

HANSARD

NOVA SCOTIA HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

COMMITTEE

ON

HUMAN RESOURCES

Tuesday, December 14, 2021

**Committee Room
Appointments to Agencies, Boards and Commissions
Organizational/Agenda Setting**

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HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Nolan Young (Chair)
Larry Harrison (Vice-Chair)
Dave Ritcey
John A. MacDonald
Melissa Sheehy-Richard
Braedon Clark
Ali Duale
Kendra Coombes
Suzy Hansen

In Attendance:

Judy Kavanagh
Legislative Committee Clerk

Gordon Hebb
Chief Legislative Counsel

WITNESSES

Executive Council Office

Karen Stone, Director, Governance and Accountability Unit
Mora Stevens, Governance Consultant
Shawn Mosher, Governance Consultant



HALIFAX, TUESDAY, DECEMBER 14, 2021

STANDING COMMITTEE ON HUMAN RESOURCES

10:00 A.M.

CHAIR

Nolan Young

VICE-CHAIR

Larry Harrison

THE CHAIR: I call this meeting to order. This is the Standing Committee on Human Resources. I'm Nolan Young, MLA and Chair of the committee. Today's meeting will be an organizational meeting to set some general meeting practices. It's also an agenda-setting and to choose topics and witnesses for the next six meetings or so.

In addition to that, we will review agencies, boards, and commissions - or ABCs - and we have guests from the Executive Council Office here today to give us a brief overview of the ABC appointment process.

I ask right now if you could put your phones on silent, and please keep your mask on during the meeting unless you're speaking. As Chair, I am exempt from the rule. Before you speak, please wait for me to say your name or for the red light on your microphone to turn on. There's no need to touch your microphone.

Now I ask the committee members to introduce themselves for the record by stating their name and their constituency.

[The committee members introduced themselves.]

THE CHAIR: For the purposes of Hansard, I'd like to recognize the presence of Legislative Counsel Gordon Hebb, and Legislative Committee Clerk Judy Kavanagh.

We have a couple of guests here today from the Executive Council Office. I'd ask if they have a PowerPoint for us, if they'd like to introduce themselves and maybe go through some of the process for appointments.

KAREN STONE: I'm Karen Stone, I'm the Director of the Governance and Accountability Unit with the Executive Council Office. On my left is Mora Stevens, a governance consultant, and on my right is Shawn Mosher, also a governance consultant. What you see before you is the team that puts together the ABC appointments that you have here that were in the later stages before they reach this committee.

I want to start off by congratulating all of you on your successful win in the election. Most of you are new faces to me, except for Mr. Harrison, who is also a member of the same golf course that we play at. We were just whining a little bit that we didn't get much game time in this year - his was because of an election, mine was for preparing the House.

Anyway, we are absolutely delighted that this meeting has been convened and we're really looking forward to the schedule that you create so that we can get a backlog of appointments that need to work their way through. The slides are not necessarily conducive to presentation slides, but they are intended to be good reference slides for you. They're quite descriptive, especially for those of you who have not had any experience in this area of work before. I'm going to take you through, and if you have any questions, somewhere between the three of us, and I'm thinking one of these two will most likely be able to best answer any questions you may have.

In Nova Scotia, we have agencies, appeal boards, boards, commissions, committees, councils, Crown corporations, foundations, panels, review boards, round tables, self-regulated professions and tribunals, which all come under the umbrella of ABCs. The type of ABC it is gets determined by how it is actually set up in its individual Act, or Act that covers several of them.

ABCs are also divided into two different categories - non-adjudicative, of which there are 155. ABCs make decisions or recommendations to government on financial, regulatory, business and policy matters that have far-reaching implications for Nova Scotians.

The second type is adjudicative, of which there are 29. Those ABCs review evidence, make findings of fact and law, and make decisions affecting liberties, security and legal rights of people.

Each ABC has its own set of screening criteria, as well as persons who are ineligible to sit on any particular ABC, mainly due to conflicts of interest or limits for

reappointments. This is all outlined on each of the ABC's profile pages, which are located on the website noted.

Currently, there are over 650 appointees serving on 184 ABCs. Many appointees receive little or no remuneration. Not to worry - you're not going to get 650 submissions, but there are approximately 200 to 300 appointments that are made annually. Some will end up being a collection of appointments for any one ABC and some will be individual.

Many appointments are reviewed by the Standing Committee on Human Resources. The Governance and Accountability Unit of the Executive Council coordinate a Spring and Fall recruitment campaign. There would be ads in media and in social media.

Vacancies are advertised one year in advance, and applications remain active for two years. Anybody who does apply, if they're not selected in a particular campaign or a particular round, their application stays active for the two-year period. Appointment processes are designed to be open, transparent and accessible. It can take a minimum of three to four months to process applications and make appointments.

The process that has been established by the non-adjudicative ABC appointments is in a procedure manual approved by Cabinet in 2008. Applications are received, screened, selection packages are given to the minister for review and selection of appointees. Once selections are made, submissions are filed with the Executive Council Office and Cabinet considers the proposed appointments.

House of Assembly Standing Committee on Human Resources is established by Rule 60 of the Rules and Forms of Procedure of the House of Assembly to review and approve, or not, candidates for appointments to ABCs where the Governor in Council or minister has discretion in making appointments - nearly all non-adjudicative appointments. Once approved, OICs or ministerial appointments are prepared, signed, and issued.

Any of you who are fans of the Big Bang Theory, this isn't quite one of Sheldon's maps, but it may look like it a little bit. The appointments process is essentially the same, but based on the board. There are vacancies that are posted. The ECO coordinates semi-annual advertising as mentioned. Applications are received via online ABC application system and email. We still do receive some by mail so if people don't have access to technology, someone will key it in. That's becoming less and less as time goes on.

Applications are reviewed by screening panels. Ministers select proposed appointees from qualified applicants. Executive Council considers and approves. HR Committee considers and approves proposed appointments, and then OICs and ministerial appointments are made.

We're hoping that by the time it all gets to you, that we've done all our homework and it should be a fairly smooth process. Clearly, this is a decision-making group so those things are still left up to you.

That's it - ABCs 101. Do you have any questions?

THE CHAIR: Thank you very much for the informative overview. If you have a question, just make contact with me and I'll keep a ledger here. I think we have one.

Ms. Coombes.

KENDRA COOMBES: You mentioned a backlog. I just want to know, what is the vacancy rate of that backlog number, if you have even an approximate?

KAREN STONE: The intent is to have awareness of positions a year to 15 months in advance. When I say a backlog, this committee didn't meet because of the election and such, so we have ones that are getting close to being imminent because we usually prepare it in advance. That's where we are and why.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Duale.

ALI DUALE: What I'd like to know is, is there any structure or part of your office to do some kind of outreach to attract to these committees and these appointees for a diverse community? If there is such, what does that look like?

KAREN STONE: To say that there's an active intent to recruit or have a diverse representation is largely - there is some work that needs to be done by the individual ABC. What we do, though, is ask in the application for people to self-identify.

If I'm understanding what you're asking, is if there is an active intent around it. Our campaign that Shawn and Mora and Communications Nova Scotia have developed usually has representative people within the number of applicants, but as far as having a fully diverse and inclusive group of people on all the ABCs, there's still work to be done.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Clark.

BRAEDON CLARK: I have a quick question. There are 184 ABCs, I think you mentioned, which is a lot. I'm just wondering if there is any kind of regular review process to determine if membership should adjust, if some ABCs could be done away with, or if new ones are needed. Does that happen on a regular basis?

KAREN STONE: Some of the work that we're doing right now - a Summer project that was undertaken while the election was going on was to determine what ABCs have quorum. Sometimes if we look at vacancies overall, an organization may have a membership of 16, they may on a regular basis run eight vacancies. Many of those may not

have anything to do with government appointments, and their quorums might be six. What we're trying to get at is this: if your quorum is six, then what is the actual number of board members that you need?

We have been trying to make sure that the government appointees, the ones that come through this committee, are on time and up to where they should be. Your question about whether there are ABCs on the books that may have been dormant - that's a project that we're currently working on for 2022, to try to get at some of that, so that we're not having multiple ones that are there that haven't met in a very long time or have become redundant or have integrated. We're trying to get a better handle on that.

THE CHAIR: Mr. MacDonald.

JOHN A. MACDONALD: Just to follow up on my friend's comment, do you look at if there's eight, nine - that they're staggered versus all at the same time? Instead of changing a whole board, actually having only a third of it every year? Is that something that's in the hopper to be looked at?

THE CHAIR: Ms. Stevens.

MORA STEVENS: What happens when we have vacancies is, within the Act or the regulations, it's determined how long the appointment is for - two years, three years. Sometimes a minister and the Executive Council have leeway in up to two years or three years, so they can then stagger those appointments.

[10:15 a.m.]

Over the years, they have become staggered so if everybody is proposing a slate of, say, eight members and they have variance, they will say, these people are appointed for two years, these people for three. If they don't, they have to be three-year appointments, so sometimes you'll see ministers suggesting, I'm going to appoint two more people six months from now. They wouldn't fill their whole slate at once. They would wait to help stagger them, but we are limited in the Act or the regulations when it determines how long those appointments can be.

JOHN A. MACDONALD: Just a quick follow-up. When you say the Act, do you mean each individual ABC Act? Is that what you're referring to?

MORA STEVENS: Yes.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Duale.

ALI DUALE: Thank you for your answer to my question. I'd like to put forward a motion for the committee - in Ms. Stone's answer to my question. I'd like the committee

to write a letter to request an action plan for how in the future they can come up with a plan to do an outreach action - and bring back to the committee for the next meeting.

THE CHAIR: We have a motion on the floor. Is everyone clear with the motion that Mr. Duale is asking?

JOHN A. MACDONALD: Just for clarity, the way the motion says is that it will be done by the next meeting, which is tentatively next month, which I would guess is completely unrealistic to the demands of what's going on. Obviously, if the intent is for that to be done and have substance by next month, I don't see it working - unless someone can explain to me. The next meeting, from what I understand, is six weeks away, based on what we're looking at.

The problem for me is that by putting the deadline and telling staff to have it done without knowing what their current workload is - I don't mind the intent, but right now, with that day onto it, I don't think it would be realistic.

THE CHAIR: Ms. Hansen.

SUZY HANSEN: I just want a point of clarity because I am familiar with the ABCs and I just want to make sure that this is correct. Before any of the applicants get to your desk, they're already screened and there's already a process that happens within their boards, councils or groups that are bringing them forward. That would be the outreach piece, is what I'm understanding, that's already being done. Then as well, the appointees come from the minister on that end, so that's already another outreach piece that is happening.

There are a number of strategies that are already happening via outreach. I just want to clarify that as well because it goes through a number of different processes before it actually ends up on your desk.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Duale.

ALI DUALE: Just to make clear what I'm asking. First of all, thank you, John, for your point. That's true, my intent was not tomorrow, but just for an action to take place. It could be a month, could be two months - as you mentioned, depending on the committee's workload. My point is to take that action, to look at this issue, and to come up with an idea and strategic plan that will be fruitful to adopt and attract more diverse candidates.

THE CHAIR: My apologies, Ms. Stone - I believe you had your hand up.

KAREN STONE: I just want to clarify something. What we do as an extension of the staff that support Executive Council is basically manage the process. In terms of trying to have a more diverse collection of people, of representation, on those 184 agencies, boards and commissions - and I don't mean to be in any way passing the buck. I just want

to make sure that we're clear on what our role is. It really comes down to those agencies, boards, and commissions themselves.

The instigation of it - if any of you sit on some of those, or you have people who sit on them, it's important that they are - and I don't want to single any of them out because I may misrepresent what it is they do. However, it's up to them to largely be advocating for more representative membership. The cog that we play in this is that we work at trying to have the campaigns and messages to foster, encourage, and demonstrate that there are committees of diversity and ethnic inclusiveness. But it really comes down to how much the ABC does itself.

In many of these committees that actually exist, the amount of government representation - or when I say government appointments or appointments made through Order in Council or by the minister - sometimes it is a very small amount. It may be two people on a 20-person committee.

In the work that we do in trying to ensure having a broad representation and trying to get the two campaigns in Spring and Fall out to as broad a section of the community as possible and making it as easy as possible for people to apply - as I said, if people don't have the ability to key in or apply themselves for whatever the circumstances, if they call - and I've seen both Mora and Shawn sitting at their computer and typing in their responses so that they have assistance with that. Again, that's anecdotal and that's not a large measure.

We can certainly come back and say what it is we do in our little spot of it, but it is a broader - what you're suggesting is needed, we agree with you that more work needs to be done. There is a limited amount that we can do, but it also goes beyond to a broader community of trying to respond or encourage or entice people, and that there's as good a selection of qualified people as we can put together that makes its way to the various ministers for their appointment.

I'm not sure if that satisfies what you're looking for. It goes beyond us, but there is a role clearly that we play, and we'd be happy to come back and speak to that.

ALI DUALE: That's what I'm looking for. I think to your point, I know for a fact you have limitations, you have a role and responsibilities. But I don't think we as a Province, we as elected officials, also to your role - we're interconnected to each other. We have a role to play with each other. My understanding is that the vision of this government is to attract a diverse community, to welcome more immigrants to this province. This kind of action is a part of that piece that connects one another.

What I'm asking is just how we can make things better. What actions can we take in order to attract more candidates who reflect the community that we come from?

THE CHAIR: Ms. Coombes.

KENDRA COOMBES: I appreciate and I do support your motion. My clarification is that the motion that I have in front of me says, report back in six months. Is that the timeline? That's just the motion I have in front of me, so I was looking for clarification on that, if that was correct.

ALI DUALE: Sure. That's correct.

KENDRA COOMBES: Okay, thank you very much.

THE CHAIR: For clarification, Mr. Duale, could you read your motion again, please?

ALI DUALE: I would like to put forward a motion that the committee write a formal letter to the Executive Council Office to request for a strategy to be put in place for approaching underrepresented communities in Nova Scotia and ensuring more diverse applicants are brought forward for agency, board, and commission appointments. The board and commission appointees will also request that the Executive Council report back in six months, in time for the next agenda-setting meeting.

THE CHAIR: Do we have any other comments? Ms. Stone.

KAREN STONE: Can I just get clarity on that? It's for an action plan, not necessarily for a results plan?

ALI DUALE: You're right, it's just an action plan.

THE CHAIR: Any further discussion on the motion? Mr. MacDonald.

JOHN A. MACDONALD: I've got the email that came in for the motion. The motion says for strategy, but you really mean an action plan. Those are kind of different. A strategy is an idea. An action plan - it actually says here - is the things being done, unless I misunderstand the two terms. That's my problem.

KAREN STONE: I may have confused it.

JOHN A. MACDONALD: That's what I just want to know. Is the mover expecting that in six months that it's going to be a road map of exactly how it's going to be or is it what's in place today, what can be done? I'm just trying to get some direction on this.

ALI DUALE: I'm not here, first of all, to create a problem. I'm here to look for a solution. If anybody at this table could have a better solution, then I'm interested. I look forward to listening. Whether you look at this as a strategy or action plan, we all know

what we are looking for. I really believe that if we have a good intent, we should not get entangled in language.

Ms. Stone, I'm sure you get my message - what I'm looking for. It's an open heart. There's no political agenda. Also, what I'm looking for is the best interests of this province.

JOHN A. MACDONALD: Is this something that we can put off until next month so we can get it worded properly? I've been in politics for many years and any person will tell you, just because you intend something, somebody will read the writing - and my friend is nodding. I'd like to get it exactly right, because I do agree we do need to make it more diverse. I want to make sure we don't ask staff to go out and do a report and when it comes back, we're going, this isn't really what I wanted here, this is what I expected.

I'm just wondering if you'd be willing to defer this until January's meeting, which is the next one, and get it taken care of. If we can get the wording right, I don't see why you wouldn't get unanimous support. I'm just nervous onto it because, again, it's what's in the words and that's what people go off. Anybody in this room would have one view; somebody watching this would have a different view. That's just my comment.

ALI DUALE: John, I think we're on the same page. I trust you. If we believe this is the right thing to do, I'm giving you the privilege to actually come up with an action plan that will actually produce a fruitful benefit for this province.

THE CHAIR: Can I ask for a motion to defer this agenda item to the next meeting. Mr. MacDonald.

JOHN A. MACDONALD: I move to defer this to the meeting in January 2022.

THE CHAIR: All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

Do we have any other questions for our guests today? Hearing none, I'd like to thank you for your time. Thank you for the presentation. I'm going to invite you to stay if you wish. If not, you're free to go. I believe Mr. Hebb has a few comments.

[10:30 a.m.]

GORDON HEBB: Generally, there are rules that apply to all the committees that are the same, but there are some special considerations for this committee, and I thought I would mention those. Just a few.

One thing the committee may do - it's set out in the rules - is the committee may interview prospective appointees, but I'd like to point out that I've been here a long time

and it's never happened. Like other committees, the committee must meet at least once every month, even if the House is prorogued. This is another issue that has come up: the committee is not entitled to know who the candidates are that the minister is not recommending. Your sole job is to look at whether this is an appropriate candidate, this particular person, for the job.

The information you have about the candidates is confidential. In the case of someone who's remunerated \$100 or more a day, their resume is made public, but not for anybody else who's not paid or is paid less than that amount.

It is highly recommended that you never give out that information, even in the case of the \$100 or more. If someone is looking for that information, it should come from the Executive Council Office. There are two good reasons for that, one is you may not know whether the appointment has actually yet been made because you're not making the appointment. The appointment is made by others. You are approving them to be able to make the appointment. Secondly, you may not have the right information, so you may give out information when they are not paid \$100 or more. You should refer them to the Executive Council Office to give it out and not do it yourself.

The final thing was that in Rule No. 60(2)(c), there are some terms of reference that go on for several pages, and there are quite a few details, some of the things I might have touched on, others I'm not going to get into, but there's quite a bit that you don't find for any other committees, these terms of reference that are quite extensive. That's all I have to say unless you have questions.

THE CHAIR: Agency, board, and commission appointments: Do we have any business or discussion?

Ms. Sheehy-Richard.

MELISSA SHEEHY-RICHARD: For the Department of Municipal Affairs and Housing, I move that Eldon MacDonald be appointed as a member of the Municipal Finance Corporation as the NSFM rep.

THE CHAIR: Is there any discussion? All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you. The motion is carried.

Mr. MacDonald.

JOHN A. MACDONALD: For the Department of Natural Resources and Renewables, I move that David Bligh, Donald McIver, Sylvain Allaire, Carolyn Johnson, and Brad Hodgins - Brad being the East Hants rep. - be appointed as members of the Shubenacadie Canal Commission.

THE CHAIR: Is there any discussion?

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

Is there any other business? Organizational: In the past years, this committee typically met on the last Tuesday of the month at 10:00 a.m. to noon. Is that okay? Seeing okay. Meetings during the Summer months: This committee is mandated by the House to meet at least once in the calendar month, if only for appointments, the ABCs, and during the House sittings and the Summer months, July and August, it normally meets only to consider ABCs and does not invite witnesses. Agreed to continue? Okay.

The procedure for questioning witnesses: This committee follows the same patterns of other standing committees. Members will take turns asking questions two at a time, a question and a follow-up, and you can raise your hand or somehow indicate that you have a question to me, and I can keep a tally similar to what we were doing so far. Are we okay to continue that way? Okay.

The agenda-setting procedures. Mr. Ritcey.

DAVE RITCEY: I'd like to make a motion on agenda-setting. I move the government caucus will get three regular or emergency topics per six-meeting rotation, the Official Opposition will get two regular or emergency topics per six-meeting rotation. The third party will get one regular or emergency topic per six-meeting rotation.

The standing committee will rotate through topics using the following order: government, Official Opposition, government, third party, government, Official Opposition. Once the list of six topics is exhausted, the Chair of the committee will hold another agenda-setting meeting that will follow the above rotation.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Ritcey, will we have flexibility just for witness availability to swap if we can't get the witnesses lined up?

DAVE RITCEY: Yes.

THE CHAIR: Is everyone clear? The motion is on the floor. Is there any further discussion?

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

If an outside party makes a request to appear, how does the committee want to address that? Ms. Coombes.

KENDRA COOMBES: I think we should go with what we've been doing in a few other committees that I have been involved in. That is that, again, the request would go to the clerk. The clerk can bring it to us and we could schedule them in during one of our meetings. We have to meet all year long, every month anyway. If they request to meet, it goes to the clerk, comes back to us, and we schedule them in. I think we should just continue that way, rather than it coming off of one of our agenda items.

THE CHAIR: Is there further discussion? Mr. MacDonald.

JOHN A. MACDONALD: Just a question, is it the intent that if any person makes the application, it's just approved or it's coming to this body to confirm it's going? Maybe because I'm new to ABCs, it will only ever be ABCs and it's a moot issue. I'm just asking the question just for process.

My question is, is it the intent that if an organization - which I assume is going to be an ABC - they will make the application to the clerk, the clerk will then just schedule it? Or am I misunderstanding something? Oh, okay. That's why I'm confused. Sorry.

THE CHAIR: I think this is just par for the ABCs, so if a local organization such as the YMCA or whatnot wanted to apply for a meeting, they could. Is everyone okay with that? It is agreed.

Committee documents such as correspondence are always emailed to all members as soon as they arrive. The morning of the meeting, as happened today, the clerk emails you all the committee documents in a batch - agenda, correspondence, a list of proposed topics, et cetera. If members want a printed copy at the meeting, they're invited to bring their own. This practice started because of the COVID-19 pandemic and has continued because the clerks find it more efficient and environmentally friendly than having a stack of papers. Does the committee wish to agree with this current practice? It is agreed.

Agenda-setting: Members should have their complete list of proposed topics. Does everybody have their list of proposed topics with them? Is there any discussion? Ms. Sheehy-Richard.

MELISSA SHEEHY-RICHARD: I move that the PC caucus topics for the consideration of the committee be read as Topics 1, 2 and 4 of the lists that were passed out. These there are: first, Strategies to Attract and Retain People to Rural Areas, we bring in as our witnesses representatives of the Department of Labour, Skills and Immigration - Deputy Minister Ava Czapalay; secondly, Strategies To Prevent Workplace Injuries, we bring in as our witnesses representatives for the Department of Labour, Skills and Immigration - Deputy Minister Ava Czapalay, Senior Executive Director of Gary O'Toole, and Chair of the Workers' Compensation Board of Nova Scotia Saeed El-Darahali.

Third and fourth on the list: Promoting Healthy Living in Students, we bring in as our witnesses representatives from the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development - Deputy Minister Cathy Montreuil.

THE CHAIR: Is there any discussion? I think there is. Ms. Coombes.

KENDRA COOMBES: My hope was to stop that so we could go one by one. I think putting all of them on the board right now gets a little confusing when people want to have a discussion about the topics. If we could start with Topic 1 of the PCs, which is Strategies to Attract and Retain People to Rural Areas, and we'll have a discussion on that, and then we'll go topic by topic - if that's more helpful to the rest of us.

The proposed witness for the PCs is the Department of Labour, Skills and Immigration.

THE CHAIR: Pardon me. In order to continue with the amendment of the motion, we would need unanimous consent. Do we have unanimous consent to amend that motion to do it individually?

Ms. Coombes.

KENDRA COOMBES: We would like to propose to add as an amendment - so motion to amend to add a representative from NOW Lunenburg County - it's a local organization working towards population growth in Lunenburg County - as well as a representative from the Cape Breton Local Immigration Partnership. The Cape Breton Local Immigration Partnership is a collaborative initiative designed to foster welcoming communities that support a full participation of newcomers in the social, economic, political, and cultural life of Cape Breton Unama'ki.

THE CHAIR: I'd just like to remind the group there are only five seats at the table here for witnesses. Is there any discussion on Ms. Coombes' amendment? I'll ask for a vote on the amendment.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The amendment is defeated.

Back to the original motion: Is there any further discussion?

Ms. Hansen.

SUZY HANSEN: We're looking at the topic, and it says Strategies to Attract and Retain People to Rural Areas. The proposed witness is the Department of Labour, Skills and Immigration. That's just one representation of how we can attract and retain people in

rural areas. I'm just confused as to why we wouldn't want to have a broader scope on the discussion of retaining people in rural areas.

THE CHAIR: We can discuss the motion that's on the floor, but we just voted against - there was just a defeated amendment to that motion, so we do have a motion.

Ms. Coombes.

KENDRA COOMBES: This may not pertain to the motion itself, but it does pertain to something the Chair has said. I'd like to ask our Legal Counsel, Gordon Hebb, about this. Can we actually limit the amount of witnesses to five? Is that in the rules? The Chair has just said that it's limited to five witnesses, and I was just wondering if that is in the rules.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Hebb.

GORDON HEBB: It's not in the rules. I think it's a practical consideration that there's only room for - pretty hard to have more than five people at the table, but it's up to the committee to decide. That's the practical problem.

[10:45 a.m.]

KENDRA COOMBES: I just wanted clarity that that was a practical thing to consider and not the actual rules of the committee.

THE CHAIR: We have a motion on the floor. Are we ready to vote?

Mr. Ritcey.

DAVE RITCEY: Which motion is on the floor?

THE CHAIR: It's the original motion that's on the floor - the first topic.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

Ms. Sheehy-Richard.

MELISSA SHEEHY-RICHARD: Second topic is Strategies to Prevent Workplace Injuries. We bring in as our witnesses representatives from the Department of Labour, Skills and Immigration: Deputy Minister Ava Czapalay, Senior Executive Director Safety, Gary O'Toole, and the Chair of the Workers' Compensation Board, Saeed El-Darahali.

KENDRA COOMBES: I move to front the amendment to add NSGEU President Jason MacLean. I think when we are talking about strategies to prevent workplace injuries, some of the best people that we can talk to are those representing workers. As Jason MacLean is president of the largest union in Nova Scotia, I think it would be prudent upon us to invite the largest union to speak to us about how we can prevent workplace injuries in the workforce.

THE CHAIR: Is there any further discussion? Just for clarity, we're going to be voting on Ms. Coombes' amendment to Ms. Sheehy-Richard's motion.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is defeated.

Any further discussion on Ms. Sheehy-Richard's original motion? Hearing none.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

Ms. Sheehy-Richard.

MELISSA SHEEHY-RICHARD: Our third topic is Promoting Healthy Living in Students. We bring in as witnesses a representative from the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Deputy Minister Cathy Montreuil.

KENDRA COOMBES: Before I move my amendment - and I've said this in another committee as all my motions were voted down - when we are putting forward topics to this committee, what we want to have are the most robust conversations we can have, so that we can actually do the work for Nova Scotians. By only contacting government agencies and departments, what we are doing is actually stifling the conversations that we could have as a committee - that it is not just a rubber stamp committee, that it's not just a committee hearing from government, but is actually hearing from people who represent workers and others in Nova Scotia.

I will say this because I've been noticing this consistently happening in committees where the PCs - and I mean no offence to this, but I am going to point it out - continuously bring up government departments, but never call for organizations, unless it's Workers' Compensation, to talk to committees, to have a robust conversation and to get real answers for real questions from all perspectives. I think we are really missing an opportunity to hear from others doing the work.

Before I do my amendment, I'm going to say this, when you're talking about retaining the rural areas and to not invite rural organizations, that is wrong, in my opinion.

To talk about strategies to prevent workplace and not invite those representing workers is wrong.

I'm going to ask you to please consider amendment, because it is very important to have a robust conversation on these topics. I move to amend that we add representatives from the Minimum Wage Review Committee - I'm sorry. It was Nourish Nova Scotia, correct? I ask that we add Nourish Nova Scotia's executive director and the Ecology Action Centre for community food coordinator.

I will say this about Nourish Nova Scotia, it's a registered not-for-profit supporting healthy food environments for children and youth. If we're going to be talking about promoting healthy living in students, let's talk to organizations that are actually promoting and doing that work for students, which is Nourish Nova Scotia and the Ecology Action Centre, that does community food coordination.

I think it is extremely important that we consider in order to have a true, robust conversation on promoting healthy living in our students, so with that I will cede my time.

THE CHAIR: Is there any discussion? Hearing none, we have a motion on the floor to amend the original motion, so we'll be voting on the amendment.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The amendment is defeated.

We have Ms. Sheehy-Richard's original motion to add the fourth topic. Is there any further discussion? Seeing none.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

Mr. Clark.

BRAEDON CLARK: I move that the first Liberal topic for the committee be the first Liberal item on the agenda here, Progress Reports on the Implementation of the Canada-Wide Child Care Agreement and the Excellence in ECE Strategy. Proposed witnesses are Deputy Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development and the Association of Early Childhood Educators Nova Scotia.

THE CHAIR: Ms. Coombes.

KENDRA COOMBES: I propose to add an amendment and to request a representative from Child Care Now Nova Scotia. Child Care Now Nova Scotia is a member-based organization dedicated to advocating for a publicly funded, inclusive,

quality non-profit child care system. I would ask if my Liberal colleagues would consider adding them to the list.

THE CHAIR: Is there any debate?

Mr. Clark.

BRAEDON CLARK: I'd just like to make a quick comment. While I appreciate my colleague's intent and friendly motions here behind the amendment, I believe there will be one for the second topic we propose as well. Being Opposition members, I think we all realize that our time is somewhat limited in the House, in committee, and so on, so it's important to us as I'm sure it's important to the members of the NDP caucus to have witnesses that they choose allotted as much time as possible. That's just my comment.

THE CHAIR: Is there further discussion?

Ms. Hansen.

SUZY HANSEN: I just wanted to also mention that the deputy minister is also going to be there in another meeting as well, and I do respect that time is valuable. I just wanted to make a note of that, because the deputy minister will be there as well on another occasion. Just wanted to point that out.

THE CHAIR: Is there further discussion? We have an amendment of the original motion on the floor. We will be voting on the amendment.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The amendment is defeated.

We have an original motion on the floor. Is there further discussion on the original motion to add the first topic for the Liberal Party?

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

Mr. Clark.

BRAEDON CLARK: I move that the second topic for the Liberal caucus be the second item on our section of the agenda: Addressing Affordability for Post-Secondary Students in Nova Scotia Post-COVID-19. Proposed witnesses are the Deputy Minister of Advanced Education and representatives of Students Nova Scotia.

THE CHAIR: Ms. Coombes.

KENDRA COOMBES: This is getting predictable, isn't it? We like to do our homework. With that, I'm just going to talk to a point that my colleague made earlier about our witnesses. I really don't consider them - from the NDP caucus - just our witnesses. I consider them all of our witnesses so that we can have a robust conversation around the table. With that, I'm going to ask this amendment.

We amend to also invite the Canadian Federation of Students - Nova Scotia. The CFSNS has over 10,000 members across the Maritimes that represent NSCAD, the University of Kings College, MSVU, Université Sainte-Anne, CBU and Dalhousie. Students Nova Scotia does excellent work, but I think that not including the Canadian Federation of Students - Nova Scotia, we're missing the other representatives around the table to give a more robust conversation about the members that they all represent.

Students Nova Scotia represent some universities, but they don't represent all the universities - just like the Canadian Federation represents some, but not all. Together, they represent all of them. I ask that my colleagues accept this amendment.

THE CHAIR: Just for clarity, Ms. Coombes, I see on the proposed witness is Students Nova Scotia and the representatives from there. Are you proposing . . .

KENDRA COOMBES: I'm proposing Canadian Federation of Students - Nova Scotia to be added along with those representatives from Students Nova Scotia.

THE CHAIR: Thank you for clarifying that. Is there further discussion? We are going to vote on the amendment to the original motion.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is defeated.

We have an original motion from Mr. Clark on the floor for the Liberal choice No. 2. Is there further discussion? Seeing none.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

Ms. Hansen.

SUZY HANSEN: We would like to put forward Teacher Workloads and Impact on Student Achievement, and Teacher Recruitment and Retention. For that, the proposed witnesses are the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development and the Educators for Social Justice.

THE CHAIR: Is there any discussion on the motion? Mr. MacDonald.

JOHN A. MACDONALD: Just a question to my friend across, you're not listing the representative, who it is - just the body - so you're happy with whoever is available? I just want to make sure. It just says the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, where when I've seen it before, it listed the specific position. I just wanted to make sure for clarity if you meant to clarify or if not, if you're good with whomever staff can get in.

SUZY HANSEN: It would be either the deputy minister or whoever is available to be able to give that information based on the proposed topic.

THE CHAIR: Is there further discussion? Seeing none.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

Is there any other business of the committee? No. Our next meeting will be Tuesday, January 25th at 10:00 a.m. until noon, subject to committee approval. Topics and witnesses will be announced. Is everyone okay with that date?

Hearing such, the meeting is adjourned.

[The committee adjourned at 11:00 a.m.]