

# PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY



Speaker: Hon. Francis (Buck) Watts

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## Standing Committee on Infrastructure and Energy

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**DATE OF HEARING:** 26 JANUARY 2017

**MEETING STATUS:** PUBLIC

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

**SUBJECT:** WORK PLAN

**COMMITTEE:**

Sonny Gallant, MLA Evangeline-Miscouche [Chair]  
Dr. Peter Bevan-Baker, Leader of the Third Party, MLA Kellys Cross-Cumberland  
Bush Dumville, MLA West Royalty-Springvale  
Jamie Fox, Leader of the Opposition, MLA Borden-Kinkora  
Sidney MacEwen, MLA Morell-Mermaid  
Pat Murphy, MLA Alberton-Roseville  
Chris Palmer, MLA Summerside-Wilmot  
Hal Perry, MLA Tignish-Palmer Road

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:**

none

**MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:**

none

**GUESTS:**

none

**STAFF:**

Emily Doiron, Clerk Assistant (Journals, Committees and House Operations)

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The Committee met at 1:30 p.m.

**Chair (Gallant):** Seeing that it's 1:30 p.m. and everyone is here, I guess we'll begin our meeting. I would like to welcome everyone back. We have our agenda in front of us. Would someone please adopt the approval of the agenda?

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

**Chair:** All in favour?

**Some Hon. Members:** Yea.

**Chair:** Our first order of business on the agenda is a request from hon. Jamie Fox on the power cable. Would you like to enlighten us a little bit further on that, Mr. Fox?

**Leader of the Opposition:** Thanks, Chair.

It is a project that I have supported in the past and I do think it's important to the future for the province economically and business-wise. Given the scope of the project it would be nice to have members of the PEI Energy Corporation and possibly the minister in, or Maritime Electric, to come in and just give us an update, a briefing on the project and how it's going and matters around it.

**Chair:** Everybody okay with that?

**Some Hon. Members:** Yes.

**Chair:** All agreed? Any further comments? That will be one.

I guess I kind of missed a line here under number three: This meeting is to discuss our work plan going forward so that was our first item. Thank you, Mr. Fox.

Next is a report from the committee clerk.

**Clerk Assistant (Doiron):** I've included a document just underneath the agenda there and it covers some of the topics that have been brought up in the fall that were kind of for consideration by the committee and I can just go through the list there. I have the first request, the power cable project, and then the requests that are there.

There was the PEI ATV Federation who wanted to come in and there were just some scheduling conflicts this fall on their end for them to come in, but they were still interested in coming in this winter if that's agreeable to the committee.

Then there was, from the Standing Committee on Communities, Land and Environment, a request to review the PEI Energy Strategy draft, I believe. I have included that letter behind this report. There's also a request to review IRAC and that was discussed on October 6<sup>th</sup> and then there was a discussion regarding provincial infrastructure and the provincial plan moving forward on various – I guess the infrastructure that the province has currently, and that was discussed on October 27<sup>th</sup>.

Those are kind of what's on for the committee at this point. I'm not sure what's under new items, but those are kind of some things that the committee had discussed in the fall so we can leave it open to the committee for discussion.

**Chair:** Thank you, Emily.

Any further discussion on that or are there any groups you'd like to see come in? Prioritize them or are we okay with Emily contacting all of these groups and seeing when they can come in?

Chris?

**Mr. Palmer:** As the new guy, I'm just trying to get up to speed. Have we already had conversations about Internet here or is that moved to a different committee? Is that something we should be talking about here?

**Chair:** Isn't that under education and economic development? I think the minister is coming into that committee, is he not? Chair, do you want to elaborate on that?

**Mr. Dumville:** Yeah, we're trying to set it up so Ryan is working on that.

**Chair:** That falls under another committee, Chris.

**Mr. Palmer:** Okay.

**Mr. Dumville:** We're meeting next Wednesday afternoon to discuss our work plan at that time.

**Chair:** Sidney?

**Mr. MacEwen:** Thank you, Chair.

I'd like to throw out to the table about the energy strategy. I know we've been expecting it for a while and what does the committee think about – should we maybe – I'm not sure if we need to get the minister in to ask her why it's not here, or maybe it's better to wait until it's released and then bring the minister in to brief us on it.

I guess I want to throw it out there for discussion. What do you guys think about timing and what we should do about it? Probably we should wait to see what's in it anyway to discuss it. What do you guys think? Should we ask the minister to come in as soon as it's released to discuss it here in committee?

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** My vote is for that. I prefer to discuss it once it's (Indistinct) and we know it's meant and it should have been delivered already and it hasn't been. Rather than bring the minister in now to be told that it's on its way, I would rather discuss it; same with the mitigation strategy and carbon pricing.

**Mr. MacEwen:** Maybe could we put a request into the minister to say once the strategy is released could you maybe look at her schedule to see if we could get a briefing on it?

**Chair:** Chris, do you want to comment on it?

**Mr. Palmer:** Yes, and can we add to that letter, so we get an expectation of when that will be delivered as well, when the new strategy is going to come out?

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** Thank you, Chris.

**Chair:** You all good with that?

Sidney, you're okay with that?

**Mr. MacEwen:** (Indistinct)

**Chair:** Any further discussion on the presenters that are here? The ATV club is one of them.

Peter Bevan-Baker.

**Dr. Bevan-Baker:** May I ask Chair, just some clarification of what the ATV club was wanting to speak to us about, I forget.

**Clerk Assistant:** They wanted to discuss their promotion of multi-use trails and I think they're developing trails in different areas of the Island and wanted to talk about maybe some supports that would be helpful for that organization and kind of discuss more broadly those multi-use trails.

**Mr. Murphy:** It would be great to get them, absolutely.

**Chair:** Okay, bring them in. Do you want to bring them in next after the cable? Then the review on IRAC, representatives from IRAC, minister responsible; what was the topic there?

**Leader of the Opposition:** We still had some questions in regards to their pricing modules. I think that maybe it's time that IRAC look at adjusting prices weekly as is done in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia due to the changing prices. Maybe this might alleviate this five and six cent up and down increases that we're seeing on the larger scale.

It would be interesting to hear from industry to find out whether or not a weekly adjustment would actually be better for the consumer, instead of them getting also hit by these large increases. We seen (Indistinct) Nova Scotia drop 1.1 cent. New Brunswick takes advantage – New Brunswick last week was 1.5 cents or something like that.

If we were going weekly would that be more beneficial to the consumers in Prince Edward Island? I think at the time we talked about, Emily – maybe it might have been Ryan – that hearing actually from industry, I think we asked for Irving or somebody or Wilsons Fuel didn't we, to possibly look at –

**Clerk Assistant:** I believe last winter or maybe previously, there were some groups that had come in from industry. I can look back at who had come in and see – are there

any suggestions of who you would like to see in from the industry?

**Leader of the Opposition:** Yeah, I think Irving was one for sure. Wilsons Fuel is another, maybe Kenmac Energy or Noonan Petroleum Ltd. Wholesalers; but I almost have to wonder if it wouldn't be good to reach out to a seniors group or some kind of resident groups of PEI, that when they go to put fuel in their fuel tank when they're hit by the big increase. That's a lot of money, right? Wouldn't it be better for them to enjoy them – be more stable at one point; those small changes or increments?

**Mr. Perry:** I think we should wait and have the answer to that first. As you mentioned earlier, would it be more beneficial to us if we went to that week, as opposed to once or twice a month, depending on the thing, right? I'd like to see those numbers too, and then we could go on – because maybe it might be beneficial to us the way it is now, right? I'd love to see those numbers.

**Leader of the Opposition:** I'd like some clarification on our method of changing prices compared to other provinces. I know how they change prices on PEI, but is that model – which has been in place for years and years – is there need for it to be changed as to what New Brunswick and Nova Scotia have elected to do? I'll take it back to Minister Currie and Minister Mitchell on the floor of the House agreed that maybe it's time that we look at a review of IRAC and this could be a first step.

**Mr. Perry:** Agreed.

**Chair:** Everybody agree?

**Mr. Murphy:** I'll just abstain from that because being a current gas retailer (Indistinct)

**An Hon. Member:** Sure.

**Chair:** The next item was provincial infrastructure, provincial plan moving forward. It was discussed on October 27<sup>th</sup>. Representatives from TIE –

**Clerk Assistant:** That meeting was the fabrication yard in Borden-Carleton and there was a discussion at the end of maybe having someone in from the province to

discuss all infrastructure that's under the care of the province at the moment and seeing kind of an, I guess, an overview of all of that. I'm just wondering if that's something you would like to see going forward or maybe that can be put off too.

**Leader of the Opposition:** I have a problem with government sitting on property for long periods of time and vacant buildings that we heat and nothing happens. Now, it's my understanding at TIE – when a building becomes surplus they have to advise every department in government to look at it to see whether or not that building would be of use to them, but there's no guideline or policy in place that says you've got 30 days or 60 days or 90 days to do it. Take that to the Prince Edward Home, there's a building we've been sitting on now for two or three years and it hasn't done nothing.

We've got the Kinkora seniors' building that finally is being torn down after eight years and I think Mr. Palmer will agree with this.

**Mr. MacEwen:** I even heard it in Summerside.

**Leader of the Opposition:** Yeah.

**Mr. Murphy:** You fellows were trying to fight me when I was trying to get the manor torn down in Alberton.

**Leader of the Opposition:** Oh no, that was a different scenario.

**Mr. MacEwen:** Is the request to the minister and perhaps a department representative to come with a briefing on basic infrastructure in the province, but whatever infrastructure that we had that's not in use or -

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

**Mr. MacEwen:** And then the policies that are surrounding what we do with that, how long we would hold onto it.

**Leader of the Opposition:** How we dispose of it and so on.

**Mr. MacEwen:** Yeah, what's the strategy behind, going forward, what the province is going to do with that type of thing. I think

holding onto it for some sort of strategic value or –

**Chair:** Chris Palmer.

**Mr. Palmer:** I think to follow up on that, if we could really understand what their existing policy is, the timeline, and then what is their current inventory of active and – for a lack of a better term – inactive assets, and can we get them to publish those so that we know what all of those assets are and we understand what the vacant ones are and what costs are related to it and are they holding it for strategic reasons or are they holding it because? I think it's a really good idea to have them in.

**Chair:** Any further discussion? Everybody agree?

**An Hon. Member:** Yes.

**Chair:** Just seeing no other items here, is there anything else that anyone has in mind?

**Mr. MacEwen:** Chair?

**Chair:** Yes.

**Mr. MacEwen:** Number one there, can we clarify who we're asking to come in –

**Chair:** For the cable project?

**Mr. MacEwen:** – for the cable project.

**Leader of the Opposition:** I think the PEI Energy Corporation because they are the lead on the project and of course they had subbed out, my understanding, to Maritime Electric as the project manager, so I would say you start with them two first.

**Mr. MacEwen:** I just wasn't sure if we had narrowed it down or not.

**Chair:** Any other organizations or any visitors that you can think of you would want to bring in? We will start off with this and –

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

**Chair:** Any other new business?

Next item is scheduling snow storm plan.

**Clerk Assistant:** In terms of scheduling, we have been using Thursday afternoons and if that still works for everybody, that's great to have kind of a day that I can work around to have presenters come in.

Then with regards to the snow plan, so if there was ever kind of snowy or bad weather, what I would usually do is consult with the Chair and then we would have a discussion about weather and whatnot and then the committee would be notified as soon as a decision is made and then I would be in contact with presenters and we would just kind of work on rescheduling at that point. I'd probably use email as probably the most convenient way to contact everybody. Before you leave home, check emails.

**Chair:** I guess just to kind of – is everybody happy with yesterday? Yesterday seemed to go smoothly.

**Mr. Perry:** Perfect.

**Chair:** We all got notice before we were in our vehicles and this would be similar to that –

**Clerk Assistant:** Yes.

**Chair:** - letting everybody know in ample time.

**Mr. Perry:** It was close (Indistinct)

**Chair:** Was it close?

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

**Chair:** Yeah, I suppose (Indistinct) close to you, that's right.

**Mr. Dumville:** (Indistinct) okay for me.

**Chair:** I'm not trying to speed the meeting along, but if there isn't any further business I'd call for an adjournment.

**Mr. Perry:** So called.

**Chair:** Thank you.

**Mr. MacEwen:** (Indistinct) next week?

**Clerk Assistant:** Probably not next week, but I'm thinking probably into mid-February. I can try, but I think next week

might be a little tight turnaround time, but then probably looking at the 9<sup>th</sup> or the 16<sup>th</sup> into February.

**Chair:** Anything else?

**Mr. MacEwen:** (Indistinct) Chair.

**Chair:** Thank you, everyone.

Meeting adjourned.

The Committee adjourned.