

# **HANSARD**

**NOVA SCOTIA HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY**

**COMMITTEE**

**ON**

**HEALTH**

**Tuesday, January 15, 2019**

**LEGISLATIVE CHAMBER**

**Organizational Meeting**

**Printed and Published by Nova Scotia Hansard Reporting Services**

## **HEALTH COMMITTEE**

Mr. Gordon Wilson (Chairman)  
Ms. Suzanne Lohnes-Croft (Vice-Chairman)  
Mr. Keith Irving  
Mr. Ben Jessome  
Ms. Rafah DiCostanzo  
Ms. Karla MacFarlane  
Ms. Barbara Adams  
Ms. Susan Leblanc  
Ms. Tammy Martin

### In Attendance:

Ms. Judy Kavanagh  
Legislative Committee Clerk

Mr. Gordon Hebb  
Chief Legislative Counsel



House of Assembly  
*Nova Scotia*

**HALIFAX, TUESDAY, JANUARY 15, 2019**

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON HEALTH**

**3:30 P.M.**

CHAIRMAN  
Mr. Gordon Wilson

MR. CHAIRMAN: Order. I would like to call the Standing Committee on Health to order. I'd like to welcome everybody here today. First, I'd just like to remind everybody to please put their phones on vibrate. I know I forget it myself. I think everybody is familiar with the Legislature and the washrooms. I would also like to note that this is your seating for Legislative TV, so please stay in those seats for Legislative TV today.

I would like to start off with introduction of members.

[The committee members introduced themselves.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: First, I would like to ask for approval of the agenda that was circulated. Ms. Suzanne Lohnes-Croft.

MS. SUZANNE LOHNES-CROFT: I move the agenda.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Seconder? Ms. MacFarlane.

MS. KARLA MACFARLANE: I will second the agenda.

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

The motion is carried. The agenda is approved.

I would just like to start out with some opening statements from myself and then pass it on for general comments. Today is, from what I understand, a special day in the Legislature. It has been, from my understanding with the Chief Clerk, since the 1980s that we've had a new standing committee appointed in the Legislature, so we're very privileged to be here today. I will go over the mandate with everybody. I would like to start by thanking the clerks, who have been amazing, and it has been a very hectic job to get to where we are today. I would like to thank them. I would like to thank the Speaker's Office for allowing us to be here in the main Chamber today, which is another privilege. I would like to thank our commissionaires. A lot of folks don't realize that when you start moving these things into place that it affects a lot, so to have our commissionaires available today when we are in the main Chamber.

The mandate of this committee: "the Health Committee is established for the purpose of considering matters relative to access to and delivery of health care services." This is from Resolution No. 50, Rule 60 of the Rules and Forms of Procedure amendment that was tabled in the House of Assembly on September 12, 2018, and it was approved September 14, 2018.

It's a very broad mandate that we have here. Again, it's a privilege for myself personally to be selected as the Chair. I think each and every one of us feels it's a privilege to be here. It is something that I think we all have a passion for, or we wouldn't be here as members. I look forward to what we can bring forward as committee members to help better understand and educate ourselves on the challenges in health care.

From that, I'll keep my opening comments brief. I will ask members, if they wish to - they don't have to, but if there's anything that they would like to say. It isn't going to be a formality that we're going to do at every meeting, but I think it's important, seeing that this is our first meeting of the committee, if anybody has anything that they would like to share. I would like to start with Ms. Martin.

MS. TAMMY MARTIN: It is a privilege to be here and sit on this Health Committee. I'm happy to be able to sit here and discuss the critical issues that we are facing across the province. I hear from all Nova Scotians the daily issues and concerns that we have, from the lack of family physicians, people who are in excess of 100,000 residents looking for a family doctor, mental health wait times of about a year, long-term care beds - we have 1,200 or 1,300 people waiting for long-term care beds - and emergency room closures and overcrowding. Some have referred to them as MASH units.

I think it is past time that we come together and work together, in my hope, to try to resolve this and bring some of these issues to a close. We are at the height - I hope it's the height - of a crisis, and I hope that we can find some answers for our constituents because they are screaming for our help.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Ms. Leblanc.

MS. SUSAN LEBLANC: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I also am feeling very privileged and lucky to be on this committee so thank you for the opportunity. I just wanted to echo what my colleague has said. You know as MLA for Dartmouth North and as one of the several MLAs in Dartmouth, I would reiterate that we feel the crisis of the lack of family physicians very strongly in Dartmouth. We are one of the regions most highly affected by the lack of doctors, and I think it is scheduled to get worse.

Also, in Dartmouth North we see so much fallout from the lack of mental health and addiction services, so I look forward to tackling some of these issues and facing some of these challenges and figuring out how to bring some resolve to the issues but also to the people who are living them daily. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Ms. Adams.

MS. BARBARA ADAMS: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Again, I am quite honoured to be here myself today. As a physiotherapist for the last 35 years, I have watched as things changed over the last four decades. Those changes are not something we anticipated or want, so to be here to have an opportunity to bring the voices of all those patients who have talked to us over the years, and the health professionals that I worked beside, I feel very fortunate to have this opportunity.

As the MLA for Cole Harbour-Eastern Passage, you've all heard me say - and will continue to hear me say - I have the only constituency without a family doctor. Despite being given the funding for a doctor and a clinical nurse practitioner more than a year ago, the Health Authority has been unable to recruit just those two people for one constituency, so it's just a very minimal view of what we are facing across the province.

Finally, my father used to work next door and he worked for whoever was the Minister of Health. When I was 12 and I asked him why he didn't run for government, he told me that it was because he was too honest and couldn't tell people we could afford things when we couldn't. He said I'll leave that to you, you can go do that, so 45 years later, here I am in this position. I'm feeling very honoured to have fulfilled his dream for me as well as mine. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Ms. MacFarlane.

MS. MACFARLANE: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. As well, I echo your comments. I want to thank everyone for being here, particularly yourself and the clerks for making sure that we arrived at this date to be here, because it's such an important topic. I've been thinking a lot about this and I've been thinking that leadership is not about the position that we all hold here, it's about the teamwork, the vision, the wisdom, and the passion we all have here.

I hope we will all remain solution-focused. I hope we will recognize, through the stakeholders we bring in, that we recognize the challenges and the gaps, and that we're able to expose these gaps and challenges within our health care system that are failing Nova Scotians. We know they're failing Nova Scotians because we are hearing it daily in our constituency offices, we're reading the stories in the media. But we have to be the conduit, we have to be the voice of those individuals who don't make the front page, they don't make the headlines.

My goal here is that we collectively come together, because if we do, we can change the odds, we can beat the odds, and we can improve the basic health care system in Nova Scotia - one that we can all be very proud of, but more important, one that Nova Scotians deserve. When you know better, you do better, so let's put our minds and our thoughts and our passion all together, and let's have action through this committee. Thank you very much.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Ms. Lohnes-Croft.

MS. LOHNES-CROFT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As usual, we get the last word in. I feel you've done a great job, my colleagues from the Opposition, speaking about what our goals should be for this committee. I, too, am honoured to be sitting here and in this position of Vice-Chair as well. I'd like to say that I get a feeling that this is going to be a collaborative effort. This is about finding solutions, being focused with passion, and bringing the voice of our constituents and Nova Scotians here to this committee.

There are lots of great things happening in health. I don't want to forget that. Lots of good things are happening here in Nova Scotia in health. But we know we have things that need to be improved, and we need to work together to find solutions. Hopefully, we'll be able to go forward as a committee with good ideas that are able to be carried out here in Nova Scotia.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Jessome.

MR. BEN JESSOME: Initially, I will just make the comment that this committee is something that was expressed by all Parties as an interesting opportunity and something that we all collectively supported and support. As local representatives, there are many stories that we have all heard that can fuel our fire. I guess from my perspective, though I look at this as an opportunity, I also approach it very humbly as someone who is not coming from a health care background. I think it's the ability to look at it from an outside perspective, intertwined with the work that we'll do with health care providers from across the province at this committee, as we try to accomplish something more. As we get excited about making change, I think we need to be very conscious about being intentional about working with health care providers who are doing great work across this province.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Irving.

MR. KEITH IRVING: It's a pleasure to join my colleagues here today for this first meeting of the Health Committee. I know we have talked about this and mused about the need for a Health Committee for many years here in the Legislature. It's long overdue that this committee is formed, and we put our dedicated energies, as my colleagues have suggested, to solutions for Nova Scotians. We're here on behalf of all Nova Scotians, and we have the challenge, with the largest part of our budget - over \$4 billion, or 41 per cent of our budget - dedicated to health. It is an area of public governance and service to the public that's extremely complex. It's important that we as legislators dig into those issues here at this committee to gain a better understanding of those complex issues and to look, as a committee, at how we can assist the Legislature and government in making the difficult policy and spending decisions with respect to health care delivery in this province.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Ms. DiCostanzo.

MS. RAFAH DICOSTANZO: I'm honoured to be here. I have my background in education and also in health as well as 20 years working in hospitals, especially the IWK and the VG and other hospitals here in Halifax. I have a vision and ideas of what I have seen in practicality that I'm hoping to bring to this committee and the wonderful services that I have seen with my own eyes. I don't deny that there are issues, but I'm hopeful I can bring the stories of the patients that I was with and the wonderful service they received and the experience that I have had in 20 years in hospitals.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you to all our members, I appreciate your comments. We will challenge each and every one of you to continue to work under those comments.

Now we'll get down to the meat of the meeting. We need to go through, and I will take us through, one by one, all the items that we have on the list of operating practices for the committee. Again, I'd like to first note that we are here at the approval of the Speaker. This was a one-time approval for us to use the Chamber, so we are going to have to make that request again, as a committee.

[3:45 p.m.]

A little bit of a background to that - you learn this is what you love about this job. As part of the conversations we've had on getting this meeting up and going, Nova Scotia is the only province in Canada that uses its main Chamber for committees, Public Accounts being that one, so we are now expanding it into another and the sanctity of the main Chamber. We do not have the full access to televising in our Committee Room. The request was to have it televised and this is the only option we have.

I do thank the Speaker for the ability to be here, but it is something we are going to have to ask for again.

In starting us through that, I'd like to start with the - I believe everybody was circulated the sample month and I don't know what day fits best. I think typically we try to go with a Tuesday or Thursday for our meetings. Again, that's around our Wednesdays because we generally have our caucus meetings on Wednesdays. Whether we have it on a Tuesday afternoon for those travelling in or a Thursday morning, who want to get their committee business done and leave, I'll just leave it open for general comment on what day of the month we would like to pick for our regular meeting. Ms. Lohnes-Croft.

MS. LOHNES-CROFT: May I just let you know that the third Thursday morning has traditionally been for the Natural Resources and Economic Development Committee. We have not met yet, but we are meeting this month on the third Thursday morning. We haven't put that together as a vote, whether we will continue with that schedule, but people may want to be mindful of that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I take it you want to put dibs on the third Thursday of the month. The third Thursday, whether it would be the 19<sup>th</sup> or the 26<sup>th</sup> in this sample month that we have there.

MS. LOHNES-CROFT: It's the 24<sup>th</sup> on this month.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Ms. Leblanc.

MS. LEBLANC: Mr. Chairman, we would like to put forward that this committee meets at least biweekly and given that there's Cabinet and also Economic Development on Thursday, my suggestion or proposal would be that the committee meets the second and fourth Tuesdays of the month, in the morning.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Ms. MacFarlane.

MS. MACFARLANE: I would like to support that suggestion, that's exactly what I was going to put forth. I'm looking at biweekly so that we would be looking at definitely having at least 16 meetings for the year, with discussion to follow, of course, with regard to March break and summer. I definitely believe this is a topic that deserves and is worthy of biweekly, and I would be looking at Tuesdays as well - Tuesday afternoons.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Ms. Lohnes-Croft.

MS. LOHNES-CROFT: Could we take a short recess on this?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, I would say that would be appropriate.

MS. LOHNES-CROFT: Great, thank you.



MR. CHAIRMAN: We'll recess for a couple of minutes; caucus wants to discuss this.

[3:49 p.m. The committee recessed.]

[3:52 p.m. The committee reconvened.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Order, I'd like to call us back to order. Our first procedural decision to make as a committee, we have a motion on the floor to have biweekly meetings, which my understanding is that is outside of a standing committee norm, but I can understand that motion. We don't have to have seconders for motions, by the way, that's okay.

Are there any comments from anybody else in regard to that? Mr. Irving.

MR. IRVING: Mr. Chairman, just on a personal note, I want to advise you that on Tuesday afternoons during the budget development, I am tied up in Treasury and Policy Board. I don't want that to drive the agenda for the whole committee but I'm putting it out there for what it is. Perhaps alternates can be found if we decide to meet on Tuesday afternoons.

Mr. Chairman, given that it's a new committee, I think our caucus is more comfortable with staying with the standard procedures that we use for standing committees, and to get this under way, to stick to that standard of once a month.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Ms. MacFarlane.

MS. MACFARLANE: There is no better time for change, there is no better time for us to show Nova Scotians that we do not have to stick to the standards in order to provide them the best care. I think we really have to look at this committee as being a poster committee to show not just the rest of our colleagues on other committees, and other committees that we sit on, but to all Nova Scotians that we are going to think outside the box with this committee, that we are going to give them the time they deserve.

I am going to say that Tuesday afternoons is ideal. It's ideal because we are not conflicting with anything on Thursdays where we would be overshadowed by the fact that there's Cabinet and other committee meetings. This is one committee that is going to have to be very well highlighted in order to express to Nova Scotians that we're in here doing the work that we have to do to ensure better health care for them.

I am suggesting again that we meet biweekly, on Tuesdays, that we meet in the summer - in fact, maybe we should be meeting every week. It's that important. This is one that I'm not going to back down on. Really when I came in here, I wanted to suggest weekly.

I really hope that we sit here and consider ourselves as individuals who are going to not just have stakeholders and presenters come in here and then go home and think a little bit about what they said - that we're actually going to act on the information that they provide. Our mandate is to make health care in Nova Scotia better. I hope everyone realizes we need to have these meetings at least biweekly.

MS. MARTIN: I completely agree with my colleague. What are we doing here? What are we doing here if we cannot commit to meeting biweekly to discuss the current health care crisis? Regardless that there are wonderful things going on in the hospitals - because there are - there are more going on that need our help.

If we are committed, as everybody said in their opening comments, that we want to come together and work together and fix health care, you can't do that for two hours once a month. Somebody has already alluded - 41 per cent of the budget - health care is the issue in Nova Scotia, and if you're not aware of that, you're not listening to your constituents. You are not listening to Nova Scotians. You are not listening to doctors. You are not listening to front-line staff. When you listen to them, you hear exactly what they're working for and working with and working in.

I completely agree - we thought at least biweekly with the caveat that when we become aware of an emergent issue, that we meet every week. Health care is in crisis. Health care is one of the most important issues that this government is dealing with and that this committee should be dealing with. Why are we at a knot already? What is the downfall of meeting every week? Why will this government not want to commit to work together to resolve the issues in health care? We are here as dedicated MLAs who care about health care.

I know my colleague and I would be here every day if we could bring a resolve to the issues that are going on in health care. I would hope that anybody who sits in this Chamber would feel the same. I beg of this committee that we agree to at least give the constituents what they're paying us to do: to come and resolve some of the issues going on in health care.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Ms. Adams.

MS. ADAMS: The fact that we're even having this debate on how often to meet is a bit disturbing to me as to how this Health Committee is going to roll out. I was on the Community Services Committee, and that's \$1 billion out of an \$11 billion budget, so that's 10 per cent of the actual budget. If health care is four times as big a budget, then just do the plain math, that means we should be meeting at least four times more often. However, you're not seeing the front page of the newspaper with community services issues every single day.

We don't have 100,000 people without any other service so until every Nova Scotian has a family doctor, then I think we should be meeting weekly throughout - in session, summertime - until everybody has a doctor, we keep meeting.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Ms. Leblanc.

MS. LEBLANC: I just want to reiterate, my suggestion - you know, the formation of this committee, my understanding is it's a direct result of the changes to the Public Accounts Committee, and now that we don't have the ability to call health care as a regular topic at the Public Accounts Committee because of the changes, this committee is it.

Since becoming an MLA, the thing that I have noticed often is that when there's tension around an issue, the general sort of pat answer is: that's the way it's done, that's the way it has always been done, that's the way it is. I do not accept that. I can't accept it for the people in my riding and for the people all over this province.

[4:00 p.m.]

My colleague, the member for Kings South in his comments, said their caucus would be more comfortable if we kept things the way they were. Let me tell you, the people that I sat with in the emergency room at the Dartmouth General Hospital this morning were in a lot of discomfort and I was only there for a couple of hours. There's nothing comfortable about the state of health care in Nova Scotia and we have to get uncomfortable to fix it. I beg of my colleagues that we see at least meeting two times a month, if not weekly.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Jessome.

MR. JESSOME: I guess I'll start by saying that I know we all have examples of stories that come from our constituencies that will have an impact on what fuels us to be here and what opportunities we can create from the stories that we get on a personalized, individual basis. My job first and foremost is to my constituents in Hammonds Plains-Lucasville.

Quite frankly, I want to maximize the amount of time that I have to meet with constituents. I want to be able to be accessible to them and bring their stories to this committee. Health is without a doubt the number-one issue to my constituents and it is, in my view, of paramount importance for me to be in touch with constituents. I say that in the context that - and not having been around here as long as some other folks, so I'll say this humbly, I think that we can be better prepared to be more qualitative about our pursuit of improving the health care system.

I think that - I'm just going to say it - if we're bringing the Department of Health and Wellness and professionals from the department in here on a weekly or biweekly basis, we may be better served to ensure that we're holding one another and those who are operating within this system to account, in the sense that if there are goals that come away from the work that we do at this committee, I don't think that bringing them back the next week or convening the next week is necessarily going to ensure that they're having the time to do the work that needs to be done.

I know that we're all motivated to see them in their best element and I think that they need to be in hospitals, in care facilities across this province. It doesn't necessarily mean that we have to meet frequently to work towards improving the system. That's my two cents.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Ms. MacFarlane.

MS. MACFARLANE: Look, the reality is that we need to be here. We're not going to have the same presenters come weekly. We're not going to have the same bureaucrats come here weekly. We're looking for different stakeholders, from Yarmouth to Neils Harbour. We're looking for different organizations to come in and share their stories. It's definitely not going to be individuals coming in - it's not going to be repetitive.

What I would suggest, and remind everyone, is if we stick to the standard then we're having one meeting once a month. Our next meeting will be agenda setting. We're not even going to have a presenter for two to three months. Come on. Do we really want to be the face out there to Nova Scotians that says, hey, we're just going to delay this a little bit longer, because you can wait a little bit longer for better health care? We just can't do that.

I sincerely request that we consider the biweekly approach. At least let's just give it a shot. Let's agree to give it a shot and see how it goes. If it's not conducive, then we'll have to reconvene and reconsider and make a compromise.

We came in here trying to be reasonable. When it was thrown out to me - let's do it weekly - I'm like, I'd love to do it weekly, but you know what, that's not quite reasonable perhaps, so let's compromise - biweekly, Tuesday afternoons - let's give it a shot, please. Let's show them that we're going to be different.

MR. CHAIRMAN: There's a motion on the floor to go to biweekly meetings on - I believe it was a Tuesday morning. For the sake of the motion, for Hansard, Tuesday mornings. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is defeated.

Ms. Martin.

MS. MARTIN: I've said this a few times in the House and I just have to say it again, and I hope this is a point of privilege, but we have come here to work together. We have come here - I love being in my constituency. If I didn't have to come to Halifax, I probably never would, because I do more good in my constituency than I can do here arguing for something that I will never get.

Regardless, this is part of the job, and my constituents know when they call and say, can I talk to Tammy? No, she's in Halifax. She's fighting for health care. She's fighting for this. She's fighting for that. What are we telling the people of Nova Scotia? Democracy means that we come together, we work together for the betterment of Nova Scotians, but as long as this Liberal Government has a majority, we are wasting our time because we can't even agree to meet biweekly for the betterment of health care in Nova Scotia. This is disgraceful.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We've got a long agenda here. I would say we're looking at knowing what day of the month - I believe we did get a little bit of a feel from that conversation that Tuesday afternoons, I believe, are more favourable. Ms. DiCostanzo.

MS. DICOSTANZO: Tuesday afternoon - the third Tuesday of every month is Veterans Affairs from 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. so we need to make sure that's taken into consideration. We should also ask the clerks, they know all the schedules.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We have a schedule in front of us that shows the second Tuesday and the fourth Tuesday of the month are open as Tuesdays, if we can agree on Tuesday afternoons. The second Tuesday in the morning - the afternoon is not available the second Tuesday? I believe the afternoons on Tuesdays - I'm trying to get some consensus here. I think we can all agree on Tuesday afternoons. Mr. Irving.

MR. IRVING: Tuesday afternoon doesn't work for me for some parts of the year, but I think we can work around that with alternates. Just to be clear, and perhaps the clerks are more familiar - when the calendar changes around, the fourth Tuesday also ends up some months as the last Tuesday in which the Human Resources Committee meets - oh, I'm sorry, in the morning. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We should avoid the fourth Tuesday in the morning, but the afternoon would be okay. Ms. Leblanc.

MS. LEBLANC: As much as I cannot believe I'm contributing to a conversation that is only choosing one Tuesday a month to meet, given that the member for Kings South can't be there in the afternoon, why do we not choose the second Tuesday of the month in the morning?

MR. CHAIRMAN: There's a motion for the second Tuesday of the month in the morning. Ms. Lohnes-Croft.

MS. LOHNES-CROFT: I think the member for Kings South said that he would make himself available or find an alternate to have afternoon meetings, so I move the second Tuesday of the month . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: There is a motion on the floor. Would you like to retract that motion? Ms. Leblanc.

MS. LEBLANC: I'll retract that motion.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Ms. Lohnes-Croft.

MS. LOHNES-CROFT: I move that the Health Committee meet on the second Tuesday of each month at 1:00 p.m. - or is 2 p.m. better? (Interruption) 1 p.m. is fine.

MR. CHAIRMAN: There is a motion for the second Tuesday at 1:00 p.m. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

I would like to add one point - it may be procedural that people don't recognize - that typically in standing committees when we meet in the Committee Room, I have a clerk on this side and a lawyer on this side and it's very easy for the chairman to get good advice. We've talked about going to headsets and things, but it's not going to work that way. I guess you'll have to excuse me; sometimes I have to refer to the clerk and it doesn't make for a good flow.

The next is location. I do believe that we have to formally make a request that the main Chamber of the Legislature be the preferred location. Are there any suggestions on the location for this meeting? Mr. Jessome.

MR. JESSOME: I think the appetite is to ensure that this meeting is televised. I think that's the goal here. I don't believe that we're required to have it in the main Chamber, and I believe that it's easier to facilitate, probably with some adjustments, to the Committee Room across the road.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'd like to clarify that, if possible. This is the only option that we have for televising - here in the main Chamber. Ms. MacFarlane.

MS. MACFARLANE: My concern is that - I'd like to have the meetings here, but when the House is sitting, what we need to ensure is that this meeting still continues, so we need to have an alternative. If we're only meeting once a month, we need to have an alternative because we need to meet every month. We can have that discussion a little bit

later with regard to summer, and I know you're going to have that, but I need to throw that out now because I think the reality is that we have to consider an alternative for when the House is sitting, as well as when we speak with regard to summer months and March break or whatever, but we do have to consider that as well. Can we discuss an alternative for when the House is sitting?

MR. CHAIRMAN: First I would like to discuss the location for our Tuesdays that we have, if we don't mind, and then I'll move on to that next point. It's a point that we're not going to miss, I'll guarantee you that. Ms. Adams.

MS. ADAMS: I would like to make a motion that we have the meetings here, and that we move forward and ask the Speaker for permission to have our meetings held here.

MR. CHAIRMAN: There is a motion on the floor to have the meetings in the main Chamber, Tuesdays at 1:00 p.m. - televised, that's part of the motion also, I would assume. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

We'll move on. The next item is meeting during House sittings, July and August, and during March break, which are traditionally times when standing committees - with the exception of the Human Resources Committee that only meets to appoint agencies, boards and commissions. I would just like to add a quick comment on Ms. MacFarlane's - and in anticipation of your comment, not to lose it - that the challenge is going to be not around availability of a place to do it, it's the availability of members to be able to come to it, when you lose five people off the Opposition side with House quorum and things like that. I will just throw that out that that could become a problem if the House is in, like during Estimates, when we sit basically pretty well through the day, it is going to be challenging when we plan to have those. (Interruption) Just one second.

[4:15 p.m.]

I have just been instructed by legal counsel that legally committees are not allowed to sit while Estimates are in process. Ms. MacFarlane.

MS. MACFARLANE: My suggestion in solving this issue would be that during the months that we're in session, is that we have our meetings in the morning here. That way, we ensure that we're at least having our monthly meetings. That would make perfect sense, actually.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I think - I will say this without not getting a lot of comment from my members down there - typically the chairman is here just to run the meetings, not throw the comments out, but I don't think there's any problem with me saying a few things.

I don't think we're averse to sitting while the House is sitting - it's the challenge of being able to coordinate that. I would like to be able to get inside the House Leader's head to know what House hours are every week, as each one of you are. So the concern would be with scheduling a meeting, and then all of a sudden the House hours do happen to go on during a planned meeting. It does cause some unanticipated confusion potentially. Mr. Jessome.

MR. JESSOME: Is there a motion on the floor? Was that a motion or can I just clarify if our initial motion around the hours here is to meet on the second Tuesday afternoons? Can I move that we amend that motion to say that we'll meet Tuesday mornings other than when the House is proceeding through Estimates? (Interruption) I think we just received some advice that committees are not to meet while the House is proceeding through Estimates. Can someone clarify that?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Committees cannot meet while Estimates are in process. That is the case.

MR. JESSOME: And as was stated, I don't think we're in disagreement that we can meet while the House is in session, so bump it to the morning versus - can I move that we recess for a second?

MR. CHAIRMAN: We'll take another quick recess to figure this out - two minutes.

[4:18 p.m. The committee recessed.]

[4:19 p.m. The committee reconvened.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: I call the meeting back to order and thank everybody for their patience. There was no motion on the floor. There was a suggestion. Are there any further comments around during House sittings? Mr. Jessome.

MR. JESSOME: I think there is a difference between when the House is proceeding through Estimates and when the House is just sitting. Can I ask our legal counsel to confirm yes or no that there is a distinction between the two?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Hebb, could you explain?

MR. GORDON HEBB: The rule is that if the Subcommittee on Supply is actually sitting - having a meeting in progress - and the Committee of the Whole on Supply is actually having a meeting in progress, then no other standing committee may have a meeting in progress at that same time. That's the extent of the rule.



MR. JESSOME: We need to move the meeting to the morning if we're going to have a monthly meeting.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Irving.

MR. IRVING: Just to bring the understanding that there's some compromise here, obviously the Opposition came to this meeting with the understanding that they were striking a committee that was going to meet as often as PAC. We understood that the Legislature created a standing committee, and our expectations were that we would be meeting monthly and not meeting in the summer or when the House is sitting.

We are prepared to support monthly meetings, including when the House is sitting, as proposed by the Opposition.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We still don't have a motion, but we do have agreement that we are going to work towards sitting while the House is sitting, that we are going to work towards sitting during July and August in the summer months, and if for some reason our meeting frequency corresponds with March break, we are going to also sit during March break. (Interruption)

If it's in the rules that we can't, I'll strike the March break. We are going to strive as a committee to meet - we can meet? (Interruption) The House cannot, but we can. So we will strive as a committee - would somebody like to make a motion to that effect? I can't make motions. Mr. Jessome.

MR. JESSOME: Do we have to amend that previous motion?

MR. CHAIRMAN: There is no motion on the floor.

MR. JESSOME: But we passed a previous motion about Tuesday afternoons, so to clarify, I need to make an amendment to that motion - correct?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, legal counsel says that we will have to amend that motion.

MR. JESSOME: It would be helpful if he was sitting right next to you, wouldn't it?

MR. CHAIRMAN: We have been advised that we don't have to amend the motion. We can in a special case when the House is meeting that we will meet in the mornings, we can schedule them for the mornings. Is everybody in agreement with that?

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

The motion is carried.

That was made by Mr. Jessome.

Ms. Adams, yes.

MS. ADAMS: I thought I originally heard a statement that they were not expecting to meet in the summertime, but we are all in agreement that we will be meeting.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes.

MS. ADAMS: Okay, good - thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Now we'll move on to the agenda-setting process. Again, it's never good to make an assumption, but typically the procedures are fairly clear. Actually, I do state that there was a letter of September 28, 2015, by the then House Leader, where the rules for setting agenda items were straight and clear, and it was the portion of topics: three-two-one. This is now the accepted practice in standing committees: that we usually try to get six topics at the least that we can for the clerk; that we have a 10-day period we try to have where agenda items can be submitted to the clerk when the call is for agenda items; that we have two or three days to troubleshoot them; and then we all come into an agenda-setting meeting where we will have a chance to have reviewed those agenda items and select witnesses that we feel are appropriate.

That is the current standard process that we have for standing committees on selecting witnesses. I heard earlier that there is some wish to certainly get us on the go - which is also our wish - as soon as possible. That would mean that we're going to have to modify how we work as a committee. Maybe just at the very start - maybe just here to get us going - we could try to shorten that agenda-setting window a little bit more and squeeze in an agenda-setting meeting as soon as possible so that we can get things moving.

I don't want to plant ideas and thoughts - again, I'm the chairman. I'm not here to direct, but here to help us move forward. Ms. MacFarlane.

MS. MACFARLANE: It has been on my mind. I was hoping to come here today with the fact that we were going to have biweekly, but seeing that we are having meetings once a month, it is my hope as I suggested earlier that we perhaps have an agenda-setting meeting at a time that's conducive for everyone, but definitely within the next week or two, so that when we do have our next monthly meeting, we do have a presenter ready to come.

I believe that we should try to meet next week, maybe on a Wednesday while everyone is usually here anyway or a Thursday, so that we can have an agenda-setting meeting - I think the sooner, the better.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Ms. Martin.

MS. MARTIN: We have come here today hopefully to ensure that democracy remains in place, and I said it before, because of the majority government it's very hard. We couldn't even agree on having biweekly meetings. Having said that, I would like to urge my colleagues to agree to a 50-50 split for topics brought forward to this committee.

This is a new committee. The way things were done in the past doesn't always mean necessarily that has to be the way things are done in the future. Health care is 41 per cent of the budget. We need to hear from constituents all over Nova Scotia, and we feel that we will be curtailed without that ability of having Opposition members having 50 per cent of the agenda-setting items. I would urge support from my colleagues showing that we're working together to make sure that we're doing what's best for Nova Scotians.

MR. CHAIRMAN: My apologies for being distracted by my clerk. Ms. MacFarlane.

MS. MACFARLANE: I would endorse that suggestion that we have 50-50 in discussions around the presenters. I think it's only fair that given this new committee that we again start off not being standard, not being the same. This is an issue that I believe it would only be fair that we have 50-50 input from all Parties.

I would like to put a motion that we agree that we would have 50-50 input, and I would like to have a recorded vote on that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Before we go any further, I would also like to point out that our meeting is scheduled to stop at 4:30 p.m., and I need unanimous consent to continue.

Is there unanimous consent of all members to continue with our meeting?

It is agreed.

MS. MACFARLANE: I just want to retract. What I was hoping is that we could do two, two, and two in suggesting our presenters. Am I able to put that motion forward?

MR. CHAIRMAN: I believe you had a previous motion of 50-50.

MS. MACFARLANE: I just said, can I retract that?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, you can. With unanimous consent - I believe we need to have all the committee to have that retracted.

Her original motion to have 50-50 - she has a request to retract that.

Is it agreed?

It is agreed.

Mr. Irving.

MR. IRVING: Speaking to that motion of 50-50 . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes. I believe there is a motion on the floor and we need unanimous consent to have it removed. I believe he wanted to speak on that, but if we could have unanimous consent to have it moved, then we can move on to the second one that you can speak on. We have unanimous consent.

The second motion was to have two, two, and two as witness selection. Mr. Irving.

[4:30 p.m.]

MR. IRVING: I believe the arrangement of three-two-one has been determined for all the standing committees, reflecting the proportions of those seats in the House. In terms of my colleague, Ms. Martin, talking about needing to hear from all constituencies, the balance of three-two-one reflects the distribution of the voices of the various constituencies around the province. I think it's important that we keep that balance that the voices of Nova Scotians are reflected in the proportions within this House that are reflected in the proportions on this committee and the divvying up of the agenda- setting items.

Clearly, looking at the issues of health care, there are many challenges and there are also many successes. I think it's important that we hear about the successes in health care and all the issues associated with health care, as well as the challenges that are there for us. I think it's important that we stick to the three-two-one.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Ms. Adams.

MS. ADAMS: The three-two-one, which was always done in the past, will get us what we've already got. If we want to change the health care system, we need to be willing to co-operate and collaborate with each other.

The Liberals are still going to outnumber the Opposition when it comes to every single vote on every single thing that we want to suggest from this committee, so we're asking for the increased ability to share the knowledge that the two Opposition Parties can bring to the table and share.

By making it two, two, and two, we're going to have a more equal representation of what Nova Scotians believe is important. I think that if the government wants to show the people of Nova Scotia that they are, indeed, willing to collaborate, that they would approve the motion. If they don't approve the motion, then they're suggesting that they

know better than the Opposition, and we're going to end up with exactly what we already have right now.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Ms. Leblanc.

MS. LEBLANC: Yes, I agree with my colleague to my left. Again, I will say what I said earlier and that is we need to do things differently. The status quo is not working for Nova Scotia; we have a health care crisis in this province. The idea that health topics have essentially been taken away from the Public Accounts Committee and sort of relegated to a standing committee, in my opinion, speaks to the government's wish to sideline some of the issues and some of the attention that gets put on these issues.

If we really want to collaborate, if we really are here and excited to truly make change and to hear from people, then we need to do things differently, so I would urge everyone to vote for a two, two, and two split.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Ms. DiCostanzo.

MS. DICOSTANZO: I'm just sitting here worried that as we change this, it opens the door to changing every standing committee, and we're opening a door which is a very difficult thing for the staff and for everybody else that's involved. That's all I want to say.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We have a motion on the floor for two, two, and two. I believe there was a request for a recorded vote for that.

**YEAS**

Ms. Martin  
Ms. Leblanc  
Ms. Adams  
Ms. MacFarlane

**NAYS**

Ms. Lohnes-Croft  
Mr. Jessome  
Mr. Irving  
Ms. DiCostanzo  
Mr. Wilson

MR. CHAIRMAN: The joy of being the chairman leaves the tying vote to me.

[The motion is defeated.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: The next item on the agenda - I had asked the clerk during our conversations about agenda setting and what she can practically do to be able to bring an agenda-setting meeting forward as soon as possible. I asked her if it was possible if we could get agenda items to her no later than next Wednesday. That gives us a few days to get those agenda items to her. That's not tomorrow; that's next Wednesday. She could then subsequently consolidate those agenda items and witnesses and get them out to our committee, which is a standard process for us, to prepare for a meeting as early as possibly

Tuesday or Wednesday of the next week. (Interruption) As she said, we're going to want to have the opportunity not only to prepare the list but to review the list, in all fairness.

What we could do is schedule a special outside of our normal second-Tuesday-of-the-month meeting. I will canvass everybody to find whatever might be available for everybody to attend. Again, all of us have a lot of committees to sit on. We have a lot of meetings, and we have a lot of work. I appreciate the work we have done, everybody, to move their schedule around to get here today. I would try to do that as the chairman if that's agreeable. Ms. Lohnes-Croft.

MS. LOHNES-CROFT: I'm assuming the meeting will probably only take about an hour - I'm hoping. I don't know. We extended more than an hour today.

Would the 29<sup>th</sup> in the afternoon be agreeable? It's a Tuesday afternoon. Some would have Human Resources in the morning and may be here. Is that afternoon a good afternoon? It would give two Wednesdays - no, one Wednesday. (Interruption) So you're looking at the first week in February, then?

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'm not sure if the members are willing to waive having an actual caucus meeting to review them. Maybe they could do their work of going through that outside of that to get it as early as possible. We might be able to squeeze something for the 29<sup>th</sup>, if that works, for agenda setting. Maybe we'll work ourselves backwards here. Mr. Irving.

MR. IRVING: Mr. Chairman, I'm not available on Wednesday mornings and that Tuesday afternoon, the 29<sup>th</sup>.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Ms. MacFarlane.

MS. MACFARLANE: I just want to say, we all have presenters and stakeholders that we could put forward right now. Why don't we put them forward right now? That way, we'll have time to meet in January and discuss them so that when we have our first meeting on February 12<sup>th</sup>, we have a presenter.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I can't speak for the Liberal caucus, but I don't think we have actually prepared a list at this point in time. I don't know of any - I think what I'm trying to endeavour here is that we do get a meeting scheduled in February and we do have, I think in all fairness, a chance to properly prepare the list and review the list, which we typically do.

If we could pull a meeting off the week of the 28<sup>th</sup> for agenda setting, which I believe we can, would that be acceptable? I'm not seeing any heads shaking this way. Most of them are up and down. Would you leave that with me as the chairman to assist? Let's try to set a date - again, everybody get their list in by the 23<sup>rd</sup> at the latest. We can get that

list out to us by the 25<sup>th</sup> to potentially have a meeting either the 29<sup>th</sup> or the 30<sup>th</sup>. No objections? Thank you. That's what we will strive to do.

I guess we're now moving into storm days. I would hope there's not a lot of debate on that, not that we don't still want to strive to meet. Typically, the chairman can cancel a meeting because of unexpected circumstances. Usually, it's if government offices are closed - again, I just want to mention that. Typically, if government offices are closed, our clerks are also not obliged if weather is bad and people do not travel in. That is standard. Are there any comments or questions around that? Ms. Adams.

MS. ADAMS: I feel it's important to point out that the health care workers are still going to have to show up, so I certainly would be willing to be here.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Ms. Leblanc.

MS. LEBLANC: Well said, but I was going to say that obviously we don't want staff to put themselves in danger to get here for a meeting. So if there was a circumstance - given that we're only meeting monthly, I would say that if a meeting has to be cancelled, then every effort is made to reschedule the meeting in that month in spite of all the other conflicts.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I think everybody is in agreement with that. Again, it would only be exceptional circumstances, and in all my time here, I don't remember - although we were watching last Wednesday whether we were going to have a closure because of the weather. But duly noted.

I believe that we have gone through - I don't believe we've missed anything, so at this point in time, I do not have the exact date for our next meeting. Ms. MacFarlane.

MS. MACFARLANE: I'm just curious - when we do have our first meeting, how long do we get to speak? There were discussions around that. I'm going to put a motion on the floor right now that we go in rounds of 20-20-20, 10-10-10, so that we all have equal opportunity to speak. I would like to have a seconder on that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: My apologies - you don't need a seconder on that motion. There's a motion on the floor. My apologies for missing that as a procedural item. You're right. Again, I take it for granted we've created a standing committee and we're going to operate as standing committees do. Sometimes we get confused with the Public Accounts Committee and our other standing committees, which the Public Accounts Committee is a different entity with different operating procedures altogether than typical standing committees.

There's a motion on the floor that the distribution of allotted time for speaking be equal - as always, the chairman tries to be - with the typical format that we've seen in standing committees is the speakers list that's kept by the chairman. Mr. Jessome.

MR. JESSOME: I'd just interject that being a member on the Public Accounts Committee, I would prefer to have more frequent distribution amongst the questions. I respectfully disagree with the sense that there's anything but good intentions. I would like to ask questions more frequently - we sit here and we wait for 40 minutes before we get to ask a question at the Public Accounts Committee.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Ms. Martin.

MS. MARTIN: What I'm hearing here today is that only Liberal constituents have a voice. Because it's a majority government, we don't have the ability to have equal footing in here to represent our constituents and this province. Did I miss something at the beginning? Everybody was all rainbows and lollipops - we were going to work together and fix health care. Now it's like, no, we have the majority, we're taking it all. What is this place? Honest to God.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Irving.

MR. IRVING: This place is the Standing Committee on Health. This place has equal voices at this table. We come here as nine equal voices. This is not the Public Accounts Committee. We are operating under the procedures of a standing committee. The Legislature struck this committee as a standing committee. I think everyone was under the impression that the standing committee operates in a certain way, and I see no reason why we would deviate from procedures on how our standing committees operate.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Ms. MacFarlene.

MS. MACFARLANE: If we go 20-20-20, that is equal. Then with regard to, well, I'd like to be able to ask a question when something comes to mind - we're going to have 10 minutes on the second round, so everyone is going to have that second opportunity, in case they forget something within their first 20 minutes.

[4:45 p.m.]

This is democracy. It's not asking for more than what you guys would get. It's not having the NDP get less than us, like the three-two-one. This is democracy: 20-20-20, 10-10-10. It makes sense. It's common sense. It's the right thing to do. It's fair.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Ms. Adams.

MS. ADAMS: I just want to say again, if we keep doing the same thing, you get the same results. If Public Accounts Committee does it that way, then there is no reason why we can't do it this way. As I say, the public are watching this new committee to see how well we're going to work together. So far, the Liberals have voted down every motion we have made.



In a gesture of showing collaboration, there should be collaboration at some point. I would expect and hope that they would approve this. Otherwise, they can explain in Question Period as to why they maintained a stranglehold on this brand-new committee before we have even gotten started.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Jessome.

MR. JESSOME: I'm willing to support the Opposition's direction, but I would like to clarify that it has nothing to do with unfairness towards any of my colleagues to my right. Preferably, I like the way that a meeting flows when we get to jump around from caucus to caucus to caucus, so I don't appreciate any other comments directing the other way.

MR. CHAIRMAN: There is a motion on the floor that the distribution of questioning be 20-20-20. Would all those in favour - recorded vote.

Ms. Martin.

MS. MARTIN: Can you state it again, please?

MR. CHAIRMAN: The motion on the floor was to have the order of questioning be distributed as 20 minutes, 20 minutes, 20 minutes, starting with the Official Opposition, the Third Party, and then the Liberals, which is the standard in Public Accounts.

MS. LEBLANC: Can we clarify that the motion is 20-20-20, 10-10-10?

MR. CHAIRMAN: We're voting on 20-20-20.

**YEAS**

**NAYS**

Ms. Martin  
Ms. Leblanc  
Ms. Adams  
Ms. MacFarlane  
Ms. Lohnes-Croft  
Mr. Jessome  
Mr. Irving  
Ms. DiCostanzo  
Mr. Wilson

[MR. CHAIRMAN: The motion is carried.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: I would like to say in closing that that was a discussion that happened - I can remember a committee meeting, and we decided to go that way. It didn't stay that long and we did switch back.

I would like to note, in the format that we have in our standing committees - and I chair a fair amount of those - equal opportunity is given to everybody to go around when you have a speakers list. I always made a point of ensuring that the two Opposition Parties did not get passed over. In saying that, there's a good way, I think, to end the meeting.

I don't know if there's anything else on the agenda. If there are no further comments, our next meeting will be an agenda-setting meeting. I would put everybody on notice that next Wednesday, no later than a week from this Wednesday, we're to have all of our agenda items to the clerk. We will go forward after that with the setting of the meeting.

The meeting is adjourned.

[The committee adjourned at 4:49 p.m.]