



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

The 27th Legislature
First Session

Standing Committee
on
Legislative Offices

Tuesday, July 29, 2008
9:34 a.m.

Transcript No. 27-1-4

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Standing Committee on Legislative Offices

Mitzel, Len, Cypress-Medicine Hat (PC), Chair
Lund, Ty, Rocky Mountain House (PC), Deputy Chair

Bhullar, Manmeet Singh, Calgary-Montrose (PC)
Blakeman, Laurie, Edmonton-Centre (L)
Campbell, Robin, West Yellowhead (PC)
Horne, Fred, Edmonton-Rutherford (PC)
Lukaszuk, Thomas A., Edmonton-Castle Downs (PC)
MacDonald, Hugh, Edmonton-Gold Bar (L)
Marz, Richard, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (PC)
Mason, Brian, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (NDP) *
Notley, Rachel, Edmonton-Strathcona (NDP)
Olson, Verlyn, QC, Wetaskiwin-Camrose (PC) **
Taft, Dr. Kevin, Edmonton-Riverview (L) ***
Webber, Len, Calgary-Foothills (PC)

* substitution for Rachel Notley
** substitution for Fred Horne
*** substitution for Laurie Blakeman

Legislative Officers

G.B. (Gord) Button	Ombudsman
Fred Dunn	Auditor General
Lorne R. Gibson	Chief Electoral Officer
Donald M. Hamilton	Ethics Commissioner
Frank Work, QC	Information and Privacy Commissioner

Support Staff

W.J. David McNeil	Clerk
Louise J. Kamuchik	Clerk Assistant/Director of House Services
Robert H. Reynolds, QC	Senior Parliamentary Counsel
Shannon Dean	Senior Parliamentary Counsel
Cheryl Scarlett	Director of Information Technology and Human Resource Services
Corinne Dacyshyn	Committee Clerk
Erin Greidanus	Committee Clerk
Jody Rempel	Committee Clerk
Karen Sawchuk	Committee Clerk
Philip Massolin	Committee Research Co-ordinator
Diana Staley	Research Officer
Rachel Stein	Research Officer
Liz Sim	Managing Editor of <i>Alberta Hansard</i>

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Tuesday, July 29, 2008

[Mr. Mitzel in the chair]

The Chair: Good morning, everyone. Thank you for taking the time to come in this morning. I'd like to call our meeting to order. Does everyone have a copy of the agenda – it was on our website – and the minutes from the last meeting?

First off, I'd like us to introduce ourselves for the record, and those members who are attending as substitutes for the original members should also indicate that in their introduction. I'm Len Mitzel, Cypress-Medicine Hat, and I chair this committee.

Mr. Bhullar: Manmeet Bhullar, Calgary-Montrose.

Mr. Campbell: Robin Campbell, West Yellowhead.

Mr. Olson: Verlyn Olson, Wetaskiwin-Camrose, here for Fred Horne.

Mr. MacDonald: Hugh MacDonald, Edmonton-Gold Bar. I would like to welcome you all to the fabulous constituency of Edmonton-Centre.

Dr. Taft: Yes. I'm Kevin Taft, sitting in for Laurie Blakeman. I might just take this moment: I'll have one very brief item, Mr. Chairman, under Other Business, just a piece of information.

The Chair: Okay.

Mrs. Scarlett: Cheryl Scarlett.

Ms Dean: Shannon Dean, Senior Parliamentary Counsel.

Mrs. Kamuchik: Louise Kamuchik, Clerk Assistant, director of House services. Good morning.

Mr. Mason: Brian Mason, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, for Rachel Notley.

Mr. Webber: Len Webber, Calgary-Foothills.

Mr. Lund: Good morning. Ty Lund, Rocky Mountain House.

The Chair: Thank you. We have the agenda. Would someone move that the agenda be adopted as circulated? That's moved by Robin Campbell.

You mentioned an addition under Other Business.

Dr. Taft: Yeah. Just a very brief item.

The Chair: All in favour of the agenda? That's carried.

You've also had the minutes of the meeting. A motion to approve the minutes of the other meeting?

Mr. Lund: I so move.

The Chair: Moved by Ty Lund. Any errors or omissions? All in favour? Opposed? That's carried.

Business arising from the minutes of the previous meeting. The main reason is the Ombudsman and the review of the terms of the contract. We'll have him come in. By the way, he hasn't met most of us, so we're going to have for his benefit, really, a round of

introductions again. Okay? We did it first for the record, and now we'll do it for Mr. Button's benefit.

Mr. Button: Good morning.

The Chair: Good morning, Mr. Button. My name is Len Mitzel. I chair this committee. I'm the MLA for Cypress-Medicine Hat. Welcome to our meeting. For your benefit, too, we're going to do a round of introductions around the table so you know who's all at the committee meeting here. I'll start with Karen.

Mrs. Sawchuk: Karen Sawchuk, committee clerk.

Mr. Bhullar: Manmeet Bhullar, MLA for Calgary-Montrose.

Mr. Campbell: Robin Campbell, West Yellowhead.

Mr. Olson: Verlyn Olson, Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

Dr. Taft: I'm sitting in for Laurie Blakeman, Gord. Kevin Taft. You know who I am.

Mrs. Scarlett: Cheryl Scarlett, director of HR and IT for the Leg. Assembly.

Ms Dean: Shannon Dean, Senior Parliamentary Counsel.

Mrs. Kamuchik: Louise Kamuchik, Clerk Assistant, director of House services.

Mr. Mason: Brian Mason, MLA for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, sitting in for Rachel Notley.

Mr. Webber: Good morning. Len Webber, Calgary-Foothills.

Mr. Lund: I'm Ty Lund, MLA for Rocky Mountain House, and I think we met when you were commander-in-chief in Red Deer for the RCMP.

Mr. Button: No. That would have been a different one.

Mr. Lund: Was it? Okay.

The Chair: And one other member, for Mr. Button's benefit.

Mr. MacDonald: My name is Hugh MacDonald, Edmonton-Gold Bar. Good morning, sir.

The Chair: Well, thank you, Mr. Button. Mr. Button is in attendance here at the committee's invitation to discuss his reappointment, and in keeping with the committee's practice, I would ask for a motion to move in camera. Moved by Robin Campbell. All in favour, say aye. Opposed? That is carried.

[The committee met in camera from 9:38 a.m. to 11:32 a.m.]

The Chair: Okay. Just for the record, Mr. Button departed the committee meeting at approximately 10:40 this morning. We are now in open session. Dr. Taft.

Dr. Taft: Yes. I just wanted to inform the committee formally in the minutes that I have asked the Auditor General to investigate the operations of the Chief Electoral Officer in relation to the conduct

of the last election. As this committee is the committee to whom both the Auditor General and the Chief Electoral Officer report, I thought I should just put that on the record. It's been in the media and elsewhere, so people probably know about it. That's a step I've taken, and it's based on very widespread concerns about the operation of the election in this preceding March.

The Chair: Okay. For the record as well you did receive a letter back from the Auditor General outlining what he was going to do.

Dr. Taft: That's right. In effect, I received a letter and I had a phone conversation with the Auditor General, and he's going to take his time to decide. The letter that he wrote to me recently was basically that he's going to consider whether he wants to proceed or not. We don't know whether there will be an investigation or not, but I thought that as a courtesy I owed it to this committee to formally let you know what's happened.

The Chair: Yeah. I have a copy of that letter as well because he copied me as the chair. He noted that his staff is reviewing the information that you gave him, and then he's going to consider the extent of any audit that he may wish to do.

Dr. Taft: Right.

The Chair: Okay.
Mr. MacDonald.

Mr. MacDonald: Yes, Mr. Chair. What is the authority of this committee to talk to the chief electoral office?

The Chair: We're the oversight committee that looks at his business plans and his budget, sir, every year. For that matter, the report hasn't been released yet from the Chief Electoral Officer. Traditionally it's about October, November that he issues his report, and then we'll be getting that.

Mr. MacDonald: Do we have the authority to investigate any matter under the Election Act?

The Chair: No. That's the Auditor General.

Mr. MacDonald: We don't.

The Chair: No.

Mr. MacDonald: Okay. Now, on the audits that are currently being conducted by the chief electoral office, I'm one of the campaigns that was randomly selected for audits, that process. Kevin is another one. I'm not sure if the leader of the third party was or the Premier's office was, but I'm told that there are up to 40 of the registered candidates being audited, their financial statements and their supporting documentation. I'm quite curious as to how this random selection process worked.

The Chair: That's beyond the purview of this committee.

Mr. MacDonald: That is beyond the purview of this committee?

The Chair: Oh, yes.

Mr. MacDonald: On the conduct of the election, the role the Premier's office has in selecting or recommending returning officers: do you think this is beyond the purview of this committee?

The Chair: I think that we have to let the Auditor General look into all of that. I mean, I think those are probably some of the comments that you made to the Auditor General, and I think that's his job. It's not ours.

Mr. MacDonald: Okay.

The Chair: We look at his report, we look at his business plan, and we look at his budgets.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you.

The Chair: Anything else on that?
Okay. Future meeting dates.

Mrs. Sawchuk: I think, Mr. Chair, it will have to wait.

The Chair: It'll have to wait. I can just let the committee know that I intend to meet with Mr. Button as quickly as possible. Then from there I guess it'll have to be a call of the chair. Karen will send out a notice and certainly ask for approval, set a number of dates that we can make something work, but we'll try and do that as quickly as possible. Within the next week I would like to meet with him, and then we can meet sometime after that if that's fine.

Mr. Lund: Mr. Chairman, I'm curious about the search that we're conducting. I would like to have a report.

The Chair: That's Mr. Campbell's committee. You can ask him.
Do you have an update, I guess?

Mr. Campbell: Well, the filing of applications actually closed on Friday. We don't have a final number, but I would say it's over a hundred applicants. Executive search will be going through the applicants and setting them up as A, B, C. We will interview a number of the candidates. We'll have to have some discussions over whether or not some of the people might be in C. Somebody might want them up in A. We'll have to have that discussion, but our mandate is still to have somebody in place for the end of October.

The Chair: So the search committee will be meeting shortly, then, won't they?

Mr. Campbell: Well, executive search will go through all the applications, and when they're done that, we'll be getting together. I would think, hopefully, towards the end of August, first week of September.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.
Is there anything else, then? Motion to adjourn. Mr. MacDonald. All in favour? Thank you.

[The committee adjourned at 11:38 a.m.]

