

Future evaluations of the Policy will be improved by integrating evaluation into implementation. For example, pre- and post- assessments following mental health first aid training, exit surveys following visits to [www.farmerstalk.ca](http://www.farmerstalk.ca), pre- and post-evaluations following FAP counselling sessions, surveys with partners, etc. will improve the Department's ability to understand the Policy's contribution to improving mental health and resiliency in PEI's agriculture industry.

### **Recommendation 5: Review the content of communication activities to ensure that the tone and tools employed are responsive to the communication preferences of industry**

Research on the agriculture industry's preferred method of communication to learn about mental health supports should be completed. Terms such as 'stress' and 'wellness' may align with communication preferences. Consideration should be made for including mental health resources in everyday communication with agriculture clients (for example, strategically adding links to the FAP program and YouTube videos to e-mail signatures, renewing the #FarmersTalk campaign, etc.).

### **Recommendation 6: Invest in a comprehensive study of mental health in PEI's agriculture community**

It is important that there is data available to understand mental health and resiliency in PEI's agriculture community. Several types of surveys and other tools exist for understanding the mental health of groups and populations. In the future, consideration should be made to investing in studies which look at mental health in the agriculture community at the population level in PEI. This study should also include the perspectives of farmers and the farming community with respect to mental health, gaps in supports for this population, patterns with respect to accessing services, and the effectiveness of mental health policies. The results can be used to update the long-term vision for mental health policies as well as inform decision-making with respect to investments in mental health policy interventions.

**Recommendation 7: Investigate mental health training that is informed by individuals with expertise in medicine and/or psychiatry**

Mental health includes biological, psychological, and socio-economic factors (in addition to social work). In the future, training that includes the perspectives of individuals with expertise in biology, medicine, and/or psychiatry may provide participants with additional skills and confidence to provide mental health first aid training. Furthermore, online training should be investigated as an alternative to in-person training.

**5.0 CONCLUSION**

This report has provided a formative evaluation assessment of the Department of Agriculture and Land's Mental Health Promotion Policy. The assessment covered the period of April 1, 2019 to March 31, 2020. Recommendations for future policy development have been provided.

## Appendices

### Appendix A: Promotion Items for the Policy

#### Pamphlet

**What kind of problems does the FAP help resolve?**

The FAP will help you deal with a wide range of problems that affect your personal well-being and work performance. These problems may include work or family pressures, job stress, alcohol or drug dependency, marital problems, children's issues or other conflicts. The FAP counsellors have a wide range of experience in a variety of problem areas including:

- stress and anxiety
- trauma/critical incidents
- alcohol and drug misuse
- bereavement
- couple and marital issues
- depression
- elder care concerns
- family matters/parenting concerns
- counselling with children and teens
- legal matters
- financial concerns
- learning disabilities
- grief counselling
- career counselling
- anger management

**How do I contact a FAP Counsellor?**

Please call 1-800-736-8006 or (602) 626-9787. FAP counselling hours are flexible, therefore appointments will be made at the earliest convenience.

**Are there any costs for the FAP services?**

100% coverage for those who meet the qualifications for those listed under 'Who Qualifies?'

**FAP will help you deal with a wide range of problems that affect your personal well-being and work performance.**

**FAP Counsellors**

Frank Bulger: 902-626-9787  
 Jan Henry: 902-436-0098  
 Caroline LeBlanc: 902-393-3829

Supported by:

**Farmer Assistance Program (FAP)**

Confidential, professional counselling services for farmers, farm employees and their families

**1-800-736-8006**

Department of Agriculture and Land

**What is the Farmer Assistance Program?**

The *Farmer Assistance Program (FAP)* is a service that provides confidential, professional counselling services to farmers, farm employees and their families.

The program recognizes that some problems can affect home life and work performance. When this happens, help may be required in resolving these problems through the assistance of a trained professional counsellor. These counsellors are trained to provide short-term counselling or refer you to other professional services and resources in the community.

**Who Qualifies?**

- Farmers who are members of the PEI Federation of Agriculture or National Farmers Union
- Immediate family members of farmers who are members of the PEI Federation of Agriculture or National Farmers Union
- Farm workers/farm employees of farmers who are members of the PEI Federation of Agriculture or National Farmers Union.

**Is this service confidential?**

Yes, your privacy is protected by strict confidentiality laws and regulations and by professional ethical standard for counsellors. The details of your discussions with the counsellor will not be released to anyone, including management, without your written consent, with the exception of:

**When information must be provided to others, whether or not consent is given, such as when a person appears to pose a threat of serious injury to themselves or others. Counsellors are also legally required to report suspicion of child abuse and to disclose information required by law.**

Policy Section, PEI Department of Agriculture and Land  
July, 2019 / 2019-10-M3 01, 2010-10-A2 01, 2010-10-A2 02

#### Magnet



**#FarmersTalk Bubble (English and French)**



**Mental Health Policy Videos (for the FAP)**

**1. 20191210\_FAP\_Donald. 1 min. and 04 sec.**



**2. 20191210\_FAP\_FARMERS. 0 min. and 36 sec.**



**3. 20191210\_FAP\_FARMS. 0 min and 34 sec.**





## Appendix B: Letter from DAL Minister to FPT Ministers of Agriculture

Dear Minister:

I am pleased to inform you that the Prince Edward Island Department of Agriculture and Land has launched a new campaign to encourage a national conversation on mental health in agriculture.

For the month of February, Canadians are encouraged to “join the talk” by posting a positive message on mental health using the #farmerstalk hash tag. The purpose of the campaign is to raise awareness of the importance of mental health in agriculture and resources to support wellness.

Enclosed you will find copies of a talk bubble which can be used to post a message to Twitter, Facebook, and other social media. I was hoping you could encourage officials at your Department to post a message during the month of February and to promote the campaign with provincial stakeholders. Organizations may also wish to dedicate wall space in offices to display messages.

Messages could include:

- Ways to take care of mental health,
- Ways to deal with stress,
- Resources that support mental health,
- Existing initiatives that support mental health in agriculture, or
- Any other message promoting good mental health for farmers

### Steps

- 1) Write a positive message on the talk bubble
- 2) Take a photo holding the bubble
- 3) Post the photo to social media using the hash tag #farmerstalk
- 4) Display the talk bubble on a wall dedicated to the #farmerstalk campaign

More information about the campaign and resources for mental health support in agriculture can be found at [www.farmerstalk.ca](http://www.farmerstalk.ca) Please note that the phone number for the crisis hotline in your province has been added under the ‘Resources’ section of the web page.

If you should have any questions about the campaign, please do not hesitate. Thank you for your support with this initiative.

Sincerely,

Bloyce Thompson  
Minister

Encl.  
Talk bubbles (20 copies)  
#Farmers Talk t-shirt  
#Farmers Talk cap

## Appendix C: Letter from DAL Minister to Provincial Stakeholders

Dear Colleague:

I am pleased to inform you that the Prince Edward Island Department of Agriculture and Land has launched a new campaign to encourage a conversation on mental health in agriculture.

For the month of February, Islanders are encouraged to “join the talk” by posting a positive message on mental health using the #FarmersTalk hash tag. The purpose of the campaign is to raise awareness of the importance of mental health in agriculture and resources to support wellness.

Enclosed you will find copies of a talk bubble which can be used to post a message to Twitter, Facebook, and other social media. I was hoping you could encourage officials at your organization to post a message during the month of February and to promote the campaign with provincial stakeholders. Organizations may also wish to dedicate wall space in offices to display messages.

Messages could include:

- Ways to take care of mental health,
- Ways to deal with stress,
- Resources that support mental health,
- Existing initiatives that support mental health in agriculture, or
- Any other message promoting good mental health for farmers

### Steps

- 5) Write a positive message on the talk bubble
- 6) Take a photo holding the bubble
- 7) Post the photo to social media using the hash tag #FarmersTalk
- 8) Display the talk bubble on a wall dedicated to the #FarmersTalk campaign

More information about the campaign and resources for mental health support in agriculture can be found at [www.farmerstalk.ca](http://www.farmerstalk.ca).

If you should have any questions about the campaign, please contact Bobby Thomas Cameron, Director of Policy, Planning and Evaluation at [bcameron@gov.pe.ca](mailto:bcameron@gov.pe.ca). Thank you for your support with this initiative.

Sincerely,

Bloyce Thompson  
Minister

Encl.  
Talk bubbles (5 copies)  
Mental Health Policy Backgrounder

## Appendix D: DAL DM Letter to DHW DM re: Farmer Assistance Program and Island Helpline

June 28, 2019

Mark Spidel, Deputy Minister  
Department of Health and Wellness

### Re: Island Helpline, 811, and the Farmer Assistance Program

Dear Deputy Spidel:

I am writing this letter to provide the Department of Health and Wellness with information regarding services offered by the Farmer Assistance Program (FAP), and to inquire if your Department could provide FAP information to the Island Helpline and 811 service.

The Department of Agriculture and Land (DAL) provides funding to the PEI Federation of Agriculture to offer confidential, professional counselling services to farmers, farm employees and their families. In-person counselling is provided by a trained professional counsellor.

The DAL would like to inform staff with the Island Helpline and 811 of this service in case they should receive mental health or addictions inquiries from farm clients.

The FAP is available 24 hours a day by calling the following number:

**1-800-736-8006**

Additional information about the FAP can be found here:

<https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/en/information/agriculture-and-fisheries/farmer-assistance-program>

The DAL is currently completing policy research on potential interventions, projects, and other initiatives to support the mental health of the agriculture community in PEI. This research builds on the recent work completed by two Policy Hack teams. The DAL is open to working collaboratively with the DHW on this issue. If you should have any questions, or would like to discuss this further, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Brian Matheson,  
(Acting) Deputy Minister

Encl: Website – Farmer Assistance Program

## Appendix E: Letter from the DAL to all farms on PEI regarding the FAP

*\*Mailed to all registered farms in PEI*



### **You are receiving this letter because you are a valued member of the PEI farming community**

Supporting farmer mental health is a priority for the PEI Department of Agriculture and Land. Prince Edward Island is seeing an increase in the number of individuals from the farming community who are in need of mental health support. Farmers experience unique challenges that put them at increased risk for mental health issues. These challenges can include unpredictable weather conditions and financial markets. Farmers often report high levels of stress, depression, and burnout. Positive mental health is important for the optimal well-being of individuals and the entire community.

We are pleased to inform you that the following people now qualify for free confidential counselling through the **Farmer Assistance Program ("FAP")**:

- *Farmers who are members of the PEI Federation of Agriculture ("the Federation") or National Farmers Union ("NFU");*
- *Immediate family members of farmers who are members of the Federation or NFU; and*
- *Farm workers/farm employees of farmers who are members of the Federation or NFU.*

FAP counsellors are qualified professionals that can assist with a wide range of challenges that the farm community may be facing including job stress, depression, alcohol or drug dependency, family pressures, and relationship issues.

**To learn more about this program, please see the enclosed brochure.**

**To make a confidential counselling appointment today, please call 902-626-9787 or 1-800-736-8006.**

This free counselling service is offered in collaboration with the Department of Agriculture and Land, the P.E.I. Federation of Agriculture, Amalgamated Dairies Limited, Farm Credit Canada, P.E.I. Dairy Trust Fund, and the National Farmers Union.

Other mental health supports on PEI

You will also find enclosed the *PEI Helping Tree*. The Helping Tree is a creation of the Canadian Mental Health Association to inform Islanders of the helping resources available on Prince Edward Island.

Sincerely,

Department of Agriculture and Land, Government of Prince Edward Island



Policy Section, Department of Agriculture and Land / August, 2019 / 2050-10-A2-02

## Appendix F: Letter from DAL Minister to Agriculture Industry re: Mental Health and COVID



Agriculture  
and Land

Agriculture  
et Terres



Office of the Minister  
PO Box 2000, Charlottetown  
Prince Edward Island  
Canada C1A 7N8

Bureau du ministre  
C.P. 2000, Charlottetown  
Île-du-Prince-Édouard  
Canada C1A 7N8

March 25, 2020

Dear Agriculture Colleagues,

I hope this letter finds you and your families well.

Due to the pandemic, it is important that we take heed of all public health measures, look after our mental and emotional well-being, and follow social-distancing. I strongly encourage you to look after yourselves and your loved ones.

I want to state clearly that **farming is an essential service**. Businesses that support farming and food production are essential services. Whether you plant crops, raise livestock or provide services to the agriculture industry, your work is vital to the health of our population and to the good of our economy.

I will take this opportunity to say thank you. Thank you to the **farmers and the business owners** who support agriculture. Thank you to the **workers** who continue to show up in these uncertain times and work hard on farms, in warehouses and processing facilities as a means to feed Canadians. Thank you to the **truckers** for tirelessly moving the goods necessary to support the agriculture community and move our products to market or for processing.

Our government is committed to seeing agriculture and food production continue, even as the necessary public health measures are followed.

These past weeks have brought changing circumstances and unfamiliar challenges. I know many of you are working in ways and in places that you have never worked before.

Here on Prince Edward Island, our provincial government is working hard in collaboration with our federal counterparts to help farmers secure much needed financing, labour and materials.

Please stay in touch with our department and follow the latest updates from our Chief Public Health Officer. New developments and announcements are happening daily. I am proud to be supported by staff who care about agriculture and the people associated with the industry. They can be counted on to work for the best interests of Islanders and Island agriculture.

This is a difficult time for all of us.

These days will pass, and I am confident that our Island will emerge even stronger.

Thank you all for your dedication and for the sacrifices that you are making to help our province and our country feed its citizens as we deal with the threat posed by COVID-19.

Stay safe.



Bloyce Thompson, Minister

Agriculture and Land

Tel/Tél. : 902 368 4820 [princeedwardisland.ca](http://princeedwardisland.ca) Fax/Télé. : 902 368 4846