

HANSARD

NOVA SCOTIA HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

COMMITTEE

ON

RESOURCES

Thursday, November 16, 2017

COMMITTEE ROOM

Organizational Meeting

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Resources Committee

Ms. Suzanne Lohnes-Croft (Chairman)

Mr. Bill Horne

Mr. Chuck Porter

Mr. Brendan Maguire

Mr. Hugh MacKay

Mr. Keith Bain

Ms. Kim Masland

Ms. Lisa Roberts

Ms. Claudia Chender

In Attendance:

Mrs. Darlene Henry
Legislative Committee Clerk

Mr. Gordon Hebb
Chief Legislative Counsel



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

HALIFAX, THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 16, 2017

STANDING COMMITTEE ON RESOURCES

9:00 A.M.

CHAIRMAN
Ms. Suzanne Lohnes-Croft

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Order, please. I call this meeting of the Standing Committee on Resources to order. I'd like to first welcome Mr. Bain back and hope you're on the road to wellness and continued wellness. (Applause)

I'd like to introduce myself, I am Suzanne Lohnes-Croft, I am the Chair of the Resources Committee and I was at the latter part of the last mandate as well. I'd like to remind everyone to turn off your phones or put them on silent. Also, I ask members to wait to be recognized by me before speaking, for Hansard purposes.

Our emergency procedure is that we will exit through Granville Street entrance and proceed to the corner of Granville and George Streets. We'll walk up George Street to Barrington Street and to the Grand Parade and gather there, should there be an emergency.

I'll ask each member to introduce themselves.

[The committee members introduced themselves.]

MADAM CHAIRMAN: I draw the members' attention to committee business. We need agreement on the decision to adhere to the current meeting schedule, so the third Thursday of the month we've been attending. Mr. Porter.

MR. CHUCK PORTER: Madam Chairman, I would so move that we stick to that time frame, if that works for everyone else.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Ms. Roberts.

MS. LISA ROBERTS: I know that other standing committees are generally starting their meetings at 10:00 a.m., just to avoid traffic tie-ups and for some of you coming in from further than I do. That might be an issue that we want to consider, 10:00 a.m. versus 9:00 a.m. It doesn't really affect me because I live very close.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Would anyone else like to address that? Mr. MacKay.

MR. HUGH MACKAY: Madam Chairman, it took me an hour and a half to come in from my constituency, which is usually only about a half-hour drive from my home to the Legislature. This morning it was an hour and a half, trying to be here for the timing of this so I would very much like to see a 10:00 a.m. start as well, if the others are in agreement.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Mr. Maguire.

MR. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Even though I live in HRM, I agree with that because it's usually a 15- to 20-minute drive but this time of the morning it has taken me an hour to get through the Rotary and things like that. If we could start a little bit later, I could be here instead of having to leave my house at 7:00 a.m.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Would someone like to move that we change the time? Mr. Porter.

MR. PORTER: I'll rescind the motion I put forward for 9:00 a.m. and adjust it to 10:00 a.m., so we only have to vote once. I'm fine with that, it doesn't matter to me - whatever works.

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

The motion is carried.

We will now meet at 10:00 a.m. on the third Thursday of the month.

Okay, we'll move along, to adhere to the previous practice of choosing the witnesses. That was set before - the government Party puts forward three, the Official Opposition two topics, and one for the Third Party.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

We will now go to the agenda-setting portion. Everyone has their papers, I'm assuming, with the list of topics. I would like to first address correspondence that came through from Forest Nova Scotia. There's an email that the clerk has done up. It's dated September 14th, you all have that.

This is separate from the topics that the Parties have brought forward on the other sheet. I'd like to address this first. This is a request to appear before the committee. Would anyone care to discuss this or make a motion to allow them to come forward? Mr. MacKay.

MR. MACKAY: Madam Chairman, I think we recognize that generally the topics and the witnesses are selected by the committee, but we're not restricted to that. Too often, we don't have advocacy groups that want to appear before us, and I think this is a very pertinent advocacy group to appear before the committee. I applaud their initiative to reach out to us.

I would like to make a motion that we accept the request of the Large Private Non-industrial Landowner Group chaired by Debbie Reeves to appear at the earliest opportunity before the Resource Committee.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Any further discussion?

Mr. Bain.

MR. KEITH BAIN: Just a question, is this going to affect the three, two, and one that we just discussed?

MADAM CHAIRMAN: No. We will still put forward our same topics.

MR. BAIN: Okay, thank you.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: I just wanted to address it as correspondence that came in prior to us going to the agenda-setting.

Ms. Roberts.

MS. ROBERTS: I wonder if we might want to consider - just because I know that there are never enough meeting dates to get through the witnesses in very quick order. I would certainly be happy to hear from Ms. Reeves and the group that she represents. I also could see her being a good fit to appear along with the PC suggested witnesses from WestFor Management Inc., because it would be a slightly distinct view on the same subject matter.

Although I wasn't on the Resources Committee, I know that the Resources Committee had a very interesting meeting last Spring. Robert Taylor was here from Taylor Lumber. I forget who the other witnesses were. They were not representing exactly the

same interest, but they were talking from different perspectives about the forestry issue. Anyhow, I would just put that forward.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: I would like to hear from the PCs on that. WestFor is a topic on its own, I feel, especially with what's going on with the study right now. I know that Forest Nova Scotia is all Nova Scotia. It's not one specific area. WestFor deals with the western part of the province.

Would someone from the PC caucus like to speak?

Ms. Masland.

MS. KIM MASLAND: I did put forth WestFor Management Inc. because I was very interested in their cuts and that type of thing. I am aware of Ms. Reeves putting forth her request. I believe that, although it is similar, it is two different topics. I think Ms. Reeves is more talking about the landowner and supply, that type of thing, where WestFor - I think they should be different.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: We have a motion on the floor by Mr. MacKay. Are we ready for the question? Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

I will ask the clerk to contact them and see how soon they can come in for a meeting.

We'll move on to the topics chosen by the three Parties. We'll start with the Liberals.

Mr. MacKay.

MR. MACKAY: I would like to put forward the topics on behalf of the Liberal caucus for the members of the committee. We have the Great Trail completion, formerly known as the Trans Canada Trail; the Maple Producers Association, with witnesses Drew Hunter and the Department of Agriculture's Frank Dunn; and thirdly, the provincial mineral grants, witness Julie Towers, Deputy Minister of DNR, who would also be the witness on the Great Trail completion.

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

The motion is carried.

We'll move on to the topics for the Progressive Conservatives.

Mr. Bain.

MR. BAIN: We submitted three that we can choose two from. The first is WestFor Management, which we just discussed now. Second is the Nova Scotia Seafood Alliance. The third is Cooke Aquaculture Inc. We could leave it to the discretion of the committee but at this time I think the most important ones might be the first two that are listed, WestFor Management and the Nova Scotia Seafood Alliance.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: And the Nova Scotia Seafood Alliance? Okay. So, that is a motion?

MR. BAIN : Yes, it is a motion, sorry.

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

The motion is carried. The clerk will attend to those as well. Thank you.

Next is the New Democratic Party. Ms. Roberts.

MS. ROBERTS: On behalf of the New Democratic Party, I'd like to put forward local food production consumption with the witness being the Department of Agriculture.

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

The motion is carried. The clerk will also attend to that.

We now move on to some clarification. At the top of the page of the agenda items - we have been invited by the Mining Association of Nova Scotia during the last mandate and it was cancelled due to the election. Is there still interest in this group to go to the gypsum mine in Milford?

Mr. MacKay.

MR. MACKAY: Madam Chairman, I'm wondering if anybody on the committee was previously there and has a bit of background they could share with us on that request.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Mr. Porter.

MR. PORTER: Some years ago, I toured a similar gypsum mine in West Hants in the Wentworth-Poplar Grove area - Wentworth Creek we call it. If you're prepared to climb down multiple sets of stairs, that's a great thing because you just continually go down, down and down and down farther. It's an interesting operation for anyone who might want

to see it but I can tell you just as a committee member, I probably won't be attending. I'll just be honest with you, I've been there. But, you know, it's an interesting business.

Some people may very well enjoy the tour, and it may have changed. I don't think there are any elevators that go down there, but that may have changed since my day and then we may want to check just to see about logically, you know, footwear, et cetera, and so on, what you might need to actually make that tour happen, because it may be a little more aggressive than just walking through a building if that's what we're thinking.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Such as safety equipment.

MR. PORTER: Yes. There's that, proper shoes they'll tell you. You know, things like that. It might be worth a contact if we're going or if members are going, just to check all that out in advance, proper dress and so on forth.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Okay. Mr. Horne.

MR. BILL HORNE: Yes, I did attend the tour of the gypsum mine in Dutch Settlement - Milford, I guess. It was quite good. Our committee did go. I think Margaret Miller was there and myself and a couple of others. We spent about two hours touring. They had an introduction for us on the safety protections required. We travelled by a truck. So, we had no problems getting down. It crisscrossed back and forth to get down to the lower levels, which is probably a couple of hundred feet below the top.

MACKAY: Not claustrophobic?

MR. HORNE: No, it's pretty wide open. Interesting to watch the big equipment working and they gave us opportunities to get into the trucks and see how big it is and then gave us a tour of that. Then, we went back and talked about any issues that we had about it.

In fact, this gypsum place where they are now is below the Shubenacadie River level. So, there's no contaminations from the digging out of the gypsum. Interesting. Could be worthwhile seeing if you haven't seen something like that before.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Mr. Bain.

MR. BAIN: Thank you, Madam Chairman. Might I suggest that, if time permits, we do have - each Party has submitted their own priorities and, if there is still time, can we leave it until the end and decide.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: So, book it for, like June.

MR. BAIN: If we're in favour of doing it, then, we look after the ones that each Party has submitted and then go from there.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Certainly. We've cancelled twice now. We did once because of a House sitting and then we cancelled again because of the last election, so they may be tired of us. Is there any other discussion?

Mr. MacKay.

MR. MACKAY: Is it necessary that this occur during our committee time? Could this not be scheduled on some other day of the week of convenience to our members?

MADAM CHAIRMAN: It could, but it may be even harder to schedule. We've all booked off our committee time, so we know when we're planning meetings in our own constituencies and whatnot. I think keeping to one of the meeting dates would probably be best for us - just from previous experience.

MR. MACKAY: I bow to the voice of experience.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: You know how hard it is to set up meetings. I'm just wondering if we could even have the clerk call the mine and speak to them about the agenda - how we would travel down to the mine and whatnot - and come back to the next meeting with more information, and we could decide then.

Mr. Horne.

MR. HORNE: Just an added thought. When we were there, they had concerns about some of their issues that were brought up, and we had some good discussion about that. It's likely to be the same sort of thing - any concerns for the mining company. One was, I guess, the idea of paying full price for gas or diesel fuel. I think that has been resolved, so probably not an issue there.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: I think we always hope that we will learn something from stakeholders, as well as how we can help their industries, when we do stakeholder visits. Anyone else?

Mr. Porter.

MR. PORTER: I am just going to add that prior to the clerk calling, you may want to find out how many are actually interested in going, so that logically they at the mine would know how to properly deal with the numbers that we have and what they might need on their end to accommodate us.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Great idea. Any other discussion? Who would be interested in going to a gypsum mine? If you're claustrophobic, you will find it a challenge - just to warn people. (Interruptions)

Maybe Mr. Bain could arrange for the Men of the Deeps to come and sing our way down to the mine. It might ease our tensions a bit. Maybe you can bring a music box with you.

That's a great suggestion, Mr. Horne. I think we have enough that we could do a visit. Would the committee be in favour of the clerk finding out more information and reporting back at our next meeting - tentatively to book in June? Is that in agreement as well?

I will ask the clerk to do that.

Snowstorm policy - I think waiting for Communications Nova Scotia has been the process to decide whether there is a release if the Legislature is open. If they are open, we continue as a committee, unless the Speaker or the Chairman deems otherwise.

How about if I read it? "At the beginning of every winter season the Speaker of the House of Assembly notifies all Committee Chairs about the Storm Closure policy of the House. While the House of Assembly is independent of government the House will follow the Province's snow closure decisions. However, there may be circumstances in which the Chief Clerk or the Speaker will make a call to send staff home earlier than the province does or despite the Snow Closure Committee's lack of a decision to close. In those instances, Chairs would be notified immediately by the committee staff to enable the postponement of a committee meeting."

Mr. Porter.

MR. PORTER: I have no problem with agreeing. I'm just curious about the time. If our plan is to be here for 10:00 a.m. on a stormy morning, some of us - like myself and others who travel from outside - would probably be on the road considerably early. Are we talking 6:00 a.m. or 7:00 a.m., that there would be notice from CNS that would come out to say, don't bother getting on the road early? We allow for time to travel based on weather, obviously, wherever we're coming from. That's going to have to be out early. I would think that would be reasonable.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Their notices are out early, according to legal counsel.

MR. PORTER: We'll hold you to that, Gordon.

MADAM CHAIRMAN: There is an agreement with the clerk that we can communicate as well.

Is everyone in agreement with keeping to the storm policy? Okay. It is agreed.

Seeing that all our business is finished, I adjourn this meeting. (Interruption)

For the record, Ms. Chender has attended the meeting.

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