



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

The 31st Legislature
First Session

Special Standing Committee
on
Members' Services

Tuesday, February 11, 2025
11:45 a.m.

Transcript No. 31-1-8

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta
The 31st Legislature
First Session**

Special Standing Committee on Members' Services

Cooper, Hon. Nathan M., Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UC), Chair
Getson, Shane C., Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland (UC), Deputy Chair
Rowswell, Garth, Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright (UC), Acting Deputy Chair

Eggen, David, Edmonton-North West (NDP)
Gray, Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP)
Hunter, Grant R., Taber-Warner (UC)*
Irwin, Janis, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (NDP)**
Long, Martin M., West Yellowhead (UC)
Metz, Luanne, Calgary-Varsity (NDP)
Rowswell, Garth, Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright (UC)
Sabir, Irfan, Calgary-Bhullar-McCall (NDP)
Singh, Peter, Calgary-East (UC)
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UC)

* substitution for Shane Getson

** substitution for Luanne Metz

Support Staff

Shannon Dean, KC	Clerk
Trafton Koenig	Law Clerk
Lianne Bell	Chief of Staff to the Speaker
Andrew Koning	Parliamentary and Engagement Coordinator
Aaron Roth	Committee Clerk
Terry Langley	Sergeant-at-Arms
Dave Ludwick	Executive Director of Corporate Services
Darren Joy	Senior Financial Officer
Lyndsay Tischer	Director of Human Resources
Amanda LeBlanc	Managing Editor of <i>Alberta Hansard</i>

11:45 a.m.

Tuesday, February 11, 2025

[Mr. Cooper in the chair]

The Chair: Good morning. Good almost lunch hour. I'd like to call this meeting to order.

My name is Nathan Cooper. I'm the MLA for the outstanding constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta, and the chair of this committee. I will now ask members that are joining the committee at the table to introduce themselves for the record, and then I will call on members joining the meeting remotely to introduce themselves as well. I also wish to note for the record the following substitutions: Mr. Rowswell as deputy chair, the hon. Mr. Hunter for Mr. Getson, and Member Irwin for Dr. Metz.

Mr. Roth: Good morning, everyone. Aaron Roth, committee clerk.

Mr. Rowswell: Garth Rowswell, MLA, Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright.

Mr. Koning: Andrew Koning, Speaker's office.

Ms Bell: Lianne Bell, Speaker's office.

Mr. Langley: Terry Langley, Sergeant-at-Arms.

Mr. Eggen: David Eggen, MLA for Edmonton-North West.

Member Irwin: Janis Irwin, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Ms Gray: Good morning, everyone. Christina Gray, MLA for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Mr. Koenig: Trafton Koenig, Law Clerk.

Ms Tischer: Lyndsay Tischer, director of human resources for the LAO.

Mr. Ludwick: Dave Ludwick, corporate services, LAO.

Ms Dean: Shannon Dean, Clerk.

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

Mr. Yao: Tany Yao, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

Mr. Hunter: Grant Hunter, MLA for Taber-Warner.

Mr. Singh: Good morning, everyone. Peter Singh, MLA, Calgary-East.

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

The Chair: Before we turn to the business at hand, a few operational items. Please note that the microphones are operated by *Hansard* staff. Committee proceedings are live streamed on the Internet and broadcast on Alberta Assembly TV. The audio- and videostream and transcripts of the meeting can be accessed via the Legislative Assembly website.

Those participating remotely are encouraged to please turn on your camera while speaking and mute your microphone when not speaking. Members participating virtually who wish to be placed on the speakers list are asked to send an e-mail or a message in the group chat to the committee clerk. Members in the room, please indicate by raising your hand, signalling you'd like to speak to the chair. Please set all cellphones and other devices to silent during the meeting.

With that, it brings us to item 2, the approval of the agenda. Are there any proposed additions, revisions for today's agenda? If not, would a member be willing to move the approval? Member Eggen. Any questions, comments, concerns? All those in favour of the approval of the agenda, please say aye. Here in the room, please say no. Joining us remotely, please say aye. Any opposed, please say no. That motion is carried and so ordered.

Item 3, the approval of the meeting minutes. Are there any amendments to the meeting minutes from our last committee meeting? If not, would a member be willing to move the adoption of those minutes? Member Rowswell has moved the adoption of the minutes. Is there any further discussion, questions, comments, or concerns? Seeing or hearing none, here in the room, all those in favour, please say aye. Any opposed, please say no. Joining us remotely, please say aye. Any opposed, please say no. The motion is carried and so ordered.

Hon. members, that brings us to item 4, the substantive portion of our meeting. This is the 2025-2026 Legislative Assembly budget estimates. I am pleased to present a brief overview of the Legislative Assembly 2025-26 proposed budget, to be followed by some additional details from the Clerk, Ms Dean.

Members will recall that this committee met on November 26, 2024, and approved the budget parameters document to direct the Legislative Assembly Office to prepare the 2025-2026 proposed budget. That is being presented today for the committee's consideration. Members, you have access to an electronic version of the budget binder, which includes the budget estimates and recommendations for branches, caucus and constituency offices, compensation, operational expenses, as well as several proposed operational improvements. You will see an amendment to the parameters that reflects a number of decisions that this committee approved on January 9 that address member compensation allowances, constituency office funding adjustments, and changes to the caucus budget funding formula.

With the changes that this committee originally considered back in November as well as those discussed on January 9, we expect an overall budget increase of 5.6 per cent, or \$4.7 million. Of this increase, approximately one-half, or \$2.45 million, is for a Chamber upgrade project that will address improvements to the Assembly's audio and visual broadcast equipment. We discussed this project at length in the fall, but for clarity and to refresh everyone's memory, this project is necessary to upgrade aging technology in the Chamber that was originally installed in 2005. Members may recall that in 2022 we experienced some intermittent audio problems. Although interim upgrades have been installed, it's necessary that we plan for a larger overall upgrade of the equipment, which is now close to 20 years old. The bulk of the Chamber project will be undertaken this summer, with some additional improvements scheduled for 2026-2027.

You will also notice other special funding requirements in the budget that have been reduced this year. The ERP project budget is reduced as we are near the launch of the new payroll and accounting platform later this summer. The employee market adjustment is also reduced to reflect our expectations around the public service general market adjustment. Shannon will describe these adjustments in more detail.

Members, you will notice that approximately \$1.2 million increase for our caucus budget as well as a \$606,000 increase to MLA administration budget, which reflects the various MLA compensation benefits and allowance changes that have been approved by this committee. Considering the budget reductions in the ERP, employee market contingency, MLA compensation benefits and allowance contingency, and the caucus contingency, these changes represent the proposed 5.6 per cent increase to the LAO budget for the fiscal year 2025-2026.

In summary, the Assembly-proposed budget is approximately \$89.7 million. Of this, approximately 45 per cent, or \$39.9 million, is allocated to MLA administration; 35 per cent, or \$31.3 million, is allocated to LAO branches; and 12 per cent, or \$10.7 million, is allocated to caucuses. The remaining 8 per cent, or \$7.8 million, is allocated to the Chamber upgrade, Electoral Boundaries Commission, the enterprise resource planning system, as well as the employee market adjustment contingency fund.

I'll now turn it over to Ms Dean, Clerk of the Legislative Assembly, to explore this coming budget year further.

Ms Dean: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker, and good morning, committee members. I'll provide some additional detail to supplement the Speaker's overview, and we'd be pleased to answer any questions you may have.

Beginning with the LAO branch budgets, as I'm sure you are aware, the compensation adjustments provided for in the budget parallel what's in place for the Alberta public service compensations for management and opted-out and excluded nonmanagement. That translates to, for branch staff, a merit adjustment of 3 per cent for those managers who are eligible and a 4 per cent adjustment for those employees who are eligible. These adjustments impact staff benefits, resulting in increased employer contributions to the health benefit and pension plans as well as premiums for CPP, EI, and WCB. Branch budgets also include an adjustment to operational expenses based on a 2 per cent inflationary factor, and these parameters were approved by this committee at its meeting in November.

Now, when we were preparing this budget, we were able to minimize some of the implications of the various proposed changes by taking advantage of a number of contingencies that were established last fiscal year. For instance, the changes approved in January regarding member compensation benefits and allowances have been off-set by the contingency approved by this committee for the 2024-25 fiscal year. That translates to a net impact of \$606,000 to the MLA administration budget. These changes include a \$522,000 adjustment to reflect the additional \$6,000 that each MLA is going to get for their member's services allowance. That's intended to support staff and leasing costs. There's a \$521,000 adjustment to members' compensation and benefits and a \$345,000 estimated accrual for the members' transition allowance. The remainder of the increase to MLA administration is for constituency staff compensation adjustments, rate changes for mileage and per diems, temporary residence allowance, and the allowance for members' security systems.

11:55

Moving on to the caucus budgets, this envelope was adjusted to reflect the revised funding formula approved by this committee in January. The adjustments made to the overall caucus budgets are off-set by a 50 per cent reduction in the other caucus budget line contingency.

Finally, the employee market adjustment contingency has been reduced by \$304,000 based on an estimated 4 per cent market adjustment for compensation, as set out in the budget parameters approved in November.

A couple of other noteworthy items. This committee approved a \$1.5 million budget for the Electoral Boundaries Commission last fiscal year, and we are carrying forward that number for fiscal year 2025-26 with no change. And, finally, our ERP budget for the forthcoming year is reduced by \$376,000.

Members, one of the important items that the Speaker highlighted in our budget is the Chamber upgrade project, and the Speaker did provide some background as to the need for this project. In terms of budgetary impact in the current fiscal year we are absorbing about \$427,000 to scope the project, start procurement, and to complete

the design work. For fiscal year 2025-26 we're looking at \$2.45 million to complete the cabling, millwork, and network construction, and in fiscal year 2026-27 we will budget \$1.2 million to complete the construction and testing.

A couple of other highlights in the budget estimates. Similar to the changes described for branch staff in terms of compensation, the same changes are applicable to caucus and constituency staff. To reiterate, that means a 3 per cent merit adjustment for eligible management and a 4 per cent adjustment for eligible nonmanagement. Again, these adjustments impact employer contributions to benefits and statutory contributions. There's also been a 2 per cent inflationary factor applied to constituency and caucus operational expenses.

We are also looking for \$50,000 in one-time funding to host the Canadian Presiding Officers Conference in January 2026. We've also included an adjustment to accommodate the reclassification for our security personnel to legislative security officers. Finally, we are experiencing a significant increase in our software licensing costs to the tune of \$360,000.

Before I turn the floor back over to the Speaker, I'm delighted to share that the Capital Gifts sales are doing very, very well. We are pleased with the sales volume to the public, and we are forecasting that that will be in excess of \$100,000 for the next fiscal year.

Over to you, Mr. Speaker.

The Chair: Thank you so much, Shannon.

I'd now like to open the floor for any questions, comments from members with respect to the budget estimates. Ms Gray is on the list.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Looking at the budget preparation parameters document, on page 3 it refers to contingency funding, but on page 23 it clarifies that the contingency funds that were "set aside for the MLA compensation, benefits, and allowances review is no longer required." I'm double-checking that we don't have a contingency going forward because decisions have been made. Perfect.

I would like to just double-check my numbers and clarity on the decisions that have been made if I may continue, Mr. Speaker.

The Chair: Please do.

Ms Gray: Thank you. Specifically on transition allowance, at the January meeting the transition allowance motion that came forward was changed on the floor to go back to the 30th Legislature. At the time I was asking about the impact of that change and how many members would be included there. Apologies to you, Madam Clerk. I may have misheard, but I think you said \$345,000 for transition. Is that the correct . . .

Ms Dean: For next fiscal.

Ms Gray: For next fiscal?

Ms Dean: Yep.

Ms Gray: Essentially, the question I asked in the last meeting that I would love clarity on is: how much has this transition allowance change added to the budget for the Legislative Assembly Office?

Ms Dean: If I may, Mr. Speaker, I think the key thing to note is that change means that you're hitting the six years of service coming up this May for, according to our tally, 52 members. The change in cost between the two proposals is an accrual for the current fiscal year, and we're able to absorb that in our budget, and that's \$3.9 million.

Ms Gray: Three point nine million? Thank you very much for that clarity.

Ms Dean: But keep in mind that under the original proposal, the six years you would hit in May 2029. So you have a rolling accrual with respect to that amount.

Ms Gray: Understood. Thank you. We live in uncertain political times though, so good to know what will happen in the sooner scenario. So \$3.9 million . . .

Ms Dean: Sorry, if I may supplement.

Ms Gray: Please.

Ms Dean: The original proposal would have necessitated an accrual of \$1.6 million.

Ms Gray: Thank you.

Ms Dean: But there is a difference in terms of next year's accrual. Next year's accrual, as you've noted, is \$345,000. But under the original proposal, it would have been higher. It would have been \$900,000, and the subsequent year's accrual would be higher.

Ms Gray: Right. No, those numbers are helpful, thank you. At the time that the committee was making the decisions it was not clear to me what was happening.

Similarly, if I may ask about caucus budgets. So caucus budget: we had a motion from the floor that changed the calculations for caucus budgets only to the benefit of the government caucus and, looking at the budget documents that have been prepared, it appears there's a \$1.7 million change to the government caucus budget. Now, I understand that included in that is going to be some of the merit increases for employees, a CPI factor of 2 per cent. I'm looking for the number that the formula change implemented to that caucus budget.

The Chair: Go ahead, Dave.

Dr. Ludwick: Sorry, MLA Gray, can you just re-ask your question? You're looking for the number that . . .

Ms Gray: When the formula was changed to give the government caucus additional funds, how much was added to their budget with that change? Right now what I'm looking at also includes CPI increases, merit increases. I'd like to know how much the government members on this committee moved to give themselves of taxpayer dollars in a clear number because, as we talked about last meeting, they were not able to share that accurate information at the time.

Dr. Ludwick: You correctly noted the \$1.7 million or so that the whole bump implies. Just the amount relating to the change in the way the caucus is funded would be very close to that, too. There's only about a \$40,000 difference that relates to the operational costs that you referred to. So about \$1.7 million.

Ms Gray: Okay. So a \$1.7 million increase that the government members on this committee voted to give their own caucus budget, and I see that it's represented as a 58 per cent increase to this line item. I just wanted to make sure I had the correct numbers for that. I think those are my questions to start off with, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

The Chair: Are there any other questions? Mr. Rowswell.

Mr. Rowswell: Yeah. Just relative to the transitional amount, like, some members are already not there, right? Have they received it already, or when will they receive it?

The Chair: There are two scenarios for transition allowance in the 31st Legislature. As you've noted, Ms Phillips resigned and so did Ms Notley. Ms Notley will have received a payment based upon the previous transition allowance formula that was from her years of service prior to the transition allowance being phased out. So she will have received that already. And then Ms Phillips will also receive a six-month transition allowance paid per month, which I don't believe has begun yet because the order must be formalized today. Or, should the committee decide to formalize the orders today, then Ms Phillips will receive a six-month transition allowance, and Ms Notley received a payment prior based upon previous years of service.

Mr. Rowswell: And you accrue the amount because if people still run another term, then they won't get it until they're not there, right?

12:05

The Chair: Correct.

Mr. Rowswell: Yeah. So you have to accrue as they get it even though we haven't paid it out.

The Chair: Correct.

Mr. Rowswell: Yeah. Okay.

Mr. Hunter: Mr. Chair, can you tell us what the amount is that Ms Notley will receive for the transition amount?

The Chair: I actually don't have that number available to me at present, but presumably it can be determined and sent unless any of our officials have the number that Ms Notley would have received. We'll try to get it before the end of the meeting and, if not, we can report back.

Mr. Sabir, followed by Mr. Eggen.

Mr. Sabir: Just a point of clarification. Are those transition allowances for all other prior members, prior to Ms Notley, public? If not, why just this number?

The Chair: Yes. All of the transition allowance payments previously made to any member are available on the public record.

Mr. Sabir: Okay. In that case, I would like to see all of that among Ms Notley's.

The Chair: Like, it's in the report, the select payments made to members in the years in which they retired. If you're inclined, I'm sure members of our research team can collate those for you. I know that these allowances were very widely discussed in the public, so if you want to google it, I'm sure there are also lots of highlights that you can find out on those. But if you're inclined and the committee would like to make a motion to find all of the previous payments, I'm sure that the administrative team here would be happy to deliver on that for the committee.

Mr. Sabir: But I also understand that in due course in some report Ms Notley's number will be there. If we can get that one without a motion, it shouldn't prevent me from asking for previous payments with a motion.

The Chair: Oh, I'm happy to. We can get you the previous numbers. In fact, we will get a number of them prior to the end of the meeting if that will suffice. If not, we'll get – you know, there

are quite likely hundreds of members who received a transition allowance, so if you'd like every single number, we're happy to provide it for you, and we can take it from there.

The amount that Ms Notley will receive or has received is approximately \$143,000.

Are there other questions? Mr. Eggen.

Mr. Eggen: Yes. Thanks, Mr. Chair. I was just wondering if somebody from the government side could explain the justification for increasing the caucus budget of the UCP government by 58 per cent. Now, I seem to recall that in the last election this same caucus lost 14 seats, yet they're increasing their caucus budget by \$1.7 million, a 58 per cent increase. Now, they just barely did win the government, but when you win the government, you literally have access to millions and millions of dollars, hundreds of workers to move forward with your agenda. So here we are with a government in the last election that lost 14 seats, and they're looking for a 58 per cent increase to their caucus budget. That defies common sense. It defies gravity, really, and Albertans notice these things, especially considering the circumstances that most Albertans are in.

The Chair: Is there anyone wishing to provide comment? Mr. Rowswell.

Mr. Rowswell: Yeah. I think we talked about this at our last meeting. You know, we'll still be about the same. The NDP caucus will still have more. This will just bring it closer so that we can manage our caucuses differently. So I think it is a fair way to handle it. It's at 50 per cent to reflect some of the advantages of ministerial benefits, but this just brings the budgets for both caucuses close to the same.

The Chair: Are there other questions with respect to the budget estimates or members who seek clarification? Mr. Yao.

Mr. Yao: Yeah. Thank you, Chair. I'm wondering, just for the sake of this conversation, if we can clarify the amounts that the opposition caucus and the government caucus would get with these new rules, just a comparison for the record to verify what Mr. Rowswell said there.

The Chair: Sure.

Dave, the total amount funded for the NDP caucus and the total amount funded for the UCP caucus, please.

Mr. Ludwick: For the NDP caucus, it's \$5.1 million. For the UCP caucus, it's \$4.8 million.

The Chair: I see Mr. Hunter has raised his hand. Are there others in the room here prior to going back to those joining us remotely? Mr. Hunter, please.

Mr. Hunter: Yeah. I just wanted to know, Mr. Chair, because I'm new to this and I don't know the answer to this, with the transition allowance: would a member be allowed to, if they felt like this wasn't fair to Albertans, opt out of it? Like, for instance, if Ms Notley felt that \$143,000 was unfair and didn't want it, could she opt out and say: no, I'm not going to take that allowance?

Ms Dean: That's an interesting question. We have requirements under the orders whereby the LAO must pay these amounts, but if there's quite clear indication from the member that they're declining it, you know, express written authorization that they're declining it, then we would consider that if it were to arise.

The Chair: Are there other questions, comments, or concerns with respect to the budget estimates? Seeing and hearing none, I am prepared to ask a member to move the following motion, that the standing committee on Members' Services approve the 2025-2026 Legislative Assembly of Alberta budget estimates in the amount of \$89,682,697.

As is available on the screen, is there any member wishing to propose such a motion? Mr. Rowswell.

Are there any additional questions, comments, concerns with respect to the motion? Ms Gray.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the work of the Legislative Assembly Office, and thank you for responding to our questions about the vote we are undertaking now.

I cannot support the budget that is brought forward, primarily because of the decision of UCP members of this committee and the motions they previously approved in the last meeting to drastically increase their compensation and benefits, including increasing their caucus budget by \$1.7 million. I will note that while we were debating this back in January, the UCP members told the committee it was going to be roughly \$1.2 million, so an extra half million dollars difference now that we see the actual numbers, which is one of the reasons why I suggest these types of major financial changes should not be done last minute on the floor in a way that was not even considered by a subcommittee. So definitely frustrated with the process and the attitude that the government members have brought to this conversation and the place that we find ourselves in with respect to the Legislative Assembly Office and the staff and the work that they do. I can't support this motion today.

The Chair: Are there others? Member Irwin, please.

Member Irwin: Thank you, Mr. Chair. You know, I had the honour of being a sub on this committee just before Christmas, and it was at that meeting when the housing allowance piece came about. It was just so alarming to me as an MLA who's the shadow minister for housing and someone who hears from my own constituents and, in fact, folks from all across Alberta who are struggling with access to any type of affordable housing. So for the UCP to increase the housing allowance at that point more than double what was recommended in the now public consultation report is just troubling for a lot of Albertans.

12:15

Now to hear today that, you know, we're looking at a \$1.7 million increase: I mean, \$1.7 million could build a lot of homes for struggling Albertans. So I cannot in good faith support this motion, and I just really want – I know the UCP, the committee members are distracted by a whole lot of scandals right now, but I'd really ask these UCP members to think about why they're here. They're here for their constituents, and I've yet to hear from one of my constituents who believes that UCP MLAs should be getting salary increases, who believes that they should be getting housing allowance increases. I'd be happy to hear from those members of the committee if they're hearing otherwise, but I'm doubtful. So I cannot support this motion.

The Chair: Are there others?

Seeing none, I am prepared to call the question. Hon. members, on the motion as proposed by the hon. Member Rowswell, all those in favour, please say aye here in the room. Any opposed in the room, please say no. Joining us remotely, all in favour, please say aye. Any opposed, please say no.

Motion is carried and so ordered.

Hon. members, that brings us to item 5. The committee will now move to the consideration of the amendments to the Members' Services Committee orders. At the January 9, 2025, meeting the committee

directed the Legislative Assembly Office to prepare draft amending orders that would implement the recommendations agreed to during its deliberations on the final report of the Members' Compensation, Benefits and Allowances Review Subcommittee. The amending orders applicable to the committee's direction are the members' allowances order and the constituency services order. Further, the amendments proposed to the constituency services order would make adjustments in accordance with the 2025-26 Legislative Assembly budget estimates, which we have now agreed to. The draft amending orders were provided to the committee on February 5, 2025.

I'd like to open the floor to any comments, questions, or motions in relation to the amendments. Mr. Rowswell.

Mr. Rowswell: Yeah. I'd like to move – I don't know if it'll bring it up there or not – that

the Special Standing Committee on Members' Services approve the

Constituency Services Amendment Order, 2025, as distributed.

This is the \$6,000 per constituency MSA increase to better serve our constituents and have our staff to do it.

The Chair: Is this the one here?

Mr. Rowswell: Yeah. It looks like it. Yep.

The Chair: Are there questions, comments, concerns with respect to the amending order before the committee?

Seeing and hearing none, I am prepared to call the question. Here in the room, all those in favour of the motion, please say aye. Any opposed, please say no. Joining us remotely, in favour, please say aye. Any opposed, please say no.

Motion is carried and so ordered.

Are there other motions? Mr. Yao.

Mr. Yao: I'd like to introduce a second motion on the allowances amendment.

The Chair: Okay. I know that these motions were shared previously, so we'll have the clerk bring that motion up. Can you see that on your screen, Mr. Yao? Is that the motion that you intended to move?

Mr. Yao: I am going to require Mr. Rowswell's help there if he's in person.

Mr. Roth: I'll see if I can enlarge.

The Chair: Okay. Can you read it out, Aaron?

Mr. Rowswell: I'll read it out. Yeah. Moved by Mr. Yao that the Special Standing Committee on Members' Services approve the Members' Allowances Amendment Order, 2025, as distributed.

Mr. Yao: Yes.

The Chair: Excellent. Is there any further discussion on the motion? Mr. Rowswell.

Mr. Rowswell: I'd like to make an amendment.

The Chair: This amendment was also shared with the committee, so you all have a copy of that virtually. It's a challenge to propose . . .

Mr. Rowswell: Do you want me to read it?

The Chair: I'll get Mr. Rowswell to read the amendment into the record, please.

Mr. Rowswell: Sure. Okay. That the motion be amended by adding the following immediately after "as distributed," with the following

amendments to section 1(8) by adding the following immediately after subsection (2):

(2.1) Section 3 is amended by adding the following immediately after subsection (5):

(6) On April 1 of each year, the amounts set out in subsection (2) shall be increased or decreased by the year-over-year weighted average percentage change in wage settlements for the public sector in Alberta for the immediately preceding calendar year, published by the Government of Alberta.

(7) Notwithstanding subsection (6), the increase or decrease implemented on April 1, 2025, is deemed to be effective January 1, 2025.

(2.2) Section 4 is amended by renumbering it as section 4(1) and by adding the following after subsection (1):

(2) On April 1 of each year, the amount set out in subsection (1) shall be increased or decreased by the year-over-year weighted average percentage change in wage settlements for the public sector in Alberta for the immediately preceding calendar year, published by the Government of Alberta.

(3) Notwithstanding subsection (2), the increase or decrease implemented on April 1, 2025, is deemed to be effective January 1, 2025.

By striking out subsection (3) and substituting the following:

(3) Section 4.1(1) is repealed.

The Chair: Any questions, comments, concerns with respect to the amendment? Member Gray.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I just want to make sure I'm being very clear. This is enacting the decisions made by the UCP majority of the committee in the votes last meeting. The difference in this drafting and the reason for this amendment is to make sure that the wage increases for MLAs are applied appropriately to the additional top-up that ministers, Premiers, House leaders, and others get. Am I understanding that correctly?

Mr. Rowswell: That will come later. Yeah.

Ms Gray: Oh. So this amendment is – sorry. I just want to make sure . . .

The Chair: Yeah. It's okay.

Trafton, can you speak to the changes that the amendment enacts?

Mr. Koenig: Yeah. If this amendment were to be passed and the main motion as amended were passed, this would align all of the adjustments in this order to the same metric. That would also include the special allowances and the third party leader allowance. I'll just make one additional comment as well, that if this is passed and the motion as amended is passed, there'll be a very, very small consequential amendment to the order that's made by the committee to just note that it's being done under the authority of the Legislative Assembly Act, the relevant sections.

The Chair: Does that answer your question, Ms Gray?

Ms Gray: Yes. So I heard that it aligns the compensation adjustments everywhere that an MLA can be paid a salary or part of their compensation. It just makes sure it's all tied to the same thing.

The Chair: It does. There is an additional change that we'll also need to correct one administrative inconsistency that will take place theoretically after this motion is passed, if the committee makes that decision. It does do that, but there's one additional requirement for that to accomplish.

Ms Gray: Okay.

The Chair: Does that make sense?

Ms Gray: So with this amendment we see compensation being adjusted and the transition allowance operationalized that the UCP majority voted on at the last meeting.

The Chair: Correct.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Chair: Are there other questions, comments, concerns with respect to the amendment?

All those in favour of the amendment here in the room, please say aye. Any opposed to the amendment here in the room, please say no. Joining us remotely, in favour, please say aye. Any opposed, please say no.

That amendment is carried and so ordered.

12:25

We are on the amended motion as proposed by Mr. Yao. Are there additional questions, comments, concerns with respect to the now amended motion?

Seeing and hearing none. All those here in the room in favour of the motion as proposed by Member Yao, please say aye. Any opposed in the room, please say no. Joining us remotely, in favour, please say aye. And joining us remotely, opposed, please say no.

That motion is carried and so ordered.

Hon. members, there is one administrative inconsistency that has now been created as a result of that changing. I am under the understanding that a potential motion has been shared with all members of the committee in advance, even though it may not necessarily be a requirement that that was shared with all members of the committee. Now, I believe that Member Rowswell may want to move that motion. In order to do that, we do require a consent motion to have a motion moved from the floor. Perhaps the clerk has what a consent motion looks like.

Mr. Rowswell: Okay. I'd like to move that

the Special Standing Committee on Members' Services permit under Standing Order 52.041(3) a motion to amend the Executive Council salaries order and the members' committee allowances order to be moved despite prior notice not having been given to the committee clerk by the deadline established by the committee chair.

The Chair: Just for clarity's sake, this is the consent motion that will allow the subsequent motion to be moved. This isn't the actual motion, although it does discuss the content of the motion that Member Rowswell intends to move. For the benefit of the committee this motion was shared with all members of the committee prior, although Member Rowswell did miss the deadline for the motion.

This is a debatable motion. If members would like to speak to the motion, they're welcome to do so, or we can call the question and debate the actual substance of the motion. Member Gray.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My only comment is, for the members of the public who may be watching this meeting or reading the *Hansard*: the need for this motion now essentially prevents the Official Opposition from surprising the government with motions that are unplanned, while the government, who has the majority on the committee, is able to then facilitate passing motions at the last minute because they have the majority and they can give themselves the authority to do that.

Just for context, in this case I also think last-minute motions like this continue to show the government making major changes that impact budgets and things that have to do with taxpayer dollars

without having planned everything appropriately. We couldn't get the numbers at the last meeting, and now we're dealing with last-minute motions from the floor. I just would like to point that out, that that is not how we would expect government caucus to operate.

Thank you.

The Chair: Just for clarity's sake, did you receive this proposed motion in advance of today's meeting?

Ms Gray: The motion for advance approval is not on the site. But I believe the motion he's going to be moving subsequent: see, this one is not on the website either.

The Chair: Right. But was it . . .

Ms Gray: I think I did receive . . .

The Chair: Was it shared with you prior?

Ms Gray: I did receive it by e-mail, so I will thank the committee and the government for sharing it in advance. But for those who are wondering about this process, I really wanted to add that context.

The Chair: Excellent.

Are there any other questions, comments, concerns with respect to the motion, the consent motion that's before the committee?

Seeing and hearing none, I am prepared to call the question. Here in the room, all those in favour of providing consent, please say aye. Any opposed in the room, please say no. Joining us remotely, in favour, please say aye. And joining us remotely, opposed, please say no.

Motion is carried and so ordered.

Mr. Rowswell, if you'd like to move your proposed motion.

Mr. Rowswell: Okay. Good. I'd like to move that the Special Standing Committee on Members' Services amend (a) the Executive Council salaries order, (i) in section 1 by renumbering the section 1(1) and by adding the following after (1):

- (2) On April 1 of each year, the amount set out in subsection (1)(a) shall be increased or decreased by the year-over-year weighted average percentage change in wage settlements for the public sector in Alberta for the immediately preceding calendar year, published by the Government of Alberta.
- (3) Notwithstanding subsection (2), the increase or decrease implemented on April 1, 2025, is deemed to be effective January 1, 2025.

(ii) by repealing section 1.1; (b) the members' committee allowances order, (i) in section 1 by adding the following immediately after subsection (2):

- (3) On April 1 of each year, the amount set out in subsection (1) shall be increased or decreased by the year-over-year weighted average percentage change in wage settlements for the public sector in Alberta for the immediately preceding calendar year, published by the Government of Alberta.
- (4) Notwithstanding subsection (3), the increase or decrease implemented on April 1, 2025, is deemed to be effective January 1, 2025.

(iii) by repealing section 2.

The Chair: Just for the clarity of the committee this administrative amendment creates absolute clarity across all allowances – both members of Executive Council, Leader of the Official Opposition, House leader, whips, Opposition House Leader and whips, or otherwise – so that all allowances are based on the agreed to amount of the public settlements that is posted monthly, that there's been some significant discussion about.

Is there any other discussion, questions, comments, concerns with respect to the motion that is before the committee? Mr. Eggen.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you. You know, sometimes it's difficult for Albertans to see the rhyme or reason of this UCP government, but we can always look for clues. The first clue that we see here very clearly is that this whole thing was made in haste, somewhat like the metaphor of a back of a napkin, and having to come back here to clean up the very hasty decision around increases to salaries for elected officials; number two, just unpacking this, of course, that these allowances for Executive Council and other positions that were otherwise increased were tied to CPI, I believe, the consumer price index.

You know, put that in context, that this government did recognize that there is a consumer price index increase, generally that is a normal way to determine wages and to determine the cost of living and did apply that to Executive Council and other special privileged members of the Legislature but never thought twice about applying that to regular workers' wages, right? We see, literally, for example, education assistants freezing on the line, not being paid a living wage, and not being offered consumer price index. Yet this was a normal way to determine wages here in the Legislature for privileged members of the Legislature.

You know, you can't ask this government what they're up to, but you can look for clues, and these are two big clues right here that they are not here for you; they're only in it for themselves.

The Chair: Are there are others? Member Hunter.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Once again a question for clarity. If, you know, after hearing Member Eggen, a member of the

opposition, felt so terrible about doing this, would they have the opportunity to be able to opt out of these pay increases?

12:35

Ms Dean: No. It's our position that we are required to pay you. If the member wants to donate that money on their own initiative, then they can do that. We have had that question before, and it's our position that we have a legal requirement to pay that amount.

The Chair: Are there others?

Seeing and hearing none, I am prepared to call the question. All those in favour of the motion here in the room as proposed by Member Rowsell, please say aye. Any opposed to the motion here in the room, please say no. Joining us remotely in favour, please say aye. Opposed joining remotely, please say no.

That motion is carried and so ordered.

Hon. members, that brings us to item 6, other business. I would like to advise the committee that the Legislative Assembly Office administration will be updating the caucus expenditure guidelines in accordance with decisions that the committee took on January 9, 2025, with an effective date of April 1, 2025. Is there other business that members intend to raise at this time?

Seeing none, item 7. The date of the next meeting will be at the call of the chair.

Item 8, adjournment. I will entertain a motion to adjourn. Member Irwin. Any questions, comments, concerns or discussion? All those in favour of the motion to adjourn, please say aye. Any opposed, please say no. Joining us remotely in favour, please say aye. Any opposed, please say no. That motion is carried and so ordered. Our meeting is adjourned at 12:37.

[The committee adjourned at 12:37 p.m.]

