

HANSARD

NOVA SCOTIA HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

COMMITTEE

ON

HUMAN RESOURCES

Tuesday, March 30, 2021

Video Conference

Appointments to Agencies, Boards and Commissions

Printed and Published by Nova Scotia Hansard Reporting Services

HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Rafah DiCostanzo (Chair)
Bill Horne (Vice-Chair)
Hon. Leo Glavine
Hon. Gordon Wilson
Hon. Tony Ince
Larry Harrison
Brad Johns
Claudia Chender
Kendra Coombes

[Rafah DiCostanzo was replaced by Hon. Ben Jessome]

In Attendance:

Judy Kavanagh
Legislative Committee Clerk

Gordon Hebb
Chief Legislative Counsel



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

HALIFAX, TUESDAY, MARCH 30, 2021

STANDING COMMITTEE ON HUMAN RESOURCES

10:00 A.M.

CHAIR

Rafah DiCostanzo

VICE-CHAIR

Bill Horne

THE CHAIR: This is the Standing Committee on Human Resources for Tuesday, March 30, 2021. I would like to say that I'm filling in today for Rafah DiCostanzo, and we'll proceed along very quickly. We're going to be doing appointments to agencies, boards, and commissions.

The members of the committee, the clerk, and the Legislative Counsel should keep your videos on throughout the meeting with your microphones on mute, unless I call on you to speak. You should turn on your own microphone before speaking and then put it back on mute afterwards.

If you have any devices with you, such as your phone, please put them on silent. Please try not to leave your seat during the meeting unless it's absolutely necessary. If you do, please leave your camera on but your audio muted. That way we know we have quorum and we know whether you are present if a vote is called for.

If I need to confer privately with the clerk or with the Legislative Counsel, or if members wish to confer before a vote, I may call for a brief recess. If any members have technical problems, please phone or text the clerk.

I will now ask for committee members to introduce themselves for the record and state their name and constituency. I will start first with the NDP members, if you would like to proceed and introduce yourselves.

[The committee members introduced themselves.]

THE CHAIR: We are here today to do the agencies, boards, and commissions, and we can start out directly with that, and we'll go through the two committees that we have.

Mr. Wilson, would you please begin with the Department of Environment and Climate Change?

HON. GORDON WILSON: Mr. Chair, I move that the following be appointed as members to the Round Table on Environment and Sustainable Prosperity: Graham Gagnon, Jeffrey Bishop, Michel Raymond, William (Bill) Simpkins, Jeff MacCallum, Louise Delisle, Marla MacLeod, Maxine MacLean, Sarah Riley, Savannah DeWolfe, Susanna Fuller; and Rochelle Owen.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Johns.

BRAD JOHNS: Mr. Chair, I do want to make a couple of quick comments before we vote on this. I thank the minister for the letter. I think it's wonderful to see these 12 appointments coming forward. I believe that it's a [Inaudible] slate of 15 so I'm quite anxious to see the round table moving forward and getting down to work. I'm curious to know what the meeting schedule is and when you're looking at holding your first meeting. I don't know if we can send correspondence to the minister and ask that. Other than that, I think this is great news today so I'm in favour of this motion.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Johns, I think that's a normal question to ask on how they'd be setting up and how often they will meet. We'll send a note off to see what the answer is to that. I personally don't know right now.

BRAD JOHNS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

THE CHAIR: Any other questions? Claudia Chender.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: I, like Mr. Johns, am pleased after a couple of years of waiting for these appointments to see them finally come forward, as delayed as they have been. Just for the record, we have a climate crisis. This government initiated an emergency debate on that crisis and yet it has taken two years for this board to be filled, which is disappointing, but we are glad to see the board filled.

We do have questions about the makeup of this board. I think many of us spent at least some time yesterday listening to presentations to the Law Amendments Committee on the Biodiversity Act. I think one of the themes that came forward in that conversation

is the influence that certain industry and lobby groups have on government policies and priorities.

One of the things that struck me as a member of the Law Amendments Committee yesterday was hearing from a real diversity of views from woodlot owners. We heard woodlot owners who were skeptical of the Act and who had challenges with the content, but we also heard from a lot of woodlot owners who represented themselves as ecologists and sustainable foresters who said, we know there are other Acts out there that have similar penalties. We know these will be applied judiciously and reasonably, and we want to do our part in addressing the climate crisis and in the biodiversity aspect of that in particular.

However, on this round table, we see Mr. Jeff Bishop representing the forestry industry. We have questions about that. One of the questions that we have is, does Forest Nova Scotia have a seat on this round table or is it Mr. Bishop's seat? Is he representing himself or is he representing the forestry industry? If he's representing the forestry industry, then I would submit - just based on yesterday - that he's not representing the full diversity of that forestry industry.

I think particularly after the somewhat, I would say, disingenuous campaign that Forest Nova Scotia had a part in around Bill No. 4, the Biodiversity Act, that's moving its way through our Legislature, which has resulted so far in some, again, quite disappointing amendments to the Act from government, I'm not sure that we would be comfortable if he was the sole representative of the forestry industry. We see in terms of environmentalists and non-profits great representation. We have real climate leaders - folks like Susanna Fuller, Marla MacLeod, Sarah Riley and Scott Skinner - people who have a great reputation and will do the yeoman's work there. We also know that forestry is a massive part of this province and we want to make sure that large canopy of foresters also has the ability to be properly represented at this table.

I know the former minister is here with us, and I won't ask him to answer questions about the department, but I would ask that we write a letter. I guess my two questions are: Is that seat Mr. Bishop's or is that seat Forest Nova Scotia's? Do organizations have a seat on this round table or individuals? If so, are there other representatives from forestry, broadly? If not, could there be? I know that's a mouthful.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Wilson, did you want to say a word?

GORDON WILSON: I think those are extremely valid points, yes. I don't mind giving a little bit of a background and understanding to it, given my understanding of the previous round table and the conversations I had and the meetings with Marty Janowitz and how great they worked as a group.

This new round table does have a bit of the old and a bit of the new. When I saw them function before, the anticipation is with that same leadership of Scott Skinner that you had mentioned. There are some very great people on there - I think the power in this

committee is that there is going to be a full diverse representation. The thought that just Jeff Bishop will be bringing forward issues on behalf of the forest industry, I don't think will be the case at all. We have some very strong people on there who - in the forum that they're going to have - are going to be open to also portray their views.

I do support that letter going forward. I think that maybe we could combine that also with Mr. Johns' letter on the timing of it. I know the legislation states that this group is to meet annually, at the very least, with the Premier and the ministers. They themselves will be meeting probably more than that just to get their feet underneath them.

I think it's a very valid question and one that I think the answer to it will hopefully be what I was reflecting, also.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, Mr. Wilson. I think my thought on this also would be that we do allow that to continue like Ms. Chender suggested and get the answers to that in writing.

To Ms. Kavanagh, I would say thank you, if you can get this from the official transcripts and ask the questions. Mr. Wilson, thank you. That's good information.

Mr. Johns.

BRAD JOHNS: Just for clarification, there's no motion to remove anybody. We're moving the slate as it is. Correct, Mr. Chair?

THE CHAIR: That is my understanding, yes.

BRAD JOHNS: What I would say is, in consultation with the PC caucus and staff, this slate is actually a good representation. It's very diverse.

I recognize there may be some concerns around Mr. Bishop's role there. What I would suggest is given the role the forestry industry plays in Nova Scotia, I think that it is important to consult them.

We did see yesterday a lot of people come forward and say that they weren't consulted in the Biodiversity Act that was coming forward at Law Amendments Committee. I think to ensure that we have a good balance of opinions and diversity, I certainly like the slate as it is.

THE CHAIR: Any other questions? If not, we'll have a vote on this.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

Thank you for that. I think this is a very good point for our government to have a committee such as this and the variety of members make a difference. We'll hopefully, not so much on the companies, but hopefully there are individuals who have the knowledge that can really focus on what they should be.

Next is the Department of Health and Wellness. Mr. Glavine.

HON. LEO GLAVINE: Mr. Chair, I'd like to present and move the names to the Nova Scotia Health Authority Board. The word "Authority" is no longer there. Janet Davidson as Chair and Director; OmiSoore Dryden, Director; Gary Osborne, Director; Jacquelyn Thayer Scott, Director; and Dr. Rex Dunn, Director (Non-Voting).

THE CHAIR: Any questions before we call for the motion of approval? Ms. Chender.

[10:15 a.m.]

CLAUDIA CHENDER: I just want to say that I'm pleased to see Dr. OmiSoore Dryden's name on that list. She was the James R. Johnston (JRJ) Chair at Dalhousie University, situated in Health, and she has been a real champion in particular for looking at the kind of differential outcomes of health for racialized folks, and she has done a lot of work particularly on blood and blood collection, which I know is more of a federal issue. I think as we in the NDP caucus have been advocating for better data, better racialized data, and a greater attention to differential health outcomes, which I think has become even more poignant in this pandemic, I think she'll be a great addition. I just wanted to speak in favour of that.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, Claudia, for those comments. Mr. Glavine, go ahead.

LEO GLAVINE: I just wanted to thank Claudia for that comment. I actually had quite a long discussion with Dr. OmiSoore, and not knowing at the time that in fact her name was coming forward for the board. She brings a tremendous perspective and background, I think, to moving the markers a long way in terms of race data that can be very helpful in stronger health delivery, especially for our diverse and minority populations. Thank you for the comment, Claudia.

THE CHAIR: Any other questions? Not hearing any, we'll vote on the motion. All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

Thank you very much. That's the end of the ABCs. We do have a couple of letters that have come in, and I believe everyone has received them. If there are any questions on those letters, I think they're self-explanatory. There are two: one for the Minister of

Communities, Culture and Heritage; and the other one, the Minister of Environment and Climate Change.

I think that's all clear. No questions? Good.

We have an annual report. We'll need a motion to approve the annual report, and eventually it will get into the House.

HON. BEN JESSOME: So moved.

THE CHAIR: Sounds good. The only other thing is to talk about our next meeting, which will be on April 27th at 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon via video conference. It will be the Department of Labour and Advanced Education re: the Nova Scotia Loan Forgiveness Program.

Just a note, if the House is still sitting on that date, the committee will meet only to consider appointments to ABCs.

Does anybody have any other issues that need to be discussed right now? Mr. Hebb.

GORDON HEBB: You called for a motion on the report, but I don't believe you had a vote on it.

THE CHAIR: Oh, I think you're absolutely correct. Thank you very much. All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

Not seeing anything else, I would say our meeting is finished. Thank you very much. It has been very simple, very clean, and lovely discussions. Thank you so much.

[The meeting adjourned at 10:20 a.m.]