



May 3, 2018

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**Standing Committee on Agriculture and Fisheries
Second Report of the Third 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)
Hon. Paula Biggar (District 23, Tyne Valley – Linkletter)
Hon. Sonny Gallant (District 24, Evangeline – Miscouche)
Jamie Fox (District 19, Borden – Kinkora) *(as of March 2, 2018)*
Colin LaVie (District 1, Souris – Elmira)
J. Alan McIsaac (District 5, Vernon River – Stratford) *(as of January 16, 2018)*
Hon. Chris Palmer (District 21, Summerside – Wilmot) *(as of February 6, 2018)*

Former members of your committee include:

Bush Dumville (District 15, West Royalty – Springvale) *(until January 31, 2018)*
Bradley G. Trivers (District 18, Rustico – Emerald) *(until March 2, 2018)*

Sidney MacEwen (District 7, Morell – Mermaid) served as a substitute member at the January 12, 2018 meeting. Hon. Richard Brown (District , Charlottetown – Victoria Park) served as a substitute member at the March 2, 2018 meeting.

Changes in Membership

On January 16, 2018, by letter from the Premier, J. Alan McIsaac (District 5, Vernon River – Stratford) was appointed as a permanent member of your committee. On January 31, 2018, by resigning from the caucus of a recognized party and pursuant to rule 90(1), Bush Dumville (District 15, West Royalty – Springvale) ceased to be a member of your committee. On February 6, 2018, by letter from the Premier, Hon. Chris Palmer (District 21, Summerside – Wilmot) was appointed as a permanent member of your committee. On March 2, 2018, by letter from the Leader of the Opposition, Jamie Fox (District 19, Borden – Kinkora) was appointed as a permanent member of your committee in place of Bradley G. Trivers (District 18, Rustico – Emerald).

Committee Activities

Since last reporting to the House (December 6, 2017), your committee met on four occasions: January 12, February 16, March 2 and April 24, 2018.

On **January 12, 2018**, your committee met to receive a briefing on drone technology used to identify fields at risk of run-off from Hon. Robert Henderson, Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries; Barry Thompson, Manager of Sustainable Agriculture; and Evan MacDonald, Soil and Water Conservation Specialist. At this meeting your committee agreed to request that representatives of Northern Pulp appear before the committee to discuss the potential release of effluent into the Northumberland Strait from a new waste water treatment project. The committee also identified several additional subjects it would like to be briefed on by the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries:

- the new Canadian agricultural partnership that follows on the Growing Forward 2 program, and the differences between the two;
- the recent study on changes in PEI's soil organic matter over the past 18 years;
- an overview of innovation and new technological approaches being used on PEI's farms;
- the new honey bee pollination expansion program, and concerns on the impact of pesticides on bee populations;
- the health of our marine ecosystems, particularly in regard to recent studies showing herring stocks to be in decline;
- an overview of agricultural health and safety inspections, including how they are carried out (e.g. at random or with prior notification), and whether they are performed by Department personnel or contracted out;
- the concept of buying local, addressing in particular the Department's efforts to encourage consumers to buy local, the Department's efforts to help producers produce value-added products that can replace imports, and the cost of production and its impact on Islanders' ability to buy local; and
- initiatives to encourage producers to diversify the crops and livestock they produce

It was later determined that Fisheries and Oceans Canada and the Workers Compensation Board would be more suited to provide briefings on marine ecosystems and agricultural health and safety inspections, respectively. Finally, the committee also agreed to request a tour of and briefing on the Bideford Shellfish Hatchery.

On **February 16, 2018**, your committee met to receive a briefing on plans regarding a new waste water treatment facility at the Pictou County, NS Northern Pulp mill by General Manager Bruce Chapman and Technical Manager Terri Fraser of Northern Pulp Nova Scotia Corporation, and Project Manager Guy Martin of KSH Solutions Inc. Following this briefing your committee decided to seek further briefings on this issue from Fisheries and Oceans Canada, the PEI Fishermen's Association, Nova Scotia fishers, and the Pictou Landing First Nation. Also, your committee agreed to a request from the PEI Potato Board to meet with the committee and provide a briefing on the Board's research and agronomy initiatives.

On **March 2, 2018**, your committee met to receive briefings from the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries on the study "Changes in soil organic matter over 18 yr in Prince Edward Island,

Canada” by Barry Thompson, Manager of Sustainable Agriculture and Kyra Stiles, Agri-Environmental Development Coordinator; and on the honey bee pollination expansion program and concerns regarding the impact of pesticides on bee populations, by Cameron Menzies, Berry Crop Development Officer/Provincial Apiarist, and Sebastian Ibarra Jimenez, Agri-Environmental Specialist. Deputy Minister John Jamieson also participated in the briefings.

An additional meeting was scheduled for **March 23, 2018**, but was cancelled due to inclement weather. On **April 24, 2018** your committee met to discuss its report to the Legislative Assembly.

Recommendations

1. Your committee recommends that the Department of Communities, Land and Environment review the *Agricultural Crop Rotation Act*, with input from the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, in order to strengthen the Act in ways that will encourage improvement in soil organic matter, nutrient retention and reduced soil loss.

Many changes in agriculture have occurred since the *Agricultural Crop Rotation Act* was passed in 2001, including shifts in crop practices and a reduction in livestock farming in PEI. PEI’s soil organic matter levels have been studied over roughly the same period of time, and overall they appear to be trending downward. Crop rotation practices are not the only factor in determining organic matter and soil health, but they are a contributor. Therefore your committee recommends that the Act be comprehensively reviewed and brought up to date. Your committee notes that a similar recommendation was put forward by the Standing Committee on Agriculture, Environment, Energy and Forestry in a November, 2014 report.

2. As the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada continue studying PEI’s soil organic matter, your committee recommends that additional data be gathered to attempt to establish causal or correlational factors in areas where soil organic matter levels are improving.

The information obtained through the study “Changes in soil organic matter over 18 yr in Prince Edward Island, Canada” is highly valuable and your committee hopes the state of PEI’s soil will continue to be studied for years to come. As this work continues, your committee sees the opportunity to increase the information gathered about each soil sample, such as type of crop being grown, rotation and tillage practices, nutrient inputs, and other factors. Comparing this information to trends in soil organic matter may increase understanding of beneficial practices. Additional information gathering will of course require additional cooperation of growers and landowners, but your committee is confident they will see the benefit in measuring the effect of management efforts.

3. Regarding the Northern Pulp wastewater treatment project, your committee recommends that evidence-based studies on the project’s direct impacts on lobster and herring be carried out as part of the environmental assessment process.

There are additional groups, such as fishers and First Nations, that your committee intends to meet with in regard to Northern Pulp’s proposed wastewater treatment project, which will

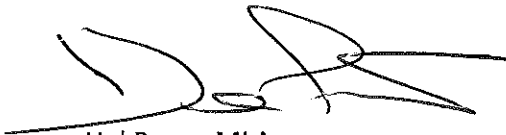
discharge effluent into the Northumberland Strait near Pictou, NS. However, with the environmental assessment phase of the project beginning this summer, your committee believes it is important that the predicted effects of the project on these important fisheries species be clearly identified without delay. Your committee plans to communicate this recommendation to Northern Pulp Nova Scotia Corporation, the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans Canada, and the Nova Scotia Ministers of Fisheries and Aquaculture, and Environment.

4. Your committee recommends that the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries consider carrying out a study on the effects of neonicotinoid pest control products on PEI's bee populations.

Conclusion

Your committee thanks the individuals and groups that shared their views on agriculture and fisheries with the committee. Your committee looks forward to continuing its work on the various topics and issues remaining on its work plan.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Hal Perry', with a long horizontal line extending to the left.

Hal Perry, MLA
Chair
Standing Committee on Agriculture and Fisheries