

May 5, 2017

**Standing Committee on Agriculture and Fisheries
Second Report of the Second Session, Sixty-fifth General Assembly
Committee Activities**

Mr. Speaker and Members of the Legislative Assembly;

The Standing Committee on Agriculture and Fisheries is charged with matters concerning agriculture and fisheries.

Committee Membership

Permanent members of your committee are:

Hal Perry, Chair (District 27, Tignish – Palmer Road)
Peter Bevan-Baker (District 17, Kellys Cross – Cumberland)
Bush Dumville (District 15, West Royalty – Springvale)
Hon. Sonny Gallant (District 24, Evangeline – Miscouche)
Colin LaVie (District 1, Souris – Elmira)
Hon. Tina Mundy (District 22, Summerside – St Eleanors) *(as of March 10, 2017)*
Bradley G. Trivers (District 18, Rustico – Emerald)

Former members of your committee include:

Hon. Pat Murphy (District 26, Alberton – Roseville) *(until March 10, 2017)*

Chris Palmer (District 21, Summerside – Wilmot), Jordan Brown (District 13, Charlottetown – Brighton) and Sidney MacEwen (District 7, Morell – Mermaid) served as substitute members at the March 31, 2017, meeting of your committee.

Changes in Membership

On March 10, 2017, Hon. Tina Mundy (District 22, Summerside – St Eleanors) replaced Hon. Pat Murphy (District 26, Alberton – Roseville) as a permanent member of your committee.

Committee Activities

Since last reporting to the House, your committee met on five occasions: January 20, March 17, March 24, March 31 and May 4, 2017.

On **January 20, 2017** your committee met to discuss its work plan. At this meeting your committee agreed that it continued to wish to meet with the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries and a representative of Fisheries and Oceans Canada regarding minimum lobster carapace size and Atlantic halibut quota. The committee also agreed to seek a briefing on fish

kills, addressing in particular how to stop them from happening and why it is difficult to pinpoint a definitive cause when they do happen, from an appropriate official in the Department of Communities, Land and Environment. Further, your committee agreed to request a briefing from the PEI Certified Organic Producers Co-op on organic certification and the lack of guidelines or regulations governing the use of the term "organic" in advertising and selling produce in PEI. Finally, your committee agreed to request a briefing from the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries on the poultry industry in PEI, touching on subjects such as an industry overview, processing facilities and future infrastructure needs, and relevant regulations.

On **March 17, 2017** your committee met to receive a briefing from the PEI Certified Organic Producers Co-op, represented by Karen Murchison, Marc Schurman and Amy Smith. At this meeting, your committee elected Hal Perry ((District 27, Tignish – Palmer Road) to serve as Chair. Your committee also agreed to request that the topics of newcomers to the oyster industry and new fisheries safety regulations be added to an upcoming briefing by the Minister and Deputy Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries; and to send a further request for a briefing on fish kills to the Department of Communities, Land and Environment as a follow up to its original request. Hon. Robert Mitchell replied to the committee on behalf of his Department on March 29, 2017.

On **March 24, 2017** your committee met to receive a briefing on minimum lobster carapace size, Atlantic halibut quota, newcomers to the oyster industry, new fisheries safety regulations, and the PEI poultry industry from Hon. Alan McIsaac and John Jamieson of the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries. Following the briefing, your committee agreed that it would like to be briefed on drone technology the Department of Agriculture of Fisheries is using to assess fields at risk of run-off, as referenced during the briefing.

On **March 29, 2017** your committee met to receive a briefing on minimum lobster carapace size and Atlantic halibut quota from Kevin Stringer and Lori Cuddy of Fisheries and Oceans Canada. At this meeting your committee also agreed to seek a briefing from Atlantic Beef Products to provide an update on marketing initiatives and other factors in the beef industry.

On **May 4, 2017** your committee met to consider its report to the Legislative Assembly.

Recommendations

1. Your committee recommends that an organic-grade regulation be developed under the *Natural Products Marketing Act* so that use of the terms “organic” and “certified organic” in advertising and selling food products in PEI is reserved for producers that have actually obtained organic certification.

Regulation of these terms is a matter of provincial jurisdiction when products are sold within their province. PEI does not currently have organic labeling policy or regulation in place, so any producer is essentially free to indicate that their produce is “organic,” regardless of production methods. When food is inaccurately labeled “organic” it confuses consumers and creates distrust. Certified organic producers undergo a strict certification process to meet organic standards, and continuing to produce according to these standards is costly and labour

intensive. Other provinces, including Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, have regulations in place in this regard. A new organic regulation for PEI should be a priority in order to protect industry participants from false claims of organic status and to ensure consumers are getting what they pay for.

2. Your committee is in favour of continued supports for organic agriculture in the next Growing Forward federal-provincial agricultural policy framework.

Growing Forward 2 funding for conventional producers to transition to organic was very effective for the development of the organic industry in PEI. The industry continues to develop, and will achieve further success with continued support in areas such as shared infrastructure (e.g. a central food hub or organic grain elevator), assistance to new entrants, value adding, and specialized market and agronomic research.

3. Your committee recommends that the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries continue to assist the PEI Certified Organic Producers Co-operative so that it can provide service and supports to PEI's rapidly developing organic industry.

4. Your committee recommends that Government examine tendering processes and procurement agreements to see how they can be revised to encourage more sourcing of food from local producers.

Your committee is pleased to hear that a Local Food Act is in development, and hopes that it will fully address potential areas of growth for local food consumption such as school lunch programs and institutional procurement. Government's own policies and agreements should reflect this commitment to local food wherever possible.

5. Your committee recommends that Government assist efforts to establish a federally inspected poultry processing facility in PEI.

Conclusion

Your committee thanks the individuals and groups that shared their views on agriculture and fisheries with the committee.

Respectfully submitted,

Hal Perry, MLA
Chair
Standing Committee on Agriculture and Fisheries