

HANSARD

NOVA SCOTIA HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

COMMITTEE

ON

RESOURCES

Thursday, January 16, 2014

RED CHAMBER

Organizational Meeting

Resources Committee

Mr. Gordon Wilson, (Chairman)
Mr. Keith Irving, (Vice-Chairman)
Mr. Lloyd Hines
Mr. Bill Horne
Ms. Margaret Miller
Mr. Alfie MacLeod
Mr. John Lohr
Hon. Sterling Belliveau
Ms. Lenore Zann

In Attendance:

Ms. Kim Langille
Legislative Committee Clerk



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

HALIFAX, THURSDAY, JANUARY 16, 2014

STANDING COMMITTEE ON RESOURCES

9:00 A.M.

CHAIRMAN
Mr. Gordon Wilson

MR. CHAIRMAN: I call the meeting to order. This is the Standing Committee on Resources, January 16, 2014, organizational meeting. I am Gordon Wilson, the Liberal representative for Clare-Digby, and I am going to be the chairman of this committee for all of you.

Today's meeting is an organizational meeting and the committee will be setting an agenda of witnesses to appear before the committee. Some of the things we'll be doing here today will be introducing ourselves, so I'll be asking everybody to introduce themselves by their name and their riding.

The clerk has provided everybody, I believe, with information, a reference manual which contains committee information and procedures. The committee meetings are recorded and transcripts are provided for the meeting proceedings.

The mandate of this committee is such as the Resources Committee is established for the purpose of considering matters normally assigned to or within the purview of the Departments and Ministers of Agriculture, Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture, and Natural Resources. The meeting dates and times are typically the third Thursday of the month from 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.

The general process that we'll be following is that the committee will call witnesses to appear before it to provide presentations on topics that fall within the committee's mandate. Members will have an opportunity to ask questions of the witnesses once the presentation is concluded.

Members wanting to ask a question will signify to the Chair who will maintain a list of those wishing to ask questions and the chairman will direct the questioning. Questions should be directed through the Chair. The chairman will recognize members and witnesses prior to their speaking or I'll try to. As in the Legislature, the red light on your microphone will be lit when you're speaking to record your comments. The chairman will reserve time at the end of the meeting to deal with any committee business that we might have.

The process for picking witnesses is such as members of each caucus were asked to submit a list of potential witnesses for their committee's consideration. This list has been circulated to all members and a copy has been provided today as well.

A witness will be put forward by each caucus beginning with the Liberals, then the Progressive Conservatives, then the New Democratic Party. There will be two rounds of selections. If there are no objections to the suggestions put forward, a motion can be introduced to approve all of the suggestions. If there is an objection with a suggestion then it is put forward as a motion and will need to be introduced to deal with the item at issue.

For today's meeting, we have our agenda before us and I would like to first ask everybody, starting with Lloyd Hines, to introduce themselves.

[The committee members introduced themselves.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: First, I'd also like to quickly review the agenda so we'll have the organizational agenda-setting. We have no witnesses for this meeting so the committee business will be the selection of witnesses, the backup date for committee meetings and then the next meeting date.

I just quickly also want to review the evacuation procedures for the building for all the members and the people in the gallery. Should there be a need to evacuate the building, please leave the Red Room and proceed down one flight of stairs to exit through the doors onto Granville Street. Please gather in the parking lot across from Province House. Please remain in the parking lot until further instructions are provided. I would also remind everybody to place their cellphones on vibrate or turn them off.

I would like to ask for witnesses to be put forward from each caucus, starting with the Liberals. We've seen the list. Mr. Hines.

MR. LLOYD HINES: On behalf of the Liberal caucus, I would put forward the two that are called out on the list there: the Maritime Lobster Panel, witness Barry MacPhee; Acting Executive Director in the Forest Products Association, witness Jeff Bishop.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I believe we'll do one at a time, if you don't mind. We'll recognize the first one.

MR. HINES: Very good. The Maritime Lobster Panel.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Do we have a representative from the PCs who would like to bring forward a witness suggestion?

MR. JOHN LOHR: I would like to bring forth the Mink Breeders Association, Dan Mullen.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. John Lohr brings forward the Mink Breeders Association, Dan Mullen. I would ask for a recommendation from the NDP.

Ms. Lenore Zann.

MS. LENORE ZANN: Thank you so much, yes. We'd like to pick the Community Shared Agriculture program as it is on the list there and also the Christmas Tree Council of Nova Scotia.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We'll just do one at a time. We'll be back to you in a minute.

MS. ZANN: Okay.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The NDP with Community Shared Agriculture. I go back to the Liberals. Do we have a recommendation from the Liberals for a second witness? Mr. Keith Irving.

MR. KEITH IRVING: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to recommend the Forest Products Association, with witness Jeff Bishop.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Forest Products Association, witness Jeff Bishop. Thank you. Do we have a recommendation for a second witness from the PC caucus? Mr. John Lohr.

MR. LOHR: Yes, thank you. The Department of Agriculture re: the strawberry industry.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Department of Agriculture, the strawberry industry. Do we have a second witness from the NDP caucus? Sterling Belliveau.

HON. STERLING BELLIVEAU: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I recognize the Christmas Tree Council of Nova Scotia.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Christmas Tree Council of Nova Scotia, so thank you very much. That gives us six witnesses for six months. I would like to make a motion that we accept these witnesses. (Interruption) I would like to ask somebody to make a motion to accept - I'm not used to sitting on this, I don't like to make motions. I'd like to ask somebody to make a motion to accept these witnesses. Mr. Lloyd Hines.

MR. HINES: So moved, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Do we have a seconder? Ms. Lenore Zann.

MS. ZANN: Seconded.

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

The motion is carried.

Mr. Irving.

MR. IRVING: Mr. Chairman, I just wanted to point out or hope that we have an understanding that we'll have the ability to be somewhat nimble as we move forward; setting an agenda for six months is looking quite far out. I understand the importance of doing that, in terms of lining up witnesses, et cetera, but I do want to recognize or hope we can recognize that the Ivany Commission report will be coming down in the next month or two and that may slightly change our focus or direction.

I just would ask for an understanding amongst ourselves that these are not iron-clad, they present a direction for us for six months but we may, as a committee, wish to modify the direction in two or three months. Is that a fair understanding?

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's a good point brought forward. Does anybody else have any comments they'd like to bring forward on that?

I know we're all anxious to hear what that has to say and I think everybody would understand if there are pressing issues with resources that maybe we want to juggle the agenda. That would be agreeable with everybody? We'll see when that date comes. Thank you very much, Keith.

So further to our proposed meeting dates that we have, we'd like to move to the next part as a backup date for committee meetings. I believe we are suggesting the following Thursday after the third Thursday of the month, which we currently have. So does anybody have any objections to that? So if we miss our third Thursday of the month

we would go to the fourth Thursday of the month as a meeting date, in case of storms. This would be something typically we would look at for every meeting subsequently from now on. Okay, so no objections to that?

I also just would like to state briefly that I've noticed that in previous terms of this committee that it has only met on an average of about four times a year for several different reasons. I would suggest if it is at all possible I would like to see us try to keep to our monthly meetings. I know there are going to be times when that isn't going to be possible. I would suggest that we consider that when the House sits that we still continue with the meetings, we're here in Halifax, it doesn't usually interfere with our House proceedings having it on Thursday mornings.

Lenore Zann.

MS. ZANN: Actually we did start to try to do that with some of the committees, but we found once the House is in that things get so frantic and all kinds of different things happen that you can't imagine beforehand. We found it very difficult and tiring meeting during the House hours when the House was in as well. We are all on many different committees, so that's something I think you should keep in mind as well.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay, good. Words of wisdom from people who have been here in the past are always helpful, thank you.

I do though feel that it is important, this is an important committee in today's world with our province's resources. To my mind it is something that I'm very passionate about and to have an opportunity more than four times a year, I think, is something we should strive for to hear from witnesses is an advantage to all of us.

I believe without further ado, the next committee meeting date will be February 20th from 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. and at that time we will be requesting a witness of the Maritime Lobster Panel with Barry MacPhee.

MS. KIM LANGILLE (Legislative Committee Clerk): Just with regard to the organization of the witnesses, I will organize them in order, however, I would appreciate some flexibility. There may be availability issues with the second item on the list, let's say, just to move them around if I have to if their availability is at issue. That has been the practice in the past and I just wanted to mention that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I don't think anybody has any objection to that? No, thank you. Is there further discussion?

Keith Irving.

MR. IRVING: Mr. Chairman, is the best way to get your attention by waving my hand or pressing this button? (Interruption) Okay, thank you very much, I have vehemently been pressing . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: It doesn't work in the Legislature that way either.

MR. IRVING: Fair enough, thank you. I thought we should enter into the minutes perhaps if appropriate, if it's practice, we do have a vacancy here to my right and I understand regrets have been sent so you may just want to recognize that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, good point, Keith. Yes, I would like to recognize that Mr. Alfie MacLeod, MLA for Sydney River-Mira-Louisbourg is not here today. Unfortunately Alfie is a bit under the weather and has been for a while so we give our best wishes to him and hope him good health in the near future. Any other comments?

Mr. Belliveau.

MR. BELLIVEAU: Mr. Chairman, regarding the witness, the selection of the Lobster Panel Report, to me that is going to be a complex issue. I'm concerned that you recognized this committee only usually sits normally four times a year. Noting the complexity of that particular issue, I'm just looking at the procedure of how this committee works. If there are a number of topics raised through this witness in that particular issue, is there going to be any urgency or an opportunity for this committee to readdress that in the ongoing time frame over the next year, if you understand my question?

MR. CHAIRMAN: No, I understand your question fully. It's an extremely complex world of the lobster industry. I think maybe that's something that we could have some discussions about after we have that presentation, to see if there is a need there for further information or another selection of witnesses. A good point, thank you. Any other comments?

I thank everybody very much for coming and I adjourn the meeting. Thank you.

[The committee adjourned at 9:21 a.m.]