

FORESTRY COMMISSION

Terms of Reference

The Forestry Commission will consist of a maximum of 15 members and a Chair appointed by the Minister of Environment, Energy and Climate Action to assist in developing a forest recovery plan and a new forest policy for the province. Membership will include woodlot owners, forest management practitioners who use both traditional and eco-based approaches, experts in land and wildlife management, forest products harvesters and processors, a public policy expert, and representation from the PEI Mi'kmagy.

Government recognizes that expert advice and public consultation are required following the devastating effects of Hurricane Fiona, and because the current Forest Policy and associated programs have not been subjected to a comprehensive public review in almost twenty years. The Commission will begin its work early in 2023, may release interim reports to stimulate public discussion if deemed necessary, and will complete work by March 31, 2025. The Commission will do the following:

1. Advise the Department on implementing the report of the Emergency Forestry Task Force;
2. Recommend changes that may be required to the Forest Enhancement Program and incorporate lessons learned from Hurricane Fiona;
3. Recommend ways to increase the resiliency of forests to climate change;
4. Recommend changes that may be required to the *Public Forest Council Act*, the *Forest Management Act* and associated Regulations;
5. Identify key indicators of progress to be used in the next State of the Forest Report; and
6. Assist the Department to develop a new Forest Policy for Prince Edward Island.

Guiding Principles

Build consensus among members of the Commission

Members of the Commission will determine their own process for decision making: unanimity, majority, or a consensus model.

Ensure adequate public input

The Commission will meet with groups having an interest in forestry and will hold public meetings across the province to present information it has gathered and to seek advice on findings and recommendations.

Practice evidence-based decision making

The Commission will seek and use only the best available data on forest inventory, forest ecosystems, and the forest industry in arriving at its recommendations.

Recognize the importance of the Mi'kmaq - Prince Edward Island – Canada Framework Agreement

The Commission will become familiar with work taking place under the Agreement, and its deliberations and decisions will respect the principles of the 2019 Framework Agreement.

Consider best-end-use for forest products that must be salvaged

The Commission will seek guidance and ensure that forest products salvaged because of damage caused by Hurricane Fiona are put to their best end use.

Strike a balance between traditional and eco-based approaches

The commission will research and identify traditional and eco-based forest management techniques and recommend that both receive appropriate financial support in the Forest Enhancement Program.

Identify new funding sources

The Commission will consult with representatives of the federal and provincial governments to identify potential sources of funding for recommended improvements to the Forest Enhancement Program.

Work Plan

The Commission will hold its inaugural meeting in early 2023 and will meet at least bi-monthly thereafter until its work is completed. The work will be done in several phases:

Phase 1 – Information Gathering – January to December 2023

- Review the work of the Emergency Forestry Task Force;
- Meet with staff of the Forests, Fish and Wildlife Division to learn about the Forest Policy, the legislative framework, the Forest Enhancement Program, and other relevant Department programs;
- Review results of the performance audit on Division operations conducted by the Auditor General's Office;
- Meet with Indigenous representatives to learn about the 2019 Framework Agreement and how it might apply to the Commission's work;

- Meet with representatives of Government of Canada funding agencies to identify potential sources of long-term funding for forest renewal programs;
- Visit Forests, Fish and Wildlife operations, including the tree nursery, demonstration woodlots, Provincial Forests, and Wildlife Management Areas;
- Meet with representatives of woodlot owners, forestry contractors, forest products manufacturers, and environmental organizations; and
- Review preliminary results of the Forest Inventory.

Phase 2 – Analysis and Feedback – January 2024 to September 2024

- Analyse information gathered in Phase 1;
- Report preliminary Commission findings and propose new forest renewal strategies;
- Hold a series of public meetings across the province (or request written feedback) to obtain input and direction; and
- Form sector-specific round tables as needed to ensure input is obtained from all interested parties in a manner suitable to them.

Phase 3 – Recommendations – September 2024 to March 2025

- Recommend changes to the Forest Enhancement Program;
- Recommend ways to increase the resiliency of forests to climate change;
- Recommend changes that may be required to the *Public Forest Council Act*, the *Forest Management Act* and associated Regulations;
- Identify key indicators of progress to be used in the next State of the Forest Report;
- Identify potential areas of collaboration between the Department and groups actively involved in forest management, including but not limited to, the Watershed Alliance, the Nature Trust, Macphail Woods Ecological Forestry Project, PEI First Nations, and the Nature Conservancy of Canada;
- Hold a series of public meetings across the province to report on key findings and to assist the Department to develop a new Forest Policy for Prince Edward Island; and
- Produce and publish a final report.