

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 31st Legislature First Session

Standing Committee on Legislative Offices

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* substitution for David Shepherd** substitution for Amanda Chapman

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10 a.m.

Thursday, June 20, 2024

[Mr. Getson in the chair]

The Chair: All right. Since my watch doesn't work, we'll say it's 10 o'clock. We'll call the meeting to order. Welcome, all the staff and guests, to the meeting of the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices.

I'm Shane Getson, the MLA for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland. I call it God's country; so do my constituents at this point. I'd like to ask all those members joining the committee at the table to introduce themselves. As always, *Hansard* is taking care of the microphones here for us at this point. Starting off to my right.

Mr. Dyck: MLA Nolan Dyck.

Mr. Eggen: Good morning. My name is David Eggen, and I'm substituting for David Shepherd, I believe. Yeah.

Ms Renaud: Marie Renaud, St. Albert.

Ms Tischer: I'm Lyndsay Tischer. I'm the director of HR for the Legislative Assembly Office.

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

The Chair: Excellent. We'll go to introductions online, in no particular order. I see MLA Eremenko.

Member Eremenko: Good morning. MLA Janet Eremenko for Calgary-Currie.

The Chair: Again, in no particular order, I see MLA Heather Sweet.

Ms Sweet: Good morning. MLA Heather Sweet, substituting for MLA Amanda Chapman.

The Chair: Thanks, MLA Sweet. I also see MLA Hunter.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Grant Hunter, MLA for Taber-Warner.

The Chair: Excellent. I see MLA Glenn van Dijken.

Mr. van Dijken: Glenn van Dijken, MLA for Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock constituency.

The Chair: I also see MLA Sinclair.

Mr. Sinclair: Good morning, everyone. Scott Sinclair, MLA for Lesser Slave Lake.

Thank you.

The Chair: Perfect. Appreciate it.

If I've missed anyone online, let me know. It kind of feels like "Mirror, mirror on the wall" looking at these things sometimes. So Mr. Eggen . . .

Mr. Long: I'm pretty sure you missed me, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Oh, there we go. MLA Long. Yeah. Please go ahead, sir.

Mr. Long: Feels like there's a particular order if you're missing me.

Martin Long, the MLA for West Yellowhead.

The Chair: Well, so all the committee members know, I am wearing glasses today, so I'm going to blame it on that, of looking over top of the rims. Appreciate that.

For the record I'd note the following substitutions: the hon. Mr. Eggen, as noted here earlier, is substituting for Mr. Shepherd, and, as noted, the hon. Ms Sweet is substituting for Ms Chapman.

As we noted, microphones are operated by *Hansard*. Committee proceedings are being live streamed on the Internet and broadcast on Alberta Assembly TV. Members participating remotely, which is a number here today, are prepared to speak when called upon, and videoconference participants are encouraged to have their cameras on if possible when speaking, and when not, please mute your lines. Of course, just common meeting courtesy for everyone else: make sure your cellphone is in the least intrusive mode as possible for operation.

With that, fasten your chinstraps; we're ready to go.

On the agenda will be the draft meeting agenda today. Would anyone like to propose any amendments or move a motion to move the agenda?

Mr. Eggen: I move the agenda.

The Chair: Perfect. We'll just flash that up on the screen. As moved, the proposed meeting agenda as distributed on June 20, 2024. All in favour? Any opposed? Online, all in favour? Any opposed? Motion carried.

The next item is approval of minutes from the previous meeting. The minutes from our last meeting have been distributed. Would anyone like to propose any amendments or move a motion to approve the minutes from the last meeting?

Mr. Dyck: I'll move to approve it.

The Chair: MLA Dyck.

And do we have something on the board? I guess it doesn't matter. That looks good to you?

Mr. Dyck: Yes.

The Chair: In the room, all in favour? Any opposed? Online, all in favour? I didn't see any opposed. Motion carried.

Officers of the Legislature, so the Acting Chief Electoral Officer, the officer compensation, and public service and general increase for management. I'm moving to the main items for our order of business. We have a few matters to address, the appointment of the Acting Chief Electoral Officer and compensation for the officers of the Legislature. It is also reasonable to expect that there will be discussion of specific details of compensation for individuals. Of course, for those I'd recommend that the committee move to in camera when we do those. As always, any motions following our discussion will be dealt with as we return to the record.

Does that sound amiable to everyone? Would anyone be interested in having a motion to that effect?

Mr. Dyck: Motion to go in camera.

The Chair: MLA Dyck. We'll throw something up on the screen here.

Mr. Dyck: Do you want me to read this in?

The Chair: Sure. Well, we'll just read it, and we'll see if the clerks can catch up. We're moving very expeditiously this morning. Go ahead, MLA Dyck.

Mr. Dyck: I move that we move in camera for our next discussion.

The Chair: Okay. We might want to add a few other things to that, that the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices meet in camera, that the required staff from the Legislative Assembly Office remain in attendance for the discussion, and we'll be covering the appointment of the Acting Chief Electoral Officer and related matters, compensation for the Deputy Chief Electoral Officer, and compensation for the officers of the Legislature. Does that sound like what you wanted to say?

Mr. Dyck: You know, you read my mind, Chair. Thank you very much for just wrapping up that thought.

The Chair: Perfect. Thank you. That's what I had there. All those in favour? Any opposed? Online, all those in favour? Any opposed? Seeing none, motion carried.

[The committee met in camera from 10:06 a.m. to 10:24 a.m.]

The Chair: Thanks for returning, folks. We are back on the record. *Hansard* has control when it comes to operating our microphones again, so you don't have to be touching on those.

Quick reminder: I'll open the floor for proposals regarding recommendations for the appointment of the Acting Chief Electoral Officer. Is there anyone wanting to make that motion?

Mr. Dyck: I would love to make that motion.

The Chair: MLA Dyck.

Mr. Dyck: I'll just wait for it to be up on the screen. I move that the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices recommend to the Lieutenant Governor in Council that LaRae Petrowsky be appointed under section 3(2) of the Election Act as the Acting Chief Electoral Officer effective July 4, 2024, until such time as an individual is appointed to the position of Chief Electoral Officer or the appointment expires in accordance with section 3(2), whichever occurs first.

The Chair: Thank you, MLA Dyck.

All in favour in the room, please say aye. Say it a little louder, guys. Okay. There we go. Any opposed? Online, all those in favour, please say aye. Any opposed? Hearing none,

motion carried.

Next item we have is the Acting Chief Electoral Officer compensation. I will ask if there is anyone looking to open up the floor for discussion or maybe to move a motion.

Mr. Dyck: Can I just move the motion, Chair?

The Chair: I'm okay with that if there's no discussion. Please go ahead, MLA Dyck.

Mr. Dyck: Excellent. I move that

the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices approve the payment of a salary equal to 65 per cent of the development maximum for the senior official A range to LaRae Petrowsky, Acting Chief Electoral Officer, for the duration of her appointment as Acting Chief Electoral Officer.

The Chair: Excellent. All those in favour in the room? Any opposed? Online, all those in favour, please say aye. Any opposed? Hearing none,

motion carried.

Deputy Chief Electoral Officer compensation request. Our final item for discussion is under agenda item 4(a). It's the compensation request, the Deputy Chief Electoral Officer. Is there any discussion on the matter? Mr. Dyck: I'd like to move the motion.

The Chair: Oh, sorry. MLA Eggen.

Mr. Eggen: Oh, no. He's ...

The Chair: Any discussion?

Mr. Eggen: Oh, we want to discuss it first. Yeah.

The Chair: Okay. Please go ahead.

Ms Renaud: Actually, I do have a few comments that I would like to put on the record about this particular item. You know, given that we've already approved this activity, this move that we're doing, in November, with the motion moved by the Member for Taber-Warner, I do believe we should approve this. However, I certainly hope that the UCP members don't intend to once again go back to any of these officers and limit their budgets.

I think we had a very lengthy discussion one of the last meetings, where . . .

The Chair: I hesitate to interrupt. We're on Deputy Chief Electoral Officer compensation.

Ms Renaud: Yeah. The 3 per cent adjustment?

The Chair: No.

Ms Renaud: Oh, I apologize. I'm sorry. I'll just take those comments off.

The Chair: No. Keep your powder dry. There's another item coming up that you might want to ...

Ms Renaud: Sure. I'm sorry.

The Chair: Okay.

Ms Renaud: I thought that's where we were at.

The Chair: No problem.

So the final item that we have is Deputy Chief Electoral Officer. Any discussions on that matter?

Hearing none, is there anyone prepared to move a motion?

Mr. Dyck: I would love to move a motion.

The Chair: MLA Dyck.

Mr. Dyck: I move that

motion carried.

the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices approve the payment of a salary equal to 70 per cent of the development maximum for the senior official A salary range to Pamela Renwick, Deputy Chief Electoral Officer, for the period May 30 to July 4, 2024, inclusive.

The Chair: Okay. All in favour in the room? Any opposed? Online, all those in favour, please say aye. Any opposed? Hearing none,

The next item we have is the officer compensation, the Alberta public service general increase for management. Moving on to agenda 4(b), we have the officer compensation, Alberta public service general management increase. Does anyone have any discussion or comments or proposals? I see MLA Renaud.

Ms Renaud: Okay. Now it's the appropriate time. Given that we already approved this in November, with the motion, as I said a little earlier, by the Member for Taber-Warner, we should approve

this. However, I do hope that the UCP members don't intend to once again go back to any of these officers and limit their budgets.

We spent a lot of time one of the last meetings talking about, or the UCP were talking about, why it was essential to cut their budgets after a presentation that I thought was really quite inclusive and really detailed. They explained why they needed to increase their budgets, and it really was related to the increases to some of the lawyers and some of the other positions that they really didn't have any choice about. So it was unfortunate to see the UCP cut that budget to this office. Now, you know, we are increasing this budget.

Anyway, I would also like to remind members that a few months later the previous Chief Electoral Officer in his budget submission explained the increased cost being felt by the changes the UCP made around quarterly reporting and how this was leading to overpayments and additional workloads, yet the government didn't feel Elections Alberta needed extra bodies or money to address these overpayments. I will remind anyone listening: it is only the UCP that collect through their constituency associations, so it is only the UCP adding to this workload and benefiting when their donors pay too much.

Naturally, I do support the increase, the 3 per cent increase.

10:30

The Chair: I hesitate to interrupt.

Ms Renaud: I'll finish my comments.

The Chair: Just for the record, Member ...

Ms Renaud: Yes, I will vote in favour of the 3 per cent increase. Thanks.

The Chair: Just for the record and clarification, again, this is in regard to five electoral officers' salaries, not their entire operating budgets. This is just so the member knows she's clear what she's voting on.

Ms Renaud: Well, I understand that, but it is coming out of a budget.

The Chair: Okay. Just so the member is clear, what she's voting on is five electoral officers.

Ms Renaud: I'm very clear.

The Chair: Okay. Is there any other further discussion?

Mr. Dyck: None for me. Can I move the motion?

The Chair: You absolutely may, MLA Dyck.

Mr. Dyck: Excellent. Well, thank you, Chair. I move that the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices approve a compensation adjustment for the officers of the Legislature that parallels the 3 per cent April 2024 general increase provided to senior officials in the Alberta public service.

The Chair: Hearing the motion, all those in favour? Any opposed? Online, all those in favour, please say aye. Any opposed? Hearing none,

motion carried.

Other business. Are there any other business items that the committee would wish to discuss at this time?

Seeing, hearing none, there are no other motions here. The next meeting, the agenda, will be called at – the chair will obviously send it out to everybody to do a straw poll or Doodle poll, as it were, to make sure we can have time. We do have to meet again.

That comes to the favourite part of the meeting, the adjournment. Is there anyone wishing to move an adjournment of the meeting? MLA Eggen. So moved. All in favour? Any opposed? Online, all those in favour? Any opposed? Motion carried.

We'll see you next time. Thank you, everyone, for your time.

[The committee adjourned at 10:32 a.m.]

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