

# **HANSARD**

**NOVA SCOTIA HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY**

**COMMITTEE ON  
NATURAL RESOURCES AND  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

**Tuesday, February 5, 2019**

**COMMITTEE ROOM**

***Agenda Setting***

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**NATURAL RESOURCES AND  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE**

Ms. Suzanne Lohnes-Croft (Chairman)

Mr. Hugh MacKay (Vice-Chairman)

Ms. Rafah DiCostanzo

Mr. Keith Irving

Mr. Brendan Maguire

Hon. Pat Dunn

Ms. Elizabeth Smith-McCrossin

Ms. Claudia Chender

Ms. Lisa Roberts

[Mr. Ben Jessome replaced Mr. Keith Irving]

In Attendance:

Mrs. Darlene Henry  
Legislative Committee Clerk

Mr. Gordon Hebb  
Chief Legislative Counsel



House of Assembly  
*Nova Scotia*

**HALIFAX, TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 5, 2019**

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON  
NATURAL RESOURCES AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

**1:00 P.M.**

**CHAIRMAN**

Ms. Suzanne Lohnes-Croft

**VICE-CHAIRMAN**

Mr. Hugh MacKay

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Order. I call this agenda-setting meeting of the Standing Committee on Natural Resources and Economic Development to order. I would like to welcome everybody. I'm Suzanne Lohnes-Croft, MLA for Lunenburg and the chairman of this committee. I will ask members to state their names and constituencies.

[The committee members introduced themselves.]

MADAM CHAIRMAN: I would ask everyone to put their phones on silent or away, and remind everyone that coffee and washrooms are out in the anteroom. Also, should there be an emergency, we will exit to Granville Street and meet at the Grand Parade. I ask that members wait to be recognized so that the recordings for Hansard are able to pick up your microphone and your voice.

We will start with the agenda, using the three, two, one process. Everyone received a sheet with the topics from the different committees. I'm going to ask the clerk to make references during each topic because she noticed that all of them had some questions or were incomplete, so she can clarify for us. We'll start with the Liberals. Mrs. Henry.

MRS. DARLENE HENRY (Legislative Committee Clerk): The official title is the Office of Regulatory Affairs and Service Effectiveness, so that would be the official name for that. Did you want me to keep going?

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Sure.

MRS. HENRY: For Nova Scotia Tourism, more specifically, would it be the official 2018 campaign, the results, or a combination of both? It just needs to be clarified a little bit.

NOW Lunenburg - it's just graphics. It should be all in caps, because it's an acronym for something or other. That's about it for those three.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Would someone from the Liberal caucus like to make a motion? Mr. Jessome.

MR. BEN JESSOME: Just to clarify on the Tourism piece, it would be both subjects.

I move that the committee accept these topics: red tape reduction, Fred Crooks, Chief Regulatory Officer at the Office of Regulatory Affairs and Service Effectiveness; Nova Scotia Tourism 2018, bringing in Michele Saran, CEO at Tourism Nova Scotia; and finally, NOW Lunenburg County, with project coordinator Tina Hennigar. I so move.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Ms. Chender.

MS. CLAUDIA CHENDER: Can I request for simplicity's sake, because this has been happening at other committees, that the topics get moved one by one?

MADAM CHAIRMAN: You prefer it one by one?

MS. CHENDER: Yes, I think it's just easier if it's separate motions, because then we can debate each one of them.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Sure, okay.

MR. JESSOME: That's fine.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: We'll say that he has done the first topic, which is the red tape. Are there any comments or questions? Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

Moving to Nova Scotia Tourism, 2018 campaign. Ms. DiCostanzo.

MS. RAFAH DICOSTANZO: I make the motion for both subjects for Nova Scotia Tourism, and the witness will be Michele Saran as the CEO.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Are there any questions or comments? Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

The third topic, NOW Lunenburg County - Mr. Jessome.

MR. JESSOME: I so move NOW Lunenburg County, Ms. Tina Hennigar, project coordinator.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Are there any questions or comments? Mr. Dunn.

HON. PAT DUNN: Would you be able to expand on that topic a little bit?

MR. JESSOME: I may invite the local MLA to add a few comments, but from what I gather, it's a group that has taken on a grassroots campaign to market their local economy. From a perspective of rural economic development, we would like to see them come in to share their story.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: They took the challenge from the Ivany report and, as he said, communities have to step up and lead the way. Lunenburg County, right from the start, started a group that is looking at ways of improving the rural economy and building the population.

This group is diving in deep with everything from broadband to increasing the population. They did a cross-Canada tour two summers ago, letting people know about life in Lunenburg County. They're pretty community-based, but all volunteers except for - they now have some grant money, so the project coordinator does get a salary for that. That's why they've been asked.

Are there any questions or comments? Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

From the PC caucus - Mr. Dunn.

MR. DUNN: As you see in the schedule, the first one is shale gas development. I thought that perhaps the deputy minister could be a person we could bring in, just for an overview in our province with regard to the potential for that - where they are at this particular time, where they might be in 10 years' time. That's number one.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: The clerk has some questions about that.

MRS. HENRY: In going through this, we're not sure if it's hydraulic fracturing or extraction of shale gas because there has been a ban on fracking since 2014.

MR. DUNN: When we were discussing this, we were looking at both, knowing that there is a moratorium. We are looking at both just to see what information is out there and what the province could be looking at in the future.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: I think witnesses were the DM for both those topics. Ms. Chender.

MS. CHENDER: Further to the clerk's point, I would just say that we do have a legislated moratorium on hydraulic fracturing. I know there was an atlas that was released recently, which from my perspective is somewhat questionable, given that we have a legislated moratorium.

The government of the day has expressed its intention to maintain that moratorium, although for the record, they have not proclaimed that Act. It seems strange to me that we around this committee table would take it upon ourselves to discuss something that is prohibited by legislation. I wonder if my colleagues could speak to that.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Should we discuss what you want to discuss first?

MS. CHENDER: I'm assuming she's responding.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: You're responding to that? Ms. Smith-McCrossin.

MS. ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: From our understanding, I think the mandate of this committee is to discuss natural resources and economic development for the province. This is one of the natural resources that our province has, so that's one of the reasons that we put it on the agenda.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Legal counsel has told me that because it's legislated, it doesn't mean that there's any reason to prevent it from coming to a committee.

Any other questions? Mr. MacKay.

MR. HUGH MACKAY: I would just like to say that I support this particular one. I think it's important that we examine potential natural resource extraction that can help economic development in Nova Scotia.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

Mr. Dunn.

MR. DUNN: The second one I'm making a motion for is to bring in the Mining Association of Nova Scotia to deal with uranium exploration in the province.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Ms. Roberts.

MS. LISA ROBERTS: It strikes me as a frustrating use of our time that we would dedicate another whole committee hearing to hearing about a possible activity which we have actually spent a considerable amount of time as a province debating and deciding not to pursue. In the case of uranium, we're talking about a commission of inquiry - multiple processes undertaken with a huge amount of public consultation and hundreds of submissions.

To think that we as a committee, in the time and with the resources allotted to us, can really serve as a second line or re-examination of these conclusions, seems to me to be foolhardy and really a poor use of our time when there are so many actual real sources of economic development that draw on the people of Nova Scotia and on the beautiful environment that we are so lucky to enjoy.

Speaking as a member of the Third Party, which only gets to put forward one topic, I would love it if we could maybe substitute one of ours for this one because I will be sitting here frustrated. I just want to voice that.

MS. SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Again, just reiterating, the mandate of this committee is to explore and discuss natural resources and economic development, and this is one of the natural resources in this province. Technology and innovation are always changing. I think it's important for us to be taking a look at opportunities where they exist.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Ms. Chender.

MS. CHENDER: Notwithstanding those comments, I would echo my colleague Ms. Roberts' comments.

I would also say that the third PC topic, which I'm guessing we may or may not get a chance to debate - just for the record, we would be fully in support of. We would very much like to talk about rural Internet. We would not like to talk about uranium. We have indicated that we are not interested in reopening the conversation around fracking. I think rural Internet is actually a great example of something that has a huge impact on our economic development that is live and active at the moment and would be a wonderful use of the committee's time.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Any further comments or questions? Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

Moving to the NDP - Ms. Chender. (Interruptions)

They have two topics - that's two topics. (Interruptions) She was suggesting that they bring forward a different topic. Ms. Chender.

MS. CHENDER: Just to correct the sheets you have in front of you, at the time, we hadn't confirmed proposed witnesses.

I would like to make a motion for our topic that we consider green jobs and economic development. This is the Natural Resources and Economic Development Committee. We find ourselves at a perilous moment in terms of climate change, and like it or not, we'll be forced to make a transition around how we use our economic development to galvanize the appropriate resources to bring us into the future. We believe that's around a shift towards green technology, and this is actually a perfect place for us to discuss that.

[1:15 p.m.]

For witnesses, we would suggest someone from the Department of Business, and that could be at the choice of government. It could be a deputy minister or the appropriate witness as determined by my colleagues.

We'd also suggest Bruno Dobrusin. He runs the Green Economy Network, which I believe is located in Ontario, but he has indicated his willingness to travel. The Green Economy Network is a large alliance of people looking at climate jobs - what does the future of the economy look like in an era of climate change? It has done a huge amount of work federally and has participated in a recent The Current special on this. (Interruption) Can I finish my motion?



Also, Lyle Goldberg who is the Canadian Solar Industries Association's Policy and Regulatory Affairs Manager. The government is doing great work around solar. I think that's an example of a leader of how we can move generally.

Those would be our three witnesses, and that would be our proposed topic.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Do you have any more questions, Mrs. Henry?

MRS. HENRY: No, she specified . . .

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Mr. Jessome.

MR. JESSOME: I would just inject that we're supportive of that conversation but would request some more information. I think we ran into some discussion around the subject of witnesses being flown in or brought in from out of jurisdiction. I'd just like to highlight that and ask where the funding is coming from to bring these folks in.

MS. CHENDER: I appreciate flagging that, although I would say this is somewhat different than the government flying in witnesses to support their own position.

Notwithstanding that, I am conscious of the use of funding for these kinds of initiatives, and were this witness able to appear and we can schedule it, he would be flying in on his own dime. We would not be paying for that trip.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Are there any further questions or comments? Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

Also, a request has come in from Mr. Patrick Crabbe, Business and Brand Development Manager of Bird Construction. You had an email from the clerk. Is there any discussion around this? Ms. Roberts.

MS. ROBERTS: I was present for parts of the Forest Nova Scotia AGM that happened last week in Halifax and happened to be in the room when Mr. Crabbe presented. I think he would be an excellent witness for this committee - talking about wood use in public buildings and some of the challenges presented both by municipal and provincial procurement processes, and also talking a lot about the economic potential of using wood to construct very close to where the wood is actually sourced. I'm fully supportive.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Ms. DiCostanzo.

MS. DICOSTANZO: I'm not sure 100 per cent here, but I thought most of the topics should come from one of the three Parties, so he could come as an NDP topic.

MS. ROBERTS: Early in my time at this committee we heard from the non-industrial woodlot owners' association and they initiated that appearance themselves in a similar process. I think it's actually a way of empowering Nova Scotians that when people feel like they have something they want to say to all three Parties that they can propose it.

Obviously, it would have to be scheduled along with everything else, but I welcome the initiative. I didn't know him before last week, so it's not like this is a secret way of getting in an NDP topic. I just happened to see him present and thought, oh, this guy has something to say.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: I'll let the clerk speak to this.

MRS. HENRY: Anybody can request an appearance before a committee - we can't stop that from happening. It does not have to be strictly a caucus witness you put forward. That's just my two cents.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Ms. Smith-McCrossin.

MS. SMITH-MCCROSSIN: This is a great topic, and I would support this witness coming. On the same day, we might want to consider bringing in other witnesses who also do similar types of work.

There are a couple of co-operatives in northern Nova Scotia - Athol Forestry and another co-operative as well. They have been working quite hard to promote the idea of heat energy in large government buildings using part of the wood product that, right now, they don't have a big market demand for. The P.E.I. Government has been doing this and has been quite successful.

Those witnesses may fit in. If we had a day when that was the topic, there may be other similar type businesses that could come.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Mr. Jessome.

MR. JESSOME: I just wanted to make the point that we need to be careful in managing expectations of everybody who reaches out, because even with the suggestion of one witness, another two or three pop up. I believe that there is some merit in having a structure in place to determine what witnesses are that stem from respective Parties submitting witnesses. That's just my food for thought.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Ms. Roberts.

MS. ROBERTS: I think, again, the topic of wood energy in public buildings would be an excellent topic, certainly one that I would have preferred over the topics that we have just approved. I don't think it necessarily fits with this witness, which I understand is very much talking about the use of wood in construction.

I think we could expand this to also look at maybe a witness from CMHC or even Housing Nova Scotia, where I know that some recently approved publicly funded housing projects are also really focusing on innovative use of mass wood construction.

I think we could add a second witness to Mr. Crabbe and have a very interesting conversation. I would certainly support wood energy for heat coming forward at another agenda-setting opportunity.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Ms. Chender.

MS. CHENDER: Just to speak to my colleague's point about whether or not we accept solicitations to appear, I'm conscious of the floodgate argument. I would also say that we all know that our respective Parties are going to have a tendency to put forward topics that support our own positions and points of view, and that may leave certain conversations un-had that ought to be discussed.

I don't think we have to accept every solicitation to appear, and I do think we need to be careful, but we are a tri-partisan committee. We do collectively have the opportunity to determine whether or not any given topic is relevant or important or we want to discuss it. I wouldn't want to rule out of hand the notion that we would at least take those under consideration.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Mr. MacKay.

MR. MACKAY: Could I get clarification from the clerk? For future agendas, are such things typically done under another agenda-setting meeting or just as they come forward here to the committee?

MRS. HENRY: If the committee gets a request, it's brought before that particular meeting and then deferred to an agenda-setting meeting for discussion.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Then caucuses can bring those as part of their list if they choose to as well. Ms. Chender.

MS. CHENDER: Or not. They could just be considered independently.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Exactly. Mr. Jessome.

MR. JESSOME: Our position at this point is that we'll defer it to an agenda-setting meeting on another day and Parties can proceed with selecting that as a topic for the consideration of this committee.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Is that a motion or a comment?

MR. JESSOME: Do we have a motion on the floor right now or are we reviewing correspondence?

MADAM CHAIRMAN: No, there's no motion. Ms. Roberts.

MS. ROBERTS: I would like to make a motion that we respond positively to the request from Patrick Crabbe to appear before this committee to discuss wood use in public buildings.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Is there any discussion? Mr. Jessome.

MR. JESSOME: In acknowledging the acknowledgement that there is a requirement to draw the line at times, where is that line drawn? I think we're just kind of going down a road that could end up being fruitful, but it could also be challenging to manage the expectations of every witness that wants to present to the committee. I'm asking if we're accepting this one today, where do we say yes and no?

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Ms. Roberts.

MS. ROBERTS: I think committee members can make that consideration. I spoke to give a little bit more information and perspective on top of the letter. I recognize the letter is relatively short. I think we can make that choice as committee members on a case-by-case basis.

Having served on this committee or a very similar committee in the past, I can say that it's only twice that I've seen a request come forward. Certainly on the first occasion it was a very fruitful, useful conversation that all committee members found helpful. Given that forestry is such an important industry in this province, and also given that we know we need a more varied and diverse economy around and uses for wood, I think that this is a super timely topic.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Ms. Smith-McCrossin.

MS. SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Just to echo her comments, I would suggest that we take a look at the requests as they come in through the clerk and we could decide at each meeting. I do also agree that the importance of forestry in our economy right now is becoming even more evident. The more we can do to discuss value-added and

diversification of this industry, it's important for the people of Nova Scotia for that to be on our agenda.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Mr. Maguire.

MR. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Let's bring them in. Let's end the argument and bring them in.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Let's vote on the motion. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

Our next meeting date is February 26<sup>th</sup>, but we would like to discuss, before she sets agendas for the House sitting - Ms. DiCostanzo.

MS. DICOSTANZO: I would like to make a motion for the standing committee that we will not meet during the House session and not meet in July and August. This will be for the duration of the committee mandate. It's the standard of all other committees.

MS. SMITH-MCCROSSIN: I don't believe it's the standard of all the committees. The fact that we've brought two committees together and the importance of economic development to this province, I believe we should be meeting monthly, minimum.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: I think we discussed that topic and voted on it in the last meeting though, and it was defeated. Ms. DiCostanzo has a motion.

MS. DICOSTANZO: That we do not meet during House sessions, nor in July and August.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

The next meeting is Tuesday, February 26<sup>th</sup> at 1:00 p.m.

The meeting is adjourned.

[The committee adjourned at 1:30 p.m.]