

Daily sitting 7

Thursday, October 26, 2023

*1 o'clock p.m.*

Prayers.

Mr. Legacy gave Notice of Motion 11 that on Thursday, November 2, 2023, he would move the following resolution, seconded by Mr. K. Chiasson:

WHEREAS the tax applied to electricity rates disproportionately impacts low-income individuals and families who spend a larger percentage of their income on basic necessities of life;

WHEREAS the rising cost of living for necessities including rent, fuel, and groceries is forcing people to make difficult choices;

WHEREAS home heating is a basic necessity of life in New Brunswick and 45% of New Brunswickers rely on electricity as their primary source for home heating;

WHEREAS the government has increased funding to accelerate the adoption of heat pumps in households across New Brunswick and is proud of its fiscal position, which includes a \$1-billion surplus;

WHEREAS, in the 2<sup>nd</sup> session of the 60<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly, the Legislative Assembly adopted Motion 30, urging the government to study the financial impact of removing the provincial portion of HST from residential electricity bills;

WHEREAS the Minister of Natural Resources and Energy Development has received the relevant information on the financial impact;

BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to remove the provincial portion of HST from residential electricity bills from January 1, 2024.

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Mr. McKee gave Notice of Motion 12 that on Thursday, November 2, 2023, he would move the following resolution, seconded by Mr. Arseneault:

WHEREAS there is a need to revisit the decision regarding the funding of the new RSV (respiratory syncytial virus) vaccine for seniors to enhance their overall health and well-being;

WHEREAS there is a general consensus on the importance of funding the RSV vaccine for seniors to alleviate the strain on hospitals and ensure more efficient healthcare resource allocation;

WHEREAS it is evident that RSV is a significant contributor to hospital admissions during certain periods of the year and that redirecting the funding of the associated hospital costs could serve to provide vaccines to a substantial number of seniors in need;

WHEREAS RSV disproportionately affects people aged 65 and older, infants, and immunocompromised individuals, leading to hospitalization and, in some cases, fatalities;

BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to fund the voluntary RSV vaccine beginning in 2023 for seniors and other vulnerable groups, considering the potential benefits it represents for public health and healthcare system efficiency;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to classify RSV as a notifiable disease under public health regulations, which will enable the collection of essential data for a more informed response to this health challenge.

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Ms. Thériault gave Notice of Motion 13 that on Thursday, November 2, 2023, she would move the following resolution, seconded by Ms. Holt:

WHEREAS pay equity is an internationally recognized human right;

WHEREAS, in 2017, the Institute for Women's Policy Research estimated that pay equity would halve the poverty rate among working women;

WHEREAS the care sector is one of the main employment sectors for women in New Brunswick, but one of the least well-paid and most undervalued;

WHEREAS, in New Brunswick, women make up the majority of the 11 000 people employed by some 700 community care agencies in rural and urban areas;

WHEREAS care services meet the needs of the most vulnerable groups, including seniors, children, and people living with disabilities or mental illness;

WHEREAS the sector includes home care, daycares, specialized care homes, community residences, family support, the Employment and Support Services Program (ESSP), and transition houses;

WHEREAS the sector faces significant difficulties in recruiting and retaining staff, and that the lack of a long-term plan to achieve pay equity and provide better working conditions has exacerbated the crisis, hampering the quality and availability of care;

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to develop a plan before April 1, 2024, to achieve pay equity across the community care sector by 2026, including:

- (a) public investments in salaries in the sector until pay equity is achieved;
- (b) the development of salary scales that take into account pay equity;
- (c) the annual indexation of these salary scales according to the Consumer Price Index;
- (d) pay equity exercises for all jobs in the community care sector that have not been evaluated;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to subsequently ensure the maintenance of pay equity every five years, to cover the cost of social benefits (health insurance, paid sick leave, pension) and to develop a process of more rigorous verification of the transfer of wage subsidies to female employees and a complaint system for the sector's workforce.

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Mr. Coon gave Notice of Motion 14 that on Thursday, November 2, 2023, he would move the following resolution, seconded by Ms. Mitton:

WHEREAS New Brunswickers are struggling to make ends meet due to rising energy costs;

WHEREAS the Enhanced Energy Savings Program has been effective in promoting energy efficiency, reducing energy costs for low-income families, and decreasing greenhouse gas emissions;

WHEREAS, although the provincial government recently announced that it will spend another \$30 million on the Enhanced Energy Savings Program, an investment of \$150 million is needed to clear the existing waitlist of about 16,000 households;

WHEREAS there is a growing need to address the energy efficiency concerns of moderate-income households, which may not qualify for the Enhanced Energy Savings Program under the current income threshold;

WHEREAS NB Power is projected to expand its energy efficiency savings target to 0.75 % of sales by 2028-29, below what is recommended by experts;

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to invest a minimum of \$120 million to clear the Enhanced Energy Savings Program's existing waitlist;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to raise the income threshold of the Enhanced Energy Savings Program to \$75,000 and establish zero-interest loans for moderate income households to furnish the capital for cost-effective energy retrofits of homes;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to raise the energy efficiency savings target to 1.5% of sales by 2025.

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Pursuant to Notice of Motion 8, Ms. Landry moved, seconded by Ms. Thériault:

WHEREAS the government in its Speech from the Throne has committed to creating 550 additional designated childcare spaces, despite a waitlist of 3,300 and continued population growth, which increases the demand on childcare services in New Brunswick;

WHEREAS families in New Brunswick are struggling with the growing cost of living, including access to affordable childcare services;

WHEREAS limited access to childcare is a major obstacle, especially for women returning to the labour market;

WHEREAS families in New Brunswick face increased childcare costs for school-aged children;

BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to table, no later than April 1, 2024, a human resources plan for the childcare sector;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to present a formal plan, no later than April 1, 2024, to allocate additional subsidized childcare spaces to eliminate the waitlist and respond to expected demographic growth.

And the question being put, a debate ensued.

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

And after some further time, Hon. Mr. Hogan, seconded by Hon. Ms. Johnson, moved in amendment:

#### AMENDMENT

That Motion 8 be amended by deleting both resolution clauses and substituting the following:

“BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to work with Ottawa to recognize New Brunswick’s unique situation and challenges to put in place the needed flexibility to create more childcare spaces without further delay.”

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

Mr. Arseneault rose on a point of order and submitted that the amendment was out of order as it was beyond the scope of the original motion.

At 3.04 p.m. the House recessed. At 3.21 p.m. the House resumed.

Madam Deputy Speaker delivered the following ruling:

#### STATEMENT BY DEPUTY SPEAKER

Honourable Members,

I have reviewed the original motion and the proposed amendment by the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development and I find the amendment to be in order for the following reasons.

The subject matter of the proposed amendment is not foreign to the original motion, nor is the amendment a direct negative to the intent of the original motion. The resolution clauses in the original motion urge the government to table a childcare human resources plan and to present a plan to allocate additional childcare spaces, both by a certain date.

The proposed amendment urges the government to work with Ottawa to create more childcare spaces without delay.

As stated in Beauchesne's Parliamentary Rules and Forms 6<sup>th</sup> Edition at paragraph 567: *The object of an amendment may be to either modify a question in such a way as to increase its acceptability or to present to the House a different proposition as an alternative to the original question.*

Accordingly, I find the amendment to be in order.

Debate resumed.

And after some time, Ms. Conroy took the chair.

And after some further time, Mr. C. Chiasson, seconded by Ms. Thériault, moved a sub-amendment:

#### SUB-AMENDMENT

That the amendment to Motion 8 be amended by deleting the words "to work with Ottawa" and substituting the following:

"to use the tools currently at its disposal to help New Brunswick families access more childcare services and to meet urgently with the Government of Canada no later than December 1, 2023,"

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

At 4.21 p.m. the House recessed. At 4.36 p.m. the House resumed with Mr. Speaker in the chair.

At the request of Hon. Mr. G. Savoie, it was agreed by unanimous consent to remove the words "to use the tools currently at its disposal" from the sub-amendment.

And the debate being ended, and the question being put, the sub-amendment was adopted.

Mr. Speaker put the question on the amendment as amended and it was adopted.

Mr. Speaker put the question on Motion 8 as amended as follows:

WHEREAS the government in its Speech from the Throne has committed to creating 550 additional designated childcare spaces, despite a waitlist of 3,300 and continued population growth, which increases the demand on childcare services in New Brunswick;

WHEREAS families in New Brunswick are struggling with the growing cost of living, including access to affordable childcare services;

WHEREAS limited access to childcare is a major obstacle, especially for women returning to the labour market;

WHEREAS families in New Brunswick face increased childcare costs for school-aged children;

BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to help New Brunswick families access more childcare services and to meet urgently with the Government of Canada no later than December 1, 2023, to recognize New Brunswick's unique situation and challenges to put in place the needed flexibility to create more childcare spaces without further delay.

And the question being put, Motion 8 as amended was resolved in the affirmative.

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Pursuant to Notice of Motion 5, Mr. McKee moved, seconded by Mr. Losier:

WHEREAS New Brunswick's healthcare system has been grappling with a multitude of challenges, including critical shortages of healthcare workers and staffing retention issues that need to be addressed;

WHEREAS patients in New Brunswick endure prolonged wait times for essential healthcare services;

WHEREAS New Brunswick has a significant senior population and one of the highest rates of chronic health conditions in the nation, which further emphasizes the pressing need for a healthcare system that is readily accessible to all residents;

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to table, no later than April 1, 2024, a healthcare worker retention plan.

And the question being put, a debate ensued.

And after some time, Ms. Anderson-Mason resumed the chair.

And after some further 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.