

HANSARD

NOVA SCOTIA HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

**COMMITTEE ON
NATURAL RESOURCES AND
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

Tuesday, December 7, 2021

Committee Room

Organizational/Agenda-Setting

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**NATURAL RESOURCES AND
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE**

Tom Taggart (Chair)
Dave Ritcey (Vice-Chair)
Kent Smith
Trevor Boudreau
Chris Palmer
Ronnie LeBlanc
Carman Kerr
Claudia Chender
Lisa Lachance

[Dave Ritcey was replaced by Danielle Barkhouse]

In Attendance:

Heather Hoddinott
Legislative Committee Clerk

Gordon Hebb
Chief Legislative Counsel



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

HALIFAX, TUESDAY, DECEMBER 7, 2021

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

9:00 A.M.

CHAIR
Tom Taggart

VICE-CHAIR
Dave Ritcey

THE CHAIR: Good morning, everyone. My name is Tom Taggart and I'm going to call this meeting to order. This is the Standing Committee on Natural Resources and Economic Development. Like I say, my name is Tom Taggart. I'm the Chair.

Before we start, please keep your masks on during the meeting unless you're speaking and please have your phones on silent or vibrate.

I'd like to do a round table of introductions. If we could, we'll start with MLA LeBlanc.

[The committee members introduced themselves.]

THE CHAIR: This is the first meeting of the Natural Resources and Economic Development Committee. It's an organizational and agenda-setting meeting. A brief review of the committee procedures will be provided and a number of committee decisions will need to be made. We will also set our agenda for the next six months. I just want to remind everybody that as we go around the table, you wait until I recognize your name and your light goes on before you speak, and that way it gets in Hansard.

We'll start with the meeting schedule. Currently, the committee meets monthly on the fourth Tuesday of the month. The usual meeting time is 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. Is there any discussion on this? Everybody's happy with that date? I think if everybody agrees, there's no need for a motion.

As for setting the agenda, a little further on we will set our agenda for the committee. Let's go over the process for that first. Previously, approved topics included three from the government caucus, two from the Official Opposition, and one from the third party. All parties can submit as many as they want, it is the number approved that matters here. Does the committee want to continue with this practice?

MLA Boudreau.

TREVOR BOUDREAU: Our caucus has discussed this, and we're very comfortable with the three-two-one rotation, and basically rotating through topics in the order of government, Official Opposition, government, third party, government, Official Opposition. I'm happy to make a motion that the government caucus will get three regular or emergency topics per six-meeting rotation, the Official Opposition will get two regular or emergency topics per six-meeting rotation, and the third party will get one regular or emergency topic per six-meeting rotation.

THE CHAIR: MLA Chender.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: I think that's fine. That's the way we've always done it, although this last part of what Mr. Boudreau said in terms of how we rotate through the topics - can I just confirm, is that the way that it's normally done? I would think that we would go just around. We could go government, Official Opposition, third party. Otherwise, we wait quite a while to get our topic.

THE CHAIR: Would you like to expand on that, MLA Boudreau?

TREVOR BOUDREAU: Sure. I'm just going through what I've experienced in Public Accounts and in other places, but again, I also think it's probably determined by witness availability as well. My understanding is just if there's availability in one place and not in another, then that would be what would be followed anyway.

THE CHAIR: MLA Chender.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: We'd be happy to support a motion of the three-two-one and then let's leave the scheduling of how that happens to the clerk, if that's okay.

THE CHAIR: That's my understanding, for sure.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Okay. Great.

THE CHAIR: Is that representative of your motion?

TREVOR BOUDREAU: Yes, I was just trying to make sure we had it organized so that it would serve everybody. I didn't want to see just three government ones in a row, so I'm just trying to kind of figure out an order.

THE CHAIR: Do we need that motion read back so we understand it?

TREVOR BOUDREAU: I move that the government caucus will get three regular or emergency topics per six-meeting rotation, the Official Opposition will get two regular or emergency topics per six-meeting rotation, and the third party will get one regular or emergency topic per six-meeting rotation.

THE CHAIR: All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

We're going to continue the regular practice so it is important to get the topics to the committee clerk in a timely manner so that the proposed list can be shared in advance, allowing the members time to meet and discuss in their respective caucuses ahead of the agenda-setting.

The proposed topic list is only shared between caucus members and the legislative staff and is not considered public until after it's dealt with by the committees. Topics being put forth must be approved by the committee through a motion. Time will be allowed for discussion on topics if necessary.

We're going now to witness questioning. The structure of how witnesses will be questioned by the committee members shall be agreed upon by the committee. The committee could keep a running list of questions and go member by member or follow the previous practice that will be two rounds of questioning. The first round is 20 minutes. The second round is typically 10 to 14 minutes, depending on the amount of time remaining and allowing for time to deal with committee business. The order of questioning is Official Opposition, third party, and governing party. I'm looking for discussion on that. MLA Boudreau, please.

TREVOR BOUDREAU: I'm comfortable with the 20-minute, 20-minute, 20-minute. It keeps each party getting the same amount of time. If everybody else is comfortable with that, I don't see a need for a motion, but if there is more discussion . . .

THE CHAIR: MLA Chender.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: I'm fine with that. That hasn't been the tradition of this committee. That's sort of what we've always done in the Public Accounts Committee, but

I look around and most people haven't been to a committee in this room. Maybe nobody has.

Maybe Mr. Hebb could back me up here, but the tradition has been that we have a more informal style of questioning here. We hear the presentations and then people ask a question and a follow-up. Sometimes that follows in order of party status, which is fine. Some Chairs prefer to do it that way and sometimes it's just in the order in which questions occur, which is also fine.

I'm okay, I guess, to move to that, but the reality is that in some topics, some folks are going to have more questions and other folks will have fewer. That works really well in the Public Accounts Committee, where you have this limited time and all this stuff, but in here, it may be constrictive. I don't know if the clerk has an opinion on that or Legislative Counsel. I don't recall ever doing a committee that way in this room.

HEATHER HODDINOTT: I believe that we did switch to this style of questioning at some point with the Natural Resources Committee. I'm not sure if that was back in February or March, but I also was starting in January as well.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: You asked for discussion so I'm bringing it up for discussion just to say that these committees have been more informal in structure than the committees that happen. It feels more informal - we're not in the Chamber. That can be nice if, say, we might have someone who knows a lot about extended producer responsibility who wants to ask a bunch of questions of somebody, and somebody else who it is not their critic area, they don't know.

I'm okay, we can be silent on the motion, but I wonder if people would want to start that way or want to start in a more informal way and then we could revisit. I suppose, Mr. Chair, it's probably your preference.

THE CHAIR: I'm looking for further discussion or a motion because I think we have to make a decision. We have here two different methods, so I would love to have a decision on how we're going to question so there's no debate somewhere down the road. I'm going to go to MLA Barkhouse first.

DANIELLE BARKHOUSE: I'm fine with that. I think it is more informal, and I also agree that some people might have a little more information in regard to some topics than others.

THE CHAIR: MLA Palmer.

CHRIS PALMER: I was wondering if it's possible, you said there were a couple of different options. Could you please go over those again, just so we have clarification on the two ideas we have?

THE CHAIR: The committee could keep a running list of questioners and go member by member, or follow the previous practice of two rounds of questioning, the first round is 20 minutes, the second round is 10-14 minutes, depending on the amount of time remaining, and allowing for time to deal with committee business. Then the final billet on that is the order of questioning would be Official Opposition, third party, and governing party.

There are distinct differences, so I need a motion on the direction we're going to go there. If I could, I just want to ask Mr. Hebb a question here first. Am I allowed to make a comment as Chair?

GORDON HEBB: Sure.

THE CHAIR: For me, I like the informal way. I just want to say that as Chair, in this committee, I will be making sure that everybody has an equal opportunity. If we go with the informal procedure, I will ensure that, say, MLA Barkhouse asks a question, she doesn't get another question until everybody else has had an opportunity to have their first question. That would be the procedure I would prefer to follow.

MLA Boudreau.

TREVOR BOUDREAU: I think it's just my mindset is still in Public Accounts Committee, because I've been to four of those meetings and none of any others, but with respect to that, I'm comfortable with it. I think the 20-20-20 could allow for that as well, but if we didn't have 20 minutes of questions, then if there's more time allotted, it would go back to the others. If we want to try informal first and then see how that goes, I'm comfortable with that.

THE CHAIR: I'll entertain a motion. MLA Chender.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: I'll split the difference a little bit and put forward a motion to say that the Chair could keep a list of questions and go through that list in order of parties, so could recognize the governing party first, the Official Opposition and then the third party in order of that list. That's another way it has been done and that helps allow for that equal opportunity of questioning, and then of course if one party doesn't have a question - that's my motion. The Chair would keep a list of questions and go through it in order of party status.

THE CHAIR: By way of clarity, I'd just like to ask, by questions, that would be hands, because I won't have the questions in advance, right? Okay.

We have a motion. Any further discussion? All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

Now we're going to move on to motions. If members are intending to introduce a motion at a meeting, please email it to the clerk. When the motion is put forward at the meeting, the clerk will distribute it via email to the members. This reduces paper, is quick and efficient. We don't have to do this for every single motion, but if there's a detailed motion that somebody intends to bring forward, having reviewed the information in advance, then the clerk would like to have it early. That really is the basis of that. Any discussion or questions on that?

If the members are reading from a document that has not already been provided to the committee, it shall be emailed to the clerk who will distribute it to the members during the meeting via email. Any questions or discussion?

[9:15 a.m.]

Next on committee documents. Committee documents such as correspondence are always emailed to all members as soon as they are received. Usually on the morning of the meeting, the clerk emails all the committee documents in a batch: agenda, correspondence, your list of proposed topics, et cetera. If members want printed copies at the meeting, they're invited to print them and bring them themselves. This practice started because of COVID-19 and it has continued because the clerks find it more efficient and environmentally friendly than having stacks of paper sit around when you arrive.

Does the committee wish to continue this practice? MLA Chender.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: I think generally that's fine, but I think it would be helpful just to have agendas. I think as an exception to that, if we had an agenda in our place when we sat, that would be helpful. We could bring supporting documents.

THE CHAIR: Everybody's fine with that? MLA Boudreau.

TREVOR BOUDREAU: Just from my perspective, I'm comfortable with that. If I'm finding that I need the information a bit earlier, is it possible to get it the night before, instead of the morning of? I'm not sure if that's available or possible for the clerk, but that just allows more prep time. Maybe we don't need that. Maybe we'll see it's fine, but I always like being able to - maybe it's my reading before I go to bed or whatever.

HEATHER HODDINOTT: If that's the committee's preference to have documents sent by email the day before the meeting, I can certainly do that. If something is to change the day of - there might be a member substitution or there may be a new correspondence that comes in - you might want to make sure you're checking your emails the next day, but I can certainly send off documents to you the day before, just to give everybody a chance to review.

THE CHAIR: Anybody have any other comments or discussion? Do we need a motion on that? Okay. We'll move along. As for setting the agenda, members should have

their complete list of proposed topics. The clerk emailed it to them yesterday. If the committee has agreed to this, we should end up with six topics: three PC, two Liberal and one NDP. To avoid confusion, we will ask the committee for discussion on each of the caucus proposals before the formal motions are made. Once a motion is made, it requires the committee's permission to amend it or revoke it.

After discussion, ask each caucus to state each topic and its witness clearly in the form of a motion for the record. They can make a separate motion for each topic or one motion to cover two or three. Ask members to indicate where they will accept a substitute - the deputy minister or designate.

The rationale for the deputy minister or designate is if we ask for the deputy minister by name and that happens to change or whether it's another position that happens to change, then we end up - so can we go with the deputy minister or designate? Is that okay? Am I right on that?

Is there any discussion on that? MLA Chender.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Are we making a blanket acceptance of that motion of deputy or designate, or we're going to talk about that for each?

THE CHAIR: MLA Palmer.

CHRIS PALMER: You were just basically saying that if the deputy minister - they change - that would be acceptable, whoever the deputy minister might be. Is that what you were saying?

THE CHAIR: I think I need to be more clear on that. Thank you. I think that however we want to word this, if we ask for the deputy minister by name, for example, and the deputy minister has changed, or if we asked for a doctor from East Hants, and that doctor has changed, then we get the current doctor.

Other than that, as I understand it - please correct me if I'm wrong - we can't change out midstream. If we approve the list of speakers or presenters on this agenda today, those are the speakers or presenters we get, unless this committee has made a motion to change that? Am I correct on that? Is that the way we want to do things? I'm going to ask Mr. Hebb to speak on this.

GORDON HEBB: I'm not quite sure what you're suggesting. Certainly, in my view, if you say it's to be the deputy minister, then it's the deputy minister - whoever that is, even if it changes the day before. If you say we want Mr. or Ms. So-and-so who happens to be the deputy minister and then it changed, then - that would be unusual to put it that way. Normally, you would say it's the deputy minister, regardless of who the deputy minister is that day.

If you're talking about a designate, you're talking about a substitute. If the deputy minister hasn't changed, but the deputy minister isn't available and sends somebody else - that's what it would mean by a designate. The committee may want to make that decision themselves because they may not be satisfied with the designate, depending on the subject.

THE CHAIR: In these proposed witnesses in our documents here - for example, it says: Karen Gatien, Deputy Minister of Natural Resources and Renewables. I want it clear: we ask for the Deputy Minister of Natural Resources and Renewables, and if Karen Gatien is not the deputy minister, then we get the deputy minister. Am I correct in that? Mr. Boudreau.

TREVOR BOUDREAU: Yes, that's my understanding. What I'm thinking is, let's say the deputy minister isn't available and they say we want to substitute with someone else: we as a committee would have to be okay with that before that actually happens. I think that's what we're getting at.

Otherwise, if it's the deputy minister - even if Karen Gatien is not there, then whoever the deputy minister is at that time will be who comes in to speak to us.

THE CHAIR: Any other witness changes have to come through this Chair - is that correct? Thank you.

I'm actually going to call for a five-minute recess, if I could. I want to understand this just a little bit better before we start going through it, if that's okay.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

[9:23 a.m. The committee recessed.]

[9:27 a.m. The committee reconvened.]

THE CHAIR: If we're ready, I'll call the meeting back to order. The time is here for us to set the agenda. We've already agreed that it's going to be three for the PCs, two for the Liberals and one for the NDP. I'm asking for discussion on this. We all have proposed topics and witness lists in our binders, so what I'm asking is that when a topic is proposed and we're voting on it, we're accepting that those are the witnesses who are going to be asked to be here. To change those, there has to be a specific motion.

I'm open for motions on the agenda subjects. MLA Palmer.

CHRIS PALMER: Our caucus will put forward the following motions. I move that the PC caucus topics for the consideration of the committee will be read as topics 2, 3 and 4 on your list. First and second on the list is the Nova Scotia Parks system and our witnesses

would be representatives from the Department of Natural Resources and Renewables: Deputy Minister Karen Gatien; and Executive Director of Policy, Planning and Support Services, Peter Geddes.

Second and third on the list: Renewable Energy: Progress Towards Targets. Our witnesses would be representatives from the Department of Natural Resources and Renewables: Deputy Minister Karen Gatien; and Executive Director of Sustainable and Renewable Energy, Keith Collins.

Third and fourth on the list, Active Transportation. Our witnesses would be representatives from the Department of Natural Resources and Renewables: Deputy Minister Karen Gatien; and Executive Director of Sustainable and Renewable Energy, Keith Collins.

THE CHAIR: Is there any discussion? All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

I'll ask the Liberal Party next to bring forward their two topics. MLA Kerr.

[9:30 a.m.]

CARMAN KERR: I move that the following topics be accepted as well. The first being: Protecting Employment in the Transition from Coal. The witnesses would be from Nova Scotia Power: Peter Gregg, CEO and President; Jamie MacDonald, Vice President, Power Production. The second witness would be International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, Local 1928 Representative. As well, Deputy Minister Karen Gatien; and the CEO of Clean Foundation, Scott Skinner.

Our second topic that I would like the committee to consider being accepted would be the Rural Economic Recovery after COVID-19. The witnesses would be Develop Nova Scotia President and CEO Jennifer Angel; the Deputy Minister of Economic Development, Scott Farmer; and Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities President Amanda McDougall, as well as Past President Emily Lutz.

THE CHAIR: Any discussion or questions? MLA Smith.

KENT SMITH: My apologies, I don't seem to have the first topic in front of me that my honourable colleague presented. (Interruptions)

THE CHAIR: Are you satisfied, MLA Smith?

KENT SMITH: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just want to be sure that all of our colleagues have a chance to review this.

THE CHAIR: Further discussion?

TREVOR BOUDREAU: Can we have a short recess? I apologize. We didn't have that first topic on our list.

THE CHAIR: We'll take a five-minute recess. Thank you.

[9:32 a.m. The committee recessed.]

[9:34 a.m. The committee reconvened.]

THE CHAIR: If we're ready, I'm going to call us back into session. MLA Kerr.

CARMAN KERR: Just a point of clarification for the government. I think the email was sent by the clerk, Heather Hoddinott yesterday at 3:45 p.m. Alright, I just wanted to make sure.

THE CHAIR: The Liberals have proposed their two subjects and their witness list. Any further discussion?

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

MLA Chender.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: I'd like to move the topic that appears third on our list: Small Woodlots and the Value of Ecological Forestry. We'd like to call the Deputy Minister of Natural Resources and Renewables - that word "deputy minister" doesn't appear, but I'm just pointing out to the committee that we would add that. Also, the President of Nova Scotia Woodlot Owners and Operators, Andy Kekacs; Western Woodlot Services Cooperative, Patricia Amero; and the Mi'kmawey Forestry initiative, Angie Gillis.

THE CHAIR: Are there any questions or discussion? All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

We've set the agenda for the next six months. We'll move on to committee business. We have one correspondence. It's addressed to me as the Chair from Janet Maybee. You've all received it.

Is there any discussion? Given it's addressed to me, should I respond and thank her for the correspondence? I think that by doing that, that officially tables that letter. Is that

correct? Is that the way we would expect to typically address correspondence with reference to topics to discuss, where we will review each one individually as they come to the committee? Is that fair?

I don't believe we need a motion - that just gets tabled. I write the letter thanking Janet Maybee for her information. That was easy. Is there any discussion on that?

Any further business?

I adjourn this meeting.

[The committee adjourned at 9:37 a.m.]