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Daily sitting 49

Thursday, November 25, 2021

*10 o'clock a.m.*

Prayers.

Mr. Speaker rose to address the point of order raised the previous day and ruled the point well taken as such comments could be interpreted as questioning the integrity of Members. Mr. Speaker reminded Members to direct their comments through the Chair and to be respectful.

Mr. Arseneault rose on a point of order and requested that the Speaker expand the scope of the ruling. Mr. Speaker ruled the point not well taken as the ruling was directed at both sides of the House.

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Ms. Mitton gave Notice of Motion 85 that on Thursday, December 2, 2021, she would move the following resolution, seconded by Mr. Coon:

THAT an address be presented to Her Honour the Lieutenant-Governor, praying that she cause to be laid upon the table of the House a list of the projects and the amount spent on each that the government has invested amounting to \$1-billion as it relates to investment towards wind energy in New Brunswick as stated by the Minister of Natural Resources and Energy Development during Question Period on November 12, 2021.

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Hon. Mr. Savoie gave notice that on Friday, November 26, 2021, Private Bill 64 would be called for second reading.

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Hon. Mr. Savoie, Government House Leader, announced that it was the intention of government that the House recess until 2.30 p.m., at which time Opposition Members' Business would be considered.

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At 11.15 a.m. the House recessed. At 2.30 p.m. the House resumed with Ms. Anderson-Mason, the Deputy Speaker, in the chair.

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Pursuant to Notice of Motion 83, Mr. McKee moved, seconded by Mr. LePage:

WHEREAS the COVID-19 pandemic has been the cause of deaths and serious illness in New Brunswick, as it has in other provinces;

WHEREAS the COVID-19 pandemic has also had a devastating impact on many businesses;

WHEREAS the federal government has stepped up to provide significant financial assistance to provinces to help them keep citizens safe, reduce the potential for the spread of the virus, and support businesses struggling to cope with the realities of dealing with COVID-19;

WHEREAS many provinces were grateful for this financial support provided by the federal government and made sure that it was utilized for the purposes for which it was intended;

WHEREAS it has come to light that the Higgs government diverted much of the federal COVID-19 financial assistance to general revenues for political purposes;

WHEREAS, had this money been used for the purpose for which it was intended, it may have allowed our province to dedicate more resources to the fight against COVID-19 and the goal of keeping New Brunswickers safe;

WHEREAS there is public outrage that the Premier would pocket much-needed monies provided for addressing our serious pandemic needs to try to create the illusion that he is a good fiscal manager;

WHEREAS public funds designed to aid the province in dealing with a public health crisis should never be used to support a government's political agenda;

BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to adopt a policy that would prevent federal funds directed to address a pandemic or other serious public health crisis from being used for any other purpose;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to provide a full public accounting for all federal funding provided to New Brunswick in support of the COVID-19 pandemic.

And the question being put, a debate ensued.

And the debate being ended, and the question being put, Motion 83 was resolved in the negative.

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Pursuant to Notice of Motion 84, Mr. McKee moved, seconded by Mr. K. Chiasson:

WHEREAS property tax assessments on residential properties have been increasing year over year across the province;

WHEREAS a demand for housing in New Brunswick has driven up the market value of residential property throughout the province;

WHEREAS many people on fixed incomes are finding it difficult to afford a significant rise in their property tax due to increased assessments;

WHEREAS, even though there is a cap limiting the rise of assessments to 10 percent in a given year, homeowners may still face significant assessment increases year after year, resulting in a cumulative unjustifiable tax hike;

WHEREAS this latest assessment increase will provide a significant revenue windfall for municipalities and the province;

WHEREAS there is no direct correlation between the rise of assessments and the costs to municipalities and the province to provide services like water and sewerage, garbage pickup, or other services;

WHEREAS there is no obligation on municipalities or the province to reduce their tax rates to help offset the financial impact of rising assessments;

WHEREAS the province should put the interests of homeowners before its own interests and ensure that residential taxpayers are not facing undue hardship;

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to establish a mechanism whereby tax rates are adjusted downward if real property assessments increase beyond a certain threshold each year.

And the question being put, a debate ensued.

And after some time, Madam Deputy Speaker interrupted proceedings and announced that the hour of daily adjournment had arrived.

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And then, 6 p.m., the House adjourned.