



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

The 30th Legislature
Second Session

Special Standing Committee
on
Members' Services

Wednesday, January 26, 2022
8:59 a.m.

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Special Standing Committee on Members' Services

Cooper, Hon. Nathan M., Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UC), Chair
Schow, Joseph R., Cardston-Siksika (UC), Deputy Chair

Allard, Tracy L., Grande Prairie (UC)
Bilous, Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (NDP)*
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South (Ind)
Deol, Jasvir, Edmonton-Meadows (NDP)
Frey (formerly Glasgow), Michaela L., Brooks-Medicine Hat (UC)**
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (NDP)
Gotfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (UC)***
Long, Martin M., West Yellowhead (UC)
Neudorf, Nathan T., Lethbridge-East (UC)
Rosin, Miranda D., Banff-Kananaskis (UC)****
Sabir, Irfan, Calgary-Bhullar-McCall (NDP)
Sigurdson, R.J., Highwood (UC)
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP)*****
Williams, Dan D.A., Peace River (UC)

* substitution for Thomas Dang

** substitution for Tracy Allard

*** substitution for Martin Long

**** substitution for R.J. Sigurdson

***** substitution for Nicole Goehring

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8:59 a.m.

Wednesday, January 26, 2022

[Mr. Cooper in the chair]

The Chair: Good morning, members. I'd like to call the committee to order. It's 9 a.m., January 26. Happy Australia Day to all of the Australians tuning in.

My name is Nathan Cooper. I'm the MLA for the outstanding constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills. I'd like to now ask members joining us at the committee table to introduce themselves for the record and then I will call upon members joining the meeting remotely to introduce themselves, beginning with the clerk on my right.

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

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

Mr. Sabir: Irfan Sabir, MLA, Calgary-Bhullar-McCall.

Ms Cherkewich: Teri Cherkewich, Law Clerk.

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

Mr. Joy: Darren Joy, senior financial officer.

Ms McHugh: Ruth McHugh, executive director, corporate services.

Ms Dean: Good morning. Shannon Dean, Clerk.

The Chair: Member Sweet.

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

The Chair: Member Bilous.

Mr. Bilous: Deron Bilous, MLA, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview. Good morning.

The Chair: Member Deol.

Mr. Deol: I thought I was muted. Good morning, everyone. Jasvir Deol, MLA for Edmonton-Meadows.

The Chair: Member Gotfried.

Mr. Gotfried: Richard Gotfried, MLA, Calgary-Fish Creek, substituting for MLA Martin Long.

The Chair: Member Neudorf.

Mr. Neudorf: Nathan Neudorf, MLA for Lethbridge-East. Good morning, everyone.

The Chair: Member Frey.

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

The Chair: Member Williams. Member Williams, I understand that from time to time you are in the far reaches of the province. Oh, here we are.

Mr. Williams: Yes, it is a bad connection, Chair. Sorry about that. I could go video off or call in if I have a difficult time with Teams.

The Chair: Excellent. Thank you.

Have I missed anyone? Excellent. Thank you.

Before we turn to the business at hand, a few operational items. I would like to just note for the record that Member Gotfried is substituting for Member Long, Member Sweet for Member Goehring, Member Bilous for Member Dang.

Member Rosin, who just joined . . .

Ms Rosin: Yes. Sorry, Chair. I am here. I think I was just a minute late logging in. Miranda Rosin, Banff-Kananaskis.

The Chair: Excellent. Thank you, Member Rosin.

Member Frey for Member Allard.

I'd like to remind everyone of the current committee room protocols, which require that those attending the committee meeting in person are required to wear a mask at all times unless they're speaking and that all attendees maintain appropriate distance between themselves and other members participating.

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 called upon and whenever possible have their cameras on when speaking, with the exception of Member Williams if his troubles persist. Please set your cellphones and other devices to silent for the duration of the meeting.

I'd now like to move to the approval of the agenda. Are there any proposed additions or revisions to today's meeting agenda?

If not, would a member please move adoption of our agenda? Member Schow to move adoption. Member Schow moved that the agenda for the January 26, 2022, meeting of the Special Standing Committee on Members' Services be approved as distributed. Is there any discussion?

Seeing none, all those in favour of the motion in the room, please say aye. Opposed in the room? On the phone in favour, please say aye. Any opposed, please say no. That motion is carried and so ordered.

Moving to agenda item 3, the meeting minutes. The meeting minutes were distributed with your meeting package. Are there any amendments to the minutes from our last meeting?

If not, would a member move a motion? Member Sabir has moved that the minutes of the December 14, 2021, meeting of the Special Standing Committee on Members' Services be approved as distributed. Is there any discussion?

Seeing and hearing none, I am prepared to call the question. All those in favour of the motion as proposed by Member Sabir in the room, please say aye. Any opposed in the room, please say no. On the phone any in favour of the motion, please say aye. Any opposed, please say no. That motion is carried and so ordered.

9:05

Item 4 on our agenda today is the 2022-23 Legislative Assembly Office budget estimates and the update on the strategic plan. On December 14, 2021, the committee met and approved the budget parameters document to direct the Legislative Assembly Office to begin preparing the 2022-23 draft budget, presented today for the committee's recommendation and consideration. The budget parameters approved on December 14 outlined a budget increase of 5.15 per cent to facilitate the required changes that were discussed and approved by the committee. Those changes were approximately 3 per cent for operational requirements in information technology and broadcast services, parliamentary services, committees, and MLA

administration and a 2 per cent one-time funding for the enterprise resource planning and election preparedness.

The approved budget parameters document indicated that compensation for the LAO parallels Alberta's public service compensation for opted-out and excluded employees. The LAO has since received notification that the government of Alberta has lifted salary restraint measures for non-union employees under the Public Service Act. This means that effective April 1, 2022, eligible Legislative Assembly Office employees who are not at the top of their salary range will receive salary adjustments. I would like to note that these adjustments are as a result of the Public Service Commissioner's change in policy in late last year.

I'd like to turn this over to the Clerk to have a bit more robust comments on how this policy change will affect the Legislative Assembly Office budget.

Ms Dean: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. Before I go into the impact of the lifting of the salary restraint, I'd just like to comment briefly on the operations of the LAO over the past year and looking forward to the 2022-23 fiscal year, which will be the fourth year in the life of the 30th Legislature. As we close on the second anniversary of the pandemic, I feel we've achieved considerable success this past year in dealing with challenges arising from the pandemic, whether that be remote voting in the Chamber or hybrid committee proceedings or just simply facilitating remote work. This has all been achieved in a year with a very high level of committee activity and sessional hours. We've also embarked on a very ambitious ERP project. Some of the groundwork has been completed to date, and it will be an important feature of our strategic plan in the next year. Following my remarks, Ruth will provide the committee with an update on that work.

Now turning to the matter of the salary adjustments and the impact on the budget, I would first note that the overall impact on the consolidated 2022-23 budget is 3.85 per cent, and these details are outlined in the addendum to the budget parameters document that's been provided in your meeting materials. As the Speaker noted, the committee in December approved a budget increase of 5.15 per cent to facilitate certain operational requirements. The changes of that 5.15 per cent previously approved plus the 3.85 per cent subsequent salary compensation adjustments result in a total change of 9 per cent. Again, detailed explanations of these changes are found in the budget descriptions and highlights provided in the meeting materials.

As the Speaker noted, the salary adjustments are consistent with what will be applied to the management and opted-out, excluded employees of the Alberta public service; that is, 3 per cent for eligible managers and 4 per cent for eligible employees. This compensation adjustment impacts staff benefits, resulting in increased employer contributions to the health benefit and pension plans and premiums for CPP, EI, and WCB.

This 3.85 per cent adjustment is comprised of three elements: first, an adjustment that took effect December 1, 4 per cent for eligible staff, nonmanagement and 3 per cent for eligible managers; effective April 1, 2022, a 4 per cent merit increase for nonmanagement and 3 per cent for eligible managers; and, finally, January 2023 a 1.25 per cent cost-of-living adjustment for everyone. This is a total of 9.25 per cent, and with compounding impact it reaches 9.5 per cent. Now, in reviewing these compensation adjustments, I think it's important to focus on the three different employee categories within the LAO: branch staff, caucus staff, and constituency staff.

For branch staff rather than applying this full increase to branch budgets, we are recommending a modified rate of 6 per cent, taking into account that only 50 to 60 per cent of branch staff are eligible

for each of the merit increases. The recommended 6 per cent also includes employer contributions for benefits and the cost-of-living adjustment.

For caucus budgets we are recommending that the committee consider a 7 per cent increase to accommodate the salary adjustments. This is calculated based on approximately 74 per cent of caucus budgets being spent on labour. Now, historically there's been a 70 per cent labour utilization rate applied when calculating the budget impact of previous salary increases. We did look at the three previous fiscal years to see where the current labour utilization rate is at, and it averages at 71 per cent, so we feel the 74 per cent rate seems reasonable when considering recent history as well as actual costs. I would also point out that while the intent of this caucus budget adjustment is to support compensation changes parallel to the rest of the public service, it is up to the individual caucus to manage as it sees fit.

Final area of compensation adjustments relates to constituency staff. This employee group is eligible for adjustments as per their employment contracts. Accordingly the recommended increase to the staffing component of the MSA budget funding formula is 9.5 per cent. Assuming the committee is in agreement with that adjustment, there will be the need for considering an amendment to the constituency services order, which sets out the funding formula.

Finally, there will be a \$97,000 increase to MLA admin that arises from increased cost to staff benefits related to the compensation adjustment.

That concludes my high-level overview, Mr. Speaker. In closing, I wanted to extend my sincere thanks and appreciation to the tireless and dedicated professionals at the Legislative Assembly Office.

We are happy to answer any questions you or the committee may have.

The Chair: Excellent. Thank you, Ms Dean.

I would also like to echo the committee's appreciation for the dedicated work that the Legislative Assembly staff have undertaken to ensure that the budget before us can be considered and members supported. On behalf of all members please pass along our thank you to them as well as all the folks who aren't joining us today but are also dedicated professionals in their own right.

I would like to just make a couple of quick comments prior to moving to Ruth to have her discuss some points around the updated Legislative Assembly strategic business plan, and I'd just like to highlight a couple of things here. One in particular is that the Public Service Commissioner's order impacts Legislative Assembly staff, potentially caucus staff, and constituency staff, but there is no increase for MLA compensation, so those are two separate things. I wanted to just make sure that we are on the record identifying that none of these increases are extended to members of the Legislative Assembly.

And then I would just like to rehighlight that the increased caucus budgets are solely as a result of the increase that has been indicated by the Public Service Commissioner, and Shannon took some time to describe how we arrived at the percentage. It's important to know that that percentage is intended for labour purposes, but as with all caucus budgets, caucuses make respective decisions based upon the best way to spend those resources. I just wanted to highlight that and make sure that we were very clear.

Having said those two things, I'd like to turn it over to Ruth for her to provide some comments and update us on the LAO strategic business plan. Please proceed.

Ms McHugh: Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker. I'm really happy to provide the committee with a brief progress report. We are more than halfway through the 2020-2023 strategic business plan,

Honouring Tradition while Embracing Change, and I'm pleased to report that we've made great progress on the actions we've outlined for each one of our five strategic goals. I'm especially pleased to report this great progress since our plan was developed before we knew we'd be dealing with a global pandemic. It's fair to say that in these last two years planned priorities have been disrupted in every organization. In my view and echoing what Shannon said earlier, the LAO has done a remarkable job of reprioritizing and reallocating resources to deal with the pandemic and support our workforce in remote operations and continued top-priority service for members.

9:15

In reviewing our progress on all five of our strategic goals, much of what we had to do to achieve remote operations turned out to be well aligned with our strategic priorities, and we continue to adjust and learn as we go. We've proven that we are a determined and resilient organization.

I don't want to take too much time in our meeting as we have a full agenda, but I thought the committee would be particularly interested in our progress on the ERP. You'll recall that the ERP, or enterprise resource planning, project was approved last year to replace our decades-old legacy accounting, finance, payroll, and HR systems. We have now completed a successful RFP process based on comprehensive and robust needs analysis and business process mapping. The ERP project launched mid-December, and together with our selected vendor and led by our newly hired project manager, we have successfully activated the technical infrastructure, oriented the working group, and set out a detailed design and implementation schedule. We are currently in the discovery phase of data cleansing for export. The data will then be further analyzed in the design phase, starting next month, to ensure that we have a clean, robust system moving forward. We'll provide the committee with periodic ERP progress updates as significant milestones are achieved.

The new ERP will impact our success in delivering our business goals and continuing to provide essential services to members. Our strategic business plan contains the guiding principles by which we make decisions to ensure that the good work we do is truly helping to strengthen parliamentary democracy for all Albertans.

Thank you so much for listening to our update.

The Chair: Excellent. Thank you, Ruth.

I'd now like to open the floor for discussion. I also have a suggested draft motion, that the Special Standing Committee on Members' Services approve the 2022-23 Legislative Assembly of Alberta budget estimates in the amount of \$71,858,000. I would love to entertain a motion of that nature, and then we can discuss that motion if there is anyone that's so inclined.

Mr. Sabir: Just a quick question, Mr. Speaker. There were some clarifying questions – nothing serious – that I wanted to ask. So will we do that before or after?

The Chair: We can do it now. Sure.

Mr. Sabir: Yeah. Then I can start now.

The Chair: Go ahead.

Mr. Sabir: First, I guess, thank you to Shannon and Ruth for that presentation. I'm pleased to see this project that supports the LAO and members in carrying out their duties. As was mentioned by Shannon, IT has been critical for the last couple of years. We were able to participate remotely in committee meetings and proceedings

in the Legislature. Certainly, I would like to extend my thanks to all the hard-working staff that made that possible.

Speaking of those IT upgrades, I was looking at the budget. We have set aside a reasonable amount to upgrade that. I think the question was around that we are also hearing about the incidence of ransomware and other cyberattacks, and that can render a system unusable and inaccessible. Does the IT department have an incident response plan that involves recovery, restoration if such an attack would occur? That's one question. And can you assure this committee that we would not be forced to pay a ransom if an attack occurred on the LAO?

The Chair: Ruth.

Ms McHugh: Thank you. That is a really great question and certainly topical. I can definitely speak to the focus on security and in particular cybersecurity. I sure wish I could give you assurance that the LAO would never be subject to a ransomware request, but of course our best defence is a good offence. The best way for ransomware attacks to happen is actually through the people, so a big part of our focus will be making sure that all of the human beings that are attached to our network – because they're a vulnerable source of malware or bad things getting into the system, so we're going to make a real concerted effort to ensure that everyone is well trained.

But just before I tell you a little bit more about that, the funding that we have requested for IT, as you've noted, is really to achieve four things: to replace obsolete equipment, as you mentioned; repair and upgrade our IT networks; cover the increased cost of mandatory user licensing; and to provide staff resources to maintain and secure the LAO's critical IT security and infrastructure. That is a huge part of what we're going to be doing.

To deal with your question around: do we have a good incident response program? We absolutely do. The LAO has a business continuity plan that is actually managed through the office of the Sergeant-at-Arms, and a part of that plan, a subset of the plan, is the disaster recovery program for IT incidents, that is really under the purview of our director of IT operations and mine, of course. Yes, it is a good robust plan. We have recently revisited it and will continue to do so. I hope that answers your question, but I'm sure happy to . . .

Mr. Sabir: Yes. Thank you.

And does this IT budget include upgrades to networking and technology in the Legislature?

Ms McHugh: Absolutely. Absolutely. Yeah.

Mr. Sabir: Another just clarifying question. On page 5 there is a mention of an APF conference in the summer of 2022. Is that an in-person conference?

The Chair: At present that conference is planned to be in person. Of course, decisions will be made over the following months with respect to whether or not an in-person conference can take place. The APF conference moves around North America on a semi-rotating basis, and we are part of that rotation. It is our opportunity and turn to host the APF program, so I look forward to being able to host. Quite frankly, I do hope that it's in person, but we'll have to follow the best advice of the chief medical health officer at the time.

Mr. Sabir: A couple more questions. One is with respect to visitor services, on page 13. Is there a plan for the resumption of visitor

services like tours, et cetera, for both the Legislature and Federal Building?

The Chair: Yeah. With respect to visitor services, visitor services has done an incredible job of shifting to be able to reach as many Albertans as possible through online programming. Obviously, there's nothing that can replace experiencing our building in person, so we are hoping that as there is an ease of restrictions and the public health emergency shifts, we'll be able to get back to in-person tours and School at the Legislature and all of the programming that visitor services provides in person as quickly as possible.

What I might just add, though, is that we will continue to run a parallel type system of offering both in-person and online services, particularly because we have seen a significant increase in the number of school-age children who have been able to access the program from outside of the capital region and still have a really great experience, but traditionally we have largely had Edmonton and capital region based schools attend School at the Legislature. So I'm pleased to see significantly more – in fact, there was a School at the Legislature from Member Schow's riding in the past couple of months, that I did a presentation for, and that just wouldn't have happened previously. So we will continue to run both sets of programming once we have tours and the building back open to the general public in a significantly more meaningful way.

9:25

Mr. Sabir: My last question is regarding MLA administration and the MSA. The question I have is that the office operation component is, I take it, the same for all offices. Is that correct?

The Chair: Well, there's a formula based upon riding size, population. It's more complex than it needs to be, but it does take in a wide variety of factors. It's not exactly the same across all 87 ridings, but largely it's very similar.

Mr. Sabir: As you know, the cost of real estate is not the same in all constituencies. Does, then, that formula account for that, and is there a plan for addressing possible, like, uneven increases to the costs of real estate in some areas of the province? For instance, in my riding, on the northeast side of the city, the cost of renting is fairly high, and it has gone up pretty much every year.

The Chair: At present the committee hasn't undertaken a review of the formula. Of course, that would be at our discretion. What it does take into account is that while real estate might be more expensive in your area, in other areas like Member Schow's or Member Williams' there's often a need for multiple locations because of size and span of riding. You know, no formula is perfect. It doesn't specifically take into consideration the cost of real estate across the province, and there are other things that the formula could be reviewed under. I think that the formula works pretty well. Like I say, it's not perfect, but it has worked well in the past. If the committee desires to undertake some sort of review, I'm sure we can consider that in the future. But at this point in time, specifically to real estate, it does not consider the difference between northeast and southeast Calgary or otherwise.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you.

The Chair: Any other questions? Member Schow.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to take a moment to thank the LAO for their presentation, their diligent work throughout the past two years as they have adapted to what I hope

and pray is a temporary world that we had to live in. Also, I'd like to thank Member Sabir for his thoughtful questions. Actually, he even raised a couple of issues that I had thought of as well, particularly about cybersecurity, one we have to address. Thank you, Ms McHugh, for your response, particularly that the best defence is a good offence. If you get tired of this LAO thing, I think you have a good career ahead of you in sports coaching. But we would hate to lose you, so please stick around. With that in mind, I appreciate the presentations given and the recommendations from the Public Service Commissioner.

Mr. Speaker, you have a draft motion that I think, you know, on this side of the room we would support and I would support at least as myself, so I would like to potentially put my weight behind that motion in support of it.

The Chair: Hon. members, Member Schow has moved that the Special Standing Committee on Members' Services approve the 2022-23 Legislative Assembly of Alberta budget estimates in the amount of \$71,858,000.

Are there any other additional questions, comments, concerns, or does anyone else have input that they would like to add?

Seeing and hearing none, I am prepared to call the question. Hon. members, on the motion as proposed by Member Schow, all those in favour of approving the 2022-23 budget estimates in the room, please say aye. In the room opposed, please say no. On the phones. In favour, please say aye. Any opposed, please say no.

The motion is carried and so ordered.

I'd like to thank the committee for that.

As mentioned in Ms Dean's presentation, or in Shannon's presentation, a motion is required to amend the constituency service orders. The draft motion I would propose is as follows, that the member moves that

the Special Standing Committee on Members' Services amend the constituency services order as follows: (a) in section 1(3)(a)(ii) by striking out "\$88,324" and substituting "\$96,715" and (b) by bringing the amendment referred to in clause (a) into force on April 1, 2022.

This is no joking matter or fooling matter, I guess, as it would be.

Is there anyone in the committee that would be willing to move such a motion as recommended by the Clerk? Member Sabir.

Are there any additional questions, comments, concerns with respect to the motion as proposed by the hon. Member Sabir?

Seeing and hearing none, I am prepared to call the question. On the motion as proposed by Member Sabir, all those in favour in the room, please say aye. Any opposed in the room, please say no. All those in favour on the telephone, please say aye. Any opposed online, please say no.

The motion is carried and so ordered.

This brings us to item 5, updates to the LAO respectful workplace policy. I want to note that this update is for information purposes only, so there is no requirement for a vote as this is a change, an update to a policy that is already existing, but I felt it necessary or important to bring you up to speed prior to making that adjustment. As noted in the briefing document, the respectful workplace policy for Legislative Assembly Office employees and attached guide were established in October 2016. In 2019 and 2020 minor updates were made to the Legislative Assembly Office policy and guide.

After receiving expert legal advice, the LAO updated both the respectful workplace policy for Legislative Assembly Office employees and the related guide. These updates ensure that the document better aligns with the current version of the respectful workplace policy for the government of Alberta and the current requirements under the Occupational Health and Safety Act. The updates have not changed the content in the LAO policy or the LAO guide that addresses complaints with members.

Since the posting of the document last week, please note that a couple of minor housekeeping edits will be made to the document based on a few questions from caucus members or staff. These edits will be reflected in the final version of the document, and Ms Tischer will provide a very brief summary of those edits just so that the committee is aware and you don't unnecessarily have to go to search out what those minor edits were.

Lyndsay.

Ms Tischer: Absolutely. Thank you for that. The edits are – actually, one was an incorrect reference. We had referenced the occupational health and safety code on page 8, and it should actually be replaced with the Occupational Health and Safety Act, and that is in reflection of certain legislative changes that are fairly recent.

Despite having it proofed by many sets of eyes, Ms Cherkewich, my co-conspirator in creating this, we noticed that part of the definition of workplace violence on page 8 had actually been cut off in the most recent version, so it currently is not complete. It currently does not include domestic and sexual violence. That was just a typo, so we have reinserted that.

9:35

There was a question-and-answer section that starts on page 12 and carries over on to page 13. In consultation with the opposition caucus it was found that the question around how joking can be considered inappropriate was no longer found material to supporting the policy and the guide itself, so we have taken that out.

The Chair: Excellent. Thank you, Lyndsay.

I'd like to also thank those who provided feedback on the document and spent additional time finding small errors and otherwise so that we can have the most up-to-date document as possible.

As I mentioned, this is for information purposes only, so we don't require a motion. But if there are any questions or comments, I'm happy to take them briefly now. Member Sabir.

Mr. Sabir: Yeah. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We appreciate the update to this policy, and thank you for those clarifications. One more, I guess, question of clarification on page 3, I believe. Under sexual harassment it says, "Sexual harassment will not be tolerated and is considered a serious breach of this Policy." I just noticed that the words "serious breach" are only used here, and when we are talking about consequences for a breach, like, this is not mentioned separately, that if there are more serious consequences for a serious breach. I wonder if you would comment on that.

The Chair: Lyndsay or Teri.

Ms Cherkewich: Yeah. Actually, the serious breach reference is made under sexual harassment, workplace harassment, and workplace violence, and it's also captured in the retaliation component. That was emphatic language that was suggested based on the review done in December 2021.

Mr. Sabir: In the consequences section you just mentioned consequences for a breach. Like, I don't see a section there which lists the consequences for a serious breach.

Ms. Tischer: If there was a complaint raised and going through the procedures, the processes for a complaint, we would be looking at what sort of mediation techniques or solutions would be fitting for the breach itself. These areas are considered serious breaches, and that's why we're using the emphatic language.

Teri, do you have anything to add to that?

Ms Cherkewich: Yeah. I guess the only thing I would add, Member Sabir, is that effectively when a complaint comes forward, it's going to be assessed on its facts, and essentially based on that assessment by the employer, which would be the LAO, they will then have to look at the different types of consequences that can be applied to that complaint. It will be in the discretion of the employer on viewing, you know, objectively the facts to determine what kind of degree of seriousness applies to that case.

The way the policy is written – and it does reflect the policy for the GOA – is that there is discretion to the employer to assess the degree of seriousness of each of the independent cases that come forward. As Lyndsay had noted, the use of the term "serious breach" is emphatic language that was suggested to us by our outside counsel in terms of making sure it's in here to be very clear that any of these types of conduct are seen by the employer as serious in nature.

The Chair: Member Gotfried.

Mr. Gotfried: Thank you, Chair. I just wanted to thank the LAO and Lyndsay for their great work on this. We all know, I think, there's greater awareness over the last decade or so on respectful workplaces and harassment and other factors that really very much are detrimental to the workplace, to committee work, to whatever roles we're in. So I just wanted to commend them for this advancement of this work, for continuing to fine-tune it, and for their collaboration with other parties that allows us the opportunity to really increase awareness and the empowerment of employees in regard to this issue. I just want to thank them very much for that.

The Chair: Are there others?

Thank you, members, for this, and I also would like to thank the LAO as well as our outside counsel, who has provided some great feedback in making sure that the policy is as up to date as possible.

Are there any other items of business for discussion?

Seeing and hearing none, the next meeting will be at the call of the chair. I anticipate that it's quite likely that we will have occasion to meet once during session, but we'll see how the agenda may or may not come together on that.

With that said, I'd like to have a motion to adjourn. Member Schow. All those in favour of the motion as proposed by Member Schow to adjourn, please say aye. On the phones, aye? Opposed on the phones? In the room, opposed? The meeting is adjourned.

Thanks so much for your attendance. Have a great day. Remember to be kind to your neighbour.

[The committee adjourned at 9:41 a.m.]

