

# **HANSARD**

**NOVA SCOTIA HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY**

**STANDING COMMITTEE**

**ON**

**COMMUNITY SERVICES**

**Tuesday, October 1, 2024**

**Committee Room**

**Agenda-Setting**

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## **COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE**

Melissa Sheehy-Richard (Chair)

John White (Vice Chair)

Larry Harrison

Hon. Trevor Boudreau

Tom Taggart

Hon. Derek Mombourquette

Carman Kerr

Susan Leblanc

Suzy Hansen

[John White was replaced by Hon. Brad Johns.]

### **In Attendance:**

Gordon Hebb  
Chief Legislative Counsel

Tamer Nusseibeh  
Legislative Committee Clerk



**HALIFAX, TUESDAY, OCTOBER 1, 2024**

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON COMMUNITY SERVICES**

**10:00 A.M.**

**CHAIR**

Melissa Sheehy-Richard

**VICE CHAIR**

John White

THE CHAIR: Order. I call the meeting to order. It is the Standing Committee on Community Services. I'm Melissa Sheehy-Richard, MLA for Hants West and chair of this committee. Today we will be conducting an agenda-setting meeting. I just want to remind everybody to have your devices on silent, please. In case of emergency, we'll use the Granville Street exit and walk up to Grand Parade.

At this point I'd like to ask committee members to introduce themselves, beginning on my left with MLA Johns.

[The committee members introduced themselves.]

THE CHAIR: I would also at this point like to note the presence of Chief Legislative Counsel Gordon Hebb and Legislative Committee Clerk Tamer Nusseibeh.

At this point we'll go right into the agenda-setting. I'll ask for members to share their topics one motion at a time. At that point I'm going to ask if there's any discussion on the topic and the witnesses as put forward, beginning with the PC caucus and MLA Boudreau.

HON. TREVOR BOUDREAU: I move that the first topic for the PC caucus be Reducing Financial Barriers for Children and Families with representatives from the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development; the Department of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage; the Department of Community Services; and KidSport Nova Scotia.

THE CHAIR: Is there any discussion on the topic? Seeing none, motion is on the floor.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried. MLA Boudreau.

TREVOR BOUDREAU: I move that the second topic for the PC caucus be Expanding Cellular Infrastructure, with representatives from the Department of Public Works, Build Nova Scotia, and Rogers Communications Canada.

THE CHAIR: Is there any discussion on the topic? Seeing none.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

MLA Boudreau.

TREVOR BOUDREAU: I move that the third topic for the PC caucus be Supporting Healthy Families with representatives from the Department of Community Services, the family resource centres, and veteran caregivers.

THE CHAIR: Is there any discussion on the topic? MLA Hansen.

SUZY HANSEN: I'm just wondering if maybe we could add a friendly amendment and add the Nova Scotia College of Social Workers into that particular presentation.

TREVOR BOUDREAU: I would say that we're comfortable with the witnesses that we've put forward. I appreciate there are stakeholders, but I think in terms of the context, we're quite comfortable with what we've put forward. Thank you for that.

THE CHAIR: All those in favour? (Interruption) Just the motion.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

I'll look to the Liberal caucus. MLA Mombourquette.

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: I move the first topic for the Liberal caucus be Review of Community Services Support Programs Amidst the Cost of Living Crisis, with representatives from the Department of Community Services, representatives from the Affordable Energy Coalition, and representatives from the Department of Service Nova Scotia.

THE CHAIR: Is there any discussion on the motion?

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

MLA Mombourquette.

DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: For our second topic, I move the topic for the Liberal caucus be the Impact of Affordable Housing Crisis on Vulnerable Nova Scotians, with representatives from the Department of Community Services, representatives from the Affordable Housing Association of Nova Scotia, representatives from the Department of Municipal Affairs and Housing, and representatives from the YMCA of Greater Halifax and Dartmouth.

THE CHAIR: MLA Hansen.

SUZY HANSEN: I'd like to put forward a friendly suggestion that maybe we can ask for a representative from Adsum for Women and Children as a witness.

DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: I accept that. Yes. If you want to move a motion - I don't know if we need a motion for that, Chair. That's a great suggestion.

THE CHAIR: I ask for a motion. MLA Hansen.

SUZY HANSEN: I'd like to put forward the motion to make the amendment to add to the Impact of Affordable Housing Crisis on Vulnerable Nova Scotians, among the other witnesses who are part of that slate, add Adsum for Women and Children as another.

THE CHAIR: Is there any discussion on the amendment?

MLA Boudreau.

HON. TREVOR BOUDREAU: I don't have a problem with adding - I'm comfortable with that.

The question that we have, as a caucus, is the definition of “vulnerable.” Do we need that “vulnerable” in there? If we think of all the different parts of spectrums of housing, there are a bunch of different Nova Scotians who are impacted. I would rather if we could remove the word “vulnerable” from that. Really outside of that, I’m comfortable with the requested extra witness. It’s fine. Is that okay?

I would like to make an amendment to the amendment to basically remove “vulnerable” from the topic title.

THE CHAIR: What we’ll do first is vote on MLA Hansen’s amendment, and then MLA Boudreau’s.

MLA Hansen, I’ll just ask you to repeat your motion so we’re sure.

SUZY HANSEN: My motion is to add a witness to the Impact of Affordable Housing Crisis on Vulnerable Nova Scotians - continue with all the representatives who are on the list and add Adsum for Women and Children to that.

THE CHAIR: All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The amendment is carried.

MLA Taggart.

TOM TAGGART: I just want to comment. I’m not opposed to any of that. I just note that on that particular one, we have five different representatives, and at least two of them are from outside of government. I recall where we once had a meeting here where we had a lot of different representatives, and somebody never got asked a question, because typically the questions are forwarded to folks within the government.

I just want to bring that to people’s attention. You will recall a large article - a scathing article, or letter to the editor or something - about this person not being given an opportunity to speak. I think we have to be cognizant of that when we get a lot of witnesses.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, MLA Taggart. MLA Boudreau.

TREVOR BOUDREAU: I’m just hoping it’s appropriate for my amendment to come forward at this point, which is to remove “vulnerable” from the title of the topic.

THE CHAIR: All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The amendment is carried.

Now I will look to MLA Mombourquette.

DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: Do you need a new motion from me?

The amended motion is carried. As I said, we supported the amendments from both the NDP and the PC caucus for that. I just don't know if I need to make a new motion.

THE CHAIR: I will now call the vote on the amended motion.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The amended motion is carried.

Now we are going over to the NDP caucus. MLA Hansen.

SUZY HANSEN: The NDP has put forward the topic Support and Protection for Tenants Under the Residential Tenancies Program. Our witnesses are the deputy minister for the Department of Service Nova Scotia; a representative from Dalhousie Legal Aid Service; a representative from the Social Justice Office - Nova Scotia Legal Aid; and a representative from Nova Scotia ACORN.

THE CHAIR: Any discussion on the motion?

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

There was a deferred motion left on the agenda: The committee to write a letter to the Emergency Management Office. You can see it here on our agenda. I'm just turning it over to MLA Mombourquette.

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: I apologize. I understand one of my colleagues put the motion on the floor. He's not here to speak to that as per the rules, so I would make a motion to defer to a later date.

THE CHAIR: All those in favour of deferring the motion? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is deferred.

MLA Kerr.

CARMAN KERR: I wonder if this is the right time, or the correct time, or the appropriate time to talk about questioning. I know in other committees I'm part of and others are part of, we're given an allotment of 15 minutes or more - or less. In this committee, it seems that whoever is first to raise their hand gets the question. It's usually

limited. I see the Chair shaking her head, but I have been on this committee where you have an opportunity to ask one question and there doesn't seem to be time to ask two, and, to MLA Taggart's point, to make sure or ensure that we're able to ask questions of all witnesses. Would this be the time to consider or make a motion to consider another format for questioning similar to other committees?

THE CHAIR: This committee is actually a 20-20-20 committee.

CARMAN KERR: Oh, I beg your pardon.

THE CHAIR: Yes. Okay?

CARMAN KERR: Very good.

THE CHAIR: Are there any other items for discussion?

I will remind everybody that our next meeting is on November 5, 2024. The topic is Addressing the Homelessness Crisis. The witnesses are the Affordable Housing Association of Nova Scotia, the Department of Community Services, the Department of Municipal Affairs and Housing, and Shelter Nova Scotia.

If there's no other committee business, then this meeting is adjourned.

[The committee adjourned at 10:12 a.m.]