

HANSARD

NOVA SCOTIA HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

COMMITTEE

ON

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Tuesday, November 14, 2017

COMMITTEE ROOM

Printed and Published by Nova Scotia Hansard Reporting Services

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Mr. Keith Irving (Chairman)

Mr. Hugh MacKay

Mr. Bill Horne

Mr. Gordon Wilson

Ms. Rafah DiCostanzo

Mr. John Lohr

Ms. Alana Paon

Ms. Lenore Zann

Ms. Susan Leblanc

[Ms. Rafah DiCostanzo was replaced by Mr. Ben Jessome]

[Ms. Lenore Zann was replaced by Ms. Lisa Roberts]

In Attendance:

Ms. Judy Kavanagh
Legislative Committee Clerk

Mr. Gordon Hebb
Chief Legislative Counsel



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

HALIFAX, TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 14, 2017

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

1:00 P.M.

CHAIRMAN

Mr. Keith Irving

MR. CHAIRMAN: Good afternoon everyone. I'd like to call to order the meeting of the Standing Committee on Economic Development and welcome everyone to our first meeting under the new 63rd General Assembly.

My name is Keith Irving, I am the MLA for Kings South and will be the Chair of this committee. Maybe we'll begin by going around the table and introducing ourselves. Just a reminder that this is recorded in Hansard so you have to wait until you are recognized by the Chair, in terms of our deliberations and questioning. Maybe we'll begin with Mr. Horne.

[The committee members and staff introduced themselves.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Our meeting today is mainly an orientation and agenda-setting meeting, so our main committee business will be setting the agenda for the upcoming series of meetings. I also wanted to deal with a few things in terms of my role as chairman and you as committee members, just to have a common understanding of the workings of the committee.

My job as chairman I believe is to ensure there is fair opportunity for all members to speak but, as has been the practice at committees, it's a bit more informal. It's not like Public Accounts Committee in which we have designated times. We may want to move to that, I don't know, but it seems to have worked well for me just to recognize people, keep a speakers' list and just ensure that everyone who wants to get questions in has that opportunity.

With your permission, we'll continue that practice in which I keep a speaking list and try to ensure that we're not leaving anybody behind with respect to an opportunity to ask questions of our witnesses. Is that agreed, folks? We are agreed on that.

Just a reminder, and I know this is always challenging for any one of us, as politicians, that we try to limit our preambles to something that is somewhat brief. Our intent at these committee meetings is really to gain information, to gather information from our witnesses. I will, if need be, step in if preambles have gotten a bit too lengthy in my judgment. As I've run previous committees, trying to keep it to maybe a question and a supplementary, rather than a back and forth. I will use my best judgment on that, in terms of fairness of time and keeping order at the table.

I'm hoping that folks can kind of nod that I'm on the right track. I'll proceed along. Any questions on that?

Just a reminder, a motion can be put on the table at any time at these committees but I guess I would caution or advise that motions - if you know you are going to be making a motion on a particular topic beforehand, if we could have that beforehand in writing, it might make things move more smoothly and with less opportunity of things needing to be tabled and put forward for consideration at a later date. So, that doesn't always and cannot always happen but, if folks arrive with an intention of a motion, it would be helpful to have that in writing beforehand. So, that's all I wanted to run through on that.

Next thing I'd like to discuss is regular meeting days and times. Traditionally, the committee clerk has handed out the timing of meetings that have been held in the past with the various standing committees. I now have a conflict on Tuesday afternoons. I'm a member of Treasury Board and Treasury Board added meetings apparently now on Tuesdays for the building of the budget. I'm wondering if it would be acceptable to move that the Economic Development Committee meeting, keeping it on the second Tuesday of the month but to move it to 10:00 o'clock in the morning. Would that be agreeable to folks?

Ms. Paon.

MS. ALANA PAON: Mr. Chairman, I'm guess, for me, it's a four-hour drive to get in here. At least in the afternoon if we're going to have caucus on Wednesdays - it's just very difficult scheduling-wise when you're coming in from Cape Breton. So, it's a back and forth. I'm just trying to economize and be as efficient as possible with my

constituency concerns, obviously, as well as my responsibilities here in Halifax. I don't know that anybody else really has that kind of an arrangement.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay, I certainly understand that we're all juggling our complex schedules. The other option, I guess, would be to move it to a Thursday. Now, let's say the second Thursday, for instance, is open here. That could either be a morning or an afternoon. I'm assuming the points you were making are with respect to coming in for Wednesday caucus and presumably, then you would be perhaps more amenable to a Thursday morning in that case. How does that work for folks? Mr. Lohr.

MR. JOHN LOHR: Resources Committee is meeting Thursday mornings right now, right?

MR. CHAIRMAN: It's meeting Thursday mornings on the third Thursday of the month. This would be the second Thursday.

MR. LOHR: Okay.

MR. CHAIRMAN: So, I think that will work for everyone. Mr. Wilson.

MR. GORDON WILSON: So, you're suggesting 10:00 a.m. until 12:00 noon or 9:00 a.m. until 11:00 a.m.? I'd suggest 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. if possible.

MR. CHAIRMAN: For those of us who are travelling in that morning . . .

MR. GORDON WILSON: Oh.

MR. LOHR: He and I are in the exact same situation.

MR. CHAIRMAN: You are in the exact same traffic jam if it's a 9:00 a.m. meeting.

Mr. Lohr.

MR. LOHR: So, yes, I would say that it can be tough to get in for a 9:00 a.m. meeting. You have to add in another half hour of driving and, in the winter in particular, it can be quite uncertain. Probably, you and I, Mr. Chairman, are not the only ones in that situation.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I think 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon is the balance to meet most everyone's needs. So, 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon on the second Thursday of the month.

Okay, can I have a motion for that please?

Mr. Horne.

MR. BILL HORNE: I'll make the motion.

MR. CHAIRMAN: So, you're moving the second Thursday of the month at 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon.

MR. HORNE: Yes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried. Thank you.

Normal practice has been that committees do not meet when the House is sitting. If we would like to continue with that, I would ask for a motion to make that clear for our staff in terms of going forward.

So, could I have a motion in that regard?

Mr. Wilson.

MR. GORDON WILSON: I move that the committee does not meet while the House is in session.

MR. LOHR: I know that other committees do meet when the House is in session, PAC does meet. We're required to. I know that the actual length of time the House sits is very limited.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The motion is that the committee will not meet when the House is sitting. We are always in session, I was just cautioned by our counsel here.

Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

The other anomaly that we deal with, with respect to the annual schedule of the committees, is the March break. I believe if we are looking ahead to March 13th or 14th that Thursday, if we continued with the practice of not meeting during March break, we would not have a meeting in March.

If that is agreeable I'd ask for a motion on the floor.

MR. HUGH MACKAY: I move that the March meeting of the Economic Development Committee be deferred.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any further discussion? Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

I guess that brings us to our main work of today's meeting and that is to set the – just before we move to agenda-setting, Mr. Hebb.

MR. GORDON HEBB: I passed out what I call Committees: the Basics, which some of you may have seen because I have given it out at other committees and all I will say is, if you have any questions about anything, I would be pleased to answer them any time.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Perhaps we could leave that with folks. It's a three-page document, you may want some time to review and you can either bring your questions to the next meeting or contact Mr. Hebb directly with any questions. Mr. Wilson.

MR. GORDON WILSON: Just one quick question, there was a fairly lengthy in-depth document that was circulated by a lot of the clerks prior to, or just shortly after we set our committees. Is this information cut and paste to that document, do you know, or would this expand on it? That question is to Mr. Hebb.

MR. HEBB: Sorry, could you repeat that?

MR. GORDON WILSON: There was an extensive document sent out to us by the clerks shortly after the committees were appointed that outlined roles, responsibilities of the committees and membership and agenda setting and all that. Is this an expansion of that document? Or is it cut and paste to the same thing that was in that? Do you know?

MR. HEBB: I am not recalling right off what that document was. There might be some overlap but I don't think it is the same document, although I have given out this document at Human Resources and at Public Accounts. I am not sure.

MR. GORDON WILSON: Okay, thank you. We'll read it with enthusiasm.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. MacKay.

MR. MACKAY: Perhaps not particularly pertinent to this committee, but I notice Public Accounts does not sit at Christmastime. What defines Christmastime?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Hebb.

MR. HEBB: I think that is played by ear each Christmas, depending on the will of the committee.

MR. MACKAY: Definitely between Christmas and New Year's it would not meet then? It might meet the week before Christmas Day?

MR. HEBB: I mean it might well have met, say, the first week of December, but they wouldn't meet every week, because Public Accounts meets every week, unlike other committees. They don't meet every week going right through the month of December, I think is the point made.

MR. MACKAY: Okay, I am still unclear. It might meet the first week of December or the second week, but . . .

MR. HEBB: I couldn't tell you what has happened each year. I'm sure it has varied from year to year. The point was that Public Accounts, unlike other committees that meet once a month, Public Accounts meets weekly, and they don't meet every week in December. I am pretty sure that they don't meet the last two weeks. Whether they meet one week or two weeks, that has probably varied from year to year.

MR. MACKAY: Is that subject to the agreement of the committee?

MR. HEBB: Yes.

MR. MACKAY: So, the committee would decide that. Okay, thank you.

MR. HEBB: It could also depend on whether the House is sitting. In some years the House has sat right up close to Christmas, and if the House is sitting, the members are there. Since Public Accounts meets when the House is meeting, then it's more likely to meet at that time of year if the House is sitting than if the House is not sitting.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay, thank you. Just a reminder to be recognized, rather than the back and forth, if you could be patient with me. Thank you.

Mr. Wilson.

MR. GORDON WILSON: Public Accounts is scheduled straight through until December 6th. There's a schedule that is set for that. We haven't scheduled anything after December 6th yet. The clerk usually gets that information out to us. It's doubtful that we are going to be meeting on the 20th or the 27th.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay, I think we'll leave Public Accounts to Public Accounts. We'll get back to our agenda-setting meeting here.

Ms. Paon.

MS. PAON: Mr. Hebb, if I may just clarify. Under "Quorum," it says "may not count member participating by teleconference." Are we permitted to teleconference in at

all? I'm just thinking of weather. I'm sure that I'll probably head into some nasty moments coming in from . . .

MR. HEBB: I don't know if there's any occasion that it has happened before on committees, because we require a special setup. I know it has happened at - which is not strictly a committee - the House of Assembly Management Commission has met in that way. I don't think it was anything to do with weather.

I'm not aware of a real committee of the House actually doing that, but if it were to happen, that would be the situation. That person would not count toward quorum.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay, thank you. Let's get on to agenda setting, shall we? As I understand it, the breakdown is that we will set out six meetings for agenda items, with the Liberal caucus providing three, the PC caucus two, and the NDP caucus one. I will leave it up to each caucus on whether they want to put forward all three or two or deal with them individually.

Mr. Wilson.

MR. GORDON WILSON: Yes, if you don't mind, we'll bring all three forward at the same time. We would suggest the topic of seafood exports, with the witness being the Deputy Minister of the Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture; the topic of the Atlantic Immigration Pilot, with the witness being the Deputy Minister of Immigration; and building an innovative economy, with the Deputy Minister of Labour and Advanced Education and the Deputy Minister of Business.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any discussion on those three agenda topics?

Ms. Leblanc.

MS. SUSAN LEBLANC: I just have a clarifying question. Is that one meeting where those three things would happen, or is that three separate meetings?

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's three separate meetings, yes.

Any further discussion? Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

In terms of the two items for the PC caucus, could I have a motion?

Mr. Lohr.

MR. LOHR: I'll make a motion that we have the two items as listed, energy growth and development and red tape reduction, with the witnesses as listed - so those two items.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Mr. Lohr.

Any discussion? Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

The topic for the NDP. Ms. Leblanc?

MS. LEBLANC: Yes, we'd like to bring the first one on the list: the role of early learning and child care in economic development, with Shelley Thompson and Tammy Findlay as the witnesses.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Wilson.

MR. GORDON WILSON: I think the topic is a good topic. Is there any possibility that we could defer the witnesses to possibly look at maybe one other witness for that, and bring that back to the next meeting? (Interruption)

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Wilson, did you want to correct your utterances?

MR. GORDON WILSON: Yes, I'd like to correct my utterances. I do wear glasses, but unfortunately, sometimes they are a little out of date, like my comments. No, we're good with that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. Thank you.

Any further discussion? Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

Thank you, we have our six topics for the next six or eight months, thereabouts. I think the last item is, our next meeting would therefore then be scheduled, if I'm correct, December 14th from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon. Again, this comes back to the question of Christmas and all of our responsibilities. The closer we get to Christmas, it's usually more difficult for folks, so I'm looking for guidance from the committee on whether we want to proceed with the December 14th meeting or to break for Christmas holidays and come back in January. Is there any discussion on that? Mr. Wilson.

MR. GORDON WILSON: If everybody is in favour I am way behind on my Christmas shopping already. I would like to defer that meeting, if we could. It would be appreciated by all of my family.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Lohr.

MR. LOHR: Well, with respect, Gordon, it's work and I think we're employed to do a job and we can do it. It's still 11 days from Christmas. It's not that difficult to do either. You have a reason to come into the city and shop then, right?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is there any further discussion on the matter? So we're okay with December 14th. That will be our regularly scheduled meeting - Thursday, December 14th from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon. We don't need a motion since we agreed to that as our regular meeting date.

I think that brings us to the end of our agenda for today. I would like to thank you all.

The meeting is adjourned.

[The meeting adjourned at 1:22 p.m.]