

Daily sitting 51

Thursday, April 10, 2014

1 o'clock p.m.

Prayers.

Due to the unavoidable absence of Mr. Speaker, Mr. Urquhart, the Deputy Speaker, took the chair as Acting Speaker.

Prior to Oral Questions, Mr. Deputy Speaker advised the House that he had reviewed the Hansard from the previous sitting day, regarding the point of order raised by Mr. Fraser, and found that the language used could be viewed as unparliamentary and requested that all Members refrain from using such language in the future.

Following Oral Questions, Mr. Fraser rose on a point of order and submitted that Hon. Mr. Williams accused Mr. Haché of making “false accusations”. Hon. Mr. P. Robichaud spoke on the point of order. Mr. Deputy Speaker advised the House that the phrase in question does not question the honesty of the Member, only the accuracy of his information. Accordingly, Mr. Deputy Speaker ruled the point not well taken.

The following Private Bill was introduced and read a first time:

By Mr. Harrison,

Bill 64, *An Act Respecting the Rothesay Common*.

Ordered referred to the Standing Committee on Private Bills.

With leave of the House, Hon. Mr. P. Robichaud moved, seconded by Mr. Fraser: (Motion 46)

THAT, in addition to the estimates referred to certain standing committees by resolutions of the House adopted February 13 and March 14, 2014, the estimates of the Department of Natural Resources shall be referred to the Standing Committee on Estimates, pursuant to Standing Rule 109.

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

Pursuant to Notice of Motion 39, Mr. Fraser moved, seconded by Mr. Kenny:

WHEREAS CN Rail has announced it will abandon a 70 kilometer stretch of track between Miramichi and Bathurst; and

WHEREAS this rail line is used to provide passenger service by VIA Rail; and

WHEREAS if the line is abandoned, rail passenger service east of Quebec to the Maritimes will be in jeopardy and may cease to exist; and

WHEREAS this passenger service is an important transportation link as access to rail passenger service supports economic growth, particularly in rural areas of the province; and

WHEREAS this service connects communities and provides greater social and economic benefits for New Brunswickers; and

WHEREAS jurisdiction for inter-provincial transportation rests with the federal government; and

WHEREAS the federal government is abandoning its responsibility to ensure the people of New Brunswick have access to a crucial national transportation link;

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly urge the provincial government to call upon the Harper government to preserve passenger rail service in New Brunswick.

And the question being put, a debate ensued.

And after some time, Mr. C. Landry took the chair.

And after some further time, Hon. Mr. P. Robichaud, seconded by Hon. Mr. Williams, moved in amendment:

AMENDMENT

That Motion 39 be amended:

By adding before the first WHEREAS clause:

“WHEREAS the Government of New Brunswick has recently worked with Canadian National Railway Company (CN) to preserve freight service in northeastern New Brunswick, which includes a commitment to invest up to \$25 million dollars by the Province in rail infrastructure and CN will spend a comparable amount to maintain and operate the line, ensuring continued rail freight service for 15 years; and”;

In the first WHEREAS clause by replacing the word “will” with “intends to” and adding the word “further” before “70”;

By deleting the seventh WHEREAS clause;

In the resolution clause, by replacing all the words following “Legislative Assembly urge the” with “Government of Canada to work with Canadian National Railway and VIA Rail to ensure the preservation of the Ocean passenger rail service in northern and eastern New Brunswick”.

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

It was agreed by unanimous consent to observe a moment of silence on the passing of Hon. Mr. Jim Flaherty, former Minister of Finance and Member of Parliament for Whitby—Oshawa (2006-2014).

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

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

Mr. Deputy Speaker put the question on Motion 39 as amended as follows:

WHEREAS the Government of New Brunswick has recently worked with Canadian National Railway Company (CN) to preserve freight service in northeastern New Brunswick, which includes a commitment to invest up to \$25 million dollars by the Province in rail infrastructure and CN will spend a comparable amount to maintain and operate the line, ensuring continued rail freight service for 15 years; and

WHEREAS CN Rail has announced it intends to abandon a further 70 kilometer stretch of track between Miramichi and Bathurst; and

WHEREAS this rail line is used to provide passenger service by VIA Rail; and

WHEREAS if the line is abandoned, rail passenger service east of Quebec to the Maritimes will be in jeopardy and may cease to exist; and

WHEREAS this passenger service is an important transportation link as access to rail passenger service supports economic growth, particularly in rural areas of the province; and

WHEREAS this service connects communities and provides greater social and economic benefits for New Brunswickers; and

WHEREAS jurisdiction for inter-provincial transportation rests with the federal government;

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly urge the Government of Canada to work with Canadian National Railway and VIA Rail to ensure the preservation of the Ocean passenger rail service in northern and eastern New Brunswick.

And the question being put, Motion 39 as amended was resolved in the affirmative.

Pursuant to Notice of Motion 41, Mr. Doucet moved, seconded by Mr. Melanson:

WHEREAS the Premier had promised after the floods of 2010 a two-year project to develop a Comprehensive Emergency Measures plan “to build a robust emergency program for the region”; and

WHEREAS this plan has failed its objective; and

WHEREAS this plan was to provide training for responders and exercises to validate the emergency plans; and

WHEREAS this plan failed this objective; and

WHEREAS local citizens involved in the discussions were told at a planning meeting in August 2012, that this planning was no longer needed; and

WHEREAS southwestern New Brunswick was hit with a serious ice storm that left thousands of New Brunswick citizens without power in freezing weather for up to 13 days; and

WHEREAS representatives from the Emergency Measures Organization arrived on the scene well after the fact and certainly added to the confusion without communicating a plan with anyone; and

WHEREAS representatives of the Emergency Measures Organization left rural New Brunswick people to fend for themselves, telling people to call their local fire department; and

WHEREAS people in rural Charlotte County were given no directions from the Emergency Measures Organization on what to do or where to go; and

WHEREAS the Emergency Measures Organization and government did not provide communications updates nor advisories to the public until well after the event; and

WHEREAS the Emergency Measures Organization and government excuses as to why there was a breakdown in communications, demonstrate the Emergency Measures Organization failure since these were issues that their planning was supposed to address; and

WHEREAS the Emergency Measures Organization and the government would not allow localized states of emergency to be called when subsection 10(2) of the *Emergency Measures Act* clearly allows this community responsibility; and

WHEREAS the role of the Emergency Measures Organization in the emergency demonstrated that no “robust” plan appeared to be in place to deal with the emergency; and

WHEREAS the document provided to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts on request to the Department of Public Safety on October 29, 2013, and tabled on December 16, 2013, indicated in the Executive Summary that no “robust” plan was in place;

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick ask the Auditor General to examine the Department of Public Safety and in particular the Emergency Measures Organization to determine if a comprehensive plan is in place for the next emergency and if staff are qualified and properly trained to protect the people of New Brunswick in this role and whether paying for these positions from the NB911 Service Fund is an appropriate use of the Fund; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Emergency Measures Organization be brought to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts within 120 days for detailed questioning by the Committee; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Emergency Measures Organization be scheduled to appear at the Standing Committee on Public Accounts every year thereafter.

And the question being put, a debate ensued.

Mr. Doucet requested the unanimous consent of the House to make certain amendments to Motion 41, and unanimous consent was denied.

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

And then, 6 o'clock 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 2013

Office of the Consumer Advocate for Insurance

April 9, 2014