

# **HANSARD**

**NOVA SCOTIA HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY**

**STANDING COMMITTEE**

**ON**

**HEALTH**

**Tuesday, April 11, 2023**

**COMMITTEE ROOM**

**Agenda Setting**

## **HEALTH COMMITTEE**

Trevor Boudreau (Chair)

Kent Smith (Vice Chair)

Chris Palmer

John White

Danielle Barkhouse

Hon. Brendan Maguire

Rafah DiCostanzo

Gary Burrill

Susan Leblanc

[Chris Palmer was replaced by Larry Harrison.]

### In Attendance:

Judy Kavanagh  
Legislative Committee Clerk

Gordon Hebb  
Chief Legislative Counsel



House of Assembly  
Nova Scotia

**HALIFAX, TUESDAY, APRIL 11, 2023**

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON HEALTH**

**10:00 A.M.**

CHAIR

Trevor Boudreau

VICE CHAIR

Kent Smith

THE CHAIR: Order. I call this meeting to order. This is the Standing Committee on Health. I'm Trevor Boudreau, the MLA for Richmond and Chair of the committee. Today's meeting is an agenda-setting meeting. There is one other item on the agenda that I'd like to do first so that we make sure we get that date set, if that's okay with the committee.

Before we do that, I'll ask to make sure everybody's phones are put on silent. Then I'll ask committee members to introduce themselves for the record by stating their name and constituency. I'll start over here to my left with MLA Smith.

[The committee members introduced themselves.]

THE CHAIR: For the purpose of Hansard, I'll also recognize the presence of Chief Legislative Counsel Gordon Hebb and Legislative Committee Clerk Judy Kavanagh.

As I mentioned, there are two items on committee business today, and I'd like to start with Item No. 2. That was a meeting that we had scheduled for April that we postponed. The clerk has found a potential date for that, so I'd like to sort that one first, and then we'll get into the agenda setting. The potential date for the meeting for Mental Health Supports for First Nations Communities, for Thursday, June 15<sup>th</sup>. All witnesses have said they're available on this date. One witness would be available only in the afternoon, so that would be a Thursday afternoon, rather than a Thursday morning.

The witnesses from the Mi'kmaw groups have said a Tuesday meeting would conflict with other regular meetings they attend and they would prefer a Thursday committee meeting. They're not available in May. It's ADM Kathleen Trott from the Office of Addictions and Mental Health who can only attend the afternoon on Thursday the 15<sup>th</sup>. If members don't want a Thursday afternoon meeting, we could ask ADM Trott to send a staff member in her place.

I'll open the floor to any discussion on that potential date, and if the afternoon of a Thursday would work for people. MLA DiCostanzo.

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: I think we're okay with the afternoon for Thursday, June 15<sup>th</sup>.

THE CHAIR: June 15<sup>th</sup> for the afternoon?

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: The afternoon is fine with us.

THE CHAIR: MLA Burrill? (Interruption) He said: We're good. It looks like by consensus we're fine for June 15<sup>th</sup> afternoon meeting. That's great. We've got that second item out. I don't think I need a motion for that. Everybody consensus-wise is good.

We'll now return to the agenda-setting item. I believe all committee members have a list of the proposed topics in front of them. We'll end up with six topics: three PC, two Liberal, and one NDP. Maybe before any formal motions, is there any discussion from committee members on the topics or any times related to the topics? I don't see any discussion. What we've typically done is each caucus would make a motion for their committee meetings. I will look to committee members. MLA White.

JOHN WHITE: Chair, I move that the first topic for the PC caucus be Implementation of Additional Mental Health and Addictions Supports, with representatives from the following facilities and witnesses: community partners and the Office of Addictions and Mental Health.

THE CHAIR: Any discussion on that motion? MLA Leblanc.

SUSAN LEBLANC: Can we just have more clarity on what is meant by community partners?

JOHN WHITE: I wasn't specific about the community partners because there are so many organizations out there that are involved in mental health, for example, the Critical Incident Stress Management Team of the Fire Service Association of Nova Scotia. I think we'd like to have some more conversation with the department and find out just who is involved and what areas, to be honest with you.

SUSAN LEBLANC: We're fine with this topic, absolutely, and we're fine with having representatives from the community, but it would be good to know in advance who the community partners are. First of all, I guess the question is: Do the PC caucus want this to be the next agenda item, like for the next meeting? If so, can we have a date by which we'll know the community partners? Or is there a way to discuss community partners over an email poll or something like that? It feels very strange to approve a topic without knowing who the witnesses are.

THE CHAIR: MLA White.

JOHN WHITE: That is totally understandable. I fully appreciate that. It doesn't matter to me when it's on the agenda. I'm okay with it being postponed for later as well.

THE CHAIR: MLA DiCostanzo.

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: Do we wait until we know who is attending? I think that is more appropriate, that we should know who is attending before we approve a topic. I do not want to lose the topic.

THE CHAIR: Just to that, I think we can approve the topic. I think what MLA Leblanc has suggested is that we get a list of - that we're suggesting, but also if there are suggestions from others about community partners. Then we can do a poll online to get to that point.

SUSAN LEBLANC: Yes, or we could have it farther down on the agenda, and then at a future meeting, after the regular meeting happens, we could have a quick discussion about the invitees for the meeting.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, MLA Leblanc. We could add it kind of on the end of the next agenda or maybe the agenda item after that to have a discussion on that. Is that appropriate?

If we're comfortable approving the topic, then we'll add that to an agenda, whether it's May or June, to have a discussion about community partners. Is that fine?

Clerk Kavanagh.

JUDY KAVANAGH: I'm just wondering, do you want me to approach the deputy minister and ask her for the community partners they would suggest bringing along? Or is this something that the caucus wants to handle?

I'm happy to do it. I can get in touch with the deputy minister and ask for their suggestions.

THE CHAIR: Why don't we start, maybe, with the clerk doing that. Then when we have our meeting, if others have suggestions as well, we can have that discussion then, if that's appropriate.

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: And if we may, if we have ideas, we can send it by email as well to the clerk.

THE CHAIR: Prior to that meeting.

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: Correct.

THE CHAIR: Okay, perfect.

We do have a motion on the floor. Any further discussion? Seeing none.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

MLA Barkhouse.

DANIELLE BARKHOUSE: I move that the second topic for the PC caucus be Expanded Scope of Pharmacists, with the Pharmacy Association of Nova Scotia, PANS, and the Nova Scotia College of Pharmacists as witnesses.

THE CHAIR: We have a motion on the floor. Any discussion? Seeing none.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

MLA Smith.

KENT SMITH: I'll move on to the third topic for the PC caucus. I'd like to move that the third topic be Investment in Robotics, with representatives from the Nova Scotia Health Authority and the IWK Health Centre.

THE CHAIR: Do we have any discussion on this topic? Seeing none.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: For the Liberals, we have our first topic, which is EHS Offload Times. We're looking to have Emergency Health Services, EHS, the Department of Health and Wellness deputy minister and appropriate staff, and third, Nova Scotia Paramedics, IUOE Local 727. That is our first topic.

THE CHAIR: We have a motion on the floor. Is there any discussion on this topic? I see no discussion. (Interruption) Yes, we can take a two-minute recess. We'll return at 10:12 a.m.

[10:10 a.m. The committee recessed.]

[10:12 a.m. The committee reconvened.]

THE CHAIR: Order. We'll call this meeting back to order. Any discussion on the item? Hearing none, we have a motion on the floor.

All those in favour of the motion? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: Our second topic will be ER Closures and Doctor Retention. We are requesting the Nova Scotia Health Authority, either CEO or vice president of Medicine; Doctors Nova Scotia, the president; and the Department of Health and Wellness, the deputy minister, to be our witnesses.

THE CHAIR: We have a motion on the floor. Is there any discussion on this item? MLA Smith.

KENT SMTH: We're okay with the topic. We're just suggesting different witnesses. We think that ADM Beaton is a more appropriate witness in conjunction with Suzanne Ley.

THE CHAIR: Instead of . . .

KENT SMITH: Instead of the deputy minister.

THE CHAIR: MLA Maguire.

HON. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: I just want to be clear, and I want this on record. The deputy minister who runs the department is not - and the buck stops with the deputy minister - is not a better witness than someone who is a couple rungs below the deputy minister, is what you're telling us. In the past, when we've asked questions, what we've gotten from people who are not the deputy minister is essentially: I can't answer that

question or that's not my say. You don't want the Deputy Minister of Health and Wellness in the Health Committee. Is that what you're saying?

KENT SMITH: What we're saying is we're trying to get the best witnesses.

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: We're happy to have his suggestion, as well as the deputy minister. If there are people who can answer as well as the deputy, but we have asked. This is our topic. We would like the deputy minister. If there are more that the deputy minister would like to bring with her, we're happy to have that.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: We'll split the difference here and we'll co-operate with the government. If they feel like there are other witnesses who should be here who work with them, and bring the deputy minister along with the witnesses that they want for our topic.

[10:15 a.m.]

THE CHAIR: Just for the record, what we've had in the past sometimes is we've had a specific person asked to come, and if they're not available, we've had to reschedule meetings or postpone meetings or whatever. So just keeping that in mind in terms of sometimes having specific people versus having a bit of a broader kind of suggestion.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: We're willing to wait. We feel that this topic, ER Closures and Doctor Retention, is probably the most important topic in health right now. It's something that falls directly in the lap of the deputy minister. We are willing to wait. This was our topic. We're looking for our witnesses, and we're willing to work with the government if they feel there are other witnesses who should be here. That's in the spirit of co-operation.

KENT SMITH: We're happy to hear that, and we're happy to co-operate. We're okay with the witnesses on this important topic.

THE CHAIR: Because the motion was just specifically the deputy minister, we'd have to have an amendment to add - MLA Smith.

KENT SMITH: I move to amend the Liberal motion to include ADM Beaton and Suzanne Ley.

THE CHAIR: Any discussion on the amendment to the motion?

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.



The motion on the original, with those additions, now. Any further discussion on the main motion?

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

SUSAN LEBLANC: I'd like to put forward the NDP topic as Home Care and Community Care, and the following proposed witnesses: the Victorian Order of Nurses for Canada, the regional executive director; the Department of Seniors and Long-term Care, the deputy minister; the Nova Scotia Nurses' Union, president; and the Canadian Union of Public Employees, president Nova Scotia.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, MLA Leblanc. Any discussion? There's a motion on the floor.

No discussion? We have a motion for Home Care and Community Care as the topic, with the witnesses written as presented.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

That concludes committee business - agenda setting and the second item. Is there any other business at this time?

Seeing none, our next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, May 9<sup>th</sup>, from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m., tentatively, with witnesses to be determined, based on what we have presented today.

Other than that, our meeting is adjourned.

[The committee adjourned at 10:18 a.m.]