

HANSARD

NOVA SCOTIA HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

STANDING COMMITTEE

ON

HEALTH

Tuesday, January 9, 2024

COMMITTEE ROOM

Agenda Setting

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HEALTH COMMITTEE

John A. MacDonald (Chair)
Danielle Barkhouse (Vice Chair)
Chris Palmer
John White
Nolan Young
Hon. Kelly Regan
Rafah DiCostanzo
Gary Burrill
Susan Leblanc

In Attendance:

Judy Kavanagh
Legislative Committee Clerk

Gordon Hebb
Chief Legislative Counsel



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

HALIFAX, TUESDAY, JANUARY 9, 2024

STANDING COMMITTEE ON HEALTH

1:00 P.M.

CHAIR

John A. MacDonald

VICE CHAIR

Danielle Barkhouse

THE CHAIR: Order. I call this meeting to order. This is the Standing Committee on Health. I'm John A. MacDonald, MLA for Hants East and the Chair of the committee. Today we will be holding an agenda setting. Please make sure you put all your phones on silent.

I'll now ask the committee members to introduce themselves by stating their name and the constituency that they represent, starting with the Vice Chair, MLA Barkhouse.

[The committee members introduced themselves.]

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

Today's business: agenda setting. At the end of this, we should have six items: three PC, two Liberal, and one NDP. To avoid any confusion, I'm going to ask them to do them one at a time, and then we'll debate them and deal with it. When we finish all that, we'll wind up dealing with it for a motion. First, I'm going to have the PC caucus do their first one. That will be MLA Palmer.

CHRIS PALMER: I move that the first topic for the PC caucus be Long-term Care Builds: Impact and Approach. Our suggested witnesses will be representatives from the Department of Seniors and Long-term Care, Mountain Lea Lodge administrator - that would be our first choice - or Queens Manor administrator if Mountain Lea is unavailable, and representatives from GEM Health Care Group or Shannex.

THE CHAIR: We've heard the first item. Any discussion on this?

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

We have one item for the agenda. The next thing is I'm going to allow the Liberals to go for their first one - I assume MLA Regan.

HON. KELLY REGAN: I move the first topic for the Liberal caucus be the Links Between Health Outcomes and Lack of Safe Affordable Housing, and the witnesses would be the Deputy Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the Deputy Minister of Health and Wellness, the Deputy Minister of Community Services, representatives from the North End Community Health Centre, and representatives from Adsum for Women and Children.

THE CHAIR: Any discussion on this one?

CHRIS PALMER: We don't have any issue with the topic. We think it's a good topic, but I would like to make an amendment to the motion.

I move that the topic, Links Between Health Outcomes and Lack of Safe Affordable Housing, the following witnesses appear as: representatives from the Department of Municipal Affairs and Housing, representatives from the Department of Community Services, representatives from the Department of Health and Wellness, representatives from North End Community Health Centre, and representatives from Adsum for Women and Children.

THE CHAIR: Just to be clear, MLA Palmer, your recommendation is actually the same groups they already did. I don't think it's an amendment, unless I missed something.

CHRIS PALMER: The amendment, Chair, is we're not saying that deputy ministers are not able to appear, but we just want the departments to be able to identify the individuals most associated with that topic. We're just representing allowing the department to send the representative who would be most associated with that topic.

THE CHAIR: The Legislative Counsel caught me and said this was the difference, how I missed it. Thank you.

Is there discussion on the amendment? MLA Leblanc.

SUSAN LEBLANC: I would just say that when we are at committee and we are discussing such important topics, the deputy ministers are where, as we've said many times, the buck stops, as it were. They are the people who should know all of the answers, and if they don't, then they can bring some help with them, people who might be directly affiliated with projects or whatever. Really, we should be questioning the deputy ministers at these committees.

While I understand that maybe we want to have the right people at the table, that should be the deputy minister and someone whom they choose to bring with them. I don't think we want to have a situation where somebody comes and then can't answer the question, and then we have to write to the deputy minister or the minister to get the answer. I wouldn't support this amendment.

KELLY REGAN: I do appreciate that the member would like people most closely associated with the programs to appear before the committee. However, it's been my experience that they can't always answer some of the bigger questions. I have no problem with saying, Deputy Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing and such representatives as the deputy minister deems appropriate to bring with them. That's not a problem at all if they need to have somebody else with them. I think it's really important that we hear from the deputy ministers. These are the people who are responsible for these programs within government, and they should be here. It's part of their job.

THE CHAIR: MLA White.

JOHN WHITE: We actually agree with what you're saying. We do technically agree with what you're saying. I just want to go on record here as saying that I think it's a fabulous topic. I really do see a direct link here.

We're not saying deputy ministers can't come. We're saying that we want to have the people who have the best information for it. The deputy ministers can gladly attend; I'm fine by that, but I do want to make sure we get some answers here because I think the topic is very important. What we're trying to say is that we bring in the people who have - the departments know who best has the information. I think that's what we're trying to say here.

THE CHAIR: MLA DiCostanzo.

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: Yes, I think we're in agreement. We want the deputy minister and whoever the deputy minister wishes to bring with them, we're more than happy, so we can change ours and representatives as necessary. We can add that to our motion.

CHRIS PALMER: I just want to be on the record as saying we agree with the topic, as my colleague said. I think it's a worthwhile topic to have a discussion about. The conversation around maybe other representatives not having the information and having to come back to us, the committee, with answers, it could be the opposite if the deputy minister were to get into the weeds with some questioning and then the deputy minister would have to come back. Our approach here is that we just feel the department can most closely identify the people who would bring the relevant information on that topic.

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: We've seen it over and over again. They bring the staff that they need with them, so we welcome them. That's how it should be done. That's how it's been done. The deputy minister is the person who's in charge, and they need to answer the questions.

THE CHAIR: Seeing no other discussion, all those in favour? Of the amendment. I apologize. Thank you, MLA Regan. On the amendment.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

On the amended motion, all those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

It has to be voted twice. The first is the amendment, then the amended motion. This is on the amended motion. I've done the ayes. Nays?

SUSAN LEBLANC: I meant to say aye. Sorry.

THE CHAIR: No problem.

The motion is carried.

That was the Liberals. I'm going to go back to the PCs.

CHRIS PALMER: For our second topic, I move that our second topic would be Withdrawal Management Services. The suggested witnesses are: Nova Scotia Health, Dana Pulsifer, senior director, Mental Health and Addictions program; the Office of Addictions and Mental Health, deputy minister and representatives - Dr. Samuel Hickcox, if available; and the Ally Centre of Cape Breton and/or Direction 180.

THE CHAIR: Any discussion on that?

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

I'm going to have the NDP.

SUSAN LEBLANC: We'd like to move as our topic the first one on our list there: Privatization of Health Care in Nova Scotia. The witnesses would be the CEO of Nova Scotia Health and representatives, the deputy minister of the Department of Health and Wellness and representatives, the executive director of the Nova Scotia Health Coalition, and representatives from NSGEU and CUPE Nova Scotia.

THE CHAIR: Discussion?

CHRIS PALMER: I'd like to make an amendment. I would like to move that the topic "Privatization of Health Care in Nova Scotia" be changed to "Private-Public Partnerships in Health Care," with the following witnesses: representatives from Nova Scotia Health, representatives from the Department of Health and Wellness, the Nova Scotia Health Coalition, NSGEU, CUPE, representatives from Doctors Nova Scotia, representatives from the Pharmacy Association of Nova Scotia, and representatives from the Nova Scotia Dental Association.

THE CHAIR: I'm just writing all that down. One second.

Okay. MLA Palmer, what's your question?

CHRIS PALMER: I didn't know if we might be able to add a bit of context.

THE CHAIR: Oh, yes, go ahead.

CHRIS PALMER: I'm not really out to change the content of what we're speaking about. I just feel that the title, in and of itself - "Privatization of Health Care" - just might be a little more misleading to the public of Nova Scotia.

I think what's happening is - this topic is better reflected by displaying the public-private partnerships in health care, and to have other representatives from that private sphere who are working with the government is a better discussion to have without the topic.

THE CHAIR: Okay, I'm just going to ask you - I saw MLA Leblanc first.

I just want to be clear: Is the topic name - because I wrote down "Private-Public Health Care in Nova Scotia," but then you said "Private-Public Partnership" - I just need to know for this, which is it? Hansard might have it right. I just might have heard it wrong.

CHRIS PALMER: Just to clarify, the topic title would be "Public-Private Partnerships in Health Care."

THE CHAIR: Okay.

SUSAN LEBLANC: I'm fine with the title change, or the topic title changing, but I do think that's kind of a lot of witnesses. I would like to suggest that perhaps we could humbly drop one of our suggested witnesses if we could also drop one of the government's suggested witnesses, so that we'd just have fewer people in the room. I think we can get at the situation, or at the topic, with not so many people in the room.

My suggestion would be that we could let go of CUPE Nova Scotia, for instance, if we also don't invite the Nova Scotia Dental Association. Then it would be Nova Scotia Health, the Department of Health and Wellness, the Nova Scotia Health Coalition, NSGEU, Doctors Nova Scotia, and the Pharmacy Association of Nova Scotia. Just to keep it a little bit less unruly.

[1:15 p.m.]

THE CHAIR: I'm going to let MLA Regan - she had her hand up first.

KELLY REGAN: What I will say is that changing the topic, to me, changes the focus, number one, and that's why you have to actually add in all those extra witnesses to water down what the original topic was, which was Privatization of Health Care in Nova Scotia. While I applaud my colleague's generous offer, I do believe that we should not be changing the title and we should not be adding in all of these other witnesses, which will guarantee that we won't get to hear very much from any witness who has anything significant to say.

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: My concern is: Are they all having opening remarks, and for how long? If we have too many presenters, we need to limit who gets to do the remarks and for how long.

THE CHAIR: I can comment on that, and that's because the Chair - for this committee, the total remarks will not exceed 15 minutes. It's broken up - the committee clerk did a great job on the first one by taking care of that, and that's how she explained it to me. Whether there are three or 30, no more than 15 minutes. It will be broken up accordingly on that portion.

JOHN WHITE: I have an extreme challenge with Privatization of Health Care in Nova Scotia. That title alone is going to set people off in the province. It's misleading, it really is, because we're not opening up hospitals as privatization. That title does allow for that kind of read into it. I'm very happy to hear that the NDP are happy to change the name and go along with a public-private partnership, because a partnership is different from privatization. They're two different things.

I think the offer was to drop CUPE and to drop the Nova Scotia Dental Association? I think we're in favour of that.

THE CHAIR: There was an amendment to remove that from it. We have two ways of doing this: One, unanimous consent to remove the amendment and restart it; or a what did you call this, subamendment? What did you call that at PAC?

GORDON HEBB: You can have a subamendment or amendment.

THE CHAIR: If MLA Leblanc would entertain a subamendment to remove CUPE and the Nova Scotia Dental Association, the alternative is if you wanted a minute, we could pause this and go to another one.

SUSAN LEBLANC: I'll propose a subamendment to Mr. Palmer's amendment. That is to strike CUPE Nova Scotia as witness and strike the Nova Scotia Dental Association as witness.

THE CHAIR: We have a subamendment, which I assume means I'm going to be voting three times.

GORDON HEBB: Yes.

THE CHAIR: Just checking. Any discussion on the subamendment?

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

Now we have an amendment motion. Everybody understands the amended motion? I don't have to re-read it?

On the amended motion, all those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

Now on the amended motion, any discussion? No.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

NDP Topic 1 is there with those amendments. We'll go back to MLA Palmer for the PCs' third topic.

CHRIS PALMER: I propose a motion for the PC third topic as Cancer Screening Programs, and our suggested witnesses would be: Nova Scotia Health, Dr. Helmut Hollenhorst, Senior Medical Director, Cancer Care Program; Jill Flinn, Senior Director, Cancer Care Program; and IWK Health, Anne Yuill, Nova Scotia Breast Screening Program; and Dr. Siân Iles, Department of Diagnostic Radiology, Faculty of Medicine, Dalhousie University.

THE CHAIR: Any discussion on that?

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

Will you be taking the other one for the Liberals, MLA Regan?

KELLY REGAN: I move the second topic for the Liberal caucus be the Impacts of the Labour Shortage on the Health Care System, and the witnesses would be the president of Nova Scotia Nurses' Union, the president of Doctors Nova Scotia, the CEO of Nova Scotia Health, the Deputy Minister of the Department of Health and Wellness, and a representative from the Nova Scotia Paramedics Union, IUOE Local 727.

THE CHAIR: Any discussion on that?

CHRIS PALMER: I'd like to make an amendment. I think it's a fine topic. We have no problem with the topic, but I'd like to make the amendment as: I move that the topic, Impacts of the Labour Shortage on the Health Care System, the following witnesses be called: Nova Scotia Nurses' Union president, Doctors Nova Scotia president, representatives from the Nova Scotia Health Authority, the Office of Healthcare Professionals Recruitment, representatives from IUOE Local 727.

KELLY REGAN: Again, have no problem with the Office of Healthcare Professionals Recruitment being added, however, I do feel that the deputy minister of Health and Wellness is the person who oversees the Department of Health and Wellness, and it is most appropriate for that person to appear before this committee. They can bring whomever they wish with them. I'm perfectly happy to have the Office of Healthcare Professionals Recruitment added to it.

THE CHAIR: Any discussion?

KELLY REGAN: I would move a subamendment to the amendment, simply that instead of Office of Healthcare Professionals Recruitment, it be the Deputy Minister of Health and Wellness and whomever they feel appropriate.

THE CHAIR: One second. The reason I asked that question, MLA Regan, is because the intent of the original motion was to remove the person and replace them. Your subamendment is to put them back, which is actually in complete contravention of what the intent of the motion is, so I have to call your subamendment out of order. That's why I had to ask the question before to confirm it. MLA Regan, you still have the floor if you have any questions.

KELLY REGAN: Once again, I do feel that this is now the second time today we have seen them try to remove a deputy minister from being called before this committee, and I have to ask why that is. This is the ranking civil servant responsible for whatever program, whatever department that we're talking about, and we twice today have seen them try to shield them from responsibility. They're supposed to sit there and answer our questions. To be quite frank, I'm not sure the Office of Healthcare Professionals Recruitment can actually answer some of the questions that we have. I think we need the deputy minister there. I think this is part of a pattern, and I'm concerned about what I'm seeing.

THE CHAIR: I'm going to ask who went first. MLA Palmer, and then MLA Leblanc.

CHRIS PALMER: We're not saying deputy ministers can't appear. What we're saying is that the Liberal topic, which we agree is a valid topic - the motion of Impacts of Labour Shortage on the Health Care System - is precisely what the Office of Healthcare Professionals Recruitment is for. We feel that is the most relevant witness to be here. That's why I made the amendment that I made.

THE CHAIR: I'm going to let MLA Leblanc speak, and then I'll get back to you, MLA Regan.

SUSAN LEBLANC: I would first say that the Office of Healthcare Professionals Recruitment is about health care recruitment, but it's not about health care retention, and our labour shortages are not just about recruitment. They're also, in many ways, about retention. The Office of Healthcare Professionals Recruitment cannot speak to any of those issues. Retention is one of the biggest hurdles we have to a well-run health care system right now.

For sure, let's have them here at the meeting, but not in place of senior people from the Department of Health and Wellness.

I can't support the amendment. I would say, and I would echo my colleague from the Liberal Party to say that it is worrying that the government members are not wishing to implore deputy ministers to be here. If I were a deputy minister, it would not be my favourite thing to come in front of a committee of MLAs. I'm sure most deputy ministers -

I don't want to speak for them, but most of them are like, Oh God, I have to go to another committee.

That is a reality, and yet they are the ones who run those departments. They are in charge. They are the ones who should be able to best answer the questions. For us to give them the choice of coming, I think, does take away the purpose of these committees. Certainly in Public Accounts, we've had this discussion, and it is the deputy ministers who are called to meetings - I think almost exclusively.

I think this amendment should not stand, but we should do another amendment. We should vote on this amendment, and then someone else can propose an amendment to invite the Office of Healthcare Professionals Recruitment along with the deputy minister of Health and Wellness.

KELLY REGAN: I would like to echo my colleague from the NDP - her remarks. I would say that our deputy ministers make significant salaries. They make double or more what MLAs make.

It is not comfortable to come before this committee. I get it. But the fact of the matter is that the buck stops with them. While there is ministerial responsibility, those deputy ministers are running those departments, and I'm not sure that the Office of Healthcare Professionals Recruitment can answer why the government, for example, cancelled the doctor recruitment bonus for Metro - why that was cancelled. The result of that is that we now have four times the people in Metro on the doctor wait-list. I don't think the office can answer why the government decided to do that, but the end result of it is this. Quite frankly, a deputy minister will have more information than simply that office.

JOHN WHITE: This is not about deputy ministers' salary. This is about recruitment and retention, which the Office of Healthcare Professionals Recruitment does indeed look after. I have not seen a deputy minister squirming in a chair over there and debating on being here. I just haven't seen that.

I'm looking for information. I think it's a great topic. I stand by bringing in the people who have the best answers for the questions we have.

CHRIS PALMER: Just my last note on this. We're willing to work with our friends across the table. We even added a witness - members from IUOE Local 727 - to the topic. We feel that the people I've listed in my amendment can really provide the most relevant information to the discussion on that topic. I just wanted to leave that.

THE CHAIR: One thing I did want to let MLA Regan know is that while she was talking, I was asking. Although your subamendment before was out of order, because you were just undoing it, there's nothing wrong with your subamendment if you actually only wanted that minister back. In other words, where you were trying to replace it, to put it

back, if your subamendment had been to add the minister for that, that actually would have been in order. Just to let you know. The deputy minister. I apologize.

KELLY REGAN: I don't understand the difference between the two . . .

THE CHAIR: Your subamendment was to undo the motion. Had your subamendment been just to add somebody, it would have been in order.

MLA Regan, you had your hand - I just wanted to let you know why I was asking him some questions while you were talking, so you didn't think I was ignoring you.

KELLY REGAN: If I were to say that my subamendment is to add the deputy minister of Health and Wellness to the list proposed by my honourable colleague MLA Palmer . . .

[1:30 p.m.]

THE CHAIR: That would be in order.

KELLY REGAN: I move that motion, then.

THE CHAIR: You move that subamendment.

KELLY REGAN: I would just say that what I don't want to have happen is that we get questions that can't be answered by the Office of Healthcare Professionals Recruitment, so then we have to write letters, and the letters get tabled. As we're going to see later today, that's what happens when certain people don't want to deal with an issue that we raise. It gets tabled and it gets kicked down the road. I'd like to have the answer to the question at the time when we're in committee, rather than having it just sent in a letter lately. It's casting no aspersions on people kicking things down the road. I don't want to get anybody's back up. I'm just saying that I'd like to deal with it when we have the topic, and that's why I want the deputy minister here.

THE CHAIR: Discussion? Was that your hand, MLA? Just checking. I'm wearing my reading glasses, so you're a little fuzzy.

JOHN WHITE: I just want to clarify that the issue we're dealing with later is telling a department what to do. It's not asking questions. When we ask deputy ministers questions and they don't have the answers, they bring them back to us. They send them back to us in emails so we can get it later if we have to. The people coming in are responsible for answering the questions, and they're expected to do so. I just want the department to send the people who have the answers, so we don't have that.

We're not saying not to send the deputy ministers. We're saying send whoever has the answers to the topic we're asking. That's what we're asking for. That could be deputy ministers. We want the executive directors. We want whoever we need to get the answers. That's what we're asking for.

I'm ready to call the question if we're ready to go.

THE CHAIR: Any other discussion? MLA DiCostanzo. I always have to look at your name so I don't mess it up.

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: No problem. Thank you, Chair.

We're just going around in circles with the same thing. The deputy minister is the person we need at the table. The public should hear from the deputy minister. The deputy minister has the chance to bring anybody they wish. We have no argument if they think there are certain questions - we already know we have questions that only the deputy minister will need to answer. We would like the deputy minister here. That's their responsibility. They show up at all important committee meetings because the buck stops with them. They have the final decision on big issues. The deputy minister has to be here, and they can bring whoever they wish. It doesn't matter which topic it is.

THE CHAIR: No other discussion? We're voting on the subamendment.

All those in favour?

SUSAN LEBLANC: I can't remember the subamendment.

THE CHAIR: The subamendment was to add the deputy minister to the list. I will ask it again.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is defeated.

On the amendment:

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

On the amended motion:

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

We now have the six items.

The next item on the thing is for the motion - I apologize. I forgot to remind everybody that the clerk will do her best to schedule the meetings in a fair order in accordance with their availability. Thank you very much. I knew they all knew that because they all like you.

We'll deal with the deferred motion that was a motion on the table deferred from the December 12, 2023, meeting. The clerk will read the motion for the record. Ms. Kavanagh.

JUDY KAVANAGH: I move that the Health Committee direct the Chair of the committee to send a letter to the Minister of Seniors and Long-term Care outlining what we heard at last month's meeting. The letter should note that we understand next year's budget is being prepared, and we want to bring these recommendations made by our witnesses directly to the minister's attention. This letter should outline the committee heard compelling cases made for the following improvements to the system, specifically that:

1. To improve the health and safety of Nova Scotia's home care workers and clients, timely in-person home assessments should be completed prior to initial home care visits. Those first home care visits should be performed by a team of two home care workers. Until such a time as cell service is extended to the entire province, in areas where cell phone service is currently non-existent or unreliable, tracking tags be provided so the locations of workers are known to their employers. Nurse practitioners be hired to ensure clients receiving home care who are not attached to a family practice can receive the timely health care they need. An increase to the budget of AWARE-NS be included in the upcoming budget.
2. To improve retention and to ensure the home care system is not being underwritten financially by our home care workers: home care providers - companies and organizations - be required to schedule and pay for continuous hours of work to those workers providing this care; an increase to the vehicle allowance be provided to home care workers using their own vehicles to ferry them to each home care client location.

THE CHAIR: Discussion on this? MLA Barkhouse.

DANIELLE BARKHOUSE: Interestingly enough, I'm going to use exactly MLA Regan's words with unnecessary letters. I feel this is unnecessary. The deputy minister was here, she attended the meeting, she participated in the discussion, and I know for a fact that the minister is aware and has noted the motion and has noted what you had said through

personal text messages, actually. I messaged her. I think this is unnecessary, and I think this falls right into what MLA Regan was saying earlier about unnecessary letters.

KELLY REGAN: I don't think I said unnecessary letters. I said I would prefer having the information in the meeting. A letter is preferable to no information at all. It's lovely that the member has a text chain with the minister; however, coming from the committee, it brings heft. It's also a public thing. It also lets people know we heard what was said at that meeting. I found a compelling case was made by CUPE about what their workers are going through. I had some idea. I had no idea of the extent, and I think it was an important meeting for this committee. I think it's important that the minister understands that, for us, what we heard was important.

I took time to write this up because I felt what I heard was important. I want to make sure that the minister sees it from this committee, not from her friend. It is valuable and appreciated that a colleague would take the time to do that, but it is important that she understands that the entire committee believes that this is important as we go into budget. That's why I wrote this.

Again, trying to table this and then delay this just simply says that we don't want this information out there. This letter is important. It should be included. To suggest that a text chain takes its place - you can "ah" and you can make noises all you want . . .

THE CHAIR: Order. Just to remind everybody to speak through the Chair. MLA Regan.

KELLY REGAN: The member can make all the noises they want; however, I do think it is important that we take what we heard seriously, and we should, in fact, give enough of a darn to write a letter to bring what we heard to the attention of the minister.

THE CHAIR: MLA Barkhouse - I saw her hand - and then MLA Leblanc.

DANIELLE BARKHOUSE: I would rather my words not be misconstrued. The deputy minister was here. The minister has made leaps and bounds in her portfolio since government has formed. She does her due diligence, and I assure you that it's more than just a text message when the deputy minister is sitting here answering all of the questions. Again, I feel this is unnecessary and I feel it's repetitive.

We're not hiding anything. The deputy minister was here and answered all the questions, and it's for the public to see. There's where I stand.

SUSAN LEBLANC: I just don't understand what the big issue is. It's a letter from a committee. I think it's an important thing to do. I think it's in the same way as when the Public Accounts Committee endorses an Auditor General's report. To not do it is kind of a big deal. Why not write a letter to the minister and say we as a Health Committee had this

great meeting, and yes, your deputy minister was there, and yes, you have personal conversations, and you have relationships with people who were at the meeting? As a formal gesture, I think it's important.

I don't disagree, necessarily, with MLA Barkhouse that the minister has made leaps and bounds. That's awesome. That's great. It doesn't mean we can't write her a letter and say, Don't forget, or please do consider this when you're continuing to make leaps and bounds. If she's done her due diligence, why should she care?

Again, if I were the Minister of Seniors and Long-term Care and I got a letter and I knew what I was doing, I'd be like, Great, thank you, yes, done. I can put that in the done pile and not worry about it. But if I haven't done it, I can be like, Oh, great point, thanks for that - and then make sure it's happening, or not, based on the policy of the day or the whim of the government, whatever.

It's so ridiculous to be fighting over this. We should just write a letter. The only person it's making more work for, unfortunately, is the clerk. I apologize to the clerk for that, but I bet she doesn't mind. Anyway, just saying.

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: I'm sure a lot has been said, so all I want to say is that this was since December 12th. By now, they know about it - we should have had a response by now. It's a simple letter that shows that we cared about what we heard. I think the minister would be happy to say, as my colleague said, that this is done, or don't worry, it's on the radar for our government.

That's all, simple.

THE CHAIR: Any other discussion?

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

The motion is defeated.

Is there anything else I need to - I'm checking with the clerk.

Is there any other business?

Seeing none - I have to find the part where it says we're going to meet again.

The next meeting is February 13, 2024, from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. The clerk will let us know what is going to be on that one.

Before we adjourn, just to let you know, one thing I've asked the clerk to look at is if we can do an agenda-setting before the end next time so we don't have to rush trying to

find stuff. We'll discuss that at a future - so instead of having the agenda-setting when we've run out of witnesses - maybe a couple before will do it, so keep rolling through - we'll discuss it as a committee. I just wanted to throw it out there.

This meeting is adjourned.

[The committee adjourned at 1:43 p.m.]