



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

The 30th Legislature
Second Session

Special Standing Committee
on
Members' Services

Wednesday, March 18, 2020
6:15 p.m.

Transcript No. 30-2-1

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Special Standing Committee on Members' Services

Cooper, Hon. Nathan M., Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UCP), Chair
Ellis, Mike, Calgary-West (UCP), Deputy Chair

Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South (NDP)
Deol, Jasvir, Edmonton-Meadows (NDP)
Ganley, Kathleen T., Calgary-Mountain View (NDP)
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (NDP)
Goodridge, Laila, Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche (UCP)
Long, Martin M., West Yellowhead (UCP)
Neudorf, Nathan T., Lethbridge-East (UCP)
Walker, Jordan, Sherwood Park (UCP)
Williams, Dan D.A., Peace River (UCP)

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[Mr. Cooper in the chair]

The Chair: Well, hon. members, good evening. I'd like to call this meeting to order.

I'd like to begin the meeting by asking members who are joining the committee at the table to introduce themselves for the record, and then I will call on members joining via teleconference to also introduce themselves. I believe we have a member on the line. I'd like to just go around the table beginning with Jody, and we'll go all the way around, please.

Ms Rempel: Jody Rempel, committee clerk.

Mr. Ellis: Mike Ellis, Calgary-West.

Mr. Neudorf: Nathan Neudorf, Lethbridge-East.

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

Mr. Williams: Dan Williams, MLA for Peace River.

Mr. Walker: Jordan Walker, Sherwood Park.

Mr. Long: Martin Long, West Yellowhead.

Ms Ducker: Megan Ducker, special assistant to the Speaker.

Mr. Link: Paul Link, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms.

Ms Ganley: Kathleen Ganley, Calgary-Mountain View.

Ms Goehring: Good evening. Nicole Goehring, MLA for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

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

Ms Cherkewich: Teri Cherkewich, Law Clerk.

Ms Dean: Shannon Dean, Clerk.

The Chair: My name is Nathan Cooper. I'm the MLA for the outstanding constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills and the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta.

On the phone, Member Dang.

Mr. Dang: Good evening. Thomas Dang, MLA for Edmonton-South.

The Chair: Well timed. Welcome, Jasvir. If you'd like to introduce yourself for the record.

Mr. Deol: Jasvir Deol, MLA for Edmonton-Meadows. Thank you.

The Chair: Excellent. Thank you.

The meeting agenda and other documents are available on the committee internal website for members' information. I'd like to also thank everyone for your co-operation in ensuring today's meeting could proceed as I know it has been on short notice.

Before we turn to the business at hand, a few operational items. The microphone consoles are operated by *Hansard* staff. Please keep your mobile devices on silent and off the table for the duration of the meeting. Audio and video of the committee proceedings are streamed live on the Internet, broadcast on Alberta Assembly TV, and recorded by *Hansard*. Audio and video access and meeting transcripts are obtained via the Legislative Assembly website and

someday in 2040 will be available on Retro Members' Services Committee Hour. I added that part in there. It's not really going to happen.

Let's move to point 2, approval of the agenda. Are there any additions or revisions to today's meeting agenda? If not, I would invite a member to move the agenda as presented. Ms Goodridge. Any debate, discussion, questions, or comments? Seeing none. All those in favour of approving the agenda as presented, please say aye. Any opposed, please say no. On the phone? That motion is carried.

Approval of the minutes of January 20, 2020. Are there any amendments to the minutes from our last committee meeting? If not, I'd be happy to entertain a motion to approve the minutes as presented. Member Long, please, for the motion to approve the minutes as presented. Are there any questions, comments, discussions, or additions, omissions? Seeing none. All those in favour of approving the minutes of January 20, 2020, as moved by the Member for West Yellowhead, please say aye. Any opposed, please say no. On the phones? That motion is carried.

Item number 4, the annual adjustments. As a way of background for members, under the Legislative Assembly Act there shall be paid to members an "allowance at the rate per year prescribed by the Members' Services Committee," and that the allowance "shall be paid in monthly amounts of not more than 1/12 of the rate of the yearly allowance." Based on approved motions of the Standing Committee on Members' Services on August 6, 2019, a 5 per cent reduction was applied to MLAs' remuneration. The current indemnity allowance for MLAs is \$120,936. On April 1 of each year the MLA indemnity allowance shall be increased or decreased by the year-over-year percentage increase or decrease in Alberta's all-items consumer price index, CPI, published by Statistics Canada for the immediate preceding calendar year. The consumer price index against which the MLA remuneration is set is the price of a basket of goods and services purchased by Albertans as determined by Statistics Canada. This Alberta CPI is collected per month, averaged for the year, and the percentage change is derived indicating the change over the previous year's. The change in 2019 over 2018 is 1.73 per cent.

As committee members are aware, there is a provision in three of the Members' Services Committee orders for member remuneration to be increased or decreased on April 1 of each year. However, on August 6, 2019, the committee passed a motion which reduced members' compensation by 5 per cent and made further reductions to the remuneration of Executive Council. As a result, the necessary changes were made to three orders: Executive Council salaries order, section 1.1(2); members' allowances order, section 4.1(2); members' committee allowances order, section 2(2). With this background, I would like to open the floor for discussion with respect to the annual CPI increase for MLA pay, and I believe Member Neudorf has some comments that he would like to put on the record.

Mr. Neudorf: Thank you, Chair. Just some brief comments. I believe that at this time it is responsible for us to defer this increase, so I do have a motion to be made at whatever time. Is this the time that you'd like me to read that motion?

The Chair: If you'd like to move a motion at this time, you're welcome to do so.

It looks like Calgary-West would like to provide some comments prior to doing so.

Mr. Ellis: Yeah. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I just want to say that, you know, although I appreciate the spirit of the 29th

Legislature and what they were trying to do in forward thinking, no Legislature, not past, not current, not any government around the world, could be having foresight into what we are experiencing right now regarding COVID-19 and, obviously, the unbelievable economic losses that are being faced here in Alberta. With that, I just wanted to add additional context to what is going on right now, and I thank Member Neudorf for the motion that he is about to go forward with.

Thank you.

The Chair: Why don't we take that motion from the member, and then if there are other folks who would like to provide additional comments with respect to whatever that motion might be, I'd be happy to do that.

Member Neudorf, please.

Mr. Neudorf: Thank you, Chair.

Moved by Nathan Neudorf that the following Members' Services Committee orders be amended as follows:

- (a) The Executive Council salaries order is amended by adding the following immediately after section 1.1(1):
 - (2) Despite subsection (1.1), the salaries referred to in that subsection must not be increased or decreased as provided in that subsection during the period beginning on April 1, 2020 and ending on the 180th day immediately following the day on which the 31st Legislature commences.
- (b) The members' allowances order is amended by adding the following immediately after section 4.1(1):
 - (2) Despite subsection (1), the allowances referred to in that subsection must not be increased or decreased as provided in that subsection during the period beginning on April 1, 2020 and ending on the 180th day immediately following the day on which the 31st Legislature commences.
- (c) The members' committee allowances order is amended by adding the following immediately after section 2(1):
 - (2) Despite subsection (1), the allowance referred to in that subsection must not be increased or decreased as provided in that subsection during the period beginning on April 1, 2020 and ending on the 180th day immediately following the day on which the 31st Legislature commences.

The Chair: Member Neudorf did provide the Clerk with the wording prior to the meeting this afternoon.

If you don't mind, Nathan, providing some plain-language context to what the motion does for all members of the committee.

Mr. Neudorf: Thank you. Basically, all these three sections are identical. In plain language this is basically an indexation, and this motion is to pause that indexation for the 30th Legislature due to the financial circumstances that this government is currently in. I personally as well as some of our caucus feel it would be

inappropriate with other indexations that have been halted in this recent budget. We feel it is only responsible for us to do the same with our wages at this time.

The Chair: Is there anyone else wishing to provide a comment with respect to the motion before us?

Mr. Dang: Thomas Dang here.

The Chair: MLA Dang.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My only comment or question, I guess, is that I think this is very similar to what was introduced in the 29th Legislature if not maybe even identical. I seem to recall that we can't bind a future Legislature, which is the same thing that happened in the 29th Legislature. So if I'm correct, the 31st Legislature will have the opportunity to repeal this even if that 180 days does not elapse. Otherwise, I just want some clarity from perhaps your end or the Clerk, but otherwise I think generally I would be supportive of this.

Thank you.

The Chair: Ms Dean or the Law Clerk with respect to potential concerns.

6:25

Ms Cherkewich: Thank you, Mr. Dang, for the question. Yes, of course, MSC would still have the authority under the Legislative Assembly Act to amend its orders, but I think that given all the matters that have to be dealt with on the commencement of a Legislature, the intention here is to sort of provide for some guidance into that next Legislature so that the committee would have some time, approximately six months, to consider what it wanted to do at that time. Of course, if it decided earlier, it could always bring forward an amending order to these provisions.

The Chair: Are there any other questions?

Seeing none, I'm prepared to call the question. All those in favour of the motion as proposed by Member Neudorf, please say aye. Any opposed, please say no. On the phones.

That motion is carried and so ordered.

We are at number 5, other business. Do members have any other business to raise at this time?

Seeing none, item 6. The next meeting shall be at the call of the chair.

Is there a member that would like to move adjournment? Anyone over there want to get on the scoresheet? Ms Goehring.

All those in favour of adjournment, please say aye. Any opposed, please say no. On the phones. That motion is carried and so ordered. The committee stands adjourned.

[The committee adjourned at 6:27 p.m.]

