

# **HANSARD**

**NOVA SCOTIA HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY**

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

**Tuesday, April 25, 2023**

**Committee Room**

**Agenda Setting**

**NATURAL RESOURCES AND  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE**

John White (Chair)  
Dave Ritcey (Vice Chair)  
Kent Smith  
Trevor Boudreau  
Chris Palmer  
Ronnie LeBlanc  
Carman Kerr  
Gary Burrill  
Lisa Lachance

[Trevor Boudreau was replaced by John A. MacDonald.]

In Attendance:

Tamer Nusseibeh  
Legislative Committee Clerk

Gordon Hebb  
Chief Legislative Counsel



House of Assembly  
*Nova Scotia*

**HALIFAX, TUESDAY, APRIL 25, 2023**

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

**1:00 P.M.**

CHAIR  
John White

VICE CHAIR  
Dave Ritcey

THE CHAIR: I call this meeting to order. This is the Standing Committee on Natural Resources and Economic Development. I'm John White. I'm the MLA for Glace Bay-Dominion and the Chair of this committee.

Today, we will not have any presenters. We're holding an agenda-setting meeting. I ask you to turn off your phones or put them on silent. In case of emergency, we'll go out the Granville Street exit and go up to Grand Parade. I'll ask committee members to introduce themselves, starting on my left.

[The committee members introduced themselves.]

THE CHAIR: Thank you. I'd also like to notice the presence of Chief Legislative Counsel Gordon Hebb on my right and Committee Clerk Tamer Nusseibeh on my left.

We'll open the agenda to the agenda-setting meeting. MLA LeBlanc.

RONNIE LEBLANC: I'd like to make a motion before we get to the selection of topics, if that's in order.

THE CHAIR: Yes, you can make a motion.

RONNIE LEBLANC: I'd like to make a motion to add an additional topic for consideration to come before the committee as part of the Liberal caucus's two approved topics. The topic would be Sustainable Marine Energy operations review, and the witness would be Jason Hayman, CEO of Sustainable Marine Energy (Canada) Ltd., and appropriate staff.

THE CHAIR: Just to be clear, is that an extra topic in addition to the six, or is that just your list?

RONNIE LEBLANC: To add to the list for consideration.

THE CHAIR: Okay. Any discussion on the motion? MLA Palmer.

CHRIS PALMER: Just for clarification, the government caucus will be putting forward a topic that will probably have the relevant people that my friend across the table is recommending. I'm not sure if anyone else wants to make a comment on that - if there's any need for that second type of meeting about that. Potentially that person is going to be here anyway.

RONNIE LEBLANC: I guess I bring the motion forward because it is an issue for Clare, obviously. I've met with A.F. Theriault & Son Ltd. just recently, and it is having a big impact on their business, so this specific witness, I think, would be - it would be important to have that witness come before the committee to try to understand what the challenges are that they're facing, and I think that's why it was important to bring that motion forward. I'll leave it at that.

THE CHAIR: MLA Smith.

KENT SMITH: Could we perhaps consider withdrawing that motion for now? It may be reconsidered at the end of the topic selection to see if the member is satisfied with the topic that the government caucus is going to put forward.

RONNIE LEBLANC: I'd rather deal with the motion immediately, if it's in order.

THE CHAIR: MLA Lachance.

LISA LACHANCE: I guess what I'm wondering is if we could combine the two topics. It would seem to me if the proposal - that some of it would overlap, but there are some specific issues that MLA LeBlanc wants to make sure are covered. Can we not put those two topics together and then ensure that the witnesses satisfy both proposals?

THE CHAIR: MLA LeBlanc, you're shaking your head, so I think that means - yes?

RONNIE LEBLANC: I was just going to say it's just to add the topic for consideration. It's not actually voting on having that topic. Once we go through the topics, then we can see when it gets slotted if it's necessary or not.

THE CHAIR: If I understand the situation correctly, if his motion goes through, it's to put it on the list for consideration. We will be starting with the PC caucus for topics first. At that point, you may not even need to choose it. Is that - are we clear on that? Call for a vote on the motion? Oh, sorry. MLA MacDonald.

JOHN A. MACDONALD: Not to be a stickler, but you need the motion seconded before we even had our discussion, so I'm pretty sure - do we just do the motions? There is no second required for this, in this committee for this? (Interruption) Okay. All right, I thought there was. Go ahead.

THE CHAIR: Any more questions?

The motion is - I'll allow you to read that again.

RONNIE LEBLANC: (Inaudible)

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

Agenda setting. We'll start with the PC caucus. The honourable MLA Palmer.

CHRIS PALMER: Mr. Chair, here is the first motion that we would like to put forward on this side of the table. I move that the first topic for the PC caucus be safeguarding the future of tidal energy in Nova Scotia, that it be scheduled at the earliest opportunity with representatives from the following organizations as witnesses: Sustainable Marine Energy (Canada) Ltd.; FORCE Nova Scotia, the Fundy Ocean Research Centre for Energy; Marine Renewables Canada; and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada, DFO.

THE CHAIR: Any questions or comments?

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

JOHN A. MACDONALD: Mr. Chair, I move that the second topic for the PC caucus be the Nova Scotia film industry, with Chris Shore from the Department of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage and a relevant representative from the Department of Economic Development as witnesses.

THE CHAIR: Comments? Discussion?

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

MLA Ritcey.

DAVE RITCEY: I would like to make a motion for our third and final topic, supports to the rural economy. Witnesses would be from the Department of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage, Bill Greenlaw; and from the Department of Economic Development, relevant representatives.

THE CHAIR: Comments? Questions?

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

The Liberal caucus, the honourable MLA LeBlanc.

RONNIE LEBLANC: I would like to move our first topic be the status of the Atlantic Loop project with witnesses from the Department of Natural Resources and Renewables, Deputy Minister Karen Gatien; and from Nova Scotia Power, CEO and President Peter Gregg.

KENT SMITH: We're okay with this topic. We request that it be put on the schedule for some time in the Fall, while we're waiting on some federal conversations to be complete that would be relevant for the discussion. We'll say yes, if the clerk can schedule it for the Fall.

THE CHAIR: MLA LeBlanc, I see you shaking your head yes. Any more comments or concerns?

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

RONNIE LEBLANC: I move that the second topic for consideration be the Coastal Protection Act implementation. The witnesses would be Department of Natural Resources and Renewables Deputy Minister Karen Gatien, and Department of Environment and Climate Change Deputy Minister Lora MacEachern.

KENT SMITH: Again, we're okay. We just need to amend the witnesses, please. Deputy Minister Gatien has nothing to do with this. It's not in her purview whatsoever. We will say yes, once you remove Deputy Minister Gatien as a witness.

THE CHAIR: MLA Kerr.

CARMAN KERR: Could I have MLA Smith clarify how the deputy has nothing to do with this topic?

KENT SMITH: Certainly. This file falls completely under the Department of Environment and Climate Change.

CARMAN KERR: My understanding was that there are certain aspects of this Act that fall under Deputy Gatien, but we're fine with that proposed change. I would ask MLA Smith, is there a representative you want in place of, or you are suggesting in place of, the DM or anyone from that department? No?

THE CHAIR: I see MLA Smith shaking his head no, so it would be the motion with the removal of one witness. We'll call for the vote, as amended.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

LISA LACHANCE: We would like to move the following topic: Nova Scotia Power's transition to renewables and progress meeting climate goals. In terms of witnesses, we are proposing: Deputy Minister Gatien from the Department of Natural Resources and Renewables; Deputy Minister MacEachern from the Department of Environment and Climate Change; Peter Gregg, the CEO and president of Nova Scotia Power, and other representatives, if applicable; and the executive director of the Ecology Action Centre, Maggy Burns.

THE CHAIR: Comments? Questions? Concerns?

We'll call for the vote.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

CHRIS PALMER: Just clarifying back to the original motion that I put forward for our first topic, we did ask for that topic to be put forward early in the agenda of the next round of topics. Where it was brought up by both members across the table, as well as us, I think it's relevant that that topic be addressed as urgently as possible, with us trying to explore other energy alternatives. It's very important that that topic be done early.

THE CHAIR: The Clerk is recognizing that he will do his best.

MLA Burrill.

GARY BURRILL: I would like to bring a motion for a topic. This motion envisions a topic not in the three categories that we've had in front of us - a PC, a Liberal or an NDP topic, but a cross-party or a pan-party topic, which would become part of the committee's business if the motion were to carry.

This motion has to do with the subject of Paper Excellence, Northern Pulp. In introducing it I'll say just a couple of words. Of course, our forests are a hugely valuable resource and this government, as well as previous governments, have committed to their protection, most particularly recently through the adoption of the Lahey report recommendations.

We have seen, through Northern Pulp, some of the very difficult impacts that mismanagement of this industry can have on environment, on communities, and in the long term, as we see now, on rural economies.

A recent investigation internationally has shone new light on the corporate structure of Northern Pulp and on Paper Excellence, which has been quickly in a position of international corporate concentration over the recent past. This has raised many questions about the parent company of Northern Pulp's association with foreign governments and with other corporate entities that are prominently associated with very destructive forestry practices.

While the mill has, of course, closed, we are nevertheless in the position in Nova Scotia that the company owns 3 per cent of the province's forests and is actively harvesting on Crown lands. This is all being done in a context in which the company owes our province millions of dollars. The people of the province have questions and this motion envisions that this question has a cross-party, legitimate call on the attention of this committee.

The motion is as follows: I move that this committee approve the topic Paper Excellence and government support of the forestry industry as an additional topic to those which have been decided upon to be heard by the committee.

KENT SMITH: I thank the member opposite for bringing this forward. Unfortunately, we're not in a position to support this motion right now. There's legal action under way right now, court proceedings not appropriate to discuss at the present time. Paper Excellence is also in the process of their Class II environmental assessment. They've got a year to complete an environmental assessment, so we feel it's not appropriate to discuss at this time.

GARY BURRILL: I think I've made the case for the motion.



[1:15 p.m.]

THE CHAIR: Any other questions or comments? We'll call the motion to a vote.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is defeated.

In our business, we have correspondence from Deputy Minister Farmer in response to a request for information regarding an equity lens in the Department of Economic Development posed by one of our committee members. The response was forwarded to the committee. Is there any discussion on this response? Seeing none, we'll move on to our next discussion item, which was Nova Scotia Business Inc., now Invest Nova Scotia. Michael Branchflower, the witness who was originally asked for, now works for Invest Nova Scotia under the same title. Would the committee like to keep Mr. Branchflower as a witness, or would you like to invite a different representative from Invest Nova Scotia?

The committee agreed to keep Mr. Branchflower on the committee.

The next meeting for us is May 23<sup>rd</sup>. The topic is Challenges in the Agriculture Sector, and the witnesses are the Department of Agriculture, Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture, and the Chicken Farmers of Nova Scotia.

This concludes the meeting for today. Meeting adjourned.

[The committee adjourned at 1:17 p.m.]