

MINUTES
NSEN Annual Meeting with NS Department of Environment
Barrington Tower – Suite 1800, 1894 Barrington Street, Halifax
10:30 AM – 12:00 PM November 15, 2018

In attendance:

From Nova Scotia Environmental Network (NSEN) and membership:

- Chris White – NSEN (Chair of the Board)
- Sheila Cole – NSEN (Senior Policy Advisor)
- Linda Scherzinger – KAIROS Halifax
- Karen McKendry – Ecology Action Centre
- Walter Regan – Sackville Rivers Association
- Wendy McDonald – Halifax North West Trails
- Olga Torres – Thinkwell Shift
- Liam Cook – Thinkwell Shift

From Nova Scotia Environment:

- Margaret Miller (Minister of Environment)
- Laura Bignell (Executive Assistant)
- Frances Martin (Deputy Minister)
- Andrew Murphy (Director of Air Quality and Resource Management)
- Elizabeth Kennedy (Director of Industrial Management, Water and Wastewater)

Minutes:

- **Chris White** opens meeting acknowledging the mutual opportunity for the public to speak directly with the Minister and for the Minister to engage with the public.
- **Minister Miller** welcomes attendees recognizing that many issues will be raised in a short amount of time, but that there will be opportunities for follow-up with point people after said issues are touched on today.
- **Sheila Cole** shares roles and funding needs of NSEN and its members:
 - Charged with managing large provincial organization without funding
 - Clarification needed on the Environmental Trust Fund
 - There needs to be a way to fund community environmental organizations, including NSEN who need a paid executive director
 - NSEN used to have ED to manage projects, work with departments
 - New Brunswick Environmental Network has most successful environmental network in the country
 - They have millions to support their member organizations
 - NSE supports EAC and Clean but should be aware of NSEN as well
 - NSE should let NSEN work with them on projects
 - NSEN needs to know where we are needed by NSE so we can put our limited efforts towards something meaningful
- **Minister Miller** responds:
 - Support given to EAC and other groups is not core funding, only project based
 - We wish we could offer more support but there is only so much money and we can't see things changing

- Elizabeth or Andrew would be point people for follow-up on cooperation opportunities
- **Linda Scherzinger** shares concerns of KAIROS Halifax:
 - We are concerned about plastic pollution and are looking for ways to reduce
 - We would like to know what NS is doing about this
 - We are part of 2030 Declaration supporting a transition to green economy
 - Could get as many as 30,000 green jobs
 - Projects like Goldboro LNG do not align with this
 - We remain concerned about the Alton Gas project
 - Release salt brine into Shubenacadie River
 - Concerned about the environment and the people defending
 - What can NS do to support them
 - What can NS do to protect coasts and cities?
- **Minister Miller** responds:
 - Waste from plastics is concerning.
 - Met with Retail Council regarding ban on single-use plastics
 - Not ready to do the ban yet but haven't taken it off the table
 - Requires planning and consultation
 - It is high on priority list, second only to greenhouse gases
 - Cap and Trade program will do what we promised Nova Scotians
 - Committed to 45-50% GHG reduction
 - 40% waste reduction
 - Looking to reduce food waste as well
 - Everyone knows present measures are not enough
 - LNG project has been around for a long time
 - Alton gas
 - Ruling on an upcoming appeal, need to wait on the science.
 - My family farmed for 25 years on Shubenacadie River, very near and dear to me
 - Coastal action
 - Need to set up a law for all NS so all municipalities are under same regulations
 - Going through consultations now, text being drafted
 - Legislation in the coming spring session
- **Karen McKendry** shares EAC efforts and concerns regarding wilderness issues:
 - Working to save and preserve biodiversity in Nova Scotia
 - Focused in part on protected areas
 - Proud of NS work on this so far
 - Need 13 – 15% of area protected
 - Want to see promotion of commercial value of protected areas
 - Nature and economics are often made out to be separate and in opposition
 - Glad to see NSE is talking about nature and economics together
 - Concerned that proposed gold mine would overlap with proposed protected area
- **Minister Miller** responds:
 - We have 11 people in protected areas sector
 - First few designations were easy, no concerns

- Now mineral rights have to be considered
 - We can't designate an area as protected if there are existing mining licenses
 - We are still committed to 13% but it will take time
 - Protected areas are a huge job
 - Better to take the time to do it properly
 - Looking for publication of protected areas
 - Show areas, trails, species, for tourism
 - Expect announcements in the coming days
- **Walter Regan** shares concerns of Sackville Rivers Association:
 - What is happening with the Watershed Management Groups as proposed by the Water for Life Strategy?
 - Update on the Lewis Lake Nature Reserve?
 - Floodplain mapping and Stream Gauging?
 - An Atlantic province Stormwater Standard
 - Need proper methods for stormwater drainage to protect fish
 - Avon River fish passage Option C?
 - Coastal Act?
- **Minister Miller** responds:
 - Nature Reserve is under review
 - Not familiar with Avon River issue
- **Elizabeth Kennedy** responds:
 - Avon River
 - Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal is reviewing and recommending to NSE
 - No info to share right now
 - Flood plain mapping is very relevant right now
 - Federal funding
 - National Disaster Mitigation funding
 - Municipal Affairs is leading on this
 - Developing and piloting for municipalities to do their own flood plain mapping
 - Internal Services is leading initiative to make LIDAR available for reliable elevation mapping, with an aggressive timeline
 - Stream Gauging
 - Evaluating the Hydrometric Network
 - Watershed Management Groups
 - Collaboration with universities, other government departments
 - NS Water Advisory Groups
 - Community watershed groups on individual basis
 - Resource intensive but good work being produced
 - Not quite what was planned in Water for Life Strategy but is more ergonomic
- **Walter Regan** states his disappointment in these responses.
- **Wendy McDonald** shares concerns of Halifax North West Trails:
 - Blue Mountain Birch Cove Lake Wilderness Area
 - Would love to take any NSE people out to experience this area
 - Provincial Trails Strategy

- Let's Get Moving report
 - Disappointed that there has been no work on Trails Strategy which has been on the backburner for a while
 - Federal version did succeed in getting people out in nature
 - Communities, Culture, and Heritage provides grant opportunities, NSE may want to consider the same
 - Stewardship is a key
- Need more regional staff
 - Trail signage isn't being respected
 - Would like to hire students to be on the ground
 - Make use of citizen science
- We have no specific ask, just want NSE to be informed
- Trail mapping on website is out of date (2009)
 - A student did a 2015 version
- **Minister Miller** responds:
 - Trails are an ongoing challenge
 - Wilderness areas must be shared but not overused or abused
- **Andrew Murphy** responds:
 - Communities, Culture, and Heritage is leading work on trails
 - Trail agreements allow trails in protected areas but don't want to overuse protected areas
 - Will follow-up regarding updating online maps
- **Olga Torres and Liam Cook** share efforts and concerns of Thinkwell Shift
 - Green school for Nova Scotia students
 - Reaching 25,000 students in Nova Scotia every year
 - Focus on energy efficiency, GHG reduction, green careers
 - We want to support EGSPA
 - Request to arrange facilitation of a meeting between the provincial departments of Environment, Energy, Transportation and Infrastructure, and Education stressing the importance of environmental curriculum in the transfer of this knowledge to students as a priority in reaching mutual goals.
 - We hear NSE talking about efficiency
 - How can businesses support environmental sustainability from within?
 - How to advance/update EGSPA and keep it relevant as time goes on?
- **Minister Miller** responds:
 - Environmental curriculum is a good idea that NSE would like to support, and we will facilitate the meeting with the other departments.
 - Continuing EGSPA
 - Some businesses want to be left alone, always some pushback
 - Things are changing and support is increasing
 - EGSPA certainly is not weakening, if anything it is strengthening
 - Many EGSPA points accomplished
 - Thinkwell Shift will be kept in mind for involvement
 - Environmental education component is the biggest thing now
- **Karen McKendry** weighs in:
 - EAC agrees that EGSPA has been great and we need to keep strengthening it
 - Environmental education needs to be in there

- EAC would like to be involved in this process
- **Sheila Cole** weighs in:
 - NSEN has an education caucus and can help with this process as well
- **Chris White** speaks on behalf of absent **Andy Blair** from Citizens Climate Lobby:
 - How much money will the Cap and Trade program bring in this year?
 - Where will that money go?
- **Minister Miller** responds:
 - Once program ramps up we expect \$25M per year from Cap and Trade
 - This money will not be going into general revenues
 - Money will go into a Green Fund and can be dispersed to many different places from there.
- **Chris White** speaks on behalf of absent **Brittany Maguire** from Atlantic Canadian Organic Regional Network (ACORN):
 - How is the NS Dept of Environment planning to enforce the NS Organic Grade regulation?
 - When do they expect the enforcement and inspection plan will be in place?
 - ACORN believes that the educational approach from the NS Dept of Agriculture will be ineffective unless it is backed by enforcement.
 - What kind of climate adaptation supports is NS planning to offer to farmers?
 - Will NS expand the AgriRisk project to other sectors beyond wine?
 - How is NS planning to communicate the climate impacts and adaptation research being undertaken?
- **Minister Miller** responds:
 - Certified organic foods would go through Department of Agriculture
 - In the early days of looking at adaptation, working with various departments
 - Success with the agriculture sector doing this with grapes
 - Taking that experience to other agriculture, but still early days
 - NSE will be working on this with Agriculture, just need time for things to take shape
- **Andrew Murphy** responds:
 - Will provide contact info for a point person in Agriculture regarding Organic Grade regulation
- **Chris White** speaks on behalf of absent **Victoria Byrne** from the Anglican Diocese of NS and PEI:
 - Government should be providing core funding to environmental non-profits so they can spearhead the work that government cannot
 - Governments need to remember the link between environment and human health
 - We expect policy makers to listen to indigenous and scientific environmental knowledge, and to protect the environment while maintaining job security
- **Minister Miller** responds:
 - Most people say NSE is asking for too much regarding Environmental Assessments and industrial approvals, but then when something happens they say NSE didn't ask for enough

- We will never be able to make everyone happy, but NSE always makes decisions based on science
- **Chris White** asks if Minister Miller has received or can respond to the letter sent to her from Dale Poulette and Rachel Greenland-Smith from the Treaty Truckhouse regarding non-compliance issues in the Alton Gas natural gas storage project.
- **Minister Miller** responds stating that people from Inspection, Compliance, and Enforcement (ICE) are drafting a response to this letter.
- **Walter Regan** asks if there is any update regarding the acquisition of the Hantsport Railway.
- **Minister Miller** responds saying there has been no update but that Nova Scotia is missing an opportunity if we don't make the most of trail systems as other provinces have done.