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Daily sitting 12

Friday, November 18, 2022

9 o'clock a.m.

Prayers.

Mr. Arseneault rose on a point of order and submitted that Hon. Mr. R. Savoie's Minister's Statement on official languages was out of order as he was not the Minister responsible for Official Languages. Mr. Speaker ruled the point not well taken.

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The following Bills were introduced and read a first time:

By Hon. Mr. Flemming, K.C.,

Bill 19, *Fiduciaries Access to Digital Assets Act*.Bill 20, *Supported Decision-Making and Representation Act*.

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Ms. Thériault gave Notice of Motion 10 that on Thursday, November 24, 2022, she would move the following resolution, seconded by Mr. Mallet:

WHEREAS New Brunswick does not have a fixed legislative calendar of sitting days;

WHEREAS there are many advantages to the public and elected members associated with having a fixed legislative calendar including those related to predictability, logistical planning and making the Legislature more family-friendly;

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly direct the Standing Committee on Procedure, Privileges and Legislative Officers to examine the options for a fixed legislative calendar and return to the Legislative Assembly within two months with recommendations.

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Mr. McKee gave Notice of Motion 11 that on Thursday, November 24, 2022, he would move the following resolution, seconded by Mr. Bourque:

WHEREAS many New Brunswickers throughout the province are worried about the difficulty they and their family members are having in obtaining crucial health services in a timely manner;

WHEREAS it is widely acknowledged that a severe shortage of health care professionals and health support workers has left our New Brunswick health care system in crisis;

WHEREAS this challenge must be recognized as a top priority that we must tackle without delay;

WHEREAS many frontline health care workers and professional health organizations have offered their insights and advice on how these challenges in our health care system can best be addressed;

WHEREAS it is in everyone's interest to heed this advice and move forward with a comprehensive health action plan;

WHEREAS Liberal Leader Susan Holt has outlined a plan to improve health care delivery and tackle our health care crisis;

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to take the following actions:

1. address the challenges that have led to emergency room service reductions and closures through the establishment of multidisciplinary care centres staffed by a mixed team of health professionals; provide additional funding for after hours community care and for training and hiring of allied health workers;
2. treat health care workers with respect, provide competitive wages, create incentives for retaining and attracting health care professionals and ensure a positive working environment that recognizes work-life balance;
3. develop an aggressive, focussed recruitment strategy that targets new graduates and promises them permanent, full-time jobs; provide targeted tuition relief and educational incentives for new entrants into programs that provide training to address health labour shortages;
4. collaborate with post-secondary training institutions and professional associations to provide enhanced training opportunities and effective recruitment programs;
5. work in tandem with communities on health care recruitment strategies and programs;
6. create a results-oriented office of health staff recruitment with laser focus, targeted objectives, and accountability.

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Ms. Thériault gave Notice of Motion 12 that on Thursday, November 24, 2022, she would move the following resolution, seconded by Mr. Gauvin:

WHEREAS the commissioners appointed to undertake a review of the *Official Languages Act* submitted their report to the Premier on December 21, 2021;

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WHEREAS, despite calls by the Official Opposition in April 2021 and the Commissioner of Official Languages in June 2021 for the Premier to respond to the report, the Premier failed to do so;

WHEREAS, by November 15, 2022, almost a year after the report was filed, the Premier had not responded to it;

WHEREAS it was recently revealed that the Premier had secretly appointed the former leader of the anti-bilingual People's Alliance party to an internal committee tasked with looking at revisions to the *Official Languages Act*;

WHEREAS the opinions and biases of the former People's Alliance leader are well known, in that he has called for the elimination of the position of Commissioner of Official Languages, has called for the merging of the two health authorities, has suggested that language proficiency requirements in the civil service be downgraded, has called for the elimination of the French immersion program, and has voiced numerous other opinions that are contrary to the spirit and intent of the *Official Languages Act*;

WHEREAS the Premier has also voiced his support for policies that would undermine the nature of bilingualism and erode the protections presently provided for under the *Official Languages Act*;

WHEREAS there is a growing concern that the Premier and his government may soon take actions that threaten the protection of minority language rights and hurt our status as Canada's only officially bilingual province;

WHEREAS there is widespread condemnation of the Premier's actions in appointing the Member for Fredericton-Grand Lake to the internal government committee deciding on whether there should be changes to the *Official Languages Act*, announcing plans to eliminate the French immersion program without data to support his decision, and mulling over other changes to official languages that would be a step backwards for the province;

WHEREAS Members of the Legislative Assembly should be provided with an opportunity to discuss the importance of the *Official Languages Act* and the dangers of taking actions to undermine it and the implementation of policies that would do likewise;

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to immediately provide a response to the Report on the Review of the *Official Languages Act*;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly urge the government not to propose any changes that would diminish the rights and protections afforded to New Brunswickers under the *Official Languages Act*.

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Mr. LePage gave Notice of Motion 13 that on Thursday, November 24, 2022, he would move the following resolution, seconded by Mr. C. Chiasson:

WHEREAS New Brunswick adopted the *Official Languages Act* in 1969, even before Canada had adopted an official languages act;

WHEREAS New Brunswick is the only officially bilingual province in Canada;

WHEREAS the House of Commons and the Senate of Canada both have standing committees on official languages;

WHEREAS the New Brunswick *Official Languages Act* contains a requirement that it be reviewed every 10 years;

WHEREAS the government has received the Report of the 2021 Review of the *Official Language Act* of New Brunswick;

WHEREAS the Official Opposition accepts all recommendations included in the commissioners' report;

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to establish a department of official languages.

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Mr. C. Chiasson gave Notice of Motion 14 that on Thursday, November 24, 2022, he would move the following resolution, seconded by Mr. LeBlanc:

WHEREAS every Member of the Legislative Assembly should have the opportunity to participate fully in the business of the Legislative Assembly;

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WHEREAS parliamentary bodies including the New Brunswick Legislature adapted to the reality of COVID-19 and modified the rules for participation by elected members in the affairs of parliaments and legislative assemblies and adopted technologies that provided for virtual participation;

WHEREAS, once the emergency order was lifted, the New Brunswick Legislative Assembly removed the option for members to participate in the business of the Legislative Assembly using virtual technology;

WHEREAS there are many compelling reasons to permit participation through the use of remote technology in certain circumstances, including the risks associated with travelling long distances in inclement weather, illness, and the difficulty faced by mothers with newborns and primary caregivers with children who require child care that may not be available outside the home;

WHEREAS women are underrepresented in politics and the lack of options for participating in the Legislative Assembly including virtual participation can be a barrier to participation and discourage women from offering as candidates for the Legislative Assembly, which is not considered a “family friendly” institution;

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly direct the Standing Committee on Procedure, Privileges and Legislative Officers to look at modifications to the Standing Rules that would permit participation in the Legislative Assembly through the use of virtual technology and report back to the Legislative Assembly within two months with recommendations for changes.

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Hon. Mr. Holder gave notice that on Tuesday, November 22, 2022, Bills 19 and 20 would be called for second reading.

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Hon. Mr. Holder, Acting Government House Leader, announced that it was the intention of government that Bill 6 be called for second reading; following which the House would resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 8.

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The Order being read for second reading of Bill 6, *An Act Respecting the Enduring Powers of Attorney Act and the Wills Act*, a debate arose thereon.

And the debate being ended, and the question being put that Bill 6 be now read a second time, it was resolved in the affirmative.

Accordingly, Bill 6, *An Act Respecting the Enduring Powers of Attorney Act and the Wills Act*, was read a second time and ordered referred to the Standing Committee on Economic Policy, as designated by the Government House Leader.

The House resolved itself into a Committee of the Whole with Ms. S. Wilson in the chair.

And after some time, Mr. Speaker resumed the chair, and Ms. S. Wilson, the Chair, after requesting that Mr. Speaker revert to Presentations of Committee Reports, reported:

That the Committee had directed that she report the following Bill as agreed to as amended:

Bill 8, *An Act to Amend the Elections Act*.

And the Committee asked leave to make a further report.

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.

It was agreed by unanimous consent that Bill 8 be ordered for third reading forthwith.

The following Bill was read a third time:

Bill 8, *An Act to Amend the Elections Act*.

Ordered that the said Bill does pass.

And then, 10.54 a.m., the House adjourned.