

April 4, 2014

**Standing Committee on Agriculture, Environment, Energy and Forestry
Second Report of the Fourth Session, Sixty-fourth General Assembly
Committee Activities and Request to Meet Intersessionally**

Madam Speaker and Members of the Legislative Assembly:

Introduction

The Standing Committee on Agriculture, Environment, Energy and Forestry is pleased to present its report to the Members of the Legislative Assembly concerning its activities during the Fourth Session of the Sixty-fourth General Assembly.

Mandate

The Standing Committee on Agriculture, Environment, Energy and Forestry is charged with matters concerning agriculture, environment, energy and forestry. In addition, it may, by majority opinion, meet to examine and inquire into such matters and things as the committee deems appropriate.

Membership

Permanent members of your committee are:

Paula Biggar, Chair (District 23, Tyne Valley-Linkletter)
James Aylward (District 6, Stratford-Kinlock)
Kathleen Casey (District 14, Charlottetown-Lewis Point)
Bush Dumville (District 15, West Royalty-Springvale)
Colin LaVie (District 1, Souris-Elmira)
Pat Murphy (District 26, Alberton-Roseville)
Hal Perry (District 27, Tignish-Palmer Road)
Buck Watts (District 8, Tracadie-Hillsborough Park)

Sonny Gallant (District 24, Evangeline-Miscouche) and Charles McGeoghegan (District 4, Belfast-Murray River) also served as substitute members.

Committee Activities

On February 5 your committee met to consider its work plan.

On February 13 your committee met to receive a presentation on deep well irrigation by Hon. Janice Sherry, Bruce Raymond and Jim Young of the Department of Environment, Labour and Justice.

On February 27 your committee met to receive presentations on deep well irrigation by the Coalition for the Protection of PEI Water, and Keptin John Joe Sark.

On March 6 your committee met to receive presentations on deep well irrigation by the National Farmers Union, the PEI Watershed Alliance, the Central Queens Branch of the PEI Wildlife Federation, the Green Party of PEI, and Innovative Farms Group.

On March 14 your committee met to receive a presentation on the hog industry by the PEI Hog Commodity Marketing Board; and presentations on deep well irrigation by the Cooper Institute, the Atlantic Salmon Federation, the Mi'kmaq Confederacy of PEI, the PEI Federation of Agriculture, the Environmental Coalition of PEI, the Council of Canadians, Daryl Guignon, the PEI Shellfish Association, and the New Democratic Party of PEI.

An additional meeting was scheduled, but was twice canceled due to inclement weather. The following individuals and organizations were scheduled to present to the committee at this meeting: the Institute for Bioregional Studies (on the agriculture industry); Horace Carver, QC (on the Report of the Commission on the *Lands Protection Act*); and Dr. Adam Fenech, Hon. George Webster, the PEI Potato Board, the Atlantic Chapter of the Sierra Club Canada, and Cavendish Farms (on deep well irrigation).

On April 3 your committee met to consider its report to the Assembly.

Recommendations

1. Your committee recommends that Government consider ways in which it can assist the PEI hog industry with the cost of shipping hogs to off-Island processing facilities.

The PEI hog industry has faced significant challenges in recent years. The number of hog farmers has dropped dramatically since the late 1970s, yet the few remaining in the industry have managed to keep the number of hogs shipped to market on a weekly basis roughly the same. According to information provided to your committee, the industry accounts for 3.5% of PEI's agricultural GDP, yet receives less than 0.25% of provincial money allocated to agriculture. After several years of negative margins, current conditions in the industry point toward a profitable future. However, PEI's producers remain at a disadvantage in that they must ship their hogs to Quebec for processing, costing them more than \$12 more per hog above what other Canadian hog farmers pay on average for transportation. Measures to help ease the burden of hog transportation would encourage the sustainability and profitability of the PEI hog industry.

2. Your committee strongly recommends that Government develop a Water Act.

3. At the present time, your committee does not recommend any changes to the 2002 moratorium on new high capacity wells for agricultural irrigation.

Your committee wishes to continue its investigations into this matter, including hearing from the witnesses that were prevented from appearing due to bad weather, and additional individuals and organizations that have expressed interest. This has proven to be a complex issue and your committee does not wish to make recommendations prematurely. Witnesses to date have made compelling arguments both for and against the lifting of the moratorium, and your committee continues to consider these very carefully. The interest of so many individuals and groups and the capacity attendance at committee meetings to date speak to how important this issue, and water in general, is to Islanders. Your committee's work is not done on this issue.

Conclusion

Your committee extends its thanks to the various individuals and organizations that shared their views in the past several months. The committee members hope Islanders continue to advocate for issues of importance in the areas of agriculture, environment, energy and forestry.

By receipt and adoption of this report, your committee requests permission to meet beyond prorogation of the Fourth Session of the Sixty-fourth General Assembly in order to complete its business intersessionally.

Respectfully submitted,

Paula Biggar, MLA

Chair

Standing Committee on Agriculture, Environment, Energy and Forestry

Witnesses Appearing Before the Committee

Allen, Boyd (Coalition for the Protection of PEI Water)
Angus, Randy (Mi'kmaq Confederacy of PEI)
Bevan-Baker, Peter (Green Party of PEI)
Broderick, Leo (Council of Canadians)
Burge, Marie (Cooper Institute)
Cameron, Dale (PEI Watershed Alliance)
Campbell, Brenda (PEI Shellfish Association)
Corrigan, Cathy (PEI Watershed Alliance)
Dingwell, Scott (PEI Hog Commodity Marketing Board)
Douglas, Angela (PEI Watershed Alliance)
Dupuis, Todd (Atlantic Salmon Federation)
Durant, Mike (Central Queens Branch, PEI Wildlife Federation)
Guignon, Daryl
Harris, Megan (Central Queens Branch, PEI Wildlife Federation)
Hill, Loman (PEI Shellfish Association)
Jamieson, John (PEI Federation of Agriculture)
Keenan, Alvin (PEI Federation of Agriculture)
Lanthier, Darcie (Green Party of PEI)
Larsen, Paul (PEI Hog Commodity Marketing Board)
Ling, Edith (National Farmers Union)
MacKinnon, Steven (National Farmers Union)
MacLeod, Leah (Cooper Institute)
Mazer, Don (Coalition for the Protection of PEI Water)
McKenna, Gordon (Innovative Farms Group)
McRae, Daniel (Environmental Coalition of PEI)
Mogan, Darragh (New Democratic Party of PEI)
Murray, Barry (PEI Watershed Alliance)
O'Brien, Catherine (Coalition for the Protection of PEI Water)
Phelan, Reg (National Farmers Union)
Raymond, Bruce (Department of Environment, Labour and Justice)
Redmond, Mike (New Democratic Party of PEI)
Robinson, Mary (PEI Federation of Agriculture)
Sark, Keptin John Joe
Schurman, Kevin (Innovative Farms Group)
Seeber, Tim (PEI Hog Commodity Marketing Board)
Sherry, Hon. Janice, Minister of Environment, Labour and Justice and Attorney General
Webster, Jason (Innovative Farms Group)
Wheatley, Ann (Environmental Coalition of PEI)
Young, Jim (Department of Environment, Labour and Justice)

Written Submissions Received by the Committee

Beck, Jenny
Beck, Jim and Marion
Beck, Ken
Beck, Ruth and John
Durant, Mike (Central Queens Branch, PEI Wildlife Federation)
Ing, David
Jamieson, John (PEI Federation of Agriculture)
MacDonald, Donald
PEI Potato Board
Phelan, Reg
Reddin, Ellie (Save Our Seas and Shores, PEI Chapter)
Reddin, Tony (Environmental Coalition of PEI)
Smith, Kip
Southward, Peter
Te Raa, John
Webster, Hon. George, Minister of Agriculture and Forestry