

Daily sitting 29

Tuesday, May 17, 2016

1 o'clock p.m.

Prayers.

The Honourable the Premier delivered to Mr. Speaker a Message from Her Honour the Lieutenant-Governor, and the said Message was read by Mr. Speaker, all the Members standing, and is as follows:

Fredericton, New Brunswick.
April 7, 2016.

Mr. Speaker and Members of the Legislative Assembly:

I thank you for your Address and beg to assure you that I entertain the fullest confidence that in all your deliberations you will be guided by a most earnest desire to promote the happiness and prosperity of the people of this province.

(Sgd.:) Jocelyne Roy Vienneau.
Lieutenant-Governor.

Mr. Speaker welcomed Bell Aliant viewers watching the proceedings of the Legislature and advised the House that New Brunswickers now have access to the broadcast of the proceedings on the Bell Aliant community television channel.

The Honourable the Premier welcomed to the House His Excellency Ousmane Paye, the Ambassador of Senegal to Canada. Ms. Dubé joined in this regard.

Mr. Crossman, Member for Hampton, laid upon the table of the House a petition on behalf of residents of Back River Road in Kings County urging the government to repair and chip seal the road. (Petition 35)

Mr. Coon, Member for Fredericton South, laid upon the table of the House a petition urging the Legislature to support increased access to abortion services. (Petition 36)

Mr. Wetmore, Member for Gagetown-Petitcodiac, laid upon the table of the House a petition urging the Legislature to reinstate the Gagetown Ferry service. (Petition 37)

Mr. Bernard LeBlanc, from the Standing Committee on Estimates and Fiscal Policy, presented the First Report of the Committee for the session which was read and is as follows:

May 17, 2016

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

Mr. Speaker:

Your Standing Committee on Estimates and Fiscal Policy begs leave to submit this, their First Report.

Your Committee met in the Legislative Assembly Chamber on February 16, 17, 18, 23, 24, 25, 26, March 1, 2, 3, 4, 22, 23, April 20 and 21, 2016, to consider the estimates referred to your Committee by resolution of the House adopted February 12, 2016.

Your Committee wishes to report that they have passed all remaining estimates referred to them and outlined in this report. Your Committee recommends that these estimates be concurred in by the House.

(Sgd. :) Bernard LeBlanc, M.L.A.
Chair

The following are the items that were passed by the Committee:

MAIN ESTIMATES, 2016-2017

RESOLVED, that there be granted to Her Majesty sums not exceeding the following to defray the expenses of the following program allocations for the fiscal year ending the 31st of March, 2017:

ORDINARY ACCOUNT	Voted (\$)
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, AQUACULTURE AND FISHERIES	
Management Services	3,254,000
Industry Programs and Policy	19,360,000
Regional Development	14,595,000
Less amounts authorized by law	47,000
Voted	37,162,000

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT	
Corporate and Other Education Services	65,624,000
School Districts	987,663,000
Early Childhood Development	84,599,000
Less amounts authorized by law	47,000
Voted	1,137,839,000
 DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY AND MINES	
Administration	616,000
Policy Management and Business Development	2,646,000
Resource Exploration, Development and Management ...	5,057,000
Less amounts authorized by law	47,000
Voted	8,272,000
 DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT	
Corporate Services	3,950,000
Local Government	121,134,000
Environment	12,927,000
Assessment and Planning Appeal Board	318,000
Community Funding	152,000
Less amounts authorized by law	47,000
Voted	138,434,000
 EXECUTIVE COUNCIL OFFICE	
Executive Council Secretariat	2,437,000
Corporate Communications	3,974,000
Office of the Lieutenant-Governor	340,000
Women's Equality Branch	2,818,000
Intergovernmental Affairs	2,381,000
Voted	11,950,000
 DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE	
Financial Resource Management	13,887,000
Office of the Comptroller	3,106,000
Less amounts authorized by law	47,000
Voted	16,946,000
 GENERAL GOVERNMENT	
Aboriginal Affairs Secretariat	2,538,000
Commissions Paid to Collectors of Pari-Mutuel Taxes . . .	350,000
Equal Employment Opportunity Program	363,000
Jobs Board Secretariat	1,030,000

Legislated Pension Plans, Benefit Accruals, Subsidies, and Supplementary Allowances	153,263,000
Less amounts authorized by law	164,000
Voted	153,099,000
Office of the Clerk and Head of the Public Service	6,668,000
Pension and Employee Benefits Plan	314,563,000
Less amounts authorized by law	2,000
Voted	314,561,000
Provision for Losses	12,200,000
Revenue Sharing Agreements with First Nations	47,200,000
Service New Brunswick	141,505,000
Supplementary Funding Provision	110,063,000
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH	
Corporate and Other Health Services	267,084,000
Medicare	606,956,000
Drug Programs	198,935,000
Regional Health Authorities	1,507,797,000
Less amounts authorized by law	47,000
Voted	2,580,725,000
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES	
Human Resource Management	3,594,000
DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE	
Administration and Planning	3,369,000
Court Services	33,758,000
Legal Aid	7,830,000
Voted	44,957,000
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY	
Members' Allowances, Committees and Operations	8,012,000
Less amounts authorized by law	4,272,000
Voted	3,740,000
Office of the Legislative Assembly	3,564,000
Office of the Auditor General	2,109,000
Offices of Leaders and Members of Registered	
Political Parties	1,603,000
Less amounts authorized by law	90,000
Voted	1,513,000

Elections New Brunswick	7,313,000
Less amounts authorized by law	668,000
Voted	6,645,000
Office of the Ombudsman	917,000
Office of the Child and Youth Advocate	916,000
Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages	514,000
Office of the Consumer Advocate for Insurance	476,000
Office of the Access to Information and Privacy Commissioner	606,000
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES	
Administration	6,663,000
Forest Management and Protection	60,872,000
Fish and Wildlife Management	2,229,000
Land Management	4,590,000
Regional Operations	17,343,000
Less amounts authorized by law	47,000
Voted	91,650,000
OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL	
Attorney General	17,641,000
OFFICE OF THE PREMIER	
Administration	1,598,000
Less amounts authorized by law	67,000
Voted	1,531,000
OPPORTUNITIES NEW BRUNSWICK	
Administration and Business Development Services	16,308,000
Financial Assistance	30,184,000
Voted	46,492,000
OTHER AGENCIES	
Consolidated Entities	258,455,000
Less amounts authorized by law	258,455,000
Voted	0
Council of Atlantic Premiers	642,000
Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation	2,799,000
Labour and Employment Board	629,000
New Brunswick Police Commission	361,000
Premier's Council on the Status of Disabled Persons	287,000
Voices of New Brunswick Women Consensus- Building Forum	421,000

DEPARTMENT OF POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION, TRAINING AND LABOUR	
Corporate Services	5,591,000
NB Public Libraries	17,201,000
Post-Secondary Education	161,636,000
Adult Learning	11,125,000
Labour and Policy	7,891,000
Employment Development	27,712,000
Canada-New Brunswick Job Fund Agreement	10,682,000
Labour Market Development	89,148,000
Population Growth	5,775,000
Less amounts authorized by law	47,000
Voted	336,714,000
DEPARTMENT OF POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION, TRAINING AND LABOUR	
Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission	273,224,000
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY	
Community, Corrections and Corporate Services	49,258,000
Public Security and Emergency Services	99,851,000
Safety Services	30,075,000
Less amounts authorized by law	47,000
Voted	179,137,000
REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION	
Development Projects and Operations	79,922,000
SERVICE OF THE PUBLIC DEBT	
Service of the Public Debt	700,000,000
Less amounts authorized by law	694,474,000
Voted	5,526,000
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT	
Corporate and Other Services	11,695,000
Child Welfare and Youth Services	123,483,000
Long Term Care	656,891,000
Income Security	241,127,000
Housing Services	88,220,000
Wellness	7,307,000
Other Benefits	35,700,000
Less amounts authorized by law	47,000
Voted	1,164,376,000

DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM, HERITAGE AND CULTURE

Administration	2,829,000
Sport and Recreation	6,583,000
Culture	16,154,000
Tourism and Parks	25,948,000
Less amounts authorized by law	47,000
Voted	51,467,000

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Administration	14,360,000
Policy, Planning and Strategic Development	1,709,000
Maintenance	59,395,000
Winter Maintenance	69,069,000
Bridge and Highway Construction	1,628,000
Buildings Group	127,020,000
New Brunswick Highway Corporation	19,719,000
Less amounts authorized by law	19,101,000
Voted	273,799,000

CAPITAL ACCOUNT

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, AQUACULTURE AND FISHERIES

Capital Equipment	100,000
Strategic Infrastructure	1,000,000
Voted	1,100,000

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

Public Schools - Capital Equipment	2,060,000
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DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Local Service Districts	1,000,000
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DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Public Hospitals - Capital Equipment	19,000,000
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DEPARTMENT OF POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION, TRAINING
AND LABOUR

Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission Deferred Maintenance Program	2,000,000
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REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

Canada-New Brunswick New Building Canada Fund- Small Communities Fund	9,500,000
Economic Development, Innovation and Infrastructure . .	2,707,000
Strategic Economic Infrastructure Fund	35,000,000
Voted	47,207,000

SERVICE NEW BRUNSWICK

Laundry Services - Capital Equipment	3,411,000
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DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM, HERITAGE AND CULTURE

Capital Improvements	2,295,000
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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Bridges	75,910,000
Highways	227,540,000
Municipal Designated Highway Program	25,000,000
Federal-Provincial Cost-Shared Program	48,860,000
Vehicle Management Agency	14,000,000
Public Works and Infrastructure	186,717,000
Less amounts authorized by law	67,236,000
Voted	510,791,000

LOANS AND ADVANCES

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, AQUACULTURE AND FISHERIES

New Brunswick Agricultural Insurance Commission	1,600,000
Loan Programs	9,500,000
Voted	11,100,000

OPPORTUNITIES NEW BRUNSWICK

Financial Assistance to Industry	60,000,000
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DEPARTMENT OF POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION, TRAINING
AND LABOUR

Student Loan Advances	62,900,000
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REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

Financial assistance to community based infrastructure	8,400,000
Northern New Brunswick Economic Development and Innovation Fund Loan Program	4,000,000
Miramichi Regional Economic Development and Innovation Fund Loan Program	1,000,000
Voted	13,400,000

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Housing	3,224,000
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WORKING CAPITAL - MAXIMUM BALANCES

WORKING CAPITAL ADVANCES

Agriculture, Aquaculture and Fisheries	1,100,000
Education and Early Childhood Development	350,000
General Government	100,000
Health	1,225,000
Justice	10,000
Office of the Attorney General	5,000
Social Development	1,900,000
Tourism, Heritage and Culture	500,000
Transportation and Infrastructure	3,000,000

WorkSafeNB

Finance	360,000
Education and Early Childhood Development	160,000
Health	515,000
Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour	30,000
Voted	1,065,000

PETTY CASH ADVANCES

Agriculture, Aquaculture and Fisheries	24,000
Education and Early Childhood Development	122,000
Environment and Local Government	5,000
Health	2,000
Justice	20,000
Natural Resources	26,000
Office of the Attorney General	4,000
Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour	20,000
Public Safety	22,000
Social Development	24,000
Tourism, Heritage and Culture	100,000
Transportation and Infrastructure	23,000
Other (small advances)	40,000

INVENTORIES

Agriculture, Aquaculture and Fisheries	2,000,000
General Government	2,000,000
Health	8,830,000
Natural Resources	510,000
Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour	200,000
Public Safety	575,000
Social Development	100,000
Tourism, Heritage and Culture	500,000
Transportation and Infrastructure	23,000,000

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES, 2014-2015, VOLUME I

RESOLVED, that there be granted to Her Majesty sums not exceeding the following to defray the expenses of the following program allocations for the fiscal year ending the 31st of March, 2015:

ORDINARY ACCOUNT	Voted (\$)
DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT	
Regional Development Corporation	32,929,181.22
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT	
Elementary and Secondary Education	26,301,037.66
GENERAL GOVERNMENT	
Legislated Pension Plans, Benefit Accruals, Subsidies, and Supplementary Allowances	211,769,213.06
New Brunswick Police Commission	81,904.97
Provision for Losses	662,844.09
DEPARTMENT OF GOVERNMENT SERVICES	
New Brunswick Internal Services Agency (NBISA)	3,084,381.30
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY	
Elections New Brunswick	1,021,909.16
DEPARTMENT OF POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION, TRAINING AND LABOUR	
Post-Secondary Education	11,958,736.47
Adult Learning	144,241.95
Canada-New Brunswick Labour Market Agreement	4,186,993.16
Voted	16,289,971.58
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY	
Safety Services	1,071,572.27
Public Security and Corrections	21,814,613.32
Voted	22,886,185.59
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT	
Long Term Care	1,399,188.00
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE	
Administration	108,937.40
Maintenance	3,303,424.45
Winter Maintenance	20,210,317.47
Voted	23,622,679.32

CAPITAL ACCOUNT

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Permanent Highways 17,182,081.43

LOANS AND ADVANCES

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Loans and Advances Program 313.73

Pursuant to Standing Rule 78.2, 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.

Mr. LePage, from the Standing Committee on Economic Policy, presented the Fourth Report of the Committee for the session which was read and is as follows:

May 17, 2016

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

Mr. Speaker:

Your Standing Committee on Economic Policy begs leave to submit this, their fourth report.

Your Committee met on April 19, 26, 27, May 4, 10 and 11, 2016, and had under consideration:

Bill 15, *Regulatory Accountability and Reporting Act*;
 Bill 18, *An Act Respecting Fiscal Measures*;
 Bill 19, *An Act to Amend the Pension Benefits Act*;
 Bill 20, *An Act to Amend the Statute Revision Act*;
 Bill 21, *An Act to Amend the Judicature Act*;
 Bill 22, *Seafood Industry Improvement Fund Act*;
 Bill 23, *An Act to Amend the Tobacco Tax Act*;
 Bill 25, *Volunteer Emergency Aid Act*;
 Bill 28, *An Act to Amend the Securities Act*;
 Bill 29, *An Act to Amend the Commissioners for Taking Affidavits Act*;
 Bill 30, *An Act to Amend the Employment Standards Act*;
 Bill 35, *Health Quality and Patient Safety Act*;

Bill 36, *An Act to Amend the Provincial Court Act*;
Bill 37, *An Act to Amend the Off-Road Vehicle Act*;
Bill 39, *An Act to Amend the Workers' Compensation Act*;

and have agreed to the same.

Your Committee also had under consideration:

Bill 12, *An Act to Amend the Crown Construction Contracts Act*;

and have made certain progress therein.

And your Committee begs leave to make a further report.

(Sgd. :) Gilles LePage, M.L.A.
Chair

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.

Mr. Roussel, from the Standing Committee on Private Bills, presented the First Report of the Committee which was read and is as follows:

May 17, 2016

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

Mr. Speaker:

Your Standing Committee on Private Bills begs leave to submit this, their First Report of the session.

Your Committee met on May 3, 2016, in the Legislative Council Chamber and had under consideration the following Bills:

Bill 17, *An Act to Incorporate the Filles de Jésus Moncton*;
Bill 38, *Vestcor Act*;

which it recommends to the favourable consideration of the House.

And your Committee begs leave to make a further report.

I move, seconded by the Member for Restigouche-Chaleur, that the report be concurred in by the House.

(Sgd. :) Wilfred Roussel, M.L.A.
Chair

Mr. Speaker put the question on the motion of concurrence in the report of the Committee, and it was resolved in the affirmative.

The following Bills were introduced and read a first time:

By Hon. Mr. Gallant,

Bill 41, *New Brunswick Women's Council Act*.

By Hon. Mr. Fraser,

Bill 42, *An Act to Amend the New Brunswick Arts Board Act*.

By Hon. Ms. Landry,

Bill 43, *An Act to Amend the Post-Secondary Student Financial Assistance Act*.

By Hon. Mr. Horsman,

Bill 44, *An Act to Amend the Legal Aid Act*.

Bill 45, *An Act Respecting the Enforcement of Financial and Consumer Services Legislation*.

By Hon. Mr. Melanson,

Bill 46, *Supplementary Appropriations Act 2014-2015 (1)*.

Mr. Speaker announced that pursuant to Standing Rule 42.3(1), Bill 46 was ordered for second and third reading forthwith.

The following Bill was read a second time:

Bill 46, *Supplementary Appropriations Act 2014-2015 (1)*.

The following Bill was read a third time:

Bill 46, *Supplementary Appropriations Act 2014-2015 (1)*.

Ordered that the said Bill does pass.

The following Bill was introduced and read a first time:

By Hon. Mr. Melanson,

Bill 47, *Appropriations Act 2016-2017*.

Mr. Speaker announced that pursuant to Standing Rule 42.3(1), Bill 47 was ordered for second and third reading forthwith.

The following Bill was read a second time:

Bill 47, *Appropriations Act 2016-2017*.

The following Bill was read a third time:

Bill 47, *Appropriations Act 2016-2017*.

Ordered that the said Bill does pass.

Mr. Fitch gave Notice of Motion 20 that on Thursday, May 26, 2016, he would move the following resolution, seconded by Mr. Holder:

WHEREAS improving access to post-secondary education is good for individual students, for the economy and creating jobs, and for the overall betterment of our society;

WHEREAS the surprise announcement of a new funding program for post-secondary institutions has left New Brunswickers bewildered and confused, with many unanswered questions;

WHEREAS the potential negative impact of the proposed changes are enormous, especially clawing back important financial support programs that were benefiting thousands of students, graduates and their families;

WHEREAS the timing of the proposed changes, coming a few months before the start of the next school year, will leave many students and families scrambling to reassess their post-secondary dreams;

WHEREAS the Gallant Government has made the ability to attend private and extra-provincial institutions virtually impossible for low-income students - not only cutting off their freedom to choose but also the ability to enrol in study programs not offered in New Brunswick public institutions;

WHEREAS none of the proposed changes are the result of widespread consultation with the public, professors, students, or their families, nor has any evidence been produced to prove that the benefits will outweigh the heavy costs of eliminating existing programming and limiting access to a small number of schools;

WHEREAS the chaotic changes proposed by the government fail to address other outstanding issues such as teaching quality, matching training to the workforce, infrastructure deficits, financial accessibility for the middle class, or student retention;

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that this Assembly urges the Gallant Government to post-pone the proposed student financial program changes for one year;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the government give strong consideration to including private entities, such as Crandall University and Oulton's College, on the list of eligible institutions;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the government give strong consideration to creating a sliding scale for student eligibility instead of a hard cut-off point where the applicant receives all benefits or none.

Mr. Steeves gave Notice of Motion 21 that on Thursday, May 26, 2016, he would move the following resolution, seconded by Mr. Oliver:

WHEREAS there are limited opportunities for interaction among those adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), and in particular for the severely autistic;

WHEREAS adults with disabilities may have access to "at home" care but only depending on the family income levels and the health and longevity of the parents;

WHEREAS most often care services come from agencies who hire workers at a minimal wage, often without a significant level of training;

WHEREAS formal intensive interventions such as Applied Behavioural Analysis are only available to children 5 years of age and under, and are available in a less intensive manner to school aged children (to a maximum age of 21);

WHEREAS access to public services, even if it were for five hours a day during the week, would be welcomed by those families who have no limited access to options in their own home;

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that this Assembly urges the government to consider opening up the current Centres for Autism to be used as a service delivery point, depending on their capacity, to provide programming for adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder issues.

With leave of the House, Mr. Albert moved, seconded by the Honourable the Premier: (Motion 22)

THAT the proceedings of the Standing Committee on Estimates and Fiscal Policy held in the Legislative Assembly Chamber from February 16 to April 21, 2016, inclusive, to consider the estimates referred by resolution of the House adopted February 12, 2016, be included in the *Journal of Debates* for the Second Session of the Fifty-eighth Legislature of the Province of New Brunswick.

And the question being put, it was resolved in the affirmative.

Mr. Albert gave notice that on Wednesday, May 18, 2016, Bills 41, 42, 43, 44 and 45 would be called for second reading.

Mr. Albert, Government House Leader, announced that it was the intention of government that Bills 31, 32, 40 and 24 be called for second reading.

Mr. Fitch, Member for Riverview, rose on a question of privilege and submitted that the Premier was in contempt of the House when he did not appear before the Standing Committee on Economic Policy on April 26, 2016, to defend Bill 15, which he had sponsored, and instead was in the Member's riding of Riverview. In accordance with Standing Rule 9(2), Mr. Fitch gave notice of his intention to move the following motion, seconded by Ms. Dubé:

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the House take action on the matter of the breach of privilege which occurred on April 26 in the Standing Committee on Economic Policy, whereby the Premier used the scheduling of business to ensure that the Leader of the Official Opposition would be in these chambers debating Bill 15, while the Premier was in the riding of Riverview doing political style campaigning.

Mr. Speaker advised that in accordance with Standing Rule 9(2), he would consider the matter in two hours' time.

Debate resumed on the adjourned debate on the motion that Bill 31, *An Act to Amend the Harmonized Sales Tax Act*, be now read a second time.

And after some time, due to the unavoidable absence of Mr. Speaker, Ms. Harris, the Deputy Speaker, took the chair as Acting Speaker.

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

Mr. Speaker advised the House that the two hours' notice required by Standing Rule 9(2) had elapsed and recognized Mr. Fitch and Hon. Mr. Fraser to speak on the question of privilege raised earlier in the sitting day. Having heard the arguments, Mr. Speaker took the matter under advisement.

Debate resumed on the adjourned debate on the motion that Bill 31, *An Act to Amend the Harmonized Sales Tax Act*, be now read a second time.

Ms. Dubé rose on a point of order and requested that Hon. Mr. Doucet withdraw the term "misled" which he did.

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

Mr. Speaker delivered the following ruling with respect to the question of privilege:

STATEMENT BY SPEAKER

Honourable Members,

I am prepared to rule on the question of privilege that was raised earlier today by the Leader of the Opposition.

The question of privilege concerned the Premier's absence from appearing before the Standing Committee on Economic Policy on April 26 to defend Bill 15, *Regulatory Accountability and Reporting Act*, as the Premier was the sponsor of the bill. The Leader of the Opposition further submitted that the Premier should have advised him that he would be in the Leader's riding as opposed to appearing before the committee. I should note that the Leader of the Opposition had earlier raised this matter in committee and was instructed by the vice-chairman to raise the matter in the House at the earliest opportunity, which the Leader of the Opposition has done.

I have considered the arguments and reviewed the parliamentary authorities and the Standing Rules of the House. Based on my understanding of the practices of the House and other Canadian Legislatures, a member of the Executive Council, including the Premier, is not obligated to defend a government bill in committee for which he or she is the sponsor. Although it may not be the norm, any member of the Executive Council may defend a government bill in committee on behalf of a fellow Cabinet Minister. This practice has occurred in our House and, indeed, has happened on numerous occasions over the past several years.

The reasons why a Minister may not be present to defend a bill in a committee may include, for instance, other legislative or government responsibilities or family commitments. The acceptability of the reason is not for the Speaker to decide. Ministers and other Members have the ability to ask fellow Members to introduce a bill or motion or to defend a bill in committee on their behalf. This is clearly the practice that has been established in this House.

As well, the Premier is not obligated, nor is any other Minister or Member, to advise any Member of this House as to when he or she will be visiting a Member's riding for political, government, or other business. I believe that Ministers may advise the public of announcements or other government activity, but this is a courtesy and certainly not an obligation under the rules.

Accordingly, I find that a *prima facie* case of breach of privilege has not been established, and the proposed motion will not go forward to the House.

And then, 6.18 p.m., the House adjourned.

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

Response to Petitions 17, 26	April 12, 2016
Response to Petitions 21, 28, 30, 32	April 15, 2016
Response to Petition 34	April 20, 2016
Annual Report 2015	
Office of the Consumer Advocate for Insurance	April 22, 2016
Response to Petition 24	May 2, 2016
Response to Petition 15	May 4, 2016