

HANSARD

NOVA SCOTIA HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

COMMITTEE

ON

HUMAN RESOURCES

Tuesday, October 4, 2022

Committee Room

**Agenda Setting
and
Appointments to Agencies, Boards and Commissions**

Printed and Published by Nova Scotia Hansard Reporting Services

HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE

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

[Larry Harrison was replaced by John White.]
[Melissa Sheehy-Richard was replaced by Tom Taggart.]

In Attendance:

Judy Kavanagh
Legislative Committee Clerk

Gordon Hebb
Chief Legislative Counsel



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

HALIFAX, TUESDAY, OCTOBER 4, 2022

STANDING COMMITTEE ON HUMAN RESOURCES

2:00 P.M.

CHAIR
Nolan Young

Vice Chair
Larry Harrison

THE CHAIR: Order. I call the meeting to order. This is the Standing Committee on Human Resources. I'm Nolan Young, MLA for Shelburne, and the Chair of this committee. Today, in addition to reviewing agency, board, and commission appointments, we will hold an agenda setting. I would ask everyone if they could turn their phones off or put them on silent.

I'd ask for committee members to introduce themselves, beginning with MLA White.

[The committee members introduced themselves.]

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

For committee business we have some agency, board, and commission appointments. I think we'll start with MLA MacDonald.

JOHN A. MACDONALD: For the Department of Health and Wellness, I move that Jessica Fancy-Landry and Barry Morshead be appointed public representatives for the Board of the Nova Scotia College of Audiologists and Speech-Language Pathologists.

THE CHAIR: Is there discussion on that motion? All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

JOHN A. MACDONALD: For the Department of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage, I move that Trevor Gould be appointed member of the Arts Nova Scotia Board.

THE CHAIR: Is there discussion on that motion? All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

JOHN A. MACDONALD: For the Department of Health and Wellness, I move that Alana Baxter, John Boddie, and Lisa Matthews be appointed public representatives for the Board of the Nova Scotia College of Counselling Therapists.

THE CHAIR: Is there discussion on that motion? All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

JOHN A. MACDONALD: For the Department of Justice, I move that Denise DiGiosia, Max Chauvin, Melissa Mixer, and Lewis Pope be appointed members of the Accessibility Advisory Board.

THE CHAIR: Is there discussion on that motion? All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

MLA Ritcey.

DAVE RITCEY: For the Department of Justice, I move that Diana Brothers, Fola Adeleke, Jenifer Tsang, Julien Matte, and Sharon Ross be appointed commissioners of the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission.

THE CHAIR: Is there discussion on that motion? All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

DAVE RITCEY: For the Department of Public Works, I move that Donna Moreen Smith Darrell be appointed member of the Halifax-Dartmouth Bridge Commission.

THE CHAIR: Is there discussion on that motion? All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

In addition, we have our agenda setting. I think the topics have been circulated and submitted. I would ask that we put forward our topics for discussion, starting with MLA White.

JOHN WHITE: I move that the first topic for the PC caucus be Support Connecting Newcomers to the Workforce, the witnesses being representatives of the Department of Labour, Skills and Immigration, and representatives of Nova Scotia Immigration and Population Growth, and representatives from YREACH as well.

THE CHAIR: Is there discussion on that motion? MLA Coombes.

KENDRA COOMBES: Yes. Just clarity on who you're looking for with the last one?

JOHN WHITE: I think I read it wrong. It's the YMCA, but I just said - representative from the YMCA is what I meant.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: It says YREACH.

THE CHAIR: MLA Hansen.

SUZY HANSEN: I just wanted to put this out there. I know we're proposing witnesses, but when it comes to newcomers, I would think as well, on top of the YMCA, ISANS would also be a group to be part of that particular conversation. That's just a thought. Sorry, I should have just said it was a thought.

THE CHAIR: Is there further discussion? Seeing none, we'll call the question on that motion.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

JOHN WHITE: I move that the second topic for the PC caucus be Support for Firefighters, the witnesses being the Halifax Professional Firefighters Association, IAFF Local 268, Captain Brendan Meagher, president and/or Michael Sears, vice president;

representatives of the Department of Labour, Skills and Immigration; and the Fire Service Association of Nova Scotia, Greg Jones, president and/or Wade Jennings, first vice president, Debert Fire Brigade.

THE CHAIR: Is there any discussion on that motion?

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

JOHN WHITE: I move that the third topic for the PC caucus be Training and Educational Partnerships: Training Initiatives for Physicians, Nurses and CCAs, the witnesses being representatives from the Department of Advanced Education; representatives from the Department of Health and Wellness; the Department of Seniors and Long-term Care, ADM or designate; representatives from the NSCC School of Health and Human Services; and representatives from the Health Association Nova Scotia.

THE CHAIR: Is there any discussion on that topic?

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

Moving on to the Liberal caucus. MLA Ince.

HON. TONY INCE: There are two topics for discussion. The first for us will be Skilled Labour Shortages and Impact on Critical Infrastructure in Nova Scotia. Representatives from the Department of Labour, Skills and Immigration; representatives of the Department of Public Works; NSCC, Jill Provoe, vice president, Academic; and NSCC, Tom Gunn, dean of Trades and Transportation will be witnesses.

The second topic will be . . .

THE CHAIR: We'll go one topic at a time.

DAVE RITCEY: I'd like to add a representative from the Apprenticeship Board. My suggestion is Chair Brad Smith, and potentially, since we have somebody already from the NSCC in Jill Provoe, Brad Smith can replace Tom Gunn. If we're going to talk about trades and education, we already have a representative from NSCC, so I'm just thinking it's important to also hear from a witness who can speak to managing the trades and training certification system in Nova Scotia, and the chair, Brad Smith, could do that.

THE CHAIR: So you have a motion on the floor? Is there any discussion? An amendment to the motion, sorry.

DAVE RITCEY: I move to amend the witness list to include representatives of the Department of Labour, Skills and Immigration; representatives of the Department of Public Works; NSCC, Jill Provoe, vice president, Academic; and representatives from the Apprenticeship Board, with the suggestion of Brad Smith, the chair.

THE CHAIR: Is there any discussion on that amendment?

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

The motion is carried. (Interruptions)

JUDY KAVANAGH: If the amendment's been accepted, then you have to vote on the amended motion.

THE CHAIR: The amended one.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

TONY INCE: For our second topic, we move the Review of School Breakfast Programs with representatives from Nourish Nova Scotia; representatives from the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development; and Allison Power, Summer Breakfast Program Coordinator with Calvin Presbyterian Church.

THE CHAIR: Is there any discussion on this topic?

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

KENDRA COOMBES: We move, as our proposed topic, the Impact of Low Wages on Labour Shortages. Our proposed witnesses are: the Deputy Minister of Labour, Skills and Immigration; Minimum Wage Review Committee, employee representative Danny Cavanagh or designate; Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, Atlantic executive director.

DAVE RITCEY: I'd like to talk about this one. During the Public Accounts Committee, we've had the Atlantic executive director of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, as well as Mr. Danny Cavanagh. Just trying to make sure that we have a verse of information out there and would like for somewhat of a change.

With labour shortages the way they are and something employers see, it's important to capture this perspective, as well, from the witness that I'd like to add: the CFIB, if that's at all possible, and remove CCPA.

KENDRA COOMBES: My answer is going to be the same as it was this morning when this occurred, and that is we will certainly think about adding, but we are not taking out one of our witnesses.

I believe members opposite have said numerous times about the intent of their topic and their witnesses - those were the members opposite's words many times over every time we propose witnesses: the intent of their topic, even though we're just adding. Members opposite want to take out witnesses we've proposed; that is not agreeable to us. We will certainly entertain adding witnesses, but not taking out witnesses.

DAVE RITCEY: I'm going to make a motion. I move to amend the witness list to include the following witnesses: Department of Labour, Skills and Immigration, deputy minister; Minimum Wage Review Committee employee representative - whoever that may be; and a representative from the Atlantic chapter of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, Louis-Philippe Gauthier.

KENDRA COOMBES: I would just like to point out for the record that this is becoming - the word escapes me right now. What would be the word for this? (Interruption) Maybe. It is becoming somewhat of a pattern with the members across trying to take out our witnesses on our proposed topic.

I find that very concerning to our democratic process, to what we're trying to do here as a committee. I find it very advantageous that the members opposite are taking this perspective and this tone of trying to take out our witnesses through their majority. Like I said, we would definitely entertain adding, but not taking out of our witnesses.

Again, I'm going to say it: This is becoming a pattern. It is very concerning. It just occurred with my colleagues prior to this, and they were agreeable, but here you're trying to take out - maybe they're agreeable because it was two NSCCs - but here the members opposite are trying to take out our witnesses. I find this very advantageous and worrying that the members are trying to do this. This happened earlier this morning in the Community Services Committee meeting with trying to take out a witness. Even though we were agreeable to add a witness, we were not agreeable to take out our witness.

Again, the members opposite have continuously said, when we've proposed witnesses, not taking out any witnesses, but proposed witnesses to add to the conversation, the members opposite would say to us, that was not the intent of our topic and so forth, continuously, even though we felt that it would add to the conversation, as you said. If you want to add to the conversation, we'll entertain adding somebody, but we're not

entertaining any notion of taking out one of our witnesses, especially when we only get one topic.

[2:15 p.m.]

I would ask the members to please rethink that motion so that we can have a very productive meeting and productive meetings going forth.

DAVE RITCEY: I too want a productive meeting, and Mr. Cavanagh we've heard from already in the Public Accounts Committee. We've also heard from the CCPA, we've also heard from them and their thoughts, and I think to have a productive and heavily discussed information session in committee, I think my request of adding somebody from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business would be a critical portion in that.

Also saying that, we've already heard from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives in committees. I'd like to call the question.

SUZY HANSEN: As my colleague has said it very calmly, we are not opposed to entertaining adding an additional presenter here. We did not say no to that. What we're saying is you will not change our presenters list. We have one topic. If you'd like to listen to that particular presenter on another topic, you have three to choose from. You could bump one of yours and add another topic of discussion. I will say this: We have one option. These are our presenters for this particular option. If you'd like to add that particular presenter, we are not against that.

What we're saying is we don't have many other options to do the work that we want to do and hear from the presenters whom we want to bring forward, so this is our one time to do that. With respect to us wanting to make suggestions in previous meetings and always being shut down, we will, as well, not entertain a change with our presenter unless you add.

KENDRA COOMBES: It's been mentioned that these things were at PAC. A lot of things come to PAC that we deal with in Health Committee, that we deal with in Human Resources, that we deal with in Community Services. They all come through PAC because it's for the Auditor General's reports. PAC is its own creation, and I think it would do members very well that we as Community Services meeting - Human Resources, sorry. I'm having the same conversation that I did in Human Resources, so it's getting a little - like I said, it's a pattern.

This is Human Resources, which means labour. It's big. To say, deal with it in PAC, I've heard, let's deal with it in PAC, I've heard, let's deal with it in Community Services, Human Resources, Health Committee. I can verbatim say that this is the same argument that we continuously have. Here's the thing: This is a different committee. It acts differently. It behaves differently. It has different members and different kinds of

questioning will go on in Human Resources than will happen in PAC. You'll get a different conversation.

Again, we'll say we will entertain adding the CFIB - if I said that right because it's been a day - but we will not entertain the Conservative Party, the PCs, I'm sorry, but right now, I've got to tell you it's getting hard - but will not entertain the PCs trying to take out our witnesses.

SUZY HANSEN: On multiple occasions.

KENDRA COOMBES: Yes, I said this a second time today, and I just find it troubling. I'm hoping my colleagues right beside me feel it kind of troubling. I hope my colleagues across from me are recognizing the pattern and finding it troubling, and they will kindly amend their motion, put forward a new motion, and we'll entertain adding.

THE CHAIR: MLA Duale.

ALI DUALE: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to my colleague for getting my attention, even though I've raised my hand before. You have plead for support and help. I really believe we as a committee, we're not here for the parties, we're here for Nova Scotians. These individuals and these witnesses are Nova Scotians who have critical information for Nova Scotians, and I really believe we are disserving the people of this province by denying those who have that information and those who can testify their knowledge to be in this committee and be at this table.

I'll urge the members of this committee to be mindful. We're here for Nova Scotians. The subject matter we are talking about is not ours, it is the people's subject matter, and we should allow those experts and those who have the knowledge to be here. I'm taking this very seriously, but also, I'm part of this committee. I'd really like to see this committee be a productive committee that serves the purpose that we've been selected to be here for. I'm going to continue that. Also, to be fair, they have only one item to choose. Let's be mindful of each other.

TONY INCE: Interesting. I've never been on committees before, so I'm going to start with that, and it's quite interesting. As a former minister who is sitting on a committee now, I have one question while I'm sitting and listening to the dialogue and what's been happening. My question is this: Are witnesses only allowed to be on one committee? There's nothing to preclude Mr. Cavanagh from being a witness at this one, is that correct? (Interruption) Okay. That's all I have to say.

DAVE RITCEY: I'm going to repeat my motion and call the question again. I move to amend the witness list to include the following witnesses: Department of Labour, Skills and Immigration, deputy minister; Minimum Wage Review Committee, employee

representative . . . (Interruption) representative from the CFIB Atlantic Chapter, Canadian Federation of Independent Business, Louis-Philippe Gauthier. You can call the question.

SUZY HANSEN: I just want to make a comment because I find this very interesting, and then we can go right to whatever the sitting government wants to say. Is this our topic, the NDP topic that we choose as presenters to bring forward to give valuable information to the committee, or is this the PC Party's topic and presenters to decide? I just want some clarification on that.

THE CHAIR: It's an NDP topic put forward, and correct me if I'm wrong, but what I think I'm hearing from Mr. Ritcey is that it was a PAC topic that was fairly similar with a lot of the same witnesses. The topic's important to Nova Scotians, but to hear from other voices.

SUZY HANSEN: I just want to say, and I'm glad you pointed that out because I remember sitting here and asking, why do we continue to have the same deputy ministers sitting around the table, giving us the same information at every committee meeting? I will say that it is. It's valuable for us to add new voices to our presenters, so we don't mind adding, but when you remove presenters, it takes away from the topic discussion.

THE CHAIR: Part of the Minimum Wage Review Committee, I think Mr. Cavanagh sits on, and in theory, that could be the person who's attending. It's someone from that committee, right? Any further discussion?

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

To vote on the amended motion - MLA Coombes.

KENDRA COOMBES: Yes, there was a tie, so as Chair, you'll actually have to put your vote in.

THE CHAIR: I did vote. I voted yes.

SUZY HANSEN: Okay.

THE CHAIR: Let's vote on the amended motion. All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

We have a December meeting date. The regular committee meeting date would be December 27th, and to avoid the holidays we've been supplied a couple of dates. Tuesday,

December 6th, or Tuesday, December 13th as an alternative as opposed to meeting over the Christmas break.

ALI DUALE: I just want to remind the committee - and through you, the Chair - last year, I put a motion for the floor for this committee, and my recollection, that motion was given a time and this committee to have a response. It's over a year, and we're here in a new year setting an agenda. Through your leadership, I'd really like to have an update, where we are and where we go from here.

THE CHAIR: Clerk Kavanagh.

JUDY KAVANAGH: I'm glad you asked. I can provide an update on that. I've been writing to the Executive Council Office over the Summer asking them to respond to the letter I sent them after the motion was passed in our February meeting. The person who would normally have done that, Karen Stone who appeared at our first meeting, has been out of the office on leave for most of the Summer. On Friday or Thursday last week, I think, she told me she had retired. So I wrote to the person who is filling in for her now until they hire a new - I forget what the title is, but anyway. I wrote to them and asked if they could respond to this letter and provide us with an answer. She said that they're in the middle of hiring a new executive director, I believe, and would rather wait until that new person is hired and ask them to respond.

ALI DUALE: Thank you for your update, but also, I just want to remind the committee. I really believe this was one of the collective decisions that we made. We elected officials felt this was a very important issue, and I really believe it will make our job and our responsibilities way better than what they are. That doesn't mean there's something wrong. What it means is we can do way better than what we are doing. As we know, as a province, we have the intention to increase our population. We are accepting. We are a very diverse province. We accepted to embrace that, so I really believe we should include in our agency, board and commission appointments how we can achieve that goal to see that reflection of Nova Scotians in the people we are selecting. I just want to put that to my colleagues for their mind, and to continue to foster this idea.

KENDRA COOMBES: Mr. Chair, you asked about the dates. I'm proposing the December 13th as December 6th is the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women and there will be memorials and action on that during those times that I believe many MLAs will want to be in their ridings for.

THE CHAIR: Would 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. work on the 13th? Seeing nods around the room, okay. I don't need a motion for that.

We have our annual report as well, which has been circulated.

[2:30 p.m.]

JOHN A. MACDONALD: Before I do that, I'd like to thank the MLA for that because you're right, I'd forgotten that we hadn't gotten it, so I'm glad you remembered. I do look forward to that report coming back. I would have hoped it would have been in the next agenda setting. I would expect, most likely, the group would agree that the sooner we can get it - I'm sure we'll adjust the schedule if we have to because that's very important. I do want to thank you for that.

I move to approve the annual report for the Human Resources Committee as written.

THE CHAIR: Is there discussion on that motion? Seeing none.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

Our next meeting is going to be Tuesday, October 25, 2022, from 10:00 a.m. until 11:00 a.m. Because the House is expected to be still sitting, the committee will meet to approve appointments to agencies, boards, and commissions.

With that said, the meeting is adjourned. Thank you, everyone.

[The committee adjourned at 2:31 p.m.]