

# Intensity flows

Consultations open on developing new Water Act for P.E.I.

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**Michael van den Heuvel, director, Canadian Rivers Institute at UPEI, gives a presentation Tuesday night during a public forum on the P.E.I. Water Act. The provincial government is encouraging the public to contribute to the development of a Water Act. The Environmental Advisory Council is hosting consultations and reports back to the Minister of Communities, Land and Environment. This forum was held in Charlottetown.**

Intensity was clearly evident as a packed room listened Tuesday to the opening session of consultation towards a new water act for P.E.I.

Eliza Starchild Knockwood sang when she took the microphone for the open mic portion of the evening held at the Murchison Centre in Charlottetown.

“Thank you water, we respect you,” she translated from her song in the Mi’kmaq language.

Darcie Lanthier’s voice was cutting with intensity as she reminded the meeting about fish kills from the Plan B highway project and said the Island should have had a pesticide ban when 5,000 people signed a petition in 2009 asking for one.

Malcolm Pitre travelled down from the Tignish area for the opening session to suggest some common sense, straight-shooting action.

He told the meeting he is a shellfisher, an industry that is fighting continuously with the devastating results of nitrogen runoff.

“I’m losing money,” he said. “Top of the hill. Walk up the hill and deal with it.

“Something has to be done a little bit quicker,” said Pitre.

Four pre-scheduled presentations were made Tuesday to the Environment Advisory Committee chaired by Richard Davies.

There is so much interest that additional public sessions will be added to the schedule, said moderator Jean Paul Arsenault.

All the presentations, including audio recordings of the evening events will be on the Water Act web page through the provincial government Internet site.

Michael van den Heuvel of the Canadian Rivers Institute led off Tuesday with a science-based presentation.

He looked at why deep water wells won't help the potato industry, but said regulating such wells should not be a feature of the new act.

The act will be "broad strokes" without the fine detail of regulations that will come from it, he said.

There needs to be an overarching law that allows, for example, nitrogen levels in waterways to be regulated.

He talked of the need for fees, that water not to be viewed as free. The act will certainly not fully please any of the competing interests, he said.

That was evident in the contrast between the City of Charlottetown's presentation and that of Don Mazer, formerly of the Winter River watershed group.

The city asked that the act recognize the absolute necessity for large scale use of ground water. Mazer said the city has almost destroyed the Winter River ecosystem as it takes more out than nature can restore.

Mazer said the city has never acknowledged that the harm it has and is doing to the ecosystem.

Roger Gordon and Maureen Kerr of Pesticide P.E.I. called Premier Wade MacLauchlan to keep a promise to include a province-wide cosmetic pesticide ban in the water act.

The consultations are scheduled for every Tuesday at 7 p.m. through to the end of November at locations across P.E.I.

The next is Oct. 13 at Credit Union Place in Summerside.