

Daily sitting 54

Friday, December 3, 2021

*9 o'clock a.m.*

Prayers.

At the request of Hon. Ms. Scott-Wallace, the House observed a moment of silence in recognition of the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women.

Mr. Hogan gave Notice of Motion 89 that on Thursday, December 9, 2021, he would move the following resolution, seconded by Mr. Turner:

THAT, notwithstanding the Standing Rules of the Legislative Assembly, following the adoption of this motion, there shall be 56 hours allocated for the proceedings at all stages of the passage of Bills 66, 67, 68, 70, 77, 80, 82, 83 and 84, which shall include the hours spent considering said Bills from November 3, 2021, and onward, and at the expiration of the said 56 hours, unless sooner concluded, the Speaker, or the Chair of the Standing Committee on Economic Policy as the case may be, shall interrupt the proceedings and put every question necessary to dispose of the order for second reading of the said Bills; the order for consideration of the said Bills in committee and report of the Bills to the House; and the order for third reading and passage of the said Bills; and where necessary, the said Bills shall be allowed to advance more than one stage in one day;

THAT, notwithstanding the expiry of the said 56 hours, there shall be, if necessary, 20 minutes allocated at committee stage for the consideration of any of the said Bills, if requested by the Government House Leader.

Mr. McKee gave Notice of Motion 90 that on Thursday, December 9, 2021, he would move the following resolution, seconded by Mr. Arseneault:

WHEREAS, in the March 2021 budget, the Higgs government projected a deficit of \$245 million for the fiscal quarter ending June 30, 2021;

WHEREAS, although the first quarter fiscal update numbers for June 30 are known to the government in July and are usually released in July or August, the government announced without explanation that they would not be available until September 2, 2021;

WHEREAS the government subsequently delayed the announcement of the first-quarter fiscal update even further, until October 13, 2021, when the second fiscal quarter was over;

WHEREAS this additional delay was also without explanation and makes a mockery of openness and transparency;

WHEREAS the fiscal update showed that, instead of a deficit of \$245 million, the province actually recorded a surplus of \$160 million;

WHEREAS such a significant gap clearly shows that the government doctored the March 2021 budget;

WHEREAS it soon became painfully obvious that the government surplus was based on the fact that it had pocketed \$300 million provided by the federal government that was intended to be used to help New Brunswickers get through the pandemic and that the government had spent \$300 million dollars less than it had budgeted;

WHEREAS, since the government made a decision to significantly reduce provincial spending and knew that its own-source revenues had increased significantly, it would have known that it would have a surplus, yet intentionally forecast the \$245 million deficit;

WHEREAS it appears that revenue information has been deliberately omitted from the fiscal forecasts;

WHEREAS, in macabre irony, it was the Premier who brought in the *Fiscal Transparency and Accountability Act* in 2014 when he was Finance Minister, and yet he has completely abandoned the principles that he espoused when the legislation was introduced;

WHEREAS, in a democratic society, the public should expect that its government will provide timely fiscal updates that are as accurate as possible using all the financial means available to it;

WHEREAS government has been secretive and omitted information crucial to budget forecast for political reasons;

WHEREAS, in order to ascertain what information was available to government when it made its fiscal forecasts, senior officials with the Executive Council Office and the Department of Finance and Treasury Board should appear before the Standing Committee on Public Accounts to provide complete disclosure;

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to support a call by the Chair of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts to request that senior officials from the Executive Council Office and the Department of Finance and Treasury Board appear before the Standing Committee on Public Accounts to provide committee members and other MLAs the opportunity to obtain the information available at the time fiscal forecasts were made and to explain the inability to deliver more accurate fiscal forecasts;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to request that the Auditor General conduct an investigation into this serious issue.

Hon. Mr. Savoie, Government House Leader, deferred third reading of certain bills to a later date and announced that it was the intention of government that Bills 82, 83 and 84 be called for second reading.

Debate resumed on the adjourned debate on the motion that Bill 82, *An Act Respecting Local Governance Reform*, be now read a second time.

And after some time, Ms. Anderson-Mason, the Deputy Speaker, took the chair as Acting Speaker.

And after some further time, Ms. Mitton, seconded by Mr. Arseneau, moved in amendment:

#### AMENDMENT

THAT the motion for second reading be amended by deleting all the words after the word “that” and substituting the following:

“Bill 82, *An Act Respecting Local Governance Reform*, be not now read a second time but that the order for second reading be discharged and the subject matter of the Bill referred to the Standing Committee on Law Amendments.”

Madam Deputy Speaker put the question on the proposed amendment and a debate ensued.

At 12.54 p.m. the House recessed. At 1.03 p.m. the House resumed.

And after some time, Mr. Speaker resumed the chair.

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

And then, 2 p.m., the House adjourned.

The following document, having been deposited with the Clerk of the House, was deemed laid upon the table of the House pursuant to Standing Rule 39:

Annual Report 2020-2021

Department of Agriculture, Aquaculture  
and Fisheries

December 2, 2021