



Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

BOARD OF INTERNAL ECONOMY

HANSARD VERBATIM REPORT



No. 7 — September 30, 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 13:03.]

The Chair: — It now being after the hour of 1 o'clock, this meeting of the Board of Internal Economy is called to order. The first item of business will be the approval of the proposed agenda. I believe all members have that before them. If someone would care to move that we adopt the agenda? Mr. Harrison, seconder by Mr. Forbes. All in favour? Carried.

I guess I should mention who is here today. We have Minister June Draude, Minister Nancy Heppner, Ms. Doreen Eagles, and the Hon. Jeremy Harrison, as well as Mr. Forbes. And sitting in today is Mr. Warren McCall. Ms. Cathy Sproule is the regular member, but there will be changes taking place for Mr. McCall to become a member of the Board of Internal Economy. But all the proper steps have not yet occurred, so Mr. McCall is sitting in and an observer today and will be allowed to participate orally but will not be voting.

Okay. Next item of business is the approval of the minutes of the meeting 06/13. Are there any questions related to the minutes of that meeting? If not, would someone move that the minutes be adopted? Mr. Forbes. Seconded by Ms. Draude. All in favour? Carried.

Okay. The first item on the agenda is a tabling and decision item, the approval of the Legislative Assembly Service's fourth quarter financial report for the fiscal year 2012-2013. It's in the package that was distributed to you. Are there any questions or concerns? If not, would someone move that the report be adopted? Ms. Eagles. Secunder, Mr. Forbes. All in favour? Carried.

Item no. 2 is the tabling and decision item approval of the Legislative Assembly Service first quarter financial report for the fiscal year 2013-2014. The item is included in your package. Are there any questions or comments? Seeing none, would someone move adoption of the report? Mr. Forbes. Secunder, Mr. Harrison. All in favour? Carried.

Item no. 3 is the tabling and decision item approval of the Legislative Assembly Service 2012-2013 year-end report on progress actions. The document was included in your package. Are there any questions or observations or concerns? Seeing none, would someone move adoption of the report? Mr. Harrison. Secunder please? Mr. Forbes. All in favour? Carried.

Item no. 4 is a decision item, a discussion item and decision item. We have the report from the steering committee for the committee's consideration. Before making any decisions on the report, we should move in camera for this discussion. Would someone move that the committee now go in camera? Mr. Forbes, seconded by Mr. Harrison. All in favour? Carried.

Before we move in camera, I would ask for the committee's indulgence to allow Mr. McCall to remain, as well as any staff members that we need for the discussion purposes.

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Okay. So be it. This committee now moves in camera. So that means we have one, two, three, four, five, six

people that leave.

[The board continued in camera from 13:07 until 14:05.]

The Chair: — Okay. This session of the Board of Internal Economy comes back to order again at 2:05 p.m. After discussions in committee regarding the recommendations of the steering committee, I think we should table the report as amended as an internal document for the Board of Internal Economy. Mr. Harrison, I recognize.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Great. Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. I really appreciated the discussion, the culmination of what's been over 18 months of work in reviewing the directives of the Board of Internal Economy. I really do want to kind of firstly offer some thank yous because this was a, I think, a very, very good process, a very valuable process, a very collaborative process between the parties working with the Legislative Assembly Service, with you, Mr. Speaker, with members of the board, with our caucuses. This is actually a great example of how our system works, and I think this was a very good example of a very positive outcome from a collaborative relationship.

I want to thank Mr. Forbes, my counterpart on the steering committee. We have added it up here. In the last while, it looks like we met personally 12 times as a steering committee on this; many, many more times phone calls, emails over the course of the last 18-plus months. I thank Mr. McCall as well who had been a member of this steering committee for the beginning of the process and who I know kept himself apprised and was involved in the process throughout as well.

I want to thank you, Mr. Speaker. It was your initiative to launch this review of the directives. You know, as somebody who's been here for now 22, 23 years, there's probably . . . There's a tiny handful of members that know as much as you do about how these directives work and the background and the history to how we got where we are and where we should go forward. And your leadership in this process was essential and very valuable.

I want to thank the officials from the Legislative Assembly Service: Mr. Putz, the Clerk, for your leadership and all the officials — the Law Clerk and all of our managers and directors in the LAS — who spent very, very significant time in working on these amendments, and thank you so much for your recommendations as well as the folks that have to administer these directives on a day-to-day basis. Your recommendations to clarify, to make more efficient, to make more transparent, these are recommendations — many, many of them, almost all of them — being incorporated in the final product, and we genuinely appreciate it.

In terms of background, the Board of Internal Economy met shortly after the November 2011 election in December of 2011 and, at the suggestion of Mr. Speaker, a subcommittee was appointed at that point to review the directives. We've had a recommendation from the Provincial Auditor to review our directives in a general sense on a regular basis. A number of these directives had been reviewed with a very specific focus in terms of MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly]

compensation some time ago, less than a decade ago. But the directives that we reviewed with regard to constituency operations, MLA travel and living expenses, how constituency assistants are treated, these directives hadn't been reviewed for 20 years, some of them even more, and we ended up with a patchwork quilt of fixes. But we had never been able to turn our mind in a systematic way for that two-decade period, and that's what we looked to do here over the course of the last couple of years or 18 months.

This was a recommendation of the Provincial Auditor that we take a look at these directives. They hadn't been looked at. That was one of the motivating factors as well.

And I really do want to kind of stress again the collaborative nature of the process in that all of these decisions, every single one, was resulted in on the basis of consensus. That's how we operated the steering committee. I think that's how we've looked at this through the full board today. All of these decisions were arrived at on a consensus basis, and that meant involving our leaders. That meant involving our caucuses. That meant involving obviously members of this board in every single consideration of the changes. So it was again a great process.

I think the general objective we were looking at was how can we make what are already some of the most transparent and accountable rules that we have in the entire country even more transparent and accountable and clear for members. And that was I think the objective we approached this with, and I think that's going to be the outcome of this process.

You know, one of the major recommendations that we are moving forward with is to take MLA expenses, MLA travel, these sorts of decisions completely out of the hands of MLAs and put these decisions into the hands of a third party. And the third party that we've decided to put this into the hands of is the National Joint Council. And what the National Joint Council is, is essentially, it was created in 1944 . . . And I'll actually quote from their website, Mr. Speaker. The National Joint Council was:

Created in 1944, the National Joint Council today includes 18 public service bargaining agents, the Treasury Board [of Canada] and four (4) "separate employers" as members. The activities of Council directly affect the working lives of well over 230,000 represented employees in 80 departments and agencies in every region of Canada.

The NJC contributes to effective labour relations and human resources management on many fronts:

- by co-developing public-service wide terms and conditions of employment through "NJC Directives";

- by co-developing public service wide health care coverage;

- by providing joint management of health . . . plans;

- by developing and reviewing occupational health and safety policies . . .

Obviously the directives that we're going to be incorporating from the National Joint Council have to do with the travel and expense provisions. These are collectively bargained between the 18 public service bargaining agencies and the Treasury Board of Canada.

Essentially these are the rules that govern the public service of Canada, and we felt very comfortable in saying this is a very representative organization and, as a best practice, to put these sorts of decisions into the hands of a third party was the right way to go. And that was a decision that we made, you know, some time ago that that was what we felt would be a best practice for this Assembly.

A number of other provisions, we changed. There were many, many changes and I won't hit on all of them.

We've clarified and explicitly prohibited any sort of partisan expenditures with regard to these directives.

We've created a new system of equipment and furniture management to ensure that we get the most value for dollar, that MLAs are able to access furniture perhaps that other MLAs are looking to move on with.

We created a new directive, directive 5.1, that allows for members who can't act for reasons of illness or other matters to conduct official MLA business or to have some official MLA business continue to be conducted.

We've upped fines as well for members who are kicked out of the House. Those fines are going to be going from \$200 to \$400, which is not insubstantial. For members who miss the Assembly without valid reason, those fines are going to be going from \$200 a day to \$250 a day.

We've also instituted a number of new rules for constituency assistants which I think are bringing some of the CA [constituency assistant] provisions into line with perhaps caucus staff and also with MLA programs. So instituting a long service recognition program for constituency assistants which, as we all know the CAs do so much great work for us, and recognizing that service in a formal fashion I think is very, very appropriate.

[14:15]

Introducing a compassionate care provision, which is something that we, in discussion, felt was a very appropriate thing to move forward with, something that, you know, I congratulate Mr. Forbes as well for making an issue.

Creating a transition allowance provision for constituency assistants that's more in line with the transition allowance provisions for caucus and MLA staff, also, I think, a very positive change. And also a whole host of other technical changes that were proposed by the Legislative Assembly Service or brought forward by members of both caucuses that we felt comfortable moving forward with to basically clarify and increase accountability and transparency for members. Like I said, we already have rules that are probably the most accountable and transparent in Canada, and we're doing even more of that.

Again I just want to thank the official opposition, thank the Speaker, thank LAS staff, thank members for participating in this process. This really was a collaborative process, all decisions arrived at in a consensus basis, and I think it showed the best of what this Legislative Assembly can be. So thanks so much for everybody. I really appreciate them.

The Chair: — Mr. Forbes.

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much. And I too would want to echo a lot of what the member from Meadow Lake, Mr. Harrison, has said. He's enumerated the changes that we are bringing forward which are so important to keep our legislature operating in a way that people can focus on the work at hand and do that good work for the people of Saskatchewan, and so that's so important.

I want to thank you, Mr. Speaker, for your leadership in tackling this issue. As has been said by Mr. Harrison, it's one that's long overdue and we need to keep that current, not only for the current MLAs, but also as we want to make sure that people look at this as a great place to come and work. This is a good place as a future potential MLA, that it's a reasonable and attractive place to serve the people of Saskatchewan. So I think this is a good, good thing.

I want to thank the staff for their patience and explaining all the work, all the details, the processes, and their learned experiences from how MLAs come in with all sorts of different things. And so we appreciate the conversations over the past 18 months. It's been a real learning experience for me.

And I want to thank my colleague, Warren McCall, and my own caucus in terms of this is a process that we've been really sharing, and I think that Mr. Harrison has done that as well. That I think a lot of the MLAs really understand much more all the directives that we have before us. So that's a very, very good thing.

Mr. Harrison's gone through the list and I think he's covered it well. I think it is a good thing when we look at how do we hold ourselves to account. And he's talked about the fines and the fine for being named in the House is now doubled, and I think that's an important one. We think about that a lot, and I think that it's going to be one . . . We'll see how that plays out in the future. I find that very interesting.

I think it's also important that some of the changes that we've talked about in terms of our assistants, they do such good work. They really truly do. And we listen to them about how we can make their workplace much better, so that's really important.

And it's also important, Mr. Harrison talked about the third . . . the arm's-length party, the National Joint Council. It's going to be very important that we have that placed there so that our travel and living expenses, the directive is more reflective of the costs involved. So there's a restructuring happening in that place, in that area, and I think that will work well for all of us and we're onside for that. So with that, Mr. Speaker, we're looking forward to voting on the motions before us.

The Chair: — Thank you, Mr. Harrison. Thank you, Mr. Forbes. And I would like to echo as well how well this process

worked. There was genuine collaboration and co-operation between both parties on this issue. And while we met about 12 times, I know that the two members — the government lead and the opposition lead — had many meetings or phone calls or emails between them in discussing the issues.

And while there was certainly negotiations, these were not aggressive negotiations. These were negotiations of how do we make this work in a practical sense, and it was always collaborative in that way. There was no antagonism between the parties on what the desire was to make this a better package — not a package for MLAs, but a better working package for the Assembly and certainly the LAS staff.

I know that while the two members were talking, the LAS and I were meeting as well trying to figure out how do you word these things to make them reflect what the desires were of the members and to make it clear and make it so that it would function, hopefully, flawlessly. But as we have seen over time, there's always things that need to be changed and corrected. And I can imagine next week somebody will come up with something new, well why didn't you include this. But that's for down the road. I think this package does reflect the new realities across the country for compensation for MLAs' operations, be it their personal compensation, which is not part of this, but their expenses and organization of their constituency office and their own travel.

So I think this is an excellent work, and I would like to thank everyone — both sides of the House and the LAS — for their hard work and diligence in bringing this to fruition. And hopefully I won't have to name anybody so that they lose their \$400.

Okay. Now that we've got the self-congratulatory messages over with, we will move on with the actual decision items on this issue. Before you we have a motion regarding directive 2. Rather than reading through each piece of this — every member has this before them — I'm wondering if you will take each of these motions as read and so that we can proceed. If someone would move the motion on directive 2.1. Mr. Harrison. Seconder? Mr. Forbes. Any discussion? If there is no discussion, all in favour? Carried. And we will take a break and get these signed every time.

Okay. Directive 3.1, will you take this as read? Agreed. Would someone move directive 3.1? Mr. Forbes. Seconder? Mr. Harrison. Any discussion? All in favour? Carried.

Okay, directive 4.1. Would someone move directive 4.1? Mr. Harrison, seconded by Mr. Forbes. Any discussion? All in favour?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried.

Okay, the next directive. This is a new directive, directive 5.1, delegation of member signing authority. Would someone move? Mr. Forbes. Seconder, Mr. Harrison. Any discussion? If not, all those in favour? Carried.

Okay, directive 6. Would someone move directive 6? Mr.

Harrison. Seconded, Mr. Forbes. Any discussion? All those in favour? Carried.

Okay, directive 6.1. Would someone move directive 6.1? Mr. Forbes. Seconded, Mr. Harrison. Any discussion? All those in favour? Carried.

Excuse me. We will change . . . We will withdraw that one. That should read, directive 6.1 is repealed and new directive 6.2 is substituted. Mr. Forbes, would you move that? Seconded by Mr. Harrison. All those in favour? Carried.

Okay, new directive #6.3. The following new directive is added after new directive 6.2. Will someone move? Mr. Harrison, seconded by Mr. Forbes. Any discussion? All in favour? Carried.

Okay. Appendix C of directive #7.2 is amended. Will you take this as read? Will someone move this amendment? Mr. Forbes, seconded by Mr. Harrison. Any discussion? All in favour? Carried.

Okay. Directive #17.2 is amended as set forth in this motion. Will you take the motion as read?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Will someone move the amendment? Mr. Harrison, seconded by Mr. Forbes. Any discussion? All in favour? Carried.

Okay. Directive #21 is amended as set forth in this motion. Will you take the motion as read?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

[14:30]

The Chair: — Agreed. Will someone move the amendment? Mr. Forbes. Mr. Harrison. Any discussion? All in favour? Carried.

Okay. That is the last of the changes to the directives. I would like to note for the record that these changes will be available online at the Legislative Assembly website by tomorrow night. So if you wish to take a look at and review them, they'll be available there.

Okay. I would like to thank everyone again for their participation in this. This has been a labour of love for all of us, I'm sure. And we will be pleased to allow this to germinate for some years to come.

Okay. We will now move on to item no. 5, a discussion and decision item, the special warrant request from the Advocate for Children and Youth. Mr. Pringle, if you would come forward.

Well thank you, Mr. Pringle, for coming to the board today to discuss needs that you have within your area as an officer of the Legislative Assembly. And I believe that some of the discussion that takes place will be involving children and youth and should probably be done in camera. Therefore I would ask that one of the members move that we move in camera at this time. Ms.

Eagles. Seconded? Mr. Forbes. All in favour? Carried. This committee will now move in camera.

[The board continued in camera from 14:32 until 14:54.]

The Chair: — Okay, this committee now comes out of camera and reconvenes at 2:54. So thank you very much everyone for your questions and comments, and thank you Mr. Pringle for your presentation. I have a recommended motion before you, and I will read that recommended motion:

That for the 2013-14 fiscal year a request for a special warrant funding in the amount of \$261,000 be approved for vote 076, Advocate for Children and Youth, and that this request for special warrant funding be transmitted to the Minister of Finance by the Chair.

Would someone move that motion please? Ms. Draude. Seconded? Mr. Forbes. Any questions, comments? Okay, Ms. Draude.

[15:00]

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Thank you. Thank you very much to the advocate for your presentation and for the work that you're doing and that you intend to do. And I know that you have the support of members when you're dealing with children and their safety and especially their safety when in care. I know that . . . I can't imagine the depth of the investigation that's going on at this time, and I know that being arm's length, that's something that is important to all of us to understand.

I'm just going to ask, I think it's more of a comment than a question, but the monies that are allocated for this investigation will be just for these two initiatives. They won't be put into any of the other work that's ongoing? You'll be keeping this . . . it's a special, two special cases. Am I correct?

Mr. Pringle: — That is correct. Now we may use one of our own staff and backfill, but that's correct. That's totally correct. There'll be no . . . If there's money left over, which there may be, but that's our best judgment at this point of what it will take, it'll just come back at the end of the year, yes.

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Thank you. I appreciate that, and good luck.

Mr. Pringle: — Thank you very much. Thank you.

The Chair: — Mr. Forbes.

Mr. Forbes: — I too want to thank Mr. Pringle, the Children's Advocate, for this presentation today. And I think this is an important issue. And of course this is one that's a tragic situation we find ourselves in, and the point being made about making sure this is done in a timely fashion and one that is done as well as it can be. So I think it's important that your office do this good work and we appreciate your comments here today.

So I, with the minister, wish you the very best, and your office and the work here. And we learned a lot more about the situation and how this cannot happen again in Saskatchewan. Thank you.

The Chair: — I have one question for you, Mr. Pringle. And it's just a clarification that this funding is for the year '13-14 and that it's your expectation to have this review completed by the end of the fiscal year, which would be March 31st. Is that correct?

Mr. Pringle: — That is correct, Mr. Chairman, members. Thank you.

The Chair: — Okay. Is there any more questions? If not, all in favour? Carried.

Mr. Pringle: — Thank you very much.

The Chair: — Okay, thank you for coming in, Mr. Pringle, and to your staff member as well.

Okay. We have one last item on the agenda under other business and that is to set the date for the Board of Internal Economy budget meeting for 2014. Last year I believe we held that budget meeting on February the 6th or 7th . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . 7th. And just wondering if we could schedule that again for that point in time. Yes, for actually February the 5th this year with the same format as last year, which would be starting at noon on February 5th . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . No, we did one day; we did it all in one day last year.

An Hon. Member: — Do we have to set it this day, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: — Well, because we know that everybody else gets busy with Treasury Board and with ministry budgets, that we thought if we got in there early we may get a chance . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . We picked Wednesday because it was the middle of the week and thought more apt to be people around. But we can certainly adjust it to earlier, like a Monday if that would work better. I suspect it doesn't but . . .

An Hon. Member: — Do we want to say the Monday? Do we want to change it . . . [inaudible].

An Hon. Member: — Do you want to just send us a save the date and send a formal invitation at a later date?

The Chair: — It would be a request — is this day available? So it wouldn't be a formal date. Again it would . . .

An Hon. Member: — My issue with this is that finalization is very soon after that. So I'd just as soon have it even in January if possible . . .

The Chair: — Late January? Like every other department, it takes time to organize these budgets as well.

An Hon. Member: — How about February 10th?

The Chair: — And what happens on February the 10th?

An Hon. Member: — It's a Monday. It's nice and close to Valentine's Day so we can get that out of the way.

The Chair: — But it sounded from June that she was interested in earlier rather than later. Does late January, like say the 27th or 28th, and I know, Nancy, you don't have your schedule . . .

[inaudible interjection] . . . Yes, but we only need the people sitting here . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . A week earlier than the 27th? Yes, so that week of the 27th. We're not available the 30th or 31st . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Well I don't know. So why don't we then aim at 27 or 28, whatever works into the schedules?

Okay. Tentatively we will set it for the 27th and 28th, hopefully a one-day meeting. And we will inform the . . .

An Hon. Member: — What's the clarification on hopefully a one-day meeting?

The Chair: — Well it all depends how many questions you ask.

An Hon. Member: — Well last year we went too late, didn't we?

The Chair: — It went late because we had supper, and then we reconvened until 9 o'clock, 6:30 to 9 o'clock in the evening . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . But starting, if it's the Monday, starting at noon is probably as early as you want to start. And we will provide meals. I've got a new Crock-Pot recipe.

Okay. So tentative, the 27th or 28th of January. Okay. That puts a squeeze on the officers in the LAS, but they wanted it early.

An Hon. Member: — And you'll send out a notice.

The Chair: — We'll send out a notice, yes. We'll ask you to confirm, you know, as soon as possible, but we'll mark those days down.

An Hon. Member: — Are you having something sent out to our office or are you just going to rely on . . . [inaudible].

The Chair: — No, we will send a request.

An Hon. Member: — When you say at our office, send it to our . . .

The Chair: — Ministry offices, yes. Yes. We recognize that the CAs are the last to know, other than spouses who are the absolute last to know.

Okay, if someone would move adjournment. Mr. Harrison. All in favour? Carried. This meeting is adjourned at 3:05 p.m.

[The board adjourned at 15:05.]