



Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

BOARD OF INTERNAL ECONOMY

HANSARD VERBATIM REPORT



No. 5 — May 23, 2013

BOARD OF INTERNAL ECONOMY

Hon. Dan D'Autremont, Chair
Cannington

Hon. June Draude
Kelvington-Wadena

Ms. Doreen Eagles
Estevan

Mr. David Forbes
Saskatoon Centre

Hon. Jeremy Harrison
Meadow Lake

Hon. Nancy Heppner
Martensville

Ms. Cathy Sproule
Saskatoon Nutana

[The board met at 10:10.]

The Chair: — Okay, I'd like to call this meeting to order, the fifth meeting of 2013. Present today we have Ms. Eagles, Mr. Harrison, Ms. Draude, Ms. Sproule, and Mr. Forbes. We will start with the approval of the agenda. I believe that everyone has it. Would someone move that we accept, approve the agenda as presented? Mr. Forbes. Seconded by Mr. Harrison. All in favour? Thank you.

We have on the agenda is the approval of the minutes for the past three meetings which we didn't have available for approval before. The first meeting that we need approval for the minutes is the meeting, the second of 2013 which took place on February the 5th. Are there any questions related to those minutes? If not, would someone move that these minutes be adopted? Ms. Eagles, seconded by Mr. Forbes. All in favour?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. The second set of minutes to be approved is no. 3 of 2013 for the meeting of March 19th, 2013. Are there any questions arising from those minutes? If there are no questions, would someone move adoption of those minutes please? Ms. Draude. Seconded by Mr. Forbes. All in favour?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. The third set of minutes to be approved is meeting no. 4, 2013 of April 22nd, 2013. Are there any questions arising from those minutes? If not, would someone move that the minutes be adopted? Mr. Harrison. Seconded by Mr. Forbes. All in favour?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Item no. 1 on the agenda is the quarterly report from the Chief Electoral Officer. We have with us today the Chief Electoral Officer, Mr. Boda. As well we have two of his staff members with us, Ms. Arberry and Mr. — I was going to say Toles; I know that's not right — it's Brent, Brent Nadon. I'd like to welcome you here today. I should remember that because Jim was in our constituency although he never did pursue me as a police officer.

So, Mr. Boda, if you would like to proceed with the presentation of your quarterly report. This, I should comment on, is the first time that we have had a quarterly report from the Chief Electoral Office. So this is a new procedure for us. So thank you for doing this and you may proceed.

Mr. Boda: — Very good. In introducing our staff here, Sandra Arberry is with us today. And she is a newly appointed director of operations for Elections Saskatchewan, so she will be with us on a regular basis. Some of you will remember that she came in on a contract in the late hours in advance of the last general election and helped us out, and she has taken over that role of director of operations. And Brent serves as our director of finance.

[10:15]

Well when we last met in February I expressed my thanks for your patience and indicated at that time that I wanted to come back to you at important times during the year when Elections Saskatchewan would need to make some key decisions that will facilitate our success during this four-year electoral cycle.

So I genuinely want to keep the Legislative Assembly abreast of what is unfolding at Elections Saskatchewan. I also want to thank you in advance for your flexibility. The staff at Elections Saskatchewan is taking extraordinary steps not just to prepare for important events in the months ahead, whether that's the continuation of the boundary delimitation process, redistribution process, any by-elections that may arise, or the 2015 general election, but also is planning for and effecting the major institutional change that is needed if Elections Saskatchewan is to be successful in the years ahead.

I've provided you with two reports for this meeting. The first is a status update in a form that I anticipate delivering to you each time we meet during this particular year. It highlights some of the topics the Speaker suggested you might have an interest in. I won't plan to present its contents each time, but I'll be happy to answer any questions that you have.

A second report focuses on the primary reason I've asked to meet with you today. It offers an analysis and some very important recommendations on the facilities that Elections Saskatchewan uses and will need to operate successfully not just during this current electoral cycle but in the decades ahead.

Perhaps I'll begin by asking if there were any questions on the status update.

The Chair: — I think it would be worth our while for the first one if you could just sort of run through it for us and make your comments as you go along.

Mr. Boda: — Okay. All right. We can return to that, that's no trouble at all. So I'll turn next to the analysis and recommendation on our facilities. The report that you've received is based principally on a needs assessment that was conducted by P3 Architects. And in completing their assessment, P3 Architects took into account the parameters of the Hamilton report that laid out key expectations for transitioning Elections Saskatchewan toward a modern election management body. It looks at standards for office and warehouses within the provincial public service, and it considered what is needed to conduct a modern electoral process by looking at other jurisdictions.

The report itself is broken down into four basic components. The first part offers an assessment of the current facilities which have housed Elections Saskatchewan since 1996 when Chief Electoral Officer Myron Kuziak took the office from the SSTA [Saskatchewan School Trustees Association] building to our present location on Park Street. The building has under 4,000 square feet of partially developed office space and just over 3,200 square feet of warehouse space, and it continues to maintain many of those wonderful features of the liquor board store it was just before we moved there. And I've been reminded by our staff, as late as the last year, people have come into the building asking whether it was still the liquor board

store. And I heard another story that they actually did deliver liquor to Elections Saskatchewan last summer. And I haven't been able to get out of them whether they actually accepted the delivery or not.

I won't go into all the details that are in the report, but P3A's [P3 Architecture Partnership] assessment is quite clear, that these facilities are insufficient and inappropriate for an election management body with a jurisdiction of our size. On the office side, they've identified fundamental problems with housing the number of employees that we will have, serious security issues with respect to both our physical and our electronic data, issues that were not front and centre back in 1996. And they highlight issues that point clearly to concerns regarding occupational health and safety.

With respect to the warehouse, my own assessment upon my arrival last year was that the number of problems that were linked to conducting the 2011 general election can be tied directly to the size and layout of the warehouse space. The size of that warehouse has forced staff to conduct elections using methods that are no longer acceptable in other jurisdictions in Canada.

Now the limited space, which is about the size of a couple of houses in the Hillsdale area of Regina, not only led to major inefficiencies in running the general election, it also led to significant errors in the assembly of materials needed by returning officers in order to comply with electoral legislation. And I'd just like to pass along, if you haven't already, some pictures of the warehouse so you get a sense of the challenges that we face.

A second component of the report explores the goal of collaboration with respect to our facilities. And I wanted to include this section in the report to demonstrate how seriously we have taken the goal of working efficiently and effectively with other institutional actors. The report talks about a number of concerns that were echoed in discussions regarding the potential of sharing with other independent officers. Both an EMB's [election management body] business cycle and its mandate differ dramatically from what other independent officers do.

With an accordion style of hiring, where we go from 13 employees to the coming and going of a much larger leadership team in advance of elections in order to support the army of 10,000 people that we hire, means that we take over a space, the space required from 12 to 18 months before the election and then six months after it.

As I've gone around the world, I've never seen another election management body share facilities with other entities. But I did want to be sure that I understood the Canadian model, and so I was very intentional about talking to people, talking to election officials across the country. And some have said yes, the idea has come forward, but in each case they've ultimately abandoned the idea. And the most recent case was last year in Alberta.

I've also talked with the independent officers within the province. In addition to differing business cycles and our mandate, they've articulated that, given our need to conduct an

election in 2015, they won't be ready to proceed, according to the aggressive timeline that we have to pursue.

I have found however that as I've considered potential partners for collaboration, significant opportunities exist for working with other bodies responsible for conducting elections. Since last June, I have developed a good working relationship with city clerks in Saskatoon and Regina. The city of Regina has immediate needs to pursue election-related facilities and has agreed in principle to share space with us within the time restrictions that we both are under as we look toward upcoming electoral events.

Elections Canada has also expressed interest in looking at ways that our facilities could be used to regionally stage some of its election materials in the months ahead, particularly as they're going to be leaving their facilities, their warehouse facilities, in 2016.

A third component of the report then considers and assesses three options that P3 Architects put forward based on their needs assessment, options that are based on our jurisdictional size and the parameters of the Hamilton report. Option one is to renovate and substantially expand Elections Saskatchewan's existing space so that it includes adequate space for both office and warehouse. Option two is to renovate all the space currently occupied by taking over what is now our warehouse facility and then secure off-site warehouse space. Option three is to relocate to a different space, either with or without an attached warehouse.

Before looking at these options, I'd like to just point to one thing. Given what we've learned, not just through this assessment exercise but through an overall assessment of Saskatchewan's approach to implementing elections, the status quo in this context is really not an option. Elections Saskatchewan must begin operating from a different type of facility as soon as possible if it is to properly and professionally fulfill its mandate in administering the 2015 general election.

Now appendix A on pages 7, 8, and 9 of the report provide an analysis of three options that were put forward, looking at the pros, the cons, and the costs related to each of the three options. Without going into the details of each option, I can offer a general assessment based on cost and operational impact of each described.

On the cost side of the equation, we were careful to develop comparatives which were consistent across all three options under consideration. To do so we focused on the costs of each project spread over a four-year period, while considering both the cost of renovation or fit-up and the lease. And we found that all three options were relatively consistent over a four-year period, as you can see on page 9 on the cost table.

But it was on the operational side of things where the differences between the three options became most evident, especially when we looked at the impact that they would have on event preparation. When we looked at the advantages of each of the projects, it became clear that option number three was far more preferable for a number of reasons, including that the approach would allow us to continue preparing for those electoral events I talked about while avoiding the disruption that

comes with major construction. Option three would also allow us to more easily collaborate with potential partners.

So the report offers a clear recommendation on where we need to go, based on P3A's assessment. Elections Saskatchewan is undergoing unprecedented institutional change. We're making the changes recommended within the Hamilton report intended to fortify the strength of the institution over the next two decades. But at the same time, we're working to stabilize the electoral procedures that were clearly lacking in advance of and during the 2011 general election.

It's become clear that balancing these two things would not be possible in pursuing option one or two. Option three is recommended from an operational standpoint. It provides the least amount of disruption, and from a cost perspective it's competitive. The new space selected would be fitted to pre-established specs prior to moving in, while Elections Saskatchewan's preparations for electoral events can continue at the present site. An approach involving a separate warehouse space will also allow Elections Saskatchewan to secure additional space in which the city of Regina and potentially Elections Canada can share costs over the longer term.

If you turn to appendix C on page 11, you'll see the costing out of the project and the total additional funds that would be required within Elections Saskatchewan's 2013-14 budget. And that amount is \$910,000.

That's the end of my presentation, and I'm happy to take questions.

The Chair: — Thank you very much. I think we have a number of questions for you, Mr. Boda. So I think, at this time, the committee would like to go in camera with you on some of these issues.

So if I could have a motion from one of the board members, please? Ms. Draude, seconded by Mr. Sproule. All in favour?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — This committee will now move in camera. Thank you.

[The board continued in camera from 10:28 until 11:46.]

The Chair: — Okay, the committee will resume its deliberations. I'd like to thank Mr. Boda for the discussion on his report. I wonder if I could get a member to move a motion that we receive the report for consideration by the Board of Internal Economy.

Mr. Harrison. Ms. Sproule. Moved. And I'll get you to read it.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — I move:

That the quarterly report presented by the Chief Electoral Officer has been received for consideration by the Board of Internal Economy.

The Chair: — Any discussion? All in favour?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. I don't believe there's any other business for us to discuss.

An Hon. Member: — When is the next meeting?

The Chair: — Call of the Chair. If someone would like to move that we adjourn? Ms. Eagles. All in favour?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. This meeting stands adjourned. Thank you, Mr. Boda, and also thank your staff for their time.

[The board adjourned at 11:47.]