

# PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY



Speaker: Hon. Francis (Buck) Watts

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## Standing Committee on Agriculture and Fisheries

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**DATE OF HEARING:** 20 JANUARY 2017

**MEETING STATUS:** PUBLIC

**LOCATION:** COMMITTEE ROOM, J. ANGUS MACLEAN BUILDING, CHARLOTTETOWN

**SUBJECT:** WORK PLAN

**COMMITTEE:**

Pat Murphy, MLA Alberton-Roseville [Chair]  
Dr. Peter Bevan-Baker, Leader of the Third Party, MLA Kellys Cross-Cumberland  
Bush Dumville, MLA West Royalty-Springvale  
Sonny Gallant, MLA Evangeline-Miscouche  
Colin LaVie, MLA Souris-Elmira  
Hal Perry, MLA Tignish-Palmer Road  
Brad Trivers, MLA Rustico-Emerald

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:**

none

**MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:**

none

**GUESTS:**

none

**STAFF:**

Ryan Reddin, Clerk Assistant (Research, Committees and Visitor Services)

Edited by Parliamentary Publications and Services

The Committee met at 10:00 a.m.

**Chair (Murphy):** I will call the meeting to order. Welcome, everybody, back. I guess it's been since before Christmas since we had the chance for this committee to meet again. I need a motion to adopt the agenda.

**Mr. Gallant:** So moved.

**Chair:** Motion by Sonny, all in favour?

**Some Hon. Members:** (Indistinct).

**Chair:** Consideration and we're here to – consideration of the committee's work plan going ahead and maybe Ryan could jump in there. Do we have any –

**Clerk Assistant (Reddin):** Sure.

Really, it's up to the committee. The last things the committee was looking at in the fall were lobster carapace size and halibut quota and the committee made a recommendation on that in its last report so it's up to the committee if it wants to do something new, revisit those issues in some regard? I don't know.

**Mr. LaVie:** I know – oh, sorry.

**An Hon. Member:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. Perry:** Oh come on.

**Mr. Gallant:** (Indistinct)

**Chair:** Peter?

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** I just wanted to know if we have any outstanding work from last session's work plan.

**Clerk Assistant:** I guess the one thing: on lobster carapace size and halibut, the committee had invited the provincial Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries to come and there was a date lined up for him to be here, but then that meeting was cancelled and we weren't able to arrange another time. Also, the committee had requested some information from Fisheries and Oceans Canada and some representation from them before the committee as well and really didn't receive any reply at all to any of that.

**Mr. Dumville:** It's a start.

**Chair:** Do we still want to hear –

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** It's still a contentious issue and the fishers there are still concerned about the speed of the increase so I don't think our work's done there, myself.

**Chair:** It's starting to affect other districts now (Indistinct)

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** I will refer to the expert now.

**Mr. LaVie:** No, we should have the minister come in. He cancelled and he was due to come in and we should get an update on his side. It's not to drill him or anything, just to have the relationship with the minister, right? We're not here to drill him or anything, but get him to come in and see where he's at and where the issues are at that were left on the table. Do we not have a request on the table for somebody from federal to come in?

**Chair:** That's what I would be more interested in; it's really their jurisdiction, right?

**Mr. LaVie:** Yeah, did we have something on the – did we invite somebody?

**Clerk Assistant:** Yeah.

**Chair:** We didn't get a reply.

**Mr. LaVie:** Oh, we didn't get a reply?

**Mr. Dumville:** Try again.

**Chair:** Move for adjournment.

**Mr. Dumville:** Yeah, he can adjourn.

**Mr. Trivers:** Sorry, guys. Earlier meeting went overtime.

**Chair:** Does anybody else want to speak on that, on having the federal minister back in?

**Mr. LaVie:** Well, it might not be the federal minister. We probably won't get the federal –

**Chair:** A representative from the federal department of fisheries?

**Mr. LaVie:** Yeah.

**Mr. Dumville:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. LaVie:** If you can, that's fine. I'd love it.

**Clerk Assistant:** So you'd like me to contact the provincial minister for him to come in to talk about those issues again and see if – try to contact DFO again to see if some representative of that department could come in? That's what I'm hearing.

**An Hon. Member:** Yes.

**Clerk Assistant:** Okay.

**Chair:** Everybody's good with that? Okay.

**Mr. Gallant:** Now you want to adjourn?

**Mr. LaVie:** This is on the fisheries side, (Indistinct) agriculture.

**Chair:** And you had something, Peter?

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** Yes. Are we ready to sort of consider new topics for discussion?

**Mr. LaVie:** Yes.

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** Is that – is this the appropriate time to bring that up?

**Chair:** Yeah –

**Mr. Dumville:** The federation is having a general meetings next – the 27<sup>th</sup>, right? So maybe something will come out of that, I don't know, that we should look at.

**Mr. Gallant:** Which federation? Fishermen?

**Mr. Dumville:** No, agriculture.

**Mr. LaVie:** No, agriculture.

**An Hon. Member:** Sorry, Peter.

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** No, no problem.

I have a couple of issues I think this committee would be good for us to look into.

**Chair:** Okay.

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** One is the reports from the fish kills from last year. I know it took a long time for them to come through and I think they're still not entirely complete. I would like to know why it takes so long to get the information out and also, perhaps more importantly, what we're going to do to stop that from happening in the future.

I don't know how the committee feels about that, but I would like – it's such a black eye on the province, I would like to investigate what we could do to prevent these from happening in the future.

**Chair:** Who would we start with? Would that be the department of environment?

**Mr. Dumville:** I would say so.

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** Rosie –

**Mr. LaVie:** The department of environment.

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** Rosie MacFarlane is the freshwater fisheries person. I think it's Rosie, isn't it?

**Mr. LaVie:** Yeah, I think it is.

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** She might be a person to speak to about that.

**Chair:** Could we contact the department and have them send the appropriate person to speak to that?

**Mr. Trivers:** Just – Chair, sorry.

**Chair:** Brad.

**Mr. Trivers:** Just to be clear, Peter. When you talk about the reports on fish kills – I know when I look at them going back a number of years, I think all the way to the mid 1960s, even, starting around 2009, the root cause of the fish kills was left blank, essentially, and they were all labeled as preliminary reports as opposed to final reports.

Are you saying that final reports are finally being published and you're wondering why it took so long for those to get published?

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** No. I guess, again, my main concern is what can we do to stop this

from happening. Also, I would like to know why it is difficult to get a definitive cause for a fish kill. I think I know the answer to that but I'm not an expert, so I might need somebody in to say (Indistinct).

**Mr. Trivers:** I would definitely support that for sure.

**An Hon. Member:** Oh, yeah.

**Mr. Trivers:** But I think it's important that when we're making our request we're very specific in the information we're looking for. I'd hate to have the people come in and say: Oh, well, actually we don't know about the reports and how come the root cause wasn't there.

**Clerk Assistant:** I hear a suggestion for Rosie MacFarlane. I believe she's a fisheries biologist.

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** Yes, I think so.

**Clerk Assistant:** Would she be in environment?

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** That's a good question. (Indistinct)

**Clerk Assistant:** I can look into it in any case. Is that where you want to start?

**Chair:** Anybody else have anything?

**Mr. Dumville:** (Indistinct) phone calls and they will advise you whether it's environment or fisheries and he can make the decision based on what he learns.

**Clerk Assistant:** Okay.

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** Oh. Sorry, Brad, you (Indistinct) –

**Mr. Trivers:** You go ahead.

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** Gee, you're all so gentlemanly this morning.

**Chair:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. Trivers:** (Indistinct)

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** Another issue I'd like this committee to look into is the certification for organic growers. I know

that there are no established guidelines or regulations here in the province. Those that are producing genuine organic products are faced with others who may not be producing organic products which are being advertised as such.

I know that the organic growers cooperative are quite concerned about that. They've spoken to the department a couple of times, but I don't think anything has been done about that. I'd like to see somebody from the organic growers come in here – PEI Certified Organic Producers, I think they're called. Karen Murchison is the spokesperson for that.

**Mr. Perry:** When Sandy MacKinnon was in, was he just speaking that time for himself, or is he representing anybody? It was just himself, was it?

**Mr. Trivers:** Just himself.

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** Yeah. This is a cooperative of organic growers.

**Mr. Perry:** I just didn't know if he belonged to that or not, because I remember his presentation was similar saying anybody could basically hang a shingle out at the end of the gate.

**Mr. Trivers:** I think he's a past-president.

**Mr. Perry:** Okay.

**Mr. Dumville:** How many are there, Peter?

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** I couldn't tell you, Bush. I don't know and I don't know if all the organic growers are members of the co-op or not. It's a fairly – I want to say 50 – I don't know where I'm getting that number from, it could be totally nonsense. Or it may be (Indistinct).

I know that they've increased their organizational capacity; they're much better organized than they were. This is a concern that they've had on a number of occasions that they brought forward and as far as I know, nothing has been done about it. It would be good for this committee to hear, I think, why they're concerned about it.

**Some Hon. Members:** (Indistinct)

**Clerk Assistant:** Yeah.

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** Karen Murchison is the person for that.

**Clerk Assistant:** Okay.

**Chair:** Any other new business?

**Mr. Trivers:** (Indistinct)

**Chair:** Surprise, surprise.

**Mr. Dumville:** You still have your coat on.

**An Hon. Member:** He just came for that part of the agenda.

**Some Hon. Members:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. Trivers:** No, no, I actually only have one item and it's a concern that's been raised to me by a number of my constituents. In the central part of the province, at least, there's one main poultry plant (Indistinct) killing of all types of poultry, really.

[A cell phone rang]

**Chair:** Sorry, guys, that's –

**Some Hon. Members:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. Dumville:** The Chair has certain privileges.

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** You could smash it with a hammer.

**Mr. Dumville:** The Chair has (Indistinct) –

**Mr. Trivers:** So –

**Chair:** Sorry, go ahead, I'll just go and put this on –

**Mr. Trivers:** So I'm just interested to know what the plans are to make sure that we have a reliable poultry plant going forward in the province. I'm afraid that – I mean, there's lots of different small producers and some larger producers that use that plant and if there ever was a failure, it's almost like a single point of failure.

I just wanted to see what has been considered in terms of that plant – the

people that use it for their services – what would happen if it closed and what impact that would have on the poultry industry here on PEI? Just to make sure that as an Island we're prepared so that that part of our agriculture industry doesn't end up being negatively impacted, that's all.

**Mr. Dumville:** Is it financially viable and is there good supply to that plant?

**Mr. Trivers:** From what I'm aware, yes, it is. It's not about financial viability; it's more of a contingency planning. Also, I'm just interested in the future and where we're planning to go in that industry.

It's complicated because there are national quota in some areas for poultry and then there's certain limits that you can produce locally as well, without having to be part of that national quota system. I think it would be good for us to know as a committee more details surrounding that (Indistinct).

**Chair:** Just for the record too, there is one up in our area, too.

**Mr. Trivers:** Right.

**Chair:** There's (Indistinct) kill plant. I just wonder, should we be looking at – are they going to be happy to be going under the microscope of the Legislative Assembly committee?

**Mr. Trivers:** Chair, just to be clear, I'm not saying we would look at any single poultry plant necessarily, I'm saying: Let's just get a general idea of the poultry industry on PEI, what plants there are, how it operates, what is the quota system and what are the plans for the future – whether we, as a committee, need to make any recommendations in to government for legislation that needs to be made to help ensure that future is a good one.

**Mr. Perry:** Chair.

**Chair:** Mr. Perry.

**Mr. Perry:** That's what I was looking for, just clarity on were you looking specifically for that one particular operation or Island as a whole? I believe – yeah, we should, as a whole on the Island; but I think in speaking to some of them, this is the regulations.

They're starting to have like a choke-hold on them.

You have to be bringing somebody in from the department, I guess, to talk about the regulations that are in place now and what the restrictions might be. That's a good idea. I know some of them are grandfathered in, but if there was a (Indistinct) location the new regulations would then apply.

**Mr. Trivers:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. LaVie:** Should we have somebody in from the department and also –

**Mr. Perry:** Representing them? I don't know if they have a representative that would be – they have an overall representative –

**Chair:** That could speak as a whole.

**Mr. Perry:** Yeah, instead of just one – we could start with the department.

**Chair:** See where that leads us, yeah.

**Mr. Gallant:** That was just for some clarity as well. You don't want to get into the finances of an operation. If we're going to – you think of the documentary that was on last fall about the chickens down in the states there when the virus hit, they had to eradicate their whole flock of birds and stuff. That sort of thing and what kind of regulations there is.

**Some Hon. Members:** Yeah, yeah.

**Chair:** Are you done, Sonny?

**Mr. Gallant:** Yeah, I'm done.

**Mr. Dumville:** I'm just wondering if we could contact the owners of the two plants and get their input into how they think we should proceed and what areas we should look at?

**Mr. LaVie:** Yeah.

**Chair:** Is there only the two of them?

**Mr. Perry:** There's probably more than two.

**Mr. Dumville:** You know (Indistinct) however many there are.

**Mr. Gallant:** There's one in Bedeque. Isn't there?

**Mr. Trivers:** There's an organic one as well out in the Freetown area.

**Mr. Gallant:** Yeah, Freetown.

**Mr. Dumville:** I think it would be nice if we did contact because they're directly involved and they could tell you exactly where we should be looking.

**Chair:** How do you feel about that?

**Mr. Trivers:** I think that was a good suggestion. Maybe we start with government and see and then add those to the list, for sure. I wouldn't be against that.

**Mr. Dumville:** You must have a relationship with the one in your area as you've done a lot of work on this.

**Mr. Trivers:** The actual plant itself?

**Mr. Dumville:** No, the owner. Like, you must be talking (Indistinct)

**Mr. Trivers:** Oh, the owners, yes. I can definitely source out some owners –

**Mr. Dumville:** There you go.

**Mr. Trivers:** – from some of the larger operations to come in and speak with us.

**Mr. Gallant:** I guess, Brad – and don't take this the wrong way, I'm not being partisan in this comment – but you're bringing it up because there's an organization in your district, but we want to be careful how we're going with this.

If we want to bring them in, like Hal said, to discuss regulations but we don't want to open Pandora's Box here on something that we don't have to open either. If they've got some issues, let's get them in and discuss their issues.

**Chair:** Yeah, we don't want to be looking at their private business and how they operate.

**Mr. Gallant:** You know what I'm saying?

**Mr. Trivers:** Chair, I think the thing is as a Standing Committee on Agriculture and Fisheries, we do have – we've gained a fair amount of expertise in some of the agriculture industries on the Island. The beef industry is one we focused on a lot, right? We toured the plant. We've had them in, etc. The beef producers association, but poultry is one where, frankly, I don't think we're as informed as we should be as a committee, and that's what I'm talking about.

**Mr. Gallant:** Chair?

**Mr. Trivers:** Let's really make sure we're not missing anything in that industry.

**Mr. Gallant:** In that light, I agree 100%.

**Mr. Trivers:** Okay.

**Mr. Gallant:** Exactly, that was very well put because we've dealt with the other aspects of it, right?

**Mr. Trivers:** Yes, that's good.

**Chair:** Okay. Ryan just informed me that he thinks there is a poultry growers association on the Island.

**Mr. LaVie:** That's what I thought.

**Mr. Dumville:** Yeah, that would be a good place to start.

**Clerk Assistant:** Start there?

**Chair:** Start there?

**Mr. Perry:** Those are the growers.

**Chair:** We can have the growers –

**Mr. Perry:** I think what you're going from, too, a lot of my constituents would be the same – backyard, well I shouldn't say backyard, but they grow 20 chickens, 24 chickens for their own consumption, right?

**Mr. Trivers:** Yes.

**Mr. Perry:** And they need to – they use those facilities and those numbers are now getting down because of –

**Chair:** Tignish (Indistinct)

**Mr. Perry:** I think it's (Indistinct) restrictions –

What?

**Chair:** A fellow up in Tignish does that.

**Mr. Perry:** Hush. Anyway, I think we do start with the department first and – no more, Pat. I know where the axe is.

**Chair:** Okay, do we have agreement on that? The poultry association? No?

**Mr. Perry:** I think we start with the department first.

**Chair:** Department first?

**An Hon. Member:** Yes.

**Chair:** Everybody in agreement on that?

**Mr. LaVie:** Sure.

**An Hon. Member:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. LaVie:** Sounds good.

**Chair:** Any other new business? I guess that's probably enough to keep us going for a while, Ryan, eh?

**Clerk Assistant:** Might be.

**Chair:** I guess the next thing on the agenda is adjournment.

**Mr. Dumville:** What about the next meeting?

**Chair:** I think Ryan will try to coordinate that; will you, Ryan?

**Mr. LaVie:** Well (Indistinct) dinner.

**An Hon. Member:** (Indistinct)

**An Hon. Member:** Yeah, have it at lunchtime (Indistinct)

**Clerk Assistant:** Yeah, I will write up some letters to invite some different groups in based on these ideas and then try to schedule them. Friday mornings is the time set aside for this committee so I will just let you know when I can – when we have dates in mind.

**Chair:** Okay, we need a motion for adjournment.

**Mr. Dumville:** I'll do that. That way you'll know I'm here.

**Chair:** All in agreement?

**Some Hon. Members:** (Indistinct)

**An Hon. Member:** Should have let Brad do it.

**Chair:** Adjourned.

The Committee adjourned