



# **Standing Committee on Natural Resources and Economic Development**

*ANNUAL REPORT*

*2023*

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Halifax

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Honourable Karla MacFarlane  
Speaker  
House of Assembly  
Province House Halifax,  
Nova Scotia

Dear Madam Speaker:

On behalf of the Standing Committee on Natural Resources and Economic Development, I am pleased to submit the Annual Report of the committee for the period from September 2022 to August 2023 of the Sixty-fourth General Assembly.

Respectfully submitted,

John White, MLA, Glace Bay-Dominion  
Chair  
Standing Committee on Natural Resources and Economic Development

Halifax, Nova Scotia  
2023

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## INTRODUCTION

The Standing Committee on Natural Resources and Economic Development, an all-party committee of the House of Assembly, was struck in the First Session of the Sixty-Fourth General Assembly. Pursuant to Rule 60(2)(d) of the *Province of Nova Scotia Rules and Forms of Procedure of the House of Assembly*:

**(2)(d)** 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, the environment, fisheries, forestry, infrastructure, marketing, mines, public works, science, technology, tourism, trade and transportation 1987 R. 60(2); am 1993; am. 1996; am. 2018

## MEMBERSHIP

There shall be no more than nine members of the Legislative Assembly appointed to this committee. The current membership of the Natural Resources and Economic Development is as follows:

John White, MLA – Chair  
Glace Bay-Dominion

Ronnie LeBlanc, MLA  
Clare

Dave Ritcey, MLA – Vice-Chair  
Truro-Bible Hill-Millbrook-Salmon River

Carmen Kerr, MLA  
Annapolis

Kent Smith, MLA  
Eastern Shore

Gary Burrill, MLA  
Halifax Chebucto

Trevor Boudreau, MLA  
Richmond

Lisa Lachance, MLA  
Halifax Citadel-Sable Island

Chris Palmer, MLA  
Kings West

## MEMBERSHIP CHANGES

John White, MLA Glace Bay Dominion, replaced Tom Taggart, MLA for Colchester North, as Chair in October 2022.

## **PROCEDURES AND OPERATIONS**

The Natural Resources and Economic Development Committee traditionally meets once a month. These meetings are usually held on the fourth Tuesday of the month in the Legislative Committee Room, 1700 Granville Street, Granville Level, One Government Place.

## **NOTICES, TRANSCRIPTS AND REPORTS**

### **NOTICES**

Notices of committee meetings are sent to all members of the committee, caucus office staff, legislative staff and Communications Nova Scotia. The notices are also posted in Province House and are on the Nova Scotia Legislature website at the following address:

<https://nslegislature.ca/get-involved/calendar/>

### **TRANSCRIPTS**

Transcripts of the Natural Resources and Economic Development Committee meetings are available from the Legislative Library in Province House, the Legislative Committees Office or on the Natural Resources and Economic Development Committee web page at:

<https://nslegislature.ca/legislative-business/committees/standing/natural-resources-and-economic-development/archive/natural-resources-and-economic-development>

### **REPORTS**

All reports of the Standing Committee on Natural Resources and Economic Development are compiled by the Legislative Committees Office and forwarded to committee members for consideration. Upon completion of the review and approval of the report, the Chair tables the report with the Speaker of the House of Assembly or with the Clerk of the House of Assembly.

## **RESEARCH MATERIAL**

All research for the Natural Resources and Economic Development Committee is compiled by the Legislative Library in consultation with the committee clerk. Research material is provided to members and caucus staff prior to the meeting date. A copy of this material is also made available to the witnesses appearing before the committee, to the Legislative Library in Province House and to Hansard Reporting Services.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The committee wishes to extend its gratitude to all witnesses for their time and co-operation. Special appreciation is extended to the Legislative Committees Office; Hansard Reporting Services; Legislative Television and Broadcast Services; and the Nova Scotia Legislative Library.



# **PUBLIC HEARINGS**

**WITNESSES**

Department of Economic Development

- Scott Farmer, Deputy Minister

Develop Nova Scotia

- Gordon Stevens, COO, and Vice President of Finance

Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities

- Amanda McDougall, Past President and Mayor of Cape Breton Regional Municipality
- Emily Lutz, Past President and Deputy Mayor of the Municipality of the County of Kings.

**COMMITTEE BUSINESS**

Correspondence

- Christopher Trider on Matt Parker’s presentation in the last committee meeting.
- Meetings with Mr. Huw Irranca-Davies regarding parliamentary procedures and the “nature emergency.”
- Follow-up information sent by Peter Geddes on behalf of Matt Parker in response to a request for information made by MLA Boudreau.

Discussion

- Approval of the Annual Report.
- Discussion on a new December meeting date to replace the 27th.

Agenda-Setting

- The first topic of the PC Caucus be the Provincial Government’s Investment in the Verschuren Centre. The witnesses would be: Scott Farmer, the Deputy Minister for the Department of Economic Development and Beth Mason, President and CEO of the Verschuren Centre.
  - o Moved by Trevor Boudreau, MLA
  - o Motion carried
- The second topic of the PC Caucus be Nova Scotia’s Clean Renewable Energy Sector, Including Green Hydrogen Production and Offshore Wind. The witnesses would be Lora MacEachern, the Deputy Minister for the Department of Environment and Climate Change, Karen Gatien, the Deputy Minister for the Department of Natural Resources and Renewables, and Michael Branchflower, Vice President of Strategic Marketing and Sales for Invest Nova Scotia.
  - o Moved by Trevor Boudreau, MLA
  - o Motion carried

- The third topic of the PC Caucus be Innovation Rebate Program. The witness would be Peter MacAskill, COO of Nova Scotia Business Inc. and, Scott Farmer, the Deputy Minister for the Department of Economic Development.
  - Moved by Tom Taggart, MLA
  - Motion carried
  
- The first topic of the Liberal Caucus be the Success and Future of Nova Scotia’s Green Fund. The witnesses would be Lora MacEachern, the Deputy Minister for the Department of Environment and Climate Change, Stephan MacDonald, President and CEO of EfficiencyOne, and Scott Skinner, President and CEO of the Clean Foundation Nova Scotia.
  - MLA Kent Smith made an approved amendment to change the words “Green Fund” to “Climate Change.”
    - Moved by Carman Kerr, MLA
    - Motion carried
  
- The second topic of the Liberal Caucus be the Impact of Inflation and the Labour Shortage on Nova Scotian Businesses. The witnesses would be representatives from the Department of Economic Development, representatives from the Department of Labour, Skills and Immigration, representatives from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, representatives from Invest Nova Scotia, and representatives from the Atlantic Chamber of Commerce.
  - Moved by Carman Kerr, MLA
  - Motion carried
  
- The topic of the NDP Caucus be Challenges in the Agricultural Sector. The witnesses would be Loretta Robichaud, the Deputy Minister for the Department of Agriculture, Tim Marsh, President of the Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture, and Thom Oulton, Chair of the Chicken Farmers Association of Nova Scotia.
  - MLA Chris Palmer made an approved friendly amendment to add the Executive Director of the Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture.
    - Moved by Gary Burrill, MLA
    - Motion carried

## DOCUMENTATION

The following information was requested and received from Scott Farmer, Deputy Minister, Department of Economic Development, and Gordon Stevens, COO and Vice President of Develop Nova Scotia:

- Report on the breakdown of costs of the NS Loyal Program.
- Report on the Cell-Gap study.

**TRANSCRIPT**

A transcript of this meeting can be found online at the following address:

[Nova Scotia Legislature - Hansard Transcript \(nslegislature.ca\)](https://www.nslegislature.ca/hansard)

**WITNESSES**

Department of Economic Development

- Scott Farmer, Deputy Minister

Verschuren Centre

- Dr. Beth Mason, President and CEO

**COMMITTEE BUSINESS**

There was no Committee Business.

**DOCUMENTATION**

No documents/information were requested.

**TRANSCRIPT**

A transcript of this meeting can be found online at the following address:

[Nova Scotia Legislature - Hansard Transcript \(nslegislature.ca\)](https://www.nslegislature.ca/hansard)

**WITNESSES**

Department of Environment and Climate Change

- Lora MacEachern, Deputy Minister
- Jason Hollett, Associate Deputy Minister
- Mike O’Brien, Executive Director of Finance

EfficiencyOne

- Stephen MacDonald, President and CEO

Clean Foundation Nova Scotia

- Scott Skinner, President and CEO

**COMMITTEE BUSINESS**

Correspondence

- Follow-up information sent by Gordon Stevens, Develop Nova Scotia, in response to a request for information made at the November 22 meeting.
- Follow-up information sent by DM Farmer, Department of Economic Development, in response to a request for information made at the November 22 meeting.

**DOCUMENTATION**

No documents/information were requested.

**TRANSCRIPT**

A transcript of this meeting can be found online at the following address:

[Nova Scotia Legislature - Hansard Transcript \(nslegislature.ca\)](https://www.nslegislature.ca/hansard)

**WITNESSES**

Department of Economic Development

- Scott Farmer, Deputy Minister

Invest Nova Scotia

- Peter MacAskill, COO

**COMMITTEE BUSINESS**

Correspondence

- The Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture's Tim Marsh is no longer the president. The organization has asked the new president, Allan Melvin, to take his place.

**DOCUMENTATION**

The following information was requested and received from Scott Farmer, Deputy Minister, Department of Economic Development:

- MLA Lisa Lachance asked for the department's equity lens process, to which he agreed to provide something that will suffice.

**TRANSCRIPT**

A transcript of this meeting can be found online at the following address:

[Nova Scotia Legislature - Hansard Transcript \(nslegislature.ca\)](https://www.nslegislature.ca/hansard)

**Agenda-Setting**

**April 25, 2023**

**WITNESSES**

N/A

**COMMITTEE BUSINESS**

Correspondence

- Deputy Minister Scott Farmer responded to a request for information regarding an equity lens in the Department of Economic Development.

Motion

- To include an additional topic for consideration by the Liberal Caucus. The topic will be Sustainable Marine Energy Operations Review, and the witness will be Jason Hayman, CEO of Sustainable Marine Energy (Canada) Ltd.
  - o Moved by Ronnie Leblanc, MLA
  - o Motion Carried.

Agenda-Setting

- The first topic of the PC Caucus be Safeguarding the Future of Tidal Energy in Nova Scotia. The witnesses would be representatives from Sustainable Marine Energy, FORCE, Marine Renewables Canada, and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada.
  - o Moved by Chris Palmer, MLA
  - o Motion carried
- The second topic of the PC Caucus be Nova Scotia Film Industry. The witnesses would be Chris Shore, Executive Director of Culture and Heritage Development Division for the Department of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage, and a representative from the Department of Economic Development.
  - o Moved by John MacDonald, MLA
  - o Motion carried
- The third topic of the PC Caucus be Support to Rural Economy. The witnesses would be Bill Greenlaw, Executive Director of Communities, Sport, and Recreation from the Department of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage, and a representative from the Department of Economic Development.
  - o Moved by Dave Ritcey, MLA
  - o Motion carried
- The first topic of the Liberal Caucus be Status of the Atlantic Loop Project. The witnesses would be Karen Gatien, Deputy Minister for the Department of Natural Resources and Renewables and Peter Gregg, President and CEO for Nova Scotia Power.
  - o MLA Kent Smith asked that the topic be held in the Fall.



- Moved by Ronnie LeBlanc, MLA
  - Motion carried
  
- The second topic of the Liberal Caucus be Coastal Protection Act Implementation. The witnesses would be Lora MacEachern, Deputy Minister for the Department of Environment and Climate Change, and Karen Gatien, Deputy Minister for the Department of Natural Resources and Renewables.
  - MLA Kent Smith made an approved amendment to remove Deputy Minister Karen Gatien from the witness list.
    - Moved by Carman Kerr, MLA
    - Motion carried
  
- The topic of the NDP Caucus be Nova Scotia Power's Transition into Renewables and Progress Meeting Climate Goals. The witnesses would be Karen Gatien, Deputy Minister for the Department of Natural Resources and Renewables, Lora MacEachern, Deputy Minister for the Department of Environment and Climate Change, Peter Gregg, President and CEO of Nova Scotia Power, and Maggy Burns, Executive Director for the Ecology Action Centre.
  - Moved by Lisa Lachance, MLA
  - Motion carried

## **DOCUMENTATION**

No documents/information were requested.

## **TRANSCRIPT**

A transcript of this meeting can be found online at the following address:

[Nova Scotia Legislature - Hansard Transcript \(nslegislature.ca\)](https://www.nslegislature.ca/hansard)

**Challenges in the Agricultural Sector**

**May 23, 2023**

**WITNESSES**

Department of Agriculture

- Loretta Robichaud, Deputy Minister
- Heather Hughes, Executive Director of Policy and Corporate Services

Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture

- Carolyn Van Den Heuvel, Executive Director

Chicken Farmers Association of Nova Scotia

- Amy Vanderheide, Chair
- Christine Bell, Executive Director

**COMMITTEE BUSINESS**

Motions

- To have the Chair withdraw a statement pertaining to taking part in the development and construction of the infectious disease lab in the province.
  - Moved by Lisa Lachance, MLA
  - Motion carried
- To have the topic “Safeguarding the Future of Tidal Energy in Nova Scotia on June 27<sup>th</sup>.
  - Moved by Melissa Sheehy-Richard, MLA
  - Motion carried
- To endorse the recommendations made by the Growing Nova Scotia Together document that was distributed to the Members by the Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture.
  - Moved by Carman Kerr, MLA
  - Motion deferred

**DOCUMENTATION**

The following information was requested and received from Loretta Robichaud, Deputy Minister of the Department of Agriculture:

- MLA Carman Kerr asked to provide the criteria for priority cell service in different scenarios.

**TRANSCRIPT**

A transcript of this meeting can be found online at the following address:

[Nova Scotia Legislature - Hansard Transcript \(nslegislature.ca\)](https://www.nslegislature.ca/hansard)

**Nova Scotia’s Clean Renewable Energy Sector,  
Including Green Hydrogen Production and Offshore Wind**

**June 27, 2023**

**WITNESSES**

Department of Environment and Climate Change

- Lora MacEachern, Deputy Minister
- Jason Hollett, Associate Deputy Minister

Department of Natural Resources and Renewables

- Karen Gatien, Deputy Minister
- Chris Spencer, Executive Director, Business Development & Strategic Opportunities Division

Invest Nova Scotia

- Peter MacAskill, President and CEO

**COMMITTEE BUSINESS**

Correspondence

- The Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada has declined all invitations to appear before the committee to discuss “Safeguarding the Future of Tidal Energy in Nova Scotia.”
- Deputy Minister Loretta Robichaud responded to the Committee’s request for information regarding criteria for priority cell service.

Motions

- To have the topic “Safeguarding the Future of Tidal Energy in Nova Scotia” excluding the Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada from the witness list on September 26<sup>th</sup>, 2023.
  - Moved by Kent Smith, MLA
  - Motion carried
  
- To write a letter to the Minister of Emergency Management to ask about the state of the closure of the Windsor Causeway Aboiteau.
  - Moved by Lisa Lachance, MLA
  - Motion defeated

**DOCUMENTATION**

The following information was tabled by MLA Iain Rankin during the meeting:

- The 2023 ACE Plan
- Update on the Pan-Canadian Approach to Carbon Pollution Pricing 2023-2030

The following information was requested and received from Karen Gatien, Deputy Minister for the Department of Natural Resources and Renewables:

- A list of the areas where there are currently geothermal operations.
- The name of the accord being amended regarding the offshore wind roadmap and the Environmental Impact Assessment.

**TRANSCRIPT**

A transcript of this meeting can be found online at the following address:

[Nova Scotia Legislature - Hansard Transcript \(nslegislature.ca\)](https://www.nslegislature.ca/hansard)

# **APPENDICES**

## APPENDIX A – MOTIONS

The following is a list of motions introduced by the Standing Committee on Natural Resources and Economic Development throughout the 2022-2023 Committee year:

### NOVEMBER 22<sup>ND</sup>, 2022

#### Agenda-Setting

- The first topic of the PC Caucus be the Provincial Government’s Investment in the Verschuren Centre. The witnesses would be: Scott Farmer, the Deputy Minister for the Department of Economic Development and Beth Mason, President and CEO of the Verschuren Centre.
  - Moved by Trevor Boudreau, MLA
  - Motion carried
  
- The second topic of the PC Caucus be Nova Scotia’s Clean Renewable Energy Sector, Including Green Hydrogen Production and Offshore Wind. The witnesses would be Lora MacEachern, the Deputy Minister for the Department of Environment and Climate Change, Karen Gatien, the Deputy Minister for the Department of Natural Resources and Renewables, and Michael Branchflower, Vice President of Strategic Marketing and Sales for Invest Nova Scotia.
  - Moved by Trevor Boudreau, MLA
  - Motion carried
  
- The third topic of the PC Caucus be Innovation Rebate Program The witness would be Peter MacAskill, COO of Nova Scotia Business Inc. and, Scott Farmer, the Deputy Minister for the Department of Economic Development.
  - Moved by Tom Taggart, MLA
  - Motion carried
  
- The first topic of the Liberal Caucus be the Success and Future of Nova Scotia’s Green Fund. The witnesses would be Lora MacEachern, the Deputy Minister for the Department of Environment and Climate Change, Stephan MacDonald, President and CEO of EfficiencyOne, and Scott Skinner, President and CEO of the Clean Foundation Nova Scotia.
  - MLA Kent Smith made an approved amendment to change the words “Green Fund” to “Climate Change.”
    - Moved by Carman Kerr, MLA
    - Motion carried
  
- The second topic of the Liberal Caucus be the Impact of Inflation and the Labour Shortage on Nova Scotian Businesses. The witnesses would be representatives from the Department of Economic Development, representatives from the Department of Labour, Skills and Immigration, representatives from the Canadian Federation of Independent

Business, representatives from Invest Nova Scotia, and representatives from the Atlantic Chamber of Commerce.

- Moved by Carman Kerr, MLA
  - Motion carried
- The topic of the NDP Caucus be Challenges in the Agricultural Sector. The witnesses would be Loretta Robichaud, the Deputy Minister for the Department of Agriculture, Tim Marsh, President of the Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture, and Thom Oulton, Chair of the Chicken Farmers Association of Nova Scotia.
  - MLA Chris Palmer made an approved friendly amendment to add the Executive Director of the Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture.
    - Moved by Gary Burrill, MLA
    - Motion carried

#### **APRIL 25<sup>TH</sup>, 2023**

- To include an additional topic for consideration by the Liberal Caucus. The topic will be Sustainable Marine Energy Operations Review, and the witness will be Jason Hayman, CEO of Sustainable Marine Energy (Canada) Ltd.
  - Moved by Ronnie Leblanc, MLA
  - Motion Carried.

#### Agenda-Setting

- The first topic of the PC Caucus be Safeguarding the Future of Tidal Energy in Nova Scotia. The witnesses would be representatives from Sustainable Marine Energy, FORCE, Marine Renewables Canada, and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada.
  - Moved by Chris Palmer, MLA
  - Motion carried
- The second topic of the PC Caucus be Nova Scotia Film Industry. The witnesses would be Chris Shore, Executive Director of Culture and Heritage Development Division for the Department of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage, and a representative from the Department of Economic Development.
  - Moved by John MacDonald, MLA
  - Motion carried
- The third topic of the PC Caucus be Support to Rural Economy. The witnesses would be Bill Greenlaw, Executive Director of Communities, Sport, and Recreation from the Department of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage, and a representative from the Department of Economic Development.
  - Moved by Dave Ritcey, MLA
  - Motion carried



- The first topic of the Liberal Caucus be Status of the Atlantic Loop Project. The witnesses would be Karen Gatien, Deputy Minister for the Department of Natural Resources and Renewables and Peter Gregg, President and CEO for Nova Scotia Power.
  - MLA Kent Smith asked that the topic be held in the Fall.
    - Moved by Ronnie LeBlanc, MLA
    - Motion carried
  
- The second topic of the Liberal Caucus be Coastal Protection Act Implementation. The witnesses would be Lora MacEachern, Deputy Minister for the Department of Environment and Climate Change, and Karen Gatien, Deputy Minister for the Department of Natural Resources and Renewables.
  - MLA Kent Smith made an approved amendment to remove Deputy Minister Karen Gatien from the witness list.
    - Moved by Carman Kerr, MLA
    - Motion carried
  
- The topic of the NDP Caucus be Nova Scotia Power’s Transition into Renewables and Progress Meeting Climate Goals. The witnesses would be Karen Gatien, Deputy Minister for the Department of Natural Resources and Renewables, Lora MacEachern, Deputy Minister for the Department of Environment and Climate Change, Peter Gregg, President and CEO of Nova Scotia Power, and Maggy Burns, Executive Director for the Ecology Action Centre.
  - Moved by Lisa Lachance, MLA
  - Motion carried

**MAY 23<sup>RD</sup>, 2023**

- To have the Chair withdraw a statement pertaining to taking part in the development and construction of the infectious disease lab in the province.
  - Moved by Lisa Lachance, MLA
  - Motion carried
  
- To have the topic “Safeguarding the Future of Tidal Energy in Nova Scotia on June 27<sup>th</sup>.”
  - Moved by Melissa Sheehy-Richard, MLA
  - Motion carried
  
- To endorse the recommendations made by the Growing Nova Scotia Together document that was distributed to the Members by the Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture.
  - Moved by Carman Kerr, MLA
  - Motion deferred

**JUNE 27<sup>TH</sup>, 2023**

- To have the topic “Safeguarding the Future of Tidal Energy in Nova Scotia” excluding the Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada from the witness list on September 26<sup>th</sup>, 2023.
  - Moved by Kent Smith, MLA
  - Motion carried
  
- To write a letter to the Minister of Emergency Management to ask about the state of the closure of the Windsor Causeway Aboiteau.
  - Moved by Lisa Lachance, MLA
  - Motion defeated

## **APPENDIX B – DOCUMENTATION**

The following is a list of documents and information requested and received by the Standing Committee on Natural Resources and Economic Development throughout 2022-2023:

### **NOVEMBER 22<sup>ND</sup>, 2022**

The following information was requested and received from Scott Farmer, Deputy Minister, Department of Economic Development, and Gordon Stevens, COO and Vice President of Develop Nova Scotia:

- Report on the breakdown of costs of the NS Loyal Program.
- Report on the Cell-Gap study.

### **FEBRUARY 28<sup>TH</sup>, 2023**

The following information was requested from Scott Farmer, Deputy Minister, Department of Economic Development:

- MLA Lisa Lachance asked for the department's equity lens process to which he agreed to provide something that will suffice.

### **MAY 23<sup>RD</sup>, 2023**

The following information was requested and has been received from Loretta Robichaud, Deputy Minister of the Department of Agriculture:

- MLA Carman Kerr asked to provide the criteria for priority cell service in different scenarios.

### **JUNE 27<sup>TH</sup>, 2023**

The following information was tabled by MLA Iain Rankin during the meeting:

- The 2023 ACE Plan.
- Update on the Pan-Canadian Approach to Carbon Pollution Pricing 2023-2030.

The following information was requested from Karen Gatien, Deputy Minister for the Department of Natural Resources and Renewables:

- A list of the areas where there are currently geothermal operations.
- The name of the accord being amended regarding the offshore wind roadmap and the Environmental Impact Assessment.

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**Website: <https://nslegislature.ca/legislative-business/committees/standing/natural-resources-and-economic-development>**