

Daily sitting 17

Tuesday, March 26, 2019

1 o'clock p.m.

Prayers.

Following Oral Questions, Mr. Savoie rose on a point of order and submitted that Mr. C. Chiasson used the phrase “monkey survey” which may be unparliamentary. Mr. Speaker asked all Members to raise the level of decorum.

Mr. Arseneault rose on a point of order and submitted that Hon. Mr. Cardy accused the Opposition of “barking”, inferring that they were dogs. Mr. Speaker again asked all Members to raise the level of decorum.

Mr. Savoie rose on a point of order and submitted that Mr. C. Chiasson used the word “propaganda”, which may be unparliamentary. Mr. Speaker ruled the point not well taken.

Mr. Savoie, from the Standing Committee on Crown Corporations, presented the First Report of the Committee for the session which was read and is as follows:

March 26, 2019

To The Honourable
The Legislative Assembly of
The Province of New Brunswick

Mr. Speaker:

Your Standing Committee on Crown Corporations begs leave to submit this, their first report.

The report outlines the Committee’s activities since its appointment during the First Session of the 59th Legislative Assembly.

And your Committee begs leave to make a further report.

(Sgd.): Glen Savoie, M.L.A.
Chair

The full report of the Committee as presented follows:

Election of Chair and Vice-Chair

Pursuant to Standing Rule 99, the Clerk convened a meeting of the Committee on December 11, 2018, and presided over the election of a Chair and Vice Chair.

On motion of Mr. Crossman, Mr. Savoie was elected Chair of the Committee.

On motion of Mr. Savoie, Mr. Northrup was elected Vice-Chair of the Committee.

Committee Activities

The Standing Committee on Public Accounts held a joint session with the Standing Committee on Crown Corporations to receive and review the following:

January 16, 2019

Office of the Auditor General of New Brunswick

Under review: Report of the Auditor General of New Brunswick 2018, Volume II - Performance Audit and Volume III - Financial Audit.

Volume II presented performance audit reports on improving student performance and managing injured workers' claims. It also presented a follow-up on performance audit recommendations from prior years and a detailed status report of performance audit recommendations since 2014.

Volume III focused on New Brunswick's year-end financial results and matters arising from the annual financial audit of the provincial government and Crown agencies including understanding key financial audit issues and observations on the state of New Brunswick's financial condition.

The Committee held meetings in the Legislative Council Chamber on January 29, 30 and 31; and February 1, 5 and 6. The following entities appeared and answered questions concerning the years under review and Auditor General recommendations:

January 29, 2019

Vitalité Health Network

Years under review: 2016-2017, 2017-2018

New Brunswick Legal Aid Services Commission

Years under review: 2015-2016, 2016-2017, 2017-2018

January 30, 2019

Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation
Years under review: 2016-2017, 2017-2018
New Brunswick Municipal Finance Corporation
Years under review: 2015, 2016, 2017

January 31, 2019

Service New Brunswick
Years under review: 2016-2017, 2017-2018
Opportunities New Brunswick
Years under review: 2016-2017, 2017-2018

February 1, 2019

WorkSafeNB
Year under review: 2017

February 5, 2019

Ambulance New Brunswick
Years under review: 2016-2017, 2017-2018
New Brunswick Power Corporation
Years under review: 2016-2017, 2017-2018

February 6, 2019

Recycle New Brunswick
Years under review: 2015, 2016, 2017
Horizon Health Network
Years under review: 2015-2016, 2016-2017, 2017-2018

Ordered that the report be received, and leave granted.

Mr. Melanson, from the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, presented the First Report of the Committee for the session which was read and is as follows:

March 26, 2019

To The Honourable
The Legislative Assembly of
The Province of New Brunswick

Mr. Speaker:

Your Standing Committee on Public Accounts begs leave to submit this, their first report.

The report outlines the Committee's activities since it last reported during the Fourth Session of the 59th Legislative Assembly.

And your Committee begs leave to make a further report.

(Sgd. :) Roger Melanson, M.L.A.
Chair

The full report of the Committee as presented follows:

Election of Chair and Vice-Chair

Pursuant to Standing Rule 99, the Clerk convened a meeting of the Committee on December 11, 2018, and presided over the election of a Chair and Vice Chair.

On motion of Mr. LeBlanc, Mr. Melanson was elected Chair of the Committee.

On motion of Mr. Crossman, Mr. Fairgrieve was elected Vice-Chair of the Committee.

Committee Activities

The Standing Committee on Public Accounts held a joint session with the Standing Committee on Crown Corporations to receive and review the following:

January 16, 2019

Office of the Auditor General of New Brunswick

Under review: Report of the Auditor General of New Brunswick 2018, Volume II - Performance Audit and Volume III - Financial Audit.

Volume II presented performance audit reports on improving student performance and managing injured workers' claims. It also presented a follow-up on performance audit recommendations from prior years and a detailed status report of performance audit recommendations since 2014.

Volume III focused on New Brunswick's year-end financial results and matters arising from the annual financial audit of the provincial government and Crown agencies including understanding key financial audit issues and observations on the state of New Brunswick's financial condition.

The Committee held meetings in the Legislative Council Chamber on February 7, 8, 19, 20, 21 and 22. The following departments appeared and answered questions concerning the years under review and Auditor General recommendations:

February 7, 2019

Treasury Board

Years under review: 2016-2017, 2017-2018

Department of Finance

Years under review: 2016-2017, 2017-2018

February 8, 2019

Department of Tourism, Heritage and Culture

Years under review: 2016-2017, 2017-2018

February 19, 2019

Aboriginal Affairs Secretariat

Years under review: 2016-2017, 2017-2018

Department of Education and Early Childhood Development

Years under review: 2016-2017, 2017-2018

February 20, 2019

Department of Social Development

Years under review: 2016-2017, 2017-2018

February 21, 2019

Department of Justice and Public Safety

Years under review: 2016-2017, 2017-2018

Department of Health

Years under review: 2016-2017, 2017-2018

February 22, 2019

Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour

Years under review: 2016-2017, 2017-2018

The Standing Committee on Public Accounts last reported during the 58th Legislative Assembly. The following activities took place prior to the appointment of your current committee.

The Standing Committee on Public Accounts held joint sessions with the Standing Committee on Crown Corporations to receive and review the following:

November 23, 2017

Office of the Auditor General of New Brunswick

*Under review: Report of the Auditor General of New Brunswick 2017
Volume III – Special Examination, Volume IV – Financial Audit, and
Volume V – Performance Audit.*

Volume III presented the special examination on Residential Property Tax Assessments in Service New Brunswick.

Volume IV focused on matters arising from the annual financial audit of the provincial government and Crown agencies including observations on the financial condition of the Province.

Volume V presented the performance report on school district purchase cards, as well as a follow-up on recommendations from prior years' performance audit chapters.

June 12, 2018

Office of the Auditor General of New Brunswick

*Under review: Report of the Auditor General of New Brunswick 2018
Volume I.*

Volume I presented performance audit reports on WorkSafeNB governance and addiction and mental health services in provincial adult correctional institutions. The volume also presented the Auditor General's concerns on the province's continuing fiscal decline and the Auditor General's eroding independence due to a lack of resources.

Ordered that the report be received, and leave granted.

Mr. C. Chiasson gave Notice of Motion 37 that on Thursday, April 4, 2019, he would move the following resolution, seconded by Mr. McKee

WHEREAS New Brunswick is one of the provinces with the highest obesity rates in Canada;

WHEREAS the government of New Brunswick seeks to promote healthy activities through Active Communities funding;

WHEREAS many local sports and leisure groups seek to use tax payer funded Department of Education and Early Childhood Development assets such as gymnasiums, sports equipment and sports fields, to promote sports and healthy active lifestyles;

WHEREAS regulations require that two custodians be on site during all such activities;

WHEREAS school districts pass on these costs directly to the group hosting the healthy living activity;

WHEREAS these costs often make it prohibitive for small groups to take part in these healthy living physical activities;

BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature urge the government to explore the feasibility of having the cost associated with the presence of two custodians covered directly by this government through Active Communities funding and/or the Departments of Education and Early Childhood Development, Health and Social Development.

Mr. Melanson gave Notice of Motion 38 that on Thursday, April 4, 2019, he would move the following resolution, seconded by Mr. Arseneault:

WHEREAS the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development recently announced he was cancelling the Confucius Institute, a Chinese cultural and language education program available in more than 28 New Brunswick schools and serving over 5400 students;

WHEREAS numerous educators and students have also criticized the decision to cancel the institute made unilaterally by the Minister without even a review of the program;

WHEREAS in discussing the rationale for his decision, the Minister cited concerns allegedly expressed to him that the curriculum presented a “one-dimensional” view of China and influenced students to only perceive the country in a positive light;

WHEREAS the Minister expressed his personal views of the Institute stating that “Their job is to create a friendly, cheerful face for a government that is responsible for more deaths than nearly any other in the history of our species”;

WHEREAS a former Canadian ambassador believes the New Brunswick government has poured “oil on the fire” of the “bilateral crisis” between Canada and China;

WHEREAS reacting to the Minister’s decision and comments about China, in a statement Canada’s Chinese embassy warned that the decision could negatively affect exchanges and cooperation between China and New Brunswick;

WHEREAS the Minister cancelled a government to government contract which could send an alarming signal to other governments doing business with New Brunswick;

WHEREAS New Brunswick enjoys a mutually beneficial relationship with China through NB – China educational partnerships like Atlantic Education International and concerns have been expressed that such educational programs could be at risk of cancellation based on the Minister's views of China;

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that the Legislature urge the government to not move forward with the cancellation of the Confucius Institute without undertaking a thorough review of the program;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature urge the government to remove all responsibilities of the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development from decision-making related to any educational partnerships with China.

Mr. C. Chiasson gave Notice of Motion 39 that on Thursday, April 4, 2019, he would move the following resolution, seconded by Ms. Thériault:

WHEREAS in 2012, the Report of the Second Language Task Force recommended that the entry point for French immersion be Grade 1;

WHEREAS leading expert literature on the subject suggests that children are more likely to be successful in learning a second language when it is introduced to them at a younger age;

WHEREAS in 2017, the previous government introduced the Grade 1 entry point for French immersion;

WHEREAS in December 2018, the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development indicated the government was considering revisiting the Grade 1 entry point for French immersion;

WHEREAS the Minister cited concerns about the Grade 2 provincial reading assessment scores as supporting a decision to move the entry point to a later year;

WHEREAS there is no evidentiary basis to support the Minister's claims that reading assessments were related to early French immersion;

WHEREAS the Minister then tried to justify his musings on moving the Grade 1 entry point with claims that there is a shortage of French immersion teachers;

WHEREAS the Minister launched an online public opinion survey on the issue that was widely criticized for being biased and containing leading questions to support the Minister's position;

WHEREAS public consultation on this important issue has been woefully inadequate;

WHEREAS instead of trying to manage issues of teacher resources and implementation, the Minister maintains the position that the only solution is to change the entry point;

WHEREAS teachers, parents and many others have expressed concerns about creating instability in the educational system if significant changes are made to the French immersion program;

WHEREAS there has been insufficient time to adequately measure the success of the program;

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to not move forward with changes to the entry point for immersion.

Mr. C. Chiasson gave Notice of Motion 40 that on Thursday, April 4, 2019, he would move the following resolution, seconded by Mr. LePage:

WHEREAS New Brunswick is the only officially bilingual province in Canada;

WHEREAS bilingualism adds hundreds of millions of dollars to our economy each year;

WHEREAS French Immersion gives New Brunswick students the opportunity to learn a second language;

WHEREAS many students in predominantly anglophone or francophone areas may not have sufficient opportunity to practice their second language outside of the classroom;

WHEREAS technology exists today to create online portals that could see students from one of our linguistic communities mentoring students from another linguistic community and vice versa;

WHEREAS practice is important when learning a second language;

BE IT RESOLVED that this Legislature urge the government to explore the possibility of developing a pilot project that would reach across linguistic lines to pair up students from both official linguistic communities through an online portal as second language mentors;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this Legislature urge the government to report back to the House as to its progress in implementing the portal no later than May 31, 2019.

Mr. Savoie, Government House Leader, announced that it was the intention of government that Bills 13, 14, 15 and 16 be called for second reading; following which the House would resume the adjourned debate on the Budget until 4.30 p.m.; at which time the House would resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider Bills 11 and 12; following which the House would consider Motion 34.

The Order being read for second reading of Bill 13, *An Act to Amend the Local Governance Act*, a debate arose thereon.

And the debate being ended, and the question being put that Bill 13 be now read a second time, it was resolved in the affirmative.

Accordingly, Bill 13, *An Act to Amend the Local Governance Act*, was read a second time and ordered referred to the Standing Committee on Economic Policy, as designated by the Government House Leader.

The Order being read for second reading of Bill 14, *An Act to Amend the Motor Vehicle Act*, a debate arose thereon.

And after some time, Mr. Speaker, at the request of Mr. Savoie, reverted to Government Motions for the Ordering of the Business of the House.

Mr. Savoie, Government House Leader, announced that it was the intention of government that the House resume the adjourned debate on the Budget until 4.30 p.m.; at which time the House would resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider Bills 11 and 12.

The Order of the Day for resuming the adjourned debate on the motion (Motion 23),

That this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government, having been read,

The debate was resumed.

And after some time, Mr. Speaker interrupted proceedings and announced that the time allotted for consideration of the adjourned debate on the Budget had expired.

The House resolved itself into a Committee of the Whole with Mr. C. Chiasson in the chair.

Mr. Arseneault rose on a point of order and submitted that Hon. Mr. Holland was not accompanied by the necessary staff to assist him with defending Bill 11. Hon. Mr. Holder spoke on the point of order. The Chair ruled the point not well taken as it was the Minister's prerogative to determine the staff required.

And after some time, Mr. Speaker resumed the chair, and Mr. C. Chiasson, the Chair, after requesting that Mr. Speaker revert to Presentations of Committee Reports, reported:

That the Committee had directed that he report progress on the following Bill:

Bill 11, *An Act to Amend the Petroleum Products Pricing Act*.

And the Committee asked leave to make a further report.

Pursuant to Standing Rule 78.1, Mr. Speaker put the question on the motion deemed to be before the House, that the report be concurred in, and it was resolved in the affirmative.

And then, 6.06 p.m., the House adjourned.