



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Standing Committee
on
Families and Communities

Public Sector Compensation Transparency Act Review

Thursday, December 20, 2018
2 p.m.

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Fourth Session**

Standing Committee on Families and Communities

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* substitution for Nicole Goehring

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[Loyola in the chair]

The Acting Chair: I'd like to call the meeting to order. Welcome to members, staff, and guests in attendance for this meeting of the Standing Committee on Families and Communities.

My name is Rod Loyola, Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie, and today I'm substituting for Nicole Goehring, the chair of this committee. I'd ask that members and those joining the committee at the table introduce themselves for the record, and then I'll call on those joining in via teleconference. Please go ahead.

Ms Renaud: Marie Renaud, MLA for St. Albert.

Ms Woollard: Denise Woollard, MLA, Edmonton-Mill Creek.

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

Ms LeBlanc: Good afternoon. Stephanie LeBlanc, with the office of Parliamentary Counsel.

Dr. Massolin: Good afternoon. Philip Massolin, manager of research and committee services.

Mr. Roth: Good afternoon. Aaron Roth, committee clerk.

The Acting Chair: Okay. For those joining us by teleconference, I'm just going to do a roll call, how about? I'm going to start with Mr. Hinkley. Go ahead and introduce yourself, please.

Mr. Hinkley: Yes. Bruce Hinkley here, Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

The Acting Chair: Okay.

Dr. Turner: Bob Turner, Edmonton-Whitemud.

The Acting Chair: Ms Fitzpatrick, please introduce yourself for the record.

Ms Fitzpatrick: Maria Fitzpatrick, MLA, Lethbridge-East.

Ms Miller: Good afternoon. Barb Miller, MLA, Red Deer-South.

Ms Goodridge: Laila Goodridge, MLA, Fort McMurray-Conklin.

Mr. Orr: Ron Orr, Lacombe-Ponoka.

The Acting Chair: I do believe that we have Mr. Tany Yao on the line.

Mr. Yao: Tany Yao here, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo. Thank you very much.

The Acting Chair: And Dr. David Swann.

Dr. Swann: Hi there. David Swann, Calgary-Mountain View.

The Acting Chair: Thank you, all. Did I miss anybody joining us by teleconference?

Hearing none, I'll carry on. A few housekeeping items to address 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.

In addition to myself I'd like to note for the record the following substitutions: Dr. Turner is substituting for Member Drever; Ms

Fitzpatrick is substituting for Ms McKittrick. Did we miss any, or are those all? Okay. Thank you.

Up next is the approval of the agenda. Would a member move a motion to approve, please? Thank you, Ms Renaud. All in favour of the motion? Any opposed? That motion is carried.

Just a friendly note to those joining us on the phone. I know that perhaps during the meeting you're on mute, but when I call for votes, I don't ask for people on the phone. I just say, "All those in favour?" so I expect you to respond at that time if you don't mind. Then I'll ask for opposed and expect people to respond at that time if they are opposed. I won't necessarily ask for "On the phones?" so please keep that in mind as we go through the meeting.

Mr. Orr: Sounds good. Thank you.

The Acting Chair: Yeah.

Again, thank you. The motion to approve the agenda is carried.

We have the minutes from the last meeting. Are there any errors or omissions to note? If not, would a member move adoption of the minutes, please? Thank you, Ms Woollard.

Mr. Orr: So done.

The Acting Chair: Okay. We'll go with Mr. Orr. All in favour of the motion to approve the minutes from the last meeting, please say aye. Any opposed, please say no. Thank you. That motion is carried.

As members will be aware, on December 4, 2018, the Assembly agreed to Government Motion 30, which referred the Public Sector Compensation Transparency Act to this committee for review. The legislation requires that a comprehensive review of the act begin by January 1, 2019, which we are doing today. I would also note that this committee only has six months to complete the review of this act. As such, the timelines will be tight for this review, particularly considering the time of year, and the committee will need to remain focused on its mandate as it plans for this review of this act. This is the first review of this statute, which was enacted three years ago. The act also concurrently provides for regular reviews at four-year intervals after this initial review.

Are there any questions regarding the mandate of this committee in reviewing this legislation? I'll open it up to discussion.

Okay. Hearing no questions, issues, concerns, I will continue. The Ministry of Justice and Solicitor General is responsible for this act. In order to ensure that the committee has a solid understanding of this legislation as we make decisions regarding our review process, it may be beneficial to request a technical briefing on the act from individuals in this ministry with expertise in this subject area.

Does anyone have any thoughts on this? Mr. Shepherd.

Mr. Shepherd: Well, thank you, Mr. Chair. I think on this that this is a fairly important issue for Albertans. As I recall, when this legislation came forward in the Legislature, there was a fair amount of debate and discussion, so I think it's pretty important as we're going to move forward in the review that we have some good background and clarification on this.

Given that the Ministry of Justice and Solicitor General is responsible for the act and, of course, there's the work of the Ministry of Treasury Board and Finance that were involved in helping put this together and helping administer it as well, I think it would be worth while to have them at the table. It's a fairly technical piece of legislation, perhaps not the most exciting but I think an important one. It deals with issues of privacy, issues of information about Albertans and is of great interest, I think, to folks in the public being able to review and see the salaries of public

servants. I think it would be a good idea for us to have those department officials come in, give us a bit of a technical briefing, be able to get some background on how they feel the legislation has been operating and any thoughts they might have on that.

With that in mind, I guess I would propose a motion to invite them to come and take part. Perhaps the clerk would have a suggestion as to wording on that.

The Acting Chair: Would you like to read a draft motion?

Mr. Roth: Certainly, Mr. Chair. Perhaps this will meet your intent. You identified Treasury Board as well. Was that correct, Mr. Shepherd?

Mr. Shepherd: Yes, indeed.

Mr. Roth: That

the Standing Committee on Families and Communities invite representatives from the Ministry of Justice and Solicitor General and the Ministry of Treasury Board and Finance to provide a technical briefing on the Public Sector Compensation Transparency Act at the next meeting of the committee.

Mr. Shepherd: That captures my intent. Thank you.

The Acting Chair: Okay. Mr. Shepherd has moved such a motion. Any discussion on the motion?

Mr. Orr: I think it's actually a good idea. I have a number of sort of technical questions that sort of follow up to some of the things that are stated in the bill, and it would be really helpful to be able to get some answers to some of those questions, which don't really need to be voiced today, but I would certainly like to address them to the appropriate officials. Yeah. I think it's a great idea.

The Acting Chair: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Orr.

Is there any other discussion on this motion?

Hearing none, I will call the question. All those in favour of the motion, please say aye. Any opposed to the motion, please say no. Okay. Thank you.

That motion is carried.

Although we are in the initial stages of our review, I expect there are some tasks that research services can begin working on to assist us in our work. Dr. Massolin, do you have any comments on this that you'd like to share with the committee?

Dr. Massolin: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would offer to the committee that the research services unit is prepared to offer support available throughout this committee's review of the Public Sector Compensation Transparency Act, and we will provide nonpartisan research support. A couple of the items that I think the committee may wish to consider at this point are a draft stakeholders list that we have traditionally prepared for legislative policy committees with such a review and also a crossjurisdictional comparison in case the committee members wish to find out what other jurisdictions are doing in this area. Of course, we're available for other research as well.

Thank you.

The Acting Chair: Thank you, Dr. Massolin.

Any discussion on what has been suggested by Dr. Massolin at this point?

Okay. I'm going to double-check with those on the phone just to make absolutely one hundred per cent sure, making sure everyone

has an opportunity to interject.

Okay. Thank you for your input on this, Dr. Massolin.

First of all, I would like to pick up on the potential for a crossjurisdictional comparison. Do any committee members have any thoughts on this?

2:10

Ms Woollard: I've always found the work completed by research services to be very helpful in facilitating the committee's work, so thank you for that. It seems to me that at this stage of the committee's work I'd be happy to support having a cross-jurisdictional comparison focus of research on the subject at hand be brought in to put on the plate.

The Acting Chair: Okay. So you're suggesting a motion, then, Ms Woollard?

Ms Woollard: Yes.

The Acting Chair: Okay. That motion would be that the Standing Committee on Families and Communities direct research services to prepare a crossjurisdictional comparison for the review of the Public Sector Compensation Transparency Act for consideration at a future meeting.

Ms Woollard: Yes. Exactly. Thank you.

The Acting Chair: Okay. Thank you, Ms Woollard.

Any discussion on the motion as proposed by Ms Woollard?

Mr. Orr: Yeah. Just a question. I'm going to assume that maybe something like that was done when the bill was first introduced, and I guess my interest would be to note if there's been anything particularly in the recent four years that we're supposed to be reviewing that comes up. I think that might be the most important part.

The Acting Chair: Any comments, Dr. Massolin?

Dr. Massolin: Mr. Chair, if I may ask through you to Mr. Orr – in the recent past, since enactment, I guess, of the act, what we're going to be doing for this, I think, subject to approval, of course, of the motion, is looking at other jurisdictions and what legislation they have, or potentially if they don't have legislation, we'll report on that, of course, by its absence and what the nature of that legislation is, what it does, what the thresholds are, for instance. I'm not quite sure exactly what Mr. Orr means by the previous four years.

The Acting Chair: Mr. Orr, would you like to . . .

Mr. Orr: I guess I'm wondering, you know – and maybe this isn't even easy to get at – what's been the experience of some of these other jurisdictions in sort of the application of it over the last four years. I'm just thinking that since we're supposed to be doing a review of the last four years, I'm just wondering if there's anything new or current particularly that would have come up that might be especially relevant to this review is all I'm saying.

The Acting Chair: Please go ahead.

Dr. Massolin: Yeah. Mr. Chair, I think, certainly, we can look for that. I don't know how successful we are in terms of finding things, but we'll certainly keep our eyes open for this sort of thing.

The Acting Chair: Okay.

Mr. Orr: Good. Thank you.

The Acting Chair: Thank you, Dr. Massolin.

Any further discussion on the motion? Okay. If not, I'm going to call the question. All in favour of the motion, please say aye. Any opposed, please say no. Okay. Thank you.

That motion is carried.

The committee may also wish to consider inviting written feedback from stakeholders given the tight timelines we are facing, of course. As in other reviews, if the committee would like to consider this, it might be useful to ask research services to compile a draft list of stakeholders for the committee's consideration, which could include suggestions provided by committee members.

Does anyone have any thoughts on who the stakeholders are in this review? Marie Renaud, please go ahead.

Ms Renaud: No, I don't have comments about specific stakeholders, but I would, very much like my colleague, like to, you know, propose a motion that we take up the kind offer of research services to help us with that, that they prepare a draft stakeholder list for review for the next meeting.

The Acting Chair: Okay. Thank you very much.

Any discussion on the motion as proposed by Member Renaud? Okay.

Do you mind reading the motion into the record, please.

Ms Renaud: Sure. Moved that

the Standing Committee on Families and Communities direct research services to prepare a draft stakeholders list for the review of the Public Sector Compensation Transparency Act for the next meeting.

The Acting Chair: Thank you very much, Ms Renaud.

Any discussion on the motion as proposed by Member Renaud? Okay. Hearing none, I will call the question. All in favour of the motion, please say aye. Any opposed, please say no. Okay. Hearing none, that motion is carried.

Thank you very much.

Dr. Massolin: Can I just offer one thing on that?

The Acting Chair: Yes, Dr. Massolin. Please go ahead.

Dr. Massolin: Yeah. Thank you. We'll certainly prepare a draft list for the next meeting for approval by the committee, but might I suggest that perhaps at the next meeting, after having reviewed this draft list, the committee may wish to be prepared with additions to the list as well, of course, for approval at the committee meeting.

The Acting Chair: Most definitely. Thank you for that, Dr. Massolin. We appreciate that.

Good. Okay. Thank you, everyone. I think that this might be the shortest meeting I've ever conducted in the history of the LAO. But at the risk of it not, are there any other issues for discussion before we conclude our meeting? Going once.

Mr. Orr: Just the date for the next meeting.

The Acting Chair: That was my next issue that I was going to bring up, sir.

Hearing no other business, the next meeting of this committee will be held in the new year at the call of the chair.

Before everyone packs up and heads off to other commitments, I'd like to quickly wish everyone the very best of the holiday season and a Happy New Year to each and every one of you.

May I have a motion to adjourn, please? Thank you, Mr. Shepherd. All in favour of the motion to adjourn, please say aye. Any opposed, please say no. Hearing no noes. Thank you. The motion is carried.

We are adjourned. Thank you very much.

[The committee adjourned at 2:17 p.m.]

