



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

The 30th Legislature
Second Session

Standing Committee
on
Legislative Offices

Wednesday, January 19, 2022
1 p.m.

Transcript No. 30-2-9

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Standing Committee on Legislative Offices

Rutherford, Brad, Leduc-Beaumont (UC), Chair
Milliken, Nicholas, Calgary-Currie (UC), Deputy Chair

Allard, Tracy L., Grande Prairie (UC)
Ceci, Joe, Calgary-Buffalo (NDP)
Eggen, David, Edmonton-North West (NDP)*
Frey (formerly Glasgo), Michaela L., Brooks-Medicine Hat (UC)**
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (NDP)***
Long, Martin M., West Yellowhead (UC)
Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (NDP)
Rosin, Miranda D., Banff-Kananaskis (UC)
Shepherd, David, Edmonton-City Centre (NDP)
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (UC)
Stephan, Jason, Red Deer-South (UC)****
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP)
van Dijken, Glenn, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock (UC)

* substitution for Rod Loyola

** substitution for Mark Smith

*** substitution for Heather Sweet

**** substitution for Glenn van Dijken

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
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Teri Cherkewich	Law Clerk
Trafton Koenig	Senior Parliamentary Counsel
Philip Massolin	Clerk Assistant and Director of House Services
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Sarah Amato	Research Officer
Melanie Niemi-Bohun	Research Officer
Warren Huffman	Committee Clerk
Jody Rempel	Committee Clerk
Aaron Roth	Committee Clerk
Rhonda Sorensen	Manager of Corporate Communications
Janet Laurie	Supervisor of Corporate Communications
Jeanette Dotimas	Communications Consultant
Michael Nguyen	Communications Consultant
Tracey Sales	Communications Consultant
Lyndsay Tischer	Director of Human Resources
Janet Schwegel	Director of Parliamentary Programs
Amanda LeBlanc	Deputy Editor of <i>Alberta Hansard</i>

1 p.m. Wednesday, January 19, 2022

[Mr. Rutherford in the chair]

The Chair: I'd like to call the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices to order and welcome everyone in attendance.

My name is Brad Rutherford, MLA for Leduc-Beaumont and the chair of the committee. I'd ask that the members that are joining the committee at the table introduce themselves for the record, and then we'll call on those joining us remotely. I will begin to my right.

Mrs. Allard: Thank you. Tracy Allard, MLA for Grande Prairie.

Mrs. Frey: Michaela Frey, MLA for Brooks-Medicine Hat.

Ms Rosin: Miranda Rosin, Banff-Kananaskis.

Mr. Long: Martin Long, MLA for West Yellowhead.

Mr. Eggen: Good afternoon. My name is David Eggen. I'm the MLA for Edmonton-North West.

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

Ms Cherkewich: Good afternoon. Teri Cherkewich, Law Clerk.

Ms Tischer: Good afternoon. Lyndsay Tischer, human resource services, Legislative Assembly Office.

Ms Dean: Shannon Dean, Clerk.

Ms Rempel: Good afternoon. Jody Rempel, committee clerk.

The Chair: Thank you.

Now we will go online, starting with Mr. Ceci.

Member Ceci: Thank you very much. Joe Ceci, Calgary-Buffalo.

The Chair: Ms Goehring.

Ms Goehring: Good afternoon. Nicole Goehring, MLA for Edmonton-Castle Downs and substituting for MLA Sweet, Edmonton-Manning.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Milliken.

Mr. Milliken: Nicholas Milliken, MLA, Calgary-Currie.

The Chair: Thank you.

And just for other substitutions: Mrs. Frey for Mr. Smith, Mr. Stephan for Mr. van Dijken, Ms Goehring for Ms Sweet, and Mr. Eggen for Member Loyola.

A few housekeeping items to address before we turn to the business at hand. Pursuant to the direction from the hon. Speaker Cooper I would remind everyone of the updated committee room protocols, which require that, outside of individuals with an exemption, those attending a committee meeting in person must wear a mask at all times unless they are speaking. In addition, attendees are reminded to leave an appropriate distance between themselves and other meeting participants.

Please note that the microphones are operated by *Hansard*. Committee proceedings are being live streamed on the Internet and broadcast on Alberta Assembly TV.

Members participating remotely should ensure that they are prepared to speak or vote when they are called upon, and videoconference

participants are asked, whenever possible, to have their cameras on when they are speaking. Also, just a reminder: if you're looking to get on the speaking list, just use the chat function or try to get our attention. I think that would be probably the best way. As well, please set your cellphones and other devices to silent for the duration of the meeting.

Moving on to point 2, the agenda, a draft agenda has been distributed to all committee members. Does anyone have any changes to propose?

If not, could I get a motion to approve the agenda? Mr. Shepherd has moved that the January 19, 2022, meeting agenda of the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices be approved as circulated. All those in favour in the room, please say aye. Anyone in the room opposed, please say no. Moving online, all those in favour online, please say aye. And anyone opposed online, please say no. Hearing none, that motion has carried.

Just before we move to adoption of the meeting minutes, I'd just ask Mr. Stephan to introduce himself, please, for the record.

Mr. Stephan: MLA Jason Stephan, Red Deer-South.

The Chair: Thank you.

Agenda item 3, adoption of meeting minutes. Are there any errors or omissions to note for the meeting minutes?

If not, would a member like to move a motion to approve the minutes as distributed? Mr. Long has moved that the minutes of the January 11, 2022, meeting of the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices be approved as distributed. All those in favour in the room, please say aye. Anybody in the room opposed, please say no. Moving online, all those in favour online, please say aye. And anyone opposed online, please say no. That motion has carried.

Agenda item 4, impact of Alberta's public service salary adjustments on officer estimates. Moving on to the main discussion point for today, I would suggest that the committee, along with the appropriate Legislative Assembly Office staff, consider moving in camera for our deliberations as we touch on specific details of contracts for the officers of the Legislature. If the committee is willing to do that, can I get someone who would like to move a motion that we move in camera? Mrs. Frey has moved that the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices, including Legislative Assembly Office staff, move in camera.

Do you have a question, Mr. Shepherd?

Mr. Shepherd: I wanted to speak to the motion if I could.

The Chair: Yes. Go ahead.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Chair. That was a rather rapid decision to move in camera without, really, any real information about the purpose for doing so. I was wondering if the member could provide some clarity on what the specific business was that, it was felt, needed to be debated in camera as opposed to on the record.

Mrs. Frey: Mr. Chair?

The Chair: Yeah. Go ahead, Mrs. Frey.

Mrs. Frey: Okay. Thank you. I think it's pretty clear. The chair said at the beginning of this meeting that we'd be discussing compensation, salaries, contracts, and the details of people's contracts. For clarity for the public who might be watching this right now – I'm sure we are on air right now – I think that's just good practice, and it's something that has been done historically, from my understanding, to move this in camera.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you to the member. To be clear, I'm not wishing to make any insinuations towards the member. I just want to be sure we have the opportunity to discuss. My understanding is that we have two pieces of business here. One is a discussion of the budgets of the parliamentary officers as may be impacted by some of the decisions that have been made generally around wages of the public service resulting from negotiations.

Now, the discussion of the budgets, I believe, of the officers of the Legislature, of which staffing is a component, have largely taken place on the record at a regular meeting of the committee every year. That is an annual procedure, and that is entirely on the record. Having been the chair of the committee for a number of years while we were in government and a participant since, that was the practice. Now, certainly, at all times when we have discussed the specific salaries and contracts of the officers of the Legislature, by all means those discussions have always been in camera.

So perhaps we could get some clarity on what is different, I guess, about this particular discussion about the budgets of the officers that we feel that that should take place in camera. Or is the intention simply that we would move in camera to discuss the portions that need to be in camera and traditionally have been and that we would come out of in camera for those discussions which have traditionally been on the record?

The Chair: Mrs. Frey.

Mrs. Frey: Thank you, Mr. Chair. To clarify, I appreciate the question from the member opposite. I think this meeting specifically, from what I understood, is about officers' contracts specifically, which is why I suggested to move in camera. From what I understand, we're not talking about full budget estimates until a future meeting. Like, I think that's what I understood from the clerk. I could have been wrong, and if I am wrong, then I'm happy to correct that. But that's what I understand.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you . . .

The Chair: Sorry. Hang on, Mr. Shepherd. Mr. Eggen raised his hand twice there.

Do you have a point?

Mr. Eggen: Yeah. Thank you. I think that if we could get clarification from the table in regard to that, that would be helpful, because, as the Member for Edmonton-City Centre mentioned, I think it's normal practice to talk about officers' salaries and compensation in camera but not all the other stuff.

The Chair: Okay. Fair.

Mr. Shepherd: Perhaps, Mr. Chair, then, we could get clarity from the table officers as to which of the two would be the topic of discussion. There was a fairly limited amount of information made available for us before the meeting to properly understand. Certainly, if, as Mrs. Frey indicated, we are only discussing the salaries and contracts of the legislative officers, then certainly I have no concerns, but if we are intended to discuss both, as I said, I do believe the second should be on the record. So perhaps we can get some clarity from the officers.

The Chair: Yeah. Absolutely.

Ms Rempel or Ms Dean.

Ms Dean: I believe the chair briefed the committee at its last meeting in connection with the public service salary adjustments, which would impact the salaries for the staff of the legislative

officers in terms of their budgets. But I believe the in camera discussion is dealing with the officer contracts.

The Chair: Yes. That's how I take it as well.

If you're looking for any other clarification, please let us know, but as far as I understood, the next portion is on the officers' contracts.

Yes. Go ahead.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Chair. If that is, in fact, the case, then I certainly have no issue with the committee moving in camera. If that is all that's discussed in camera, that's fine. I would say, of course, that we don't discuss what we discuss in camera, but certainly it would be my intention that if there was any further discussion on topics that would normally be on the record, I would wish to leave in camera to do so.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Okay. Fair enough.

Mrs. Frey: I appreciate the collaboration and the thoughtful tone that we're having right now. I agree with the member opposite. If it's something that we've generally had on the record before, I'd be happy to entertain that. As I said, this is just based on knowledge that I had from prior.

The Chair: Thank you for that.

Any other comments to the motion?

Hearing none – and I will try to leave a bit of an awkward pause there for folks online to jump in if they so choose.

Hearing no other questions or concerns wanting to come up, I will just call the question on the motion by Mrs. Frey to move in camera. All those in favour in the room, please say aye. Anyone in the room opposed, please say no. And moving online, all those in favour, please say aye. And anyone opposed online, please say no. That motion has carried.

We will now move in camera.

[The committee met in camera from 1:10 p.m. to 2:21 p.m.]

The Chair: All right. We are back on the record. Thank you, everybody, for your patience.

To close the discussion, then, as committee members are aware, in December the government of Alberta announced that it is lifting salary restraint measures for non-union employees under the Public Service Act. This means that some of the staff working in these offices are now eligible for a one-time in-range salary increase retroactive to December 1, 2021, and may potentially receive an additional in-range salary adjustment on their employment anniversary date, beginning in the '22-23 fiscal year.

This may result in some of the officers requiring additional funds for the current year or needing to update their '22-23 budget requests. The time to update their '22-23 estimates is quickly running out, and I will send a letter to each of the officers advising them of our decisions made today and asking them to promptly follow up with the committee with two updated budgets, one that includes only staff increases and one that also includes an increase in officer pay which parallels senior officers in the public service, and that we have a consensus to have taken in the information from today and that we will be making a decision on officers' pay at the next meeting.

Any other questions or comments to that?

Okay. Hearing none, we can move on to agenda item 5, other business. Does anyone have any other business to raise?

We are adjourned. Thank you.

Okay. Hearing none, agenda item 6. The date of the next meeting will be at the call of the chair.

Can I get a motion to adjourn?

Mrs. Allard: So moved.

The Chair: Mrs. Allard has moved that the committee adjourn for today. All those in favour in the room, please say aye. Anybody opposed in the room, please say no. And moving online, all those in favour, please say aye. And anyone online opposed, please say no. That motion is carried.

[The committee adjourned at 2:23 p.m.]

