

HANSARD

NOVA SCOTIA HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

COMMITTEE

ON

HUMAN RESOURCES

Tuesday, June 30, 2020

VIA TELECONFERENCE

Appointments to Agencies, Boards and Commissions

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HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Brendan Maguire, Chair
Suzanne Lohnes-Croft, Vice-Chair
Bill Horne
Rafah DiCostanzo
Brad Johns
Larry Harrison
Kendra Coombes
Claudia Chender

In Attendance:

Judy Kavanagh
Legislative Committee Clerk

Gordon Hebb
Chief Legislative Counsel



HALIFAX, TUESDAY, JUNE 30, 2020

STANDING COMMITTEE ON HUMAN RESOURCES

10:00 A.M.

CHAIR

Mr. Brendan Maguire

VICE-CHAIR

Ms. Suzanne Lohnes-Croft

THE CHAIR: We're going to bring the Standing Committee on Human Resources to order. My name is Brendan Maguire, I'm the Chair of the committee.

We'll start with a roll call and get everybody to introduce themselves.

[The committee members introduced themselves.]

THE CHAIR: Just a reminder that when you're not speaking, please put your phone on mute. It can be difficult to hear.

Today, we are going to consider appointments for agencies, boards, and commissions. Just to keep things rolling smoothly, let's try to only respond once your name is called. With that, we will start with the appointments.

BILL HORNE: For the Department of Business, I move that Michael Roberts be appointed as a Director to the Develop Nova Scotia Ltd. Board of Directors.

THE CHAIR: Are there any questions? Brad Johns.

BRAD JOHNS: Mr. Chair, I'm noting that Mr. Roberts has already served two terms on the board and I do see that they're requesting that he do a third term based on what they feel is a strong knowledge of rural broadband. I'm concerned about a couple of things. One is that the terms of reference says that it should be a two-term position. I'm sure that there are other people throughout the province who have as good, if not better, understanding with regard to rural broadband. This is a potentially precedent-setting move by doing this.

I have no issues with the individual, but I do have issues with looking at extending the term. I'm curious as to why they can't go out and find somebody else who has the same qualifications and still uphold the terms of reference for DNS.

THE CHAIR: Duly noted. Are there any other questions?

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

The motion is carried.

BILL HORNE: For the Halifax Convention Centre Board of Directors (Events East), I move that Barbara Manning, James (Jamie) MacNeil, Justin McDonough, and Wayne Crawley be appointed as members.

THE CHAIR: Are there any questions? Brad Johns.

BRAD JOHNS: Mr. Chair, I know Mr. McDonough and Mr. Crawley. They're both very upstanding and nice people. I know them both personally. In fact, when I served on the board for the Halifax Convention Centre 15 years ago, both of those individuals were there at that time. Justin was the Chair. Mr. Crawley and I actually sat on a human resources subcommittee, which hired Scott Ferguson to replace Fred MacGillivray.

That was a good while ago - 15 years ago - so I'm curious to know what the terms are for those two gentlemen. Have they been there for 15 years on that committee? If not, why is it that Halifax Convention Centre seems to be recycling board members? Once again, it's nothing against either of those individuals. I know them both and they're very smart and upstanding individuals, but I am concerned, once again, about the process in this case too. Does anybody have any answers on that?

THE CHAIR: We can look into it and it's noted. We wouldn't have those answers specifically. We can reach out to that board. We can see what the terms of reference are and we can ask for a response, but nobody right now would have that answer, I don't think. Does the clerk have the answer?

JUDY KAVANAGH (Legislative Committee Clerk): No, I don't.

BRAD JOHNS: Due to the fact that we don't have a current answer on that, I would

like to put a motion forward that we defer those two recommendations until our next meeting so we can get an answer on that. I would move that we defer Justin McDonough and Wayne Crawley until our next meeting.

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

The motion is defeated.

The nominations are on the floor. We'll put it up for vote unless there are any more questions.

Mr. Johns.

BRAD JOHNS: So we've just voted not to defer those two appointments, so the motion we'll be voting on will be all four of them then?

THE CHAIR: Yes.

BRAD JOHN: Okay. Thank you.

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

The motion is carried.

SUZANNE LOHNES-CROFT: For the Department of Energy and Mines, I move that James G. MacDonald be appointed as a Member to the Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Board.

THE CHAIR: Are there any questions? Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried. Next.

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: For the Department of Health and Wellness, I move that Doreen Campbell, Melinda Daye, and Phillip Veinotte be appointed as Members to the Board of the Nova Scotia College of Medical Laboratory Technologists.

THE CHAIR: Are there any questions? Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried. Any others?

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: For the Department of Labour and Advanced Education,

I move that the following be appointed to the Occupational Health and Safety Advisory Council: Ernie Dalton as Member, Employee Representative; Jerry Aguinaga as Member, Employer Representative, and designate as Employer Co-Chair; Stephanie Kewachuk as Member, Employer Representative; and Jesse Risser as Member, Employer Representative.

THE CHAIR: Are there any questions? Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried. Anything else?

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: For the Department of Labour and Advanced Education, I move that the following be appointed to the Workers' Compensation Board: Rick Clarke as Member, Worker Representative; and Janet Hazelton as Member, Worker Representative.

THE CHAIR: Are there any comments? Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried. Next?

SUZANNE LOHNES-CROFT: For the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal, I move that Janet MacMillan be appointed as Vice-Chair and Member to the Halifax-Dartmouth Bridge Commission.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Johns, you had a question?

BRAD JOHNS: Yes, thank you Mr. Chair. I'm just curious - I notice that in doing this, we are revoking Ms. MacMillan's appointment as a Member and re-appointing her as Vice-Chair. My question, I guess, is that doesn't take care of the vacancy that's still there. With 10 applicants, I don't understand why we're doing this and we're not appointing to fill the vacancy that exists. Does anybody know that?

THE CHAIR: Sounds like the clerk; would you have the answer to that?

[10:15 a.m.]

JUDY KAVANAGH: No. I don't know, but if the committee wants me to, I can write to the minister.

THE CHAIR: We can write and figure out why this position isn't being filled.

BRAD JOHNS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

THE CHAIR: Any other questions? Would all those in favour of the motion please

say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

Next, we do have some correspondence for other committee business. We have correspondence from the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board in response to questions raised at the May 26th meeting. Is there any response or discussion on this? First of all, did everybody receive it? Okay. Do we want to open up the floor to some discussion on this, or are we good?

BRAD JOHNS: I would just move that we send an email to the minister and thank her for her response. I have no other questions in regard to the correspondence.

THE CHAIR: Yes, we can do that. Clerk, can you note that?

JUDY KAVANAGH: I will do so.

THE CHAIR: Okay. The second piece of correspondence that we received was from the Minister of Health and Wellness in response to questions raised at the May 26th meeting. Is there any discussion on that? First of all, everybody received it, right? Okay. Any discussion?

BRAD JOHNS: I would like the record to reflect that the PC caucus does feel that it would be beneficial to have cross appointments between those two boards. If those cross appointments were in place, IWK may not have ended up in some of the issues that they ended up in. There are other benefits as well. I would like the record to note that we feel that. I would move a motion that we also send an email to Minister Delorey and thank him for his correspondence.

THE CHAIR: We don't need a motion. Clerk, you can note that, and we can send something on behalf of the board.

Ms. Chender.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: I would like to make a motion if this is the appropriate time.

THE CHAIR: Certainly.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: I'll move my motion and then speak to it. I move that the committee write a letter to the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development calling on him to guarantee that all licensed child care centres have adequate funding to avoid layoffs of early childhood educators and centre closures.

The clerk also has a copy of this motion, which she can maybe forward to everyone.

JUDY KAVANAGH: I will do so.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Thank you.

We know that Nova Scotia went into this pandemic with a patchwork system. Prior to the introduction of pre-Primary, we have an early childhood education system that's characterized already by a shortage of spaces, relatively high fees, and low wages for early childhood educators. The pandemic has highlighted existing challenges related to the provision of child care in Nova Scotia.

We know that child care is a service with multiple goals: it has child development goals, it certainly helps level the playing field, and it also helps parents go to work or go to school because they know that their children are safe and cared for. As we have discussed in this committee before, women with young children have experienced the biggest total loss in working hours during this pandemic, and that trend shows no signs of reversal right now.

The government did step in and backstop user parent fees for three months, which I think many Nova Scotians are really grateful for. But the current situation is that daycares and regulated child care centres are allowed to have 50 per cent capacity, and the government is paying 50 per cent of their fees. Because school-aged children have no care at all and because many people have lost their jobs, those child care centres are not yet at 50 per cent capacity in almost every case, and therefore, we are starting to see a wave of lay-offs and even some centre closures.

This motion is to ask the minister to immediately address this issue. It has already been a problem in the past and it's going to form one of the biggest barriers to women being able to go back to work.

THE CHAIR: I think it's a great motion, but we'll leave it up to the floor to debate.

SUZANNE LOHNES-CROFT: I think certainly we can write a letter, but I think we need to be clear that this committee doesn't set government policy. As a committee, we can certainly send a letter to the minister to look into this possibility, but I just want it to be clear that we do not set government policy here at committee.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: The motion is not to set government policy, but to write a letter to the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

THE CHAIR: Ms. Chender, is it possible after the vote on this that you could send that via email to the clerk and she can send it out to us?

CLAUDIA CHENDER: She has it and should have sent it to you already.

SUZANNE LOHNES-CROFT: We have it. I got it.

THE CHAIR: I'm a little slow on my emails. I apologize. Is there any other discussion on this?

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

The motion is carried.

Is there any other business?

BRAD JOHNS: It's not really a point of order, but I do want to highlight that this is our second meeting where we have a vacant seat - I note that that is a government seat here at the table.

Given that I believe there are 26 members of the Liberal caucus, I really don't know why that seat continues to be vacant during our committee meetings. I'm hopeful that at our next meeting that seat will have somebody in it. I would just make that point before we end. Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Certainly, we can definitely take that under consideration.

With that, is that the end of our other business? Does anyone else have anything else they want to throw on the floor?

Well, as usual, it has been a pleasure to speak to all of you. I think this has gone smoothly. Our next meeting will be Tuesday, July 28th at 10:00 a.m.

That will bring this meeting to close. Thank you very much and enjoy your week.

[The committee adjourned at 10:22 a.m.]