



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

The 30th Legislature
Second Session

Standing Committee
on
Legislative Offices

Wednesday, February 26, 2020
8 a.m.

Transcript No. 30-2-1

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Second Session**

Standing Committee on Legislative Offices

Ellis, Mike, Calgary-West (UCP), Chair
Schow, Joseph R., Cardston-Siksika (UCP), Deputy Chair

Goodridge, Laila, Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche (UCP)
Gray, Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP)
Lovely, Jacqueline, Camrose (UCP)
Nixon, Jeremy P., Calgary-Klein (UCP)
Rutherford, Brad, Leduc-Beaumont (UCP)
Schmidt, Marlin, Edmonton-Gold Bar (NDP)
Shepherd, David, Edmonton-City Centre (NDP)
Sigurdson, R.J., Highwood (UCP)
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP)

Legislative Officers

Jill Clayton	Information and Privacy Commissioner
Del Graff	Child and Youth Advocate
Glen Resler	Chief Electoral Officer, Election Commissioner
Marianne Ryan	Ombudsman, Public Interest Commissioner
Marguerite Trussler, QC	Ethics Commissioner
W. Doug Wylie	Auditor General

Support Staff

Shannon Dean	Clerk
Stephanie LeBlanc	Clerk Assistant and Senior Parliamentary Counsel
Teri Cherkewich	Law Clerk
Trafton Koenig	Parliamentary Counsel
Philip Massolin	Clerk of Committees and Research Services
Sarah Amato	Research Officer
Nancy Robert	Research Officer
Michael Kulicki	Committee Clerk
Jody Rempel	Committee Clerk
Aaron Roth	Committee Clerk
Rhonda Sorensen	Manager of Corporate Communications
Jeanette Dotimas	Communications Consultant
Tracey Sales	Communications Consultant
Janet Schwegel	Director of Parliamentary Programs
Amanda LeBlanc	Deputy Editor of <i>Alberta Hansard</i>

8 a.m. Wednesday, February 26, 2020

[Mr. Ellis in the chair]

The Chair: All right. Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. I'd like to welcome members and staff and guests to this meeting of the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices.

My name is Mike Ellis, MLA for Calgary-West and chair of this committee. I'd like to ask the members and those joining the committee at the table to introduce themselves for the record, starting to my right.

Mr. Schow: Joseph Schow, MLA, Cardston-Siksika.

Ms Goodridge: Laila Goodridge, MLA, Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche.

Ms Lovely: Jackie Lovely, MLA, Camrose constituency.

Mr. Sigurdson: R.J. Sigurdson, Highwood.

Mr. Rutherford: Brad Rutherford, MLA, Leduc-Beaumont.

Mr. Jeremy Nixon: Jeremy Nixon, Calgary-Klein.

Ms Gray: Christina Gray, Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Mr. Shepherd: Good morning. David Shepherd, Edmonton-City Centre.

Ms Sweet: Good morning. Heather Sweet, MLA, Edmonton-Manning.

Ms Cherkewich: Teri Cherkewich, Law Clerk.

Ms Dean: Good morning. Shannon Dean, Clerk of the Assembly.

Ms Rempel: Jody Rempel, committee clerk.

The Chair: Wonderful. For the record I'd like to note the following substitutions, but there are none today.

Before we turn to the business at hand, a few operational items. Please note that the microphones are operated by *Hansard*. Committee proceedings are being live streamed on the Internet and broadcast on Alberta Assembly TV. Please set your cellphones and other devices to silent for the duration of the meeting.

Next, to the agenda. A draft agenda has been made available to the committee members. Would anyone like to propose any amendments? Seeing none, would a member move a motion to approve today's agenda as circulated? All right. Ms Lovely to move that the February 26, 2020, meeting agenda of the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices be approved as circulated. All those in favour, say aye. Any opposed, say no. Hearing none, that motion is carried.

We'll then go to number 3, approval of the meeting minutes. The minutes from our last meeting were also distributed for consideration. Are there any errors or omissions to note? If not, would a member move approval of the February 5, 2020, minutes as distributed? Would somebody like to move that? Okay. Ms Goodridge to move that the minutes of the February 5, 2020, meeting of the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices be approved as distributed. All in favour, say aye. Any opposed, say no. That motion is carried.

We do have another member. If that member could just introduce himself.

Mr. Schmidt: Marlin Schmidt, Edmonton-Gold Bar.

The Chair: Thank you very much, sir.

All right. Next, officer contracts. As we move on to our main item of business today, I'd like to thank everyone for your understanding regarding the need for this early morning meeting. The first matter for discussion this morning relates to the motion that was passed at our previous meeting through which we recommended that Mr. Resler be reappointed as Chief Electoral Officer. As committee members are aware, different pieces of legislation provide for the mandate of each officer of the Legislature. It has been brought to my attention that the wording of the motion used to recommend Mr. Resler's appointment is inconsistent with the related legislation as the committee recommends the reappointment of the Chief Electoral Officer not to the Assembly but to the Lieutenant Governor in Council.

Fortunately, the process to remedy the situation is relatively straightforward. Step one is for this committee to rescind the motion adopted at the February 5, 2020, meeting and then address a new motion regarding Mr. Resler's appointment. The new motion would be that, quote, the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices recommend to the Lieutenant Governor in Council that Mr. Glen Resler be reappointed as the Chief Electoral Officer.

Are there any questions regarding process? Okay. Seeing none, would somebody like to move a motion that the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices rescind the motion passed at the February 5 – okay. Ms Goodridge would be moving that the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices rescind the motion passed at the February 5, 2020, meeting recommending to the Legislative Assembly that Mr. Resler be reappointed as the Chief Electoral Officer.

All in favour, say aye. Any opposed, say no.

That motion is carried.

Okay. That completes the first step of the process. The next step would be consideration of the new motion. Is someone prepared to move that new motion? Okay. Mr. Sigurdson would be moving that the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices recommend to the Lieutenant Governor in Council that Mr. Glen Resler be reappointed as the Chief Electoral Officer.

All in favour, say aye. Any opposed, say no. Okay.

That motion is carried.

Thank you, everyone.

That leaves us with one more item to discuss. I think that it is reasonable to anticipate that this next agenda item may involve details of contracts of the officers of the Legislature, so I would suggest that the committee, including Legislative Assembly Office committee support staff, consider moving in camera. Is there a member that would like to move us in camera?

Mr. Schow: So moved.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Schow.

Mr. Schow to move that the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices, including Legislative Assembly Office support staff, move in camera. All those in favour, say aye. Any opposed, say no. That motion is carried.

[The committee met in camera from 8:05 a.m. to 8:29 a.m.]

The Chair: Okay. Wonderful. Thank you. We've now returned. Staff have now returned to the room.

We just have a couple more items before we conclude our meeting. Members of the Official Opposition do have a motion that they would like to put forward. Ms Sweet, I can read it, but would you like to put forward the motion? And then I'll open to discussion.

Ms Sweet: Yeah. We would like to put a motion forward. Do we want to do that first, or do we want to wait until after we've...

The Chair: I believe that we first have to instruct the clerk.

Ms Sweet: We'll do it first? Okay. We would like to put a motion forward that once negotiations are complete with the Chief Electoral Officer, it be reported back to the committee. I believe that there's been a motion drafted that I'm fine with you reading out.

The Chair: Yeah. Sure. The motion by Ms Sweet would read that when the new contract for the Chief Electoral Officer is finalized, the Clerk of the Assembly will report the details to the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices.

Do we have any discussion further on this?

Ms Sweet: Mr. Chair, would you like me to provide rationale?

The Chair: Yeah. Sure.

Ms Sweet: The rationale behind our request is that we recognize that there have been some fiscal requests made by this government in regard to salaries for public-sector workers, teachers, nurses, in addition to asking within the ministry budgets for rollbacks on their spending. We now see that the government is looking at potentially providing a salary increase for the Chief Electoral Officer. Although we support all of the work that he does and we recognize that it was busy, we saw under Bill 22 the firing of the Election Commissioner due to fiscal restraint, saying that it was supposed to save Albertans money, and now what we're seeing is a potential increase in salary for the Chief Electoral Officer. At this time, if that is to move forward, we would request that the committee be notified of what the salary will end up being given the fact that with all of the other rhetoric we're hearing from the government around fiscal responsibility, Albertans have a right to know immediately what that salary is when every other public sector is being asked to take less.

The Chair: Okay. Any further comments? Sorry, Ms Gray. One second, here. We'll just allow the government member here. Mr. Schow, go ahead.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Chair. In rebuttal to that comment from Ms Sweet, I would, through you, just like to say that it is convention that the salaries are disclosed to the public at their proper time, and I think that is sufficient. Knowing the salary early doesn't benefit or hurt the public in any way, and I don't see why we'd have to break convention in the name of trying to politicize the salary of a public servant.

The Chair: Okay.

Ms Gray: I was, just in support of my colleague's motion, wanting to put on record that the full disclosure of this change to salary will not be available to Albertans until 2022 because of how this is published, and that seems like a significant delay. June 30 of this year we'll publish the 2019 salary. June 30 of next year we'll publish the 2020 salary, but that will only reflect a portion of the change because, of course, we're already starting in the year. That means that the Alberta public will not know the decisions made by this committee and the change to this particular salary line item for a significant time, which I think is a nontransparent thing. I just wanted to flag that, given the Public Sector Compensation Transparency Act and how the sunshine list is reported by the Chief Electoral Officer.

Thank you.

The Chair: Ms Gray, the clerk just advised me that the budget for this committee is disclosed with that line item. I guess my point is that it will be sooner rather than as you suggested.

Ms Gray: Thank you. Sooner than the sunshine list publication?

The Chair: Yes.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you.
Any further discussion?

Mr. Sigurdson: Just to put on record, I think that we have to realize the scope increase of this position and how much more has been put on this individual to be able to do within his job, which I think is a consideration. As well, with that, when it comes to this motion, I don't think that we should be putting any person within the public sector under scrutiny that no other public-sector worker has. It seems like they're singling him out in that manner, which I'm not in support of. It doesn't seem to be a regular practice, and I think that we have the sunshine list, which is fair and equitable, so it happens anyway.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms Sweet: Just in response to Mr. Sigurdson, the issue is not about the individual himself. The issue here is that when you say that we are singling out an individual, the government, in fact, is doing that, because you are actually telling all of the public service that they need to take rollbacks, that you've publicly come forward about around doctors, and you've torn up contracts as well as looked at cutting back nurses' salaries, looking at teachers' salaries, looking at public-service salaries. So it's not us that's targeting one individual. You, the government side, are actually the one that is talking about giving an increase to one individual at the same time as telling everybody else that they have to take rollbacks. There's the inconsistency. It's not about this individual and his ability to do the work. It's the fact that there's no consistency around how you're dealing with public-sector workers.

8:35

The Chair: Okay. I see no further indication that anybody wants to say anything on that side.

I'm going to read the motion again, and we'll vote, okay? Ms Sweet to move that

when the new contract for the Chief Electoral Officer is finalized, the Clerk of the Assembly will report the details to the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices.

All those in favour, say aye. Any opposed, say no.

That motion has been defeated.

Okay. With that, I'd like to make a motion so that we can wrap things up. Oh, sorry. Other business: are there any items of discussion regarding other business?

Nope. With that, we will continue on. The next meeting will be at the call of the chair.

Ms Sweet: Mr. Chair, sorry. I think that we still have to give direction to the clerk, or do we not? No. Okay. Sorry. Just clarifying.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Can we get a member to make a motion to adjourn? All right. Mr. Nixon, hand up first. Thank you very much, sir. All those in favour to adjourn, say aye. All right.

Have a great day.

[The committee adjourned at 8:36 a.m.]

