



FOURTH SESSION - TWENTY-SECOND LEGISLATURE

of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

BOARD OF INTERNAL ECONOMY

MINUTES AND VERBATIM REPORT

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The Honourable H.H. Rolfes
Speaker



No. 6

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 14, 1994

BOARD OF INTERNAL ECONOMY

Hon. Herman Rolfes, Chairperson
Saskatoon Nutana

Hon. Carol Carson
Melfort

Glenn Hagel, MLA
Moose Jaw Palliser

Lynda Haverstock, MLA
Saskatoon Greystone

Hon. Eldon Lautermilch
Prince Albert Northcote

Rick Swenson, MLA
Thunder Creek

Eric Upshall, MLA
Humboldt

MEETING #6 1994
BOARD OF INTERNAL ECONOMY
Room 10 Legislative Building
9:09 a.m. Wednesday, December 14, 1994

Present: Members of the Board of Internal Economy

Hon. Herman Rolfes, Chair
Hon. Eldon Lautermilch
Rick Swenson, MLA
Eric Upshall, MLA (in Humboldt, connected by telephone)

Staff to the Board

Gwenn Ronyk, Clerk
Marilyn Borowski, Director, Financial Services
Deborah Saum, Secretary

MINUTES Moved by Mr. Lautermilch, seconded by Mr. Swenson, ordered, that the Minutes of Meeting #5/94 be adopted. Agreed.

AGENDA Moved by Mr. Upshall, seconded by Mr. Swenson, that the proposed agenda be adopted. Agreed.

ITEM 1 Decision Item - Review of the Budget for the Independent Committee to Review MLA Salaries and Allowances

Moved by Mr. Upshall, seconded by Mr. Swenson:

That the Remuneration to the Chair and Members of the Independent Committee be amended to read:

Chair: 10,000
Members: 9,000

A debate arising and the question being put, it was agreed to.

Moved by Mr. Swenson, seconded by Mr. Lautermilch:

That the proposed budget, as amended, in the amount of \$78,000 for the Independent Committee to Review MLA Salaries and Allowances be approved, and that the funding for said committee be authorized to be paid out of the Legislative Assembly Budget.

The question being put, it was agreed to.

Minute #1345

ITEM 2 Decision Item - A request from P. Lorje, MLA Saskatoon Wildwood, to review payment for French textbooks

Moved by Mr. Upshall, seconded by Mr. Swenson:

That, in keeping with the Board decision to reject claims for French courses taken by Members of the Legislative Assembly (Meeting #2/94), P. Lorje not be reimbursed for costs incurred for French textbooks.

Minute #1346

A debate arising and the question being put, it was agreed to.

The Speaker confirmed the dates of the next Board of Internal Economy Meeting as being January 5, 1995 from 7 p.m. to 10 p.m. and January 6, 1995 commencing at 9 a.m. until completion.

Moved by Mr. Upshall, seconded by Mr. Lautermilch that the meeting be adjourned at 9:30 a.m.

**BOARD OF INTERNAL ECONOMY
December 14, 1994**

The Chairperson: — Ladies and gentlemen, I think we should begin the meeting. Can you hear me, Eric?

Mr. Upshall: — Yes I can, very clearly.

The Chairperson: — Thank you. The agenda is before you . . .

Mr. Upshall: — Now you're gone.

The Chairperson: — Am I gone?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — I think I pushed the mute button.

Mr. Upshall: — I think you did something.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — I didn't want to cough in your ear.

The Chairperson: — Okay. It's okay, it's only the minister. He pushed the button and cut you off. Okay?

Mr. Upshall: — Okay.

The Chairperson: — You can hear me though. Okay.

Before we begin, we have with us also Vonda from the Liberal office, and Brian Schumacher from Mr. Lautermilch's office with us.

And the items on the agenda, first of all to review the meetings of the meeting no. 5. Gentlemen, have you reviewed those minutes and if you have could I get someone to move that we adopt the minutes as presented? Moved by Mr. Lautermilch, seconded by Mr. Swenson.

Mr. Upshall: — I had my hand up.

The Chairperson: — Oh, darn it. I missed it. Sorry, Eric. Okay. All in favour?

Mr. Upshall: — Agreed.

The Chairperson: — Okay. Thank you.

Now the agenda before us is, we have two items. One is a decision item on the budget of the independent committee and the other one is a request from Ms. Lorje on — the MLA

(Member of the Legislative Assembly) from Saskatoon Wildwood — on review payment of French textbooks. Are there any other items to be added to the agenda? No other items? All right.

Could we have someone move that the agenda be adopted? Eric, how about you?

Mr. Upshall: — I had my hand up again.

The Chairperson: — Okay. Moved by Eric, seconded by Mr. Swenson. All in favour?

Mr. Upshall: — Agreed.

The Chairperson: — Agreed. Okay. First item on the agenda then is the budget for the independent commission.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Yes. Mr. Speaker, if I could just make a few comments with respect to the budget that's before us.

The Chairperson: — Can you hear him?

Mr. Upshall: — I can hear you very, very well.

The Chairperson: — No, but can you hear Mr. Lautermilch?

Mr. Upshall: — Yes, I can.

The Chairperson: — Okay, thank you.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Well that's very good. Good morning, Mr. Upshall.

Mr. Upshall: — Yes, sir.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — This budget had been previously presented in this form to both the Leader of the Third Party and the then Leader of the Opposition. It's in the amount of \$78,000 and I think it quite adequately reflects a couple of things.

Firstly, that we want to allow adequate remuneration for the independent commission to be able to fulfil its role, the role that we have asked it to accomplish.

But secondly, it is very much in line with what the expenditure of other bodies of this sort have been allocated and have budgeted for.

There is one possibility of a variable within this budget that I think concerned Ms. Haverstock when we last met, and that was with respect to employee services and the secondment of staff. It's my understanding that for a period of under two months, the secondments could happen without the remuneration to those employees being billed to this kind of a commission. So that is a variable. Whether or not it's billed to this particular budget or whether they're just paid from wherever they're seconded, I guess is the variable.

But I think just in all it reflects an adequate amount. In here we have enough for a 1-800 number, to do some advertising with respect to that number, to have the general public . . . give the general public the opportunity to have input. So I think it's an acceptable budget and I certainly will be voting in favour of it.

The Chairperson: — Okay. Any further comments? Eric?

Mr. Upshall: — Yes. I'm a little concerned with the way the budget was put forward. I think if we want to save ourselves some problems, all of us save ourselves some problems, there's . . . Are you still there?

The Chairperson: — Yes. Oh, yes.

Mr. Upshall: — We should look at the position of chair and members that are presented on a daily basis, and in terms of being consistent, the employee services on a monthly basis. Why wouldn't we change the chair and members to a monthly basis? Three months times whatever, equalling 10,000 or 9,000, and put it out that way.

I know the problems that we've . . . all government experience whenever you're putting together a blue ribbon commission with a perception of the overpayment of members. I think simply present it as a monthly, on a monthly basis would solve a lot of our problems.

The Chairperson: — I will have to defer to the minister because I can't answer that.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Well I think in no way do we want to be hiding the amount of money that we are paying in terms of remuneration for these members.

Mr. Upshall: — We're not hiding any money.

The Chairperson: — Order, order. Let the minister speak.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — This is in tune and in line, very much in line, with what we pay board members who sit on Power Corporation, SaskEnergy, and boards of that nature.

I think that we have asked these people to take out of what is very busy work schedules and very heavy workload and to ask them to embark on this kind of public service . . .

Mr. Upshall: — I'm not arguing about the amount at all, Mr. Minister. I'm just putting a case forward that it might be better to put it on monthly basis than a daily basis.

The Chairperson: — Are you thinking that the 20 days and 15 days is not sufficient and that more will be expended? Is that your . . . ?

Mr. Upshall: — I think that the 20 days is 20 days that they expect those people to work over a period of three months. All I'm doing is suggesting, and I will stop suggesting it right now, is that it be presented in terms of month and not base. End of case.

The Chairperson: — Okay.

Mr. Swenson: — I know where you're coming from, Eric. No one out there believes that anybody is worth that kind of money on a daily basis, especially people that have . . . in the case of Wakabayashi, McDowell are both on pensions from other areas, public money. So it's a tough one.

Now I'm a little concerned that we may go beyond the 20 days, but in discussing this with Eldon and Lynda earlier, and sort of the ways that they would be presented the material, they really don't need any more time than that.

But it's a perception problem. And I don't know — if you said 3,500 or whatever a month — if it would make it any better, but I guess there's a lot of people out there do make that kind of money, it might . . .

Mr. Upshall: — Yes, that's my point — perception.

The Chairperson: — Could I just ask the

minister a question here? Would we, if this were changed now — I assume that this is what you've negotiated with the people — if this changed to a monthly basis . . .

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — The per diem rate will not change; the per diem rate has already been confirmed with the members. And so in terms of that, that will remain.

If for optics you would feel more comfortable, I guess what we could do is omit the reference to chair at 20 days of \$500 a day and just put a global amount in there in terms of remuneration to committee.

But I don't see to my mind, frankly, any benefit in that, in that two things: one, this is a public board; it's recorded in *Hansard*; and I think that it would be far better for us to be straightforward with the people of this province and indicate to them, quite clearly, to get people of this calibre that \$500 a day for a man of Mr. McDowell's capabilities is certainly not out of line. And that would be an amount that he could command were he doing service for a corporation. I would say the same with respect to Mr. Wakabayashi and the same to Ms. Gallaway.

But I guess, from my perspective, if members of the board would feel better having this just listed as remuneration to committee members a global figure of \$19,000, then I certainly will defer to the members of the board.

Mr. Swenson: — What do you think, Eric?

Mr. Upshall: — I'm in favour of that. I think you should do two — chair and members — but you can do the math any way you want.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Would you want just the deletion then of the 500 times 20 and the 300 times 15 times 2? And just put remuneration, chair, 10,000; remuneration, members, 9,000?

Mr. Upshall: — I would agree with that.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Done.

The Chairperson: — All right. Then it's moved by Eric, seconded by Rick, right? And all in favour?

Mr. Upshall: — Agreed.

The Chairperson: — Okay. Agreed. Anything further on the budget? If not, then could I have someone move the recommendation?

Mr. Swenson: — I so move.

The Chairperson: — Okay. Moved by Mr. Swenson:

That the proposed budget in the amount of 78,000 for the independent committee to review MLA salaries and allowances be approved and that the funding for said committee be authorized to be paid out of the Legislative Assembly budget.

Do I have a seconder? Seconded by Mr. Lautermilch. Any further discussion? All in favour?

Mr. Upshall: — Agreed.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Agreed.

The Chairperson: — Rick.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — I wanted Eric to know that I voted for this.

Mr. Swenson: — Agreed.

The Chairperson: — Okay. That item then is settled. We want to very quickly now turn to the next item that is a request from Pat Lorje that she is appealing the Speaker's decision on an item where I felt that I was interpreting the board's decision correctly. And she's appealing to the board my decision and I'm putting it, as per her request, tabling the item for you and asking the board to consider the request made by Ms. Lorje.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Just for clarification, Mr. Speaker, was this issue brought to the board's attention . . . was it not brought to the board's attention at a meeting prior to this?

The Chairperson: — Oh yes, the board had made a decision on this some time ago.

Mr. Swenson: — Back in the spring.

The Chairperson: — Only on the classes, not on the textbooks. It was that we were not going to pay for the tuition fees on the classes. And we just . . . I just interpreted that then to mean

that if we're not going to pay for the tuition fees that we were not going to pay for textbooks.

Now if I'm wrong on that interpretation then it's up to the board to give me further indication.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, if I could just make a couple of comments. There appears to be some — again — grey areas in terms of what's acceptable and what's not acceptable with respect to members' ability to do their jobs and what should in fact come out of their communications allowance.

I know that some members have been concerned with respect to books that they've purchased that they believe enhances their ability to expand their knowledge on issues. And some of those requests have been turned down, I guess, by the Speaker's office, and this appears to be another one of those. I can certainly understand Ms. Lorje's concern with respect for her desire to be able to communicate with the people of Saskatchewan in our second official language. I guess an argument can be mounted for both tuition and the tools to be able to develop that skill.

Having said that, I think that we've got a whole other area in terms of other kinds of purchases that members have made, and I'm wondering if it would be possible to refer this issue to the Clerk, to come forth with some options and some recommendations in terms how we may be able to accommodate these kinds of requests, which may or may not be acceptable in terms of members' expenditures, because it's so difficult for us to make a determination not knowing, first of all, what types of requests are made.

This one is quite clear; there are others, I think, that were less clear, much more ambiguous. So I guess what I would like is to bring to the next board meeting — and I'm assuming we'll be holding a board meeting to deal with the budgets in early January so this deal . . . this matter could be dealt with fairly quickly — but if we could have some options and have a look at what's happening in other areas. Because I'm really not clear as to what should be acceptable or what shouldn't.

The Chairperson: — Yes, this is a difficult item, Mr. Lautermilch. I have to go back into our records, but I think we did bring to the board some time ago, fairly detailed requests

— this is some time ago; I'd have to go and check back in my records — and the board at that time turned them down. And what I have done is simply interpreted what I thought was board decision. I mean it was just simply extended: the board said no to tuition, why would we say yes to textbooks?

The problem you have here is, I can understand as far as the French is concerned, but what about someone who would take an economics class or someone who would take a history class, someone would take a . . . do we buy textbooks in that regard? And I just simply interpreted from the board's discussion that we had at the time — and I can go back and review that — the board simply saying no, we did not want to extend it any further than what presently existed.

I want to make it very clear, I'm not speaking yes . . . for or against Ms. Lorje's request here. But I would not at all feel bad if the board said pay for them. I just need . . . she's appealed and that's why it's here.

Mr. Swenson: — I'll make that motion, Mr. Speaker.

The Chairperson: — What's the motion?

Mr. Swenson: — That she pay for it.

The Chairperson: — That she pay for it?

Mr. Swenson: — Right.

The Chairperson: — She had done that. She wants reimbursement.

Mr. Upshall: — I think the motion should be that we uphold the decision made by the board at whatever meeting it was made.

The Chairperson: — Okay, and that what you're really saying, uphold the decision of the Speaker?

Mr. Upshall: — Right.

Mr. Swenson: — Agreed.

The Chairperson: — Agreed? Okay, thank you. It's been moved by Mr. Upshall, seconded by Mr. Swenson, that we uphold the decision of the Speaker.

Gentlemen, before you . . . I know this meeting . . . I need a motion for adjournment, but before you do so, I don't know if you received notice, but if you haven't received notice yet but I have scheduled a meeting for the evening of the 5th and all day of the 6th of January for board stuff . . . budget.

Mr. Swenson: — The 5th, or the 4th and the 5th?

The Chairperson: — Fifth — evening of the 5th and all day of the 6th.

Mr. Swenson: — That's the Thursday night and the Friday?

The Chairperson: — That's correct. That is the absolute deadline that we have for budget.

Mr. Swenson: — Well I could have gone to Lake Louise to the Palliser . . . or the wheat growers' convention and skied and had a good time, but if you're in a really bad . . .

Mr. Upshall: — Go ahead, Rick. We'll take care of business.

The Chairperson: — Well, I really have no choice.

Mr. Swenson: — Well I guess you've got to do it then.

The Chairperson: — So I mean if . . . but if, I mean, we can't get a quorum, we can't have the budget. That's what I'm trying to say to you, and I've checked with Finance and the 6th is the absolute deadline.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, could I ask maybe — Ms. Haverstock's person is here — is that . . . does that fit into her calendar?

Ms. Croissant: — Yes.

The Chairperson: — Okay. Eric, you're available for those days, right?

Mr. Upshall: — I have both marked off.

The Chairperson: — Okay. So we shall meet then at 7 o'clock on the 5th until . . . 7 to 10 and all day on the 6th until we're finished.

Mr. Swenson: — I guess so. Bring the coffee.

The Chairperson: — Yes, and we'll try and get the budget documents out to you early next week, okay? Thank you very much.

Mr. Upshall: — Just one thing on that . . .

The Chairperson: — Oh sure, you would, wouldn't you? Okay, go ahead, Eric.

Mr. Upshall: — Well just because we're up against a deadline, we have to be absolutely sure that those people who were answering questions on the budget be very well equipped, because we can't delay it. And so that might . . . it's just a suggestion because it might . . .

The Chairperson: — Are you insinuating that we aren't equipped when we come before the board? Don't answer that.

Mr. Upshall: — I would never insinuate anything like that.

The Chairperson: — Okay. We will certainly do that. And I've already talked to the Provincial Auditor. He has reserved those dates so he's available, and I know the people from LAO (Legislative Assembly Office) are available for that day.

Ms. Ronyk: — If members have any particular questions that they — once they see the documents — that they might want to raise and it might take us some time to pull together, you know, with statistics or whatever, if you'd let us know then we can be more prepared at the meeting date.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, I'm just wondering with respect to scheduling, are we going to be holding the Provincial Auditor over for the 5th and the 6th?

The Chairperson: — No. What I have said to the Provincial Auditor: we will do the LAO budget first and that will be Thursday night we'll start on that. And then he would be on deck for the next day. We could reverse it if you wanted to. We could do the Provincial Auditor's budget first, but I thought the LAO budget probably wouldn't be as controversial. So I've scheduled that one first. Okay?

Now I need a motion for adjournment. Moved by Eric, seconded by Mr. Lautermilch. All in

favour? Agreed. Everybody have a Merry Christmas, including you, Eric.

Mr. Upshall: — Same to everybody down there.

The Chairperson: — Hey you know, I'm going to do this again. You're much more cooperative on the conference call than you are at the board meetings. So we might consider this again.

Mr. Upshall: — Are you insinuating that . . .

The Chairperson: — I would never do that! Okay. Have a good day, Eric. Thanks very much, everybody.

The committee adjourned at 9:30 a.m.