

HANSARD

NOVA SCOTIA HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

STANDING COMMITTEE

ON

**NATURAL RESOURCES
AND
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

Tuesday, April 22, 2025

COMMITTEE ROOM

Organizational Matters and Agenda-Setting

Printed and Published by Nova Scotia Hansard Reporting Services

**NATURAL RESOURCES AND
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE**

Hon. Brad Johns (Chair)
Kyle MacQuarrie (Vice Chair)
Tom Taggart
David Bowlby
Julie Vanexan
Susan Leblanc
Krista Gallagher
Hon. Iain Rankin
Hon. Derek Mombourquette

In Attendance:

Tamer Nusseibeh
Legislative Committee Clerk

Genevieve Harvey
Legislative Counsel



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

HALIFAX, TUESDAY, APRIL 22, 2025

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

1:00 P.M.

CHAIR

Hon. Brad Johns

VICE CHAIR

Kyle MacQuarrie

THE CHAIR: I'd like to start our meeting today. Calling to order the Standing Committee on Natural Resources and Economic Development. My name is Brad Johns. I'm the MLA for Sackville-Uniacke. I'll be the Chair of the committee.

The purpose today is to discuss our organizational matters and to hold our agenda-setting. I see everybody here today. I'm sure we're all going to get along well over the next year and work so well together. It's wonderful to see the MLAs here with us today.

I would ask everybody to please ensure your cellphone is turned off. For emergency purposes, if there is an emergency, we'll exit onto Granville Street and walk up to the Grand Parade.

Before we go on, I would like to provide an opportunity for committee members to introduce themselves for the record. I'll start with the government side and ask that you provide your name and your constituency, please.

[The committee members introduced themselves.]

THE CHAIR: I'd also like to note for the record the presence of Legislative Counsel Genevieve Harvey, as well as Legislative Committee Clerk Tamer Nusseibeh.

I have a few notes here in regard to organizational matters for the committee. This is the first meeting of the Natural Resources and Economic Development Committee in this session; therefore, the committee has to run over a few of the rules and how we're going to conduct our procedures. The committee guide reference document has been distributed to all members. I would like to now provide an overview for the members of what the committee's mandate is:

The Natural Resources and Economic Development Committee is established for the purpose of considering matters relative to natural resources and economic development including agriculture, aquaculture, business, energy, environment, fisheries, forestry, infrastructure, marketing, mines, public works, science, technology, tourism, trade and transportation.

Members, legislative staff, caucus researchers, and Legislative Counsel Office staff will be attending all the meetings. Meetings are televised, live-streamed, and open to public attendance. The committee typically will be meeting on the third Tuesday of every month from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. in the Committee Room here at One Government Place.

That was the procedure in the past. Is the committee still okay with that procedure moving forward?

I'm sorry. Just to make sure, I think I said third. It is the fourth Tuesday of the month. Is that still okay with everybody? Good.

As a reminder, in the past, the committee has not met during the Summer months of July and August or during House sittings. Does the committee wish to continue this practice? Perfect.

Witness questioning procedure: MLA MacQuarrie.

KYLE MACQUARRIE: I'd like to make a motion. I move that the Standing Committee on Natural Resources and Economic Development adopt a question format of 30 minutes for the government caucus, 20 minutes for the Official Opposition, and 10 minutes for the third party. Additional time will then be split evenly, with half going to the government caucus and the other half shared by the two Opposition caucuses.

THE CHAIR: We have a motion on the floor. Any discussion?

MLA Leblanc.

SUSAN LEBLANC: With all due respect, this is an unfair sharing of time for the committees. We should - I know this committee, in the past, did not even use time allotment, but it was just questions. Whoever had questions would have their questions answered in order as the Chair saw them.

If we are going to allot time, we should make it a straight 20, 20, 20 and then divide the remaining time evenly among the three caucuses.

THE CHAIR: Any other questions or comments on the motion?

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

Agenda-setting procedures: When we're considering the agenda-setting, caucuses will present a list of potential topics and corresponding witnesses for deliberation. As it stands, the government party is allowed three topics, the Official Opposition is allowed two topics, and the third party one topic throughout the committee year.

I believe all caucuses have submitted some suggestions for topics to the clerk. It has been the practice of the committee to have requests to appear considered by each caucus separately for inclusion in their suggested topic list. I believe everybody has brought their topics forward. Does the committee wish to make any changes?

MLA Taggart.

TOM TAGGART: For clarity, by "any changes" do you mean changes to this list?

THE CHAIR: We haven't got to the actual lists yet.

TOM TAGGART: You're talking about changes in the process.

THE CHAIR: Yes.

MLA Leblanc.

SUSAN LEBLANC: I apologize. Could you repeat the number of topics per caucus you just said?

THE CHAIR: In the past, the governing party was allowed three topics, the Official Opposition would be allowed two topics, and the third party would bring one topic each

year. My question was - if the committee is okay with that procedure, we'll move forward into looking at the topics.

SUSAN LEBLANC: In principle I agree with this, but that makes six topics, and we have 10 months of the year. So, what happens? Do we go back to agenda-setting when we get to the end of the list?

THE CHAIR: Yes, thank you, MLA Leblanc. The intention would be, as the committee's meeting, we would know there will be people who will submit requests to appear before the committee, so we'll have an opportunity to consider those, as well as anything that pops up that the individual parties would like to bring forward. In case there isn't, we'll have another agenda-setting meeting and do the same process all over again.

MLA Taggart.

TOM TAGGART: In the case of somebody requesting to come before the committee, is that something that is a majority vote or unanimous consent? How is that?

THE CHAIR: I'll get to that. What would typically happen is that they would make contact through the clerk and the Chair of the committee, who would then bring it forward to the committee for discussion at that time.

The committee does not post witness presentations and requested information. Should the committee wish to upload such documents, it must come with approval of their publication to the legislature's website and help the Legislative Library. Does the committee agree with this still?

To paraphrase, anything that comes forward from the committee, whether it's handouts or anything like that, is not automatically posted to the website. It goes to the members of the committee.

Notices of the meeting are often accompanied by the Legislative Library's research package, as described in the provided pamphlet, which MLAs have in front of them, and sent to members, witnesses, Legislative staff, and caucuses a week in advance of the meeting via an appointment email.

Supporting documents, such as the agenda, membership list, seating plan, and committee correspondence, are sent to members, witnesses, and caucuses the day before the meeting. Correspondence that is directed to the committee, such as witness submissions, requests to appear, letters, or emails, is distributed to members as soon as it is received.

Any issues or concerns around these? Great.

Now we'll move into our agenda-setting portion. As I said earlier, the government would be proposing three topics. What I will do is ask the government to present each of them individually, if they could, and then members at the table can vote on each of those instead of doing the block, if everybody's okay with that.

MLA Taggart.

TOM TAGGART: I move that the first topic for the PC caucus be Implementing the Critical Minerals Strategy, with the following witnesses: John Wightman for the GOLDFIELDS Group; Mark Haywood, president and CEO, EDM Resources Inc.; Sean Kirby, executive director, Mining Association of Nova Scotia; and a representative from the Department of Natural Resources.

THE CHAIR: We have a motion.

MLA Rankin.

HON. IAIN RANKIN: I note that you have a number of stakeholders representing industry - that's fine - and you have the department. What is missing here is any representation from the Mi'kmaq, given they are treaty holders and recognized in the constitution under the duty to consult.

I would ask we add the regional chief - they could sufficiently represent - there are 13 bands, but if we added one person, the regional chief for Mi'kma'ki would be a helpful addition to the topic.

THE CHAIR: There is an amendment on the floor. Would anyone else like to speak to the amendment?

MLA Leblanc.

SUSAN LEBLANC: I want to speak in favour of that amendment. It's important that we make sure we have - in all things when we're talking about natural resources - that we're hearing from the voices of the Mi'kmaq. I like MLA Rankin's suggestion.

THE CHAIR: Any further discussions? If not, we'll call for a vote on the amendment.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The amendment is carried.

We'll move to the main motion of the topic: Implementing the Critical Minerals Strategy.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

I'll go back to MLA Taggart for Topic No. 2 from the PC caucus.

TOM TAGGART: I move that the second topic of the PC caucus be the Impacts of the Nova Scotia Loyal Program, with the following witnesses: representatives from the Department of Growth and Development, the Department of Service Nova Scotia, and the Department of Agriculture.

THE CHAIR: There is a motion on the floor. Any discussions?

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

MLA Taggart, I'll go to you for your third one.

TOM TAGGART: I move that the third topic for the PC caucus be the Development of Nova Scotia Power Battery Plants, with the following witnesses: representatives from the Department of Natural Resources and from Nova Scotia Power.

THE CHAIR: There is a motion on the floor. Any discussions?

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

I will now recognize the NDP caucus to bring forward their two.

MLA Leblanc.

SUSAN LEBLANC: The first topic we'd like to bring forward is Reviewing the Energy Poverty Task Force Report and Recommendations. The proposed witnesses are members of the Energy Poverty Task Force; representatives from the Affordable Energy Coalition, the Ecology Action Centre, Efficiency Nova Scotia, Nova Scotia Power, the Town of Bridgewater, and the Department of Opportunities and Social Development.

THE CHAIR: We have a motion on the floor. Do we have any - we do have a discussion.

MLA Vanexan.

[1:15 p.m.]

JULIE VANEXAN: I'd like to amend the title. I move that the title of the NDP topic be changed from Reviewing the Energy Poverty Task Force Report and Recommendations to Energy Pricing and amend the witness list to include representatives from the Department of Energy and the Department of Opportunities and Social Development.

THE CHAIR: We have an amendment. Those who want to discuss the amendment - MLA Leblanc, please.

SUSAN LEBLANC: I will just point out that we do list the Department of Opportunities and Social Development in the suggested witness list, so it's not necessary to add.

I would say that this topic is quite specific, in our view. We have a report from the Energy Poverty Task Force that was put together by the government, Nova Scotia Power, and other stakeholders. The idea is that we are not talking about energy pricing in general. We are talking about energy poverty and the recommendations from that task force.

I don't know if it's a confusing title or if there's a reason why the government wants to change it to Energy Pricing - and I'd love to hear the reasoning behind it - but in our view, this is about the report and the recommendations and where we are with the implementation of those recommendations.

THE CHAIR: Any other discussion on the amendment that is on the floor?

I call for the question on that amendment, please.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The amendment is carried.

We'll move on now to the main motion that was on the floor in regard to this topic.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

THE CHAIR: I will go back to the NDP caucus. MLA Gallagher.

KRISTA GALLAGHER: The second topic we'd like to bring forward is Preserving and Restoring the Health of Coastal Ecosystems. Witnesses include Dr.

Kristina Boerder, Dr. Derek Tittensor, a representative from the Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq, and a representative from the Ecology Action Centre.

THE CHAIR: MLA Rankin.

HON. IAIN RANKIN: I just thought you might want to entertain bringing somebody representing government - I would say a representative from the Department of Environment and Climate Change, given the mandate to preserve and protect certain percentages of land. I don't think it needs to be the deputy minister, but I think if we just add a representative of the Department of Environment and Climate Change.

THE CHAIR: MLA Bowlby.

DAVID BOWLBY: I move to amend the title of the NDP topic Preserving and Restoring the Health of Coastal Ecosystems to the Coastal Protection Action Plan. I guess we don't need to - you've already got the Department of Environment and Climate Change in there?

THE CHAIR: MLA Taggart.

TOM TAGGART: No, it's not in there.

THE CHAIR: I am sorry, MLA Bowlby. I wasn't sure if MLA Rankin was putting an amendment on or if it was just a suggestion. I do know that the motion that is there encompasses that, but did you want it to be recognized as an amendment?

IAIN RANKIN: Yes.

THE CHAIR: Okay. Councillor Rankin, please, for a moment.

IAIN RANKIN: You're going back in time. (Laughter)

THE CHAIR: I still think of your dad.

IAIN RANKIN: Yes, I will amend to add the Department of Environment and Climate Change.

I would say that I think the topic is fine as is. If we are moving it to just a coastal action plan, then that's quite specific to one initiative, but I think the government can speak to coastal ecosystems and protected land without trying to be microtargeted to a specific plan within that scope.

My motion is just adding the witness from the Department of Environment and Climate Change.

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

The amendment is carried.

Moving to MLA Bowlby's amendment: I would ask if he could - and I apologize - restate it for the record. I guess you can leave out the part that was amended by MLA Rankin.

DAVID BOWLBY: Sure. I move that the title of the NDP topic Preserving and Restoring the Health of Coastal Ecosystems be changed to the Coastal Protection Action Plan.

THE CHAIR: There is a motion on the floor. Any discussion on that?

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

Moving on now to the Liberal caucus.

I'm sorry? We will vote on the amended motion.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

Now we'll move to the Liberal caucus to present their topic.

MLA Rankin.

HON. IAIN RANKIN: I will propose the topic of a Progress Report on Wind Power. I'm going to recommend we keep the deputy minister for the Department of Environment and Climate Change and the deputy minister for the Department of Energy. That's all we need for the focus of that discussion - the government representatives.

THE CHAIR: We have a motion on the floor from the Liberal caucus. Any discussion?

MLA MacQuarrie.

KYLE MACQUARRIE: Does that leave - if the deputy minister wants to bring another representative, would that be okay?

IAIN RANKIN: I'm fine with that. We'll say deputy minister or representative.

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

The motion is carried.

We're doing well so far. That gives us some direction over the next couple months as the committee moves forward. I would like to point out - and I think this was asked earlier - that if there are organizations or groups that do wish to appear before the committee, they should submit a written request to the Legislative Committees Office, addressed to the Chair of the committee. Once a request is received, it will be discussed at a future committee meeting to see if it can be scheduled in, depending on time availability.

Although it's going to be a brief presentation, we do have a request from the Legislative Library, who would like to take the opportunity to appear before the committee at a future meeting to discuss their role in committee meeting preparation. As I said, there is a pamphlet in front of all the MLAs that highlights some of the things they would like to discuss. They say it's going to be five minutes. If there's no opposition, we'll invite them to our next meeting. We'll do that.

Before we wind down, I do want to recognize for Hansard - my apologies - all motions that were put here have been passed today and carried.

With that, our next meeting of the committee will be May 27, 2025. Our presenters will be dependent on who's available to come, ideally in the order we've presented. If there's nothing else, we'll adjourn the meeting. Thanks, everyone. Have a great day.

[The committee adjourned at 1:24 p.m.]