



Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

BOARD OF INTERNAL ECONOMY

HANSARD VERBATIM REPORT



No. 5 — November 13, 2012

BOARD OF INTERNAL ECONOMY

Hon. Dan D'Autremont, Chair
Cannington

Hon. June Draude
Kelvington-Wadena

Ms. Doreen Eagles
Estevan

Mr. David Forbes
Saskatoon Centre

Mr. Jeremy Harrison
Meadow Lake

Mr. Warren McCall
Regina Elphinstone-Centre

Hon. Don Morgan
Saskatoon Southeast

[The board met at 17:21.]

The Chair: — Okay. I'd like to call this meeting to order. First item on the agenda is the approval of the proposed agenda, if someone would like to move that we accept this agenda.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — I so move.

The Chair: — Mr. Morgan. I don't believe we need a seconder on that . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . We do? Okay.

Mr. McCall: — I so move.

The Chair: — Mr. McCall. I guess I should start off with introducing who we have here today. On the government side we have Minister Morgan. We have Ms. Eagles and Minister Draude. On the opposition side we have Mr. McCall and Mr. Forbes. And on the government side we also have Mr. Harrison.

All those in favour of the proposed agenda, please say aye.

Some Hon. Members: — Aye.

The Chair: — Carried. Okay. Thank you. Item no. 1 is a tabling and decision item, approval of the Legislative Assembly Service's fourth quarterly financial and fiscal forecast report for 2011-2012 . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Oh, excuse me. I do that all the time with the blues as well, skip parts.

We have the minutes of meeting #4/12, need approval for that. Are there any questions arising from the minutes? If not, would somebody move adoption of the minutes? Mr. Forbes, seconded by Mr. Morgan. All in favour? Carried.

Now we can move on to item no. 1, the Legislative Assembly Service fourth quarterly financial and fiscal forecast report. We have the Clerk, Greg Putz, along with Lynn Jacobson and Dawn Court here to answer any questions related to these or other matters as we progress. Do we have any questions in regards to the fourth quarter financial report? Mr. Forbes.

Mr. Forbes: — Yes. I'm just learning how to read these things. And I'm looking at our caucus operations and how . . . I'm assuming was that the totals for the two caucuses for the fiscal, the year from April to March? And then the change over was because the change in number of members in the caucuses, right?

Ms. Jacobson: — Yes.

Mr. Forbes: — Then good. Thank you.

The Chair: — Any other questions? If not, would someone move adoption of the fourth quarter financial report? Mr. McCall. Secunder? Mr. Harrison. All in favour?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Okay. We'll move on to item no. 2. It's a tabling and decision item, approval of the Legislative Assembly's first and second quarterly financial and fiscal forecast report for 2012-2013. I recognize Mr. Morgan.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have questions I would like to ask in camera. I note that there is a pending litigation and I wouldn't mind having an update on that in camera.

The Chair: — So you're moving that we move in camera for this?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — I am, unless there's other things that the members want to deal with before we go in.

The Chair: — No we can move in . . . Mr. Harrison.

Mr. Harrison: — Yes, just a question on the RARF [Refurbishment and Asset Replacement Fund]. What are the third and fourth quarter expenditures going to be going towards?

Mr. Putz: — We're expecting . . . Because we know that the fourth floor project won't be going — that isn't RARF, but that was an extra expenditure for that — that won't go forward. So that will be returned to the treasury at the end of the fiscal year. The other projects we're just beginning. Some of these . . . We expect to be on budget for all of them.

One in particular you might . . . The one that is the lion's share of the funding for this fiscal year was the replacement of furniture in members' offices in this building. And some of you who are caucus Chairs — two of you are here — will know that you received a letter recently from the Speaker. So you know that that project is now just getting under way.

Mr. Harrison: — What's kind of the time frame for that, when we're going to be having visits going to members' offices and . . .

Mr. Putz: — What we're hoping to do is have an assessment done so that we can begin work right after session, after having assessed what furniture is needed, and then having the purchase of the furniture installed over the course of January, February time frame.

The Chair: — Mr. Forbes.

Mr. Forbes: — Yes. I have a question about the two spreadsheets. The first one as of June 30th, 2012 at the bottom. And I'm not sure how I'm reading this, but if the government caucus received 25 per cent — which I assume should be in terms of a quarter, 25 per cent — we received 20 per cent. But then the leader's grant is there in the next line but there's a strange symbol. I'm not sure what that means.

But it seems like the subtotal is . . . Should that . . .

Ms. Court: — So with respect to that, for the opposition caucus and the opposition leader, there's only one budgeted line item which is the 728. But we actually track, you know, on two different line items within MIDAS [multi-informational database application system] just for tracking purposes. And so what you actually would see if you added the two lines together, you would have 186 and that would take you to the 25 per cent. And that symbol there is just because there's nothing

to calculate on a budget, so it just shows you that.

Mr. Forbes: — And then on the next page I assume then that's essentially the same reason, but I would be asking why the government caucus has received 58 per cent of their money for the year.

Ms. Court: — Part of that has to do with the salaries that were paid in the caucus offices.

Mr. Forbes: — So we're at 45 and probably would be 50 per cent?

Ms. Court: — Yes.

Mr. Forbes: — Okay. Fair enough. Good, thanks.

Ms. Court: — You're welcome.

The Chair: — Ms. Eagles.

Ms. Eagles: — I'd just like you to refresh my memory regarding the furniture for members' offices. That's only if they . . . I mean it's not mandatory that they take the furniture. If they're completely happy with the furniture they have, there is no reason to update. Is that right?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — We might have that discussion in camera as well.

Ms. Eagles: — Okay, we can wait.

The Chair: — If there is no further discussion, would Mr. Morgan like to move that we move in camera?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — So moved.

The Chair: — Secunder? Mr. Forbes. All in favour?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Agreed. We will now move in camera.

[The board continued in camera from 17:30 until 17:52.]

The Chair: — We will reconvene this committee hearing at the present time. The item under discussion is item no. 2, the approval of the Legislative Assembly's first and second quarter and financial and fiscal forecast reports. Are there any further questions related to this matter? If not, would someone move approval of the reports? Mr. Harrison. Secunder, Mr. McCall. All in favour?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. We'll move on to item no. 3, approval of the Legislative Assembly's 2011-12 year-end report of progress for the year ending March 31st, 2012. Are there any questions related to this report? Mr. Morgan.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — There's two recommendations of the Provincial Auditor that perhaps were not dealt with because of election timing. I worry because we're into the second time

they've been raised by the Provincial Auditor. So what I would expect to see would be a specific commitment that those issues get dealt with prior to the next cycle so that we're able to respond to the auditor directly because I think we've agreed to them. And I realize we went through a number of changes and then we had the election come up. And I would like to, you know, sort of make sure that the board has raised the issues and that the LAS [Legislative Assembly Service] staff are aware and that we have their commitment that they can deal with.

The Chair: — Mr. Putz.

Mr. Putz: — Mr. Morgan's correct. They were raised by the auditor the previous year, and they are addressed in the agenda item 5 coming up. We do intend to fulfill those recommendations this year.

And it wasn't just because of the election that they weren't fulfilled. It was in the process. As the board will recall, we were in the process of restructuring our financial services and member services branch, and they were delayed until we hired the people to replace Linda and Marilyn as they retired, and two of those people are here. So now we're in a position to work on those recommendations of the auditor and fulfill them. I don't know if, Lynn, you want to add anything to that?

Ms. Jacobson: — No, thank you.

The Chair: — Any other questions? If not, could I please have a motion to approve the Legislative Assembly 2011-12 year-end report of progress? Mr. Morgan, seconded by Mr. Forbes. All in favour?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Okay. Item no. 4 is the aforementioned audit letter of October 1st, 2012. Lynn, do you have anything to say about this or Dawn?

Ms. Jacobson: — In terms of a recommendation, Mr. Speaker, we're looking at coming back with some recommendation with respect to financial reporting, in terms of meeting the standards.

The Chair: — So basically on this letter, what we have to do is just accept it?

Ms. Jacobson: — Yes.

Mr. Putz: — The items that Mr. Morgan addressed in the response, if you see, Mr. Morgan, those are items 2 and 3, and it explains the reason. And I can add that this was discussed with the auditor, and the auditor is fully aware of the reasons why we weren't able to do it that year. So there's no complaint about that. It's just that they weren't fulfilled, so they put them again in this letter.

The thing that Dawn was mentioning is the one new one the auditor added this year. And that was the recommendation around caucus accountability reports, and that has to do with accounting standards. There is a board directive that says that you as the board are responsible for establishing the standards the caucuses are to use.

And this is something that perhaps Dawn can explain about the standards in the accounting world that are coming into play. And the board will have to decide on one of those standards and adhere it to how the caucuses do their annual audit reports, and the auditors also asked that we work with the caucuses in making sure they're able to fulfill that obligation. Dawn do you want to . . .

Ms. Court: — I think that's probably a good . . .

Mr. Putz: — That sums it up?

Ms. Court: — Yes.

The Chair: — So what we need to do is table the letter for item no. 4, and I'm assuming that's done just by presenting it.

Mr. Putz: — I'm not sure what you mean by tabling, Mr. Speaker.

The Chair: — Well on my agenda it says, table item: audit letter.

Mr. Putz: — Yes, oh yes. It has to be tabled. Sometimes you use the American form of tabling and I'm confused. You don't mean adjourn it; you mean to actually table it.

The Chair: — That's right.

Mr. Putz: — Okay. Now we're on the same page.

The Chair: — Yes.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — [Inaudible] . . . rather than use the word tabling . . . [inaudible] . . . is inherently confusing. We should on something like this just say we've received it and have that be the motion.

The Chair: — Do we need a motion for receiving a letter or just indicate that the board has it?

Mr. Putz: — Well Irene . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Yes.

The Chair: — Yes. Okay. We'll just indicate that we have received the letter. So item no. 5 is the response to the audit as well, a letter that I sent to Ms. Lysyk on this.

Mr. Putz: — Only if you . . .

The Chair: — Oh, I will if we approve it.

Mr. Putz: — Unless the board has some concerns about your response, then this will be the letter that you will send her.

The Chair: — Yes.

Mr. Putz: — That's why it's dated today.

The Chair: — Yes. Mr. Morgan.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — In your response letter to Ms. Lysyk, you're talking about agreeing with the recommendation on the accountability, but we appear to have to determine a

methodology, or there's a choice to be made. And do we need to have a process to make that decision?

Mr. Putz: — What this is just saying is the auditor was reminding us through this recommendation that the board needs to establish that standard. And Dawn will work with the caucuses, and I'm not sure that we need to do anything directive-wise because the directive already says that the board needs to be doing this. We're just going to fulfill the directive now, and then I'm sure the auditor will be satisfied with that.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — I think if the minutes show that we've replied and that the staff will work on it and come back to us with a report in due course, then we can decide whether we need to give a directive or not because I think it was issues of methodology that were there.

[18:00]

Mr. Putz: — Do you want to say anything about that, about the two standards and what the choice might be?

Ms. Court: — Well I think basically PSAB [Public Sector Accounting Board] has just changed for not-for-profit accounting, so we need to look at both standards and do an analysis on which would be best for the caucus offices. We want to make sure that whatever standard that we choose, it creates accountability and transparency and there's comparability between both of the caucus offices. So we need to work with the caucus offices as well as your external auditors that are currently working on your files.

The Chair: — Mr. Forbes.

Mr. Forbes: — So when you say comparability, that when you read the two audited statements you're comparing right across.

Ms. Court: — Right across.

Mr. Forbes: — Which is not the case now.

Ms. Court: — That's correct.

Mr. Putz: — And that's one of the auditor's complaints.

Mr. Forbes: — Not that they're both doing . . . One's not wrong or right. They're just two different . . . Yes.

Mr. Putz: — The board has never set the standard, and that's what the auditor wants you to do.

Mr. Forbes: — Right. Right.

Hon. Ms. Draude: — So then by the board agreeing to this, then we're really saying that together we want to figure out a system that's going to work for both of us. So that makes sense to me.

The Chair: — Well there are two standards, and we have to pick between one of them.

Hon. Ms. Draude: — We have to pick, but there's going to have to be a discussion, whoever it is on both sides to figure out

what'll be the right way . . . which'll be the way we choose.

The Chair: — Yes. David.

Mr. Forbes: — Would there be cost implications like training in how we use this new standard?

Ms. Court: — Not necessarily because your external auditors do your financial statements, so it's more so a conversation with probably myself and your auditors, if you agree to that. To be honest with you, I haven't had the chance to do the detailed analysis of what the pros and cons of both methodologies are.

Mr. Forbes: — I think it would be helpful though if our own people knew what was going on so that we could read our own audited statements . . .

Ms. Court: — Yes.

Mr. Forbes: — And be preparing them so when our auditors come in, it's pretty straightforward. So that's why. I'm more concerned that our own people who are keeping the books are really pretty fluent in that new standard.

Mr. Putz: — That certainly is our objective, and that's the way the Speaker's letter is phrased — that the LAS staff will work with the caucus offices to assist them adopting a common financial framework. We have to reply to the auditors, so we're saying that we agree with this and we're going to work with the two caucuses to come up with something that's workable.

Ms. Court: — And we certainly can provide support to you on how to read your statements and be interactive that way as well.

Mr. Forbes: — But I'm thinking about software and all of that and how we can do our own quarterly reports and so we understand what we're doing ourselves. So yes. Yes, thanks.

The Chair: — Any other questions? June.

Hon. Ms. Draude: — And with the other two recommendations, then the goal is to be able to at least say that we're reporting progress by the next time the auditor looks at the . . . [inaudible] . . . Whether we're finished or not, we have to be working on it.

The Chair: — We have to be moving down that path.

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Yes.

The Chair: — If there's no further discussion, would someone move approval of the response letter to the Provincial Auditor? Ms. Eagles, seconded by Mr. Forbes. All in favour?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. We don't actually have a motion for that, but at least we're showing that it's supported to move ahead.

Okay, item no. 6. We have the MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly] accountability and disclosure reports for the fiscal year March 31st that were tabled. Greg.

Mr. Putz: — Oh, yes. These next items here are required by law to table these things and then not only in the House but in the board, so this is just fulfilling that part. This is the first board meeting since those items were completed and tabled with you, Mr. Speaker. So this is more of a formality than anything else. They've already been tabled in the Assembly as well.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Greg, are you saying you want the motion to be one of receiving or tabling?

Mr. Putz: — I don't think that there needs to be any motion for this one because the items have been tabled with the board to be part of the board records now.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Yes. So all we need to do is just an acknowledgement?

Mr. Putz: — Yes.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Okay, I'm fine.

Mr. Putz: — The minutes need to show that they were tabled here with the board members as well as the Assembly. So that's what the purpose was for this item.

The Chair: — Okay.

Mr. Forbes: — I had another question.

The Chair: — Go ahead.

Mr. Forbes: — But maybe it's a question you can't answer because, you know, when we look at ours . . . And again this sort of speaks to the previous item. When you can have comparability, that would be great. Like ours, on page 4 of our audited statement, talks about the statement of financial position March 31st, 2012. We have a column for March 31st and a column for November 6th, 2011, and we ended up with a deficit of \$115.

But when I look at the Sask Party one — and we're just trying to read this; I'm just not sure how to read this — theirs is 2012, 2011. It's not as of November 6th. So was that for the full year for 2011? So it's two different things again, and it's just a matter of accepting it.

Ms. Jacobson: — Certainly there was questions from the audit group that they had looked to the 6th, and then they had also done the full year. But when they reported, they reported on the entire year.

Mr. Forbes: — All right. Okay.

Ms. Jacobson: — So both, just of by way of background, both of the audit companies had been in touch with us in member services in terms of validating the amounts and what we paid on our records and whatnot, so we were able to confirm those with them. But when they reported, they reported for the entire year as opposed to that . . . [inaudible].

Mr. Forbes: — Without a break. Okay, fair enough. Thank you very much.

The Chair: — Okay. We will then move on to item no. 7, and that is a discussion and decision item, a request for funding commitment from the Advocate for Children and Youth and the Ombudsman. So if Mr. Pringle would like to come forward. Mr. Pringle, if you'd like to go ahead.

Mr. Pringle: — Okay. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, board members. Thank you for the opportunity to be here and also for your past support. We appreciate that and your co-operation. And the Ombudsman is away, so he left me with the task of trying to answer the questions. Anyway I'll do my best. And do you want me just to give a short presentation, Mr. Speaker? Or do members have . . .

The Chair: — Yes, just outline what the request is and justification.

Mr. Pringle: — Okay. Thank you very much. As you know, members, and Mr. Speaker, the Advocate for Children and Youth and the Ombudsman have been sharing office space since the year 2000 in Saskatoon. And as you also know, it's a pretty tight market. I'm sure it is in Regina and other parts of the province as well, but it's very tight.

Our office lease expires on the 31st of January, 2013. And Central Services, Kevin and I have met on a couple of occasions with the deputy minister, and our folks have been working over the last year. They determined that our functional space requirements for the two offices exceed our current allotted space and that opportunities do not exist to expand to any adjoining space on the current floor, but there is an opportunity to move to another floor in the same building with Highways moving out in December. And so what they're suggesting to us as the best course of action is to secure a two-year extension on the current lease with a 90-day termination clause while the new space is being secured.

And moving the Advocate and the Ombudsman to another floor in the existing building will cut down the one-time cost significantly because in a way the provincial government's already paid for the leasehold improvements to about \$250,000. And all of those can be preserved with our . . . We can accommodate all those changes. I can go over those if you have any questions on those. So it would normally cost about 800,000 one-time expenditure to move, given the market. And the recommendation indicates it would cost about 500,000 for this move, which I know is a big number.

But the little hitch for us is of course in the rent because it's additional space as well. The rent's going to go up anyway at the end of the lease even if we . . . in the two years because as the board has approved the last two years, our rent actually has been up 50 per cent over three years ago, just the market. So the one-time cost would be 500,000 for leasehold improvements, and the rent estimated by central services would be 300,000 per year, up 127,000 per year over what the two offices are paying right now.

But prior to commencement of any formal negotiations with the owner, central services requires documentation demonstrating a funding commitment for additional annualized costs of the new lease and a one-time leasehold improvement of \$500,000 prior to commencing. And again, these were costs in the 2013-2014

year. There will be some costs for us to absorb the rent for the rent increase we're going to get anyway at the end of January for February and March. We could absorb those, Mr. Speaker, and board members.

So the request is that the Advocate for Children and Youth and the Ombudsman require a funding commitment from the board in order that central services can proceed to secure the lease space for the offices. And they're not willing to pursue the two-year lease, according to the deputy minister last Friday, unless they get a commitment for the ongoing five-year lease. Well the landlord, the owner is not willing to do that unless we're going to go upstairs. So that two-year lease, interim lease agreement is based on the fact that we would go upstairs. And we're advised by Mr. Dedman that the cost is, would be about 800,000, one time, to move out to some other space.

And of course we want to continue to share because that's worked well for us. And the new space — which I have a kind of a floor plan for with me — is conducive to sharing a number of common features in the office and also allowing us to each have our independent programs. So that's all I wanted to say, Mr. Speaker, and I'd be happy to try and answer some questions.

The Chair: — Okay, thank you. Basically what it is, is they're not looking for us to make a budget determination, but a commitment to financially support them down the road. Mr. Morgan.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — The space you're in now, is that in the Stone?

Mr. Pringle: — I'm sorry, no, Mr. Morgan. It's in the T & T building, the corner of 3rd and 25th.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — So it's not government-owned space?

Mr. Pringle: — It is not, no. And the other little hitch here is the owner is, the building is changing hands, so the owner wants to have leases secured before he sells it. Sorry.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — And then, so your intention would be to stay in the same building?

Mr. Pringle: — That's correct, yes.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Is there availability in government space anywhere?

Mr. Pringle: — No, no. It is so tight that there just . . . As a matter of fact, when Kevin and I met with the deputy minister back on the 4th of June, he was clear to us that the only option we're looking at for you is the same building because it's the only one that's affordable without significantly increasing the costs.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Your note says they identified a shortfall in our current office space. What is the shortfall in the current space?

Mr. Pringle: — Shortfall is about 50 square metres. So this is the other a little bit of a hitch, is that the space upstairs is more

space than we need, at least at the current situation, the current situation we're in. Although the Ombudsman feels that with all the training mandate that they have — the training of all the ministries, all the departments — they sometimes have trouble getting training space, that if they put a training room in, that would then accommodate the entire floor. But the excess is too small; the owner's not willing to divide it up because you wouldn't really be able to lease it out. So it's a whole package or nothing. So it is about 800 square metres is the new space upstairs.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — The shortfall was 50? The space you're moving to is 800?

Mr. Pringle: — No, the shortfall that we have currently . . .

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — It's 50.

Mr. Pringle: — Yes, square metres.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — So we're spending nearly \$1 million to . . . Well, 500,000 one-time expense as . . .

Mr. Pringle: — Half million, yes.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Additional rent.

The Chair: — That includes the space you already have. So it's not just 50 metres to 800.

Mr. Pringle: — I'm sorry?

The Chair: — You're not going . . . You're short 50 right now.

Mr. Pringle: — Yes.

The Chair: — And you're going to 800 metres, but you already have space as well. So it's not a completely new 700 or 850.

Mr. Pringle: — Oh, no. The annualized cost increase would be 127,000 for rent per year shared by the two programs, and then the one-time cost of 500, which he says would be 800 if we were moving out, or more if we weren't sharing. But still I know it's a big number.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — I'm wondering, Mr. Chair, and I appreciate the very good work that's done by both of these offices, but I'm concerned about what's available in Government Services. I'm wondering whether we could have the deputy minister of Government Services come back at the next meeting and give us a report on what the costs were going to be because there's a half million dollars of leasehold costs there. I appreciate the needs are there, but I'm just wondering . . . I wouldn't mind having a report to make sure that we've canvassed all options between now and when we make the commitment. And I realize they need it likely soon.

The Chair: — Mr. Forbes.

Mr. Forbes: — I'm okay with that. Two questions: how long have you been in that building, in that space?

Mr. Pringle: — Since 2000.

Mr. Forbes: — 2000. And the Children's Advocate would stay in the main floor or the ground floor?

Mr. Pringle: — No, no. I'm sorry, I didn't present this very well. We will move together because we want to continue to share. It's been an arrangement that's worked well for us and I think that . . .

Mr. Forbes: — So you all move to the second floor?

Mr. Pringle: — We would all move to the fifth floor from the main floor.

Mr. Forbes: — Fifth floor.

Mr. Pringle: — Yes.

Mr. Forbes: — And the main floor would . . .

Mr. Pringle: — Everybody would move up, yes. We would vacate.

Mr. Forbes: — Nothing on the main floor.

Mr. Pringle: — Neither of our two offices, no.

Mr. Forbes: — Okay. So you're moving completely out of that space.

Mr. Pringle: — Yes. That is the recommendation.

Mr. Forbes: — Okay.

The Chair: — Mr. Pringle. How much space do you have in total there between the Ombudsman and the Children's Advocate's office?

Mr. Pringle: — We have just under 700 square feet. So again . . .

The Chair: — Your proposal is to go to 800 square feet. So this is not a new 800. It's new access to you, but it's not an additional 800.

Mr. Pringle: — I'm sorry. No, it's an additional 100-and-some square metres, actually.

The Chair: — Square metres, sorry.

Mr. Pringle: — Yes, it's metres. Yes, square metres. They go by metres today, square metres, I guess.

The Chair: — Yes.

Mr. Pringle: — And actually it is 375, in the new space, would be \$375 per square metre. We're currently paying \$299 per square metre, but it's going to go up in February for sure even where we are, and Government Services is not in a position to tell us at this point what that would be.

The Chair: — How soon do you need a decision on this commitment?

Mr. Pringle: — Well again we're told that the window's pretty short because the owner is not prepared to go very long without rent. But I did take the liberty — and this may not be appropriate — but I did take the liberty of, when we anticipated this would be a challenge, of indicating that the Speaker might want to contact you. And I don't know if we had your permission, Mr. Speaker, after the conversation that we had with you, but I did say that. And so it wouldn't come as a surprise to him if there was contact from the board.

You know, I don't do space so I can't really defend it, but I appreciate these are big amounts of money and money's tough. And so I would be . . . And he knows the timeline as well. They tell us it's pretty tight, but he knows specifically when it is, and that would be probably a more informed voice.

The Chair: — I'm wondering if the board would be prepared to meet again next week if we talked with the Central Services on this.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Chair, even if the representatives from the advocate, they were the ones . . . You know, it's background on space, and I don't . . . Even if they weren't there, if we had the deputy minister from Government Services, they would be able to answer all or most of our questions.

The Chair: — That's fine, but we do need to make a commitment one way or the other from this committee. So we would have to meet.

Mr. Pringle: — I think he knows that you are probably not going to say, here's the money, like it's approved because he understands the process, but I think he's looking for a strong gesture of support if that decision is taken by the board.

The Chair: — Okay. Well I think unless there's different comment around the table that the committee would like to hold this for further discussion and some discussion with Central Services.

Mr. Forbes: — I agree that we can wait till next week to make a decision. But I guess I just want to raise a point that because I've been in your office several times and I really appreciate the front, that it's on the ground level, very accessible to people who need to meet with you folks. And that's sort of a sad thing if you're going to be up on the fifth floor.

Mr. Pringle: — Well the interesting thing is, Mr. Speaker, board members, we actually have very little walk-in traffic.

Mr. Forbes: — Okay.

Mr. Pringle: — Because our people are out all across the province, and so we're kind of being a provincial organization. We don't have, like we don't have a lot of people dropping in. I was into . . . I've been to Alberta and to Manitoba, and they have a different operation and different traditions and locations and so on. So we have very little walk-in traffic. It would be very accessible, and I know the Ombudsman feels the same way. But it is accessible. It's tight too, right? You have to agree, it's tight.

Mr. Forbes: — It is.

Mr. Pringle: — Thank you very much.

The Chair: — Okay. Well thank you. So this will be held for the next meeting. Do we want to take a recess at the present time, or do we want to get into item no. 8? . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Okay. We will take a 10-minute recess.

[The board recessed for a period of time.]

The Chair: — I'd like to reconvene the meeting. With the permission of the committee, I would like to move to item no. 9 at the present time and then revert back to item no. 8 subsequently. Seeing approval from the committee, I'd like to invite Mr. Michael Boda to come forward.

Mr. Boda is the Chief Electoral Officer. He has some issue he wishes to discuss with us in camera. So I wonder if I can get a motion please from the committee to move in camera. Mr. Morgan. Mr. McCall. All in favour?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — This meeting is now in camera.

[The board continued in camera from 18:40 until 18:58.]

The Chair: — Okay. I would like to reconvene this meeting. We do have one item left on the agenda and we will hold it for a meeting next week. That is item no. 8. So at this time if I could have someone move adjournment, please.

Ms. Draude and Mr. McCall. All in favour?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — This committee stands adjourned to the call of the Chair.

[The board adjourned at 18:59.]