



PROVINCE OF NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR
HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY
MANAGEMENT COMMISSION

Eighty-third Meeting

Wednesday, December 1, 2021

HANSARD

Speaker: Honourable Derek Bennett, MHA

The Management Commission met at 9:30 a.m. via video conference.

SPEAKER (Bennett): Thank you, everyone.

I'd like to call this meeting to order. First I'm going to begin by introducing the Management Commission Members and also our staff that are present.

First of all, apologies are sent by the hon. Steve Crocker. The Government House Leader couldn't attend the meeting this morning.

We also have today, present, Barry Petten, the Opposition House Leader; the hon. Helen Conway Ottenheimer, the Member for Harbour Main; the hon. Lisa Dempster, Member for Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair; Jim Dinn, Member for St. John's Centre; Paul Pike, Member for Burin - Grand Bank; Brian Warr, Deputy Speaker; and Sandra Barnes, Clerk and secretary to the Commission.

Also absent this morning and sending apologies is Kim Hawley George. We also have present Mark Jerrett, the policy, planning and research analyst.

Welcome, everyone, to our meeting this morning. Everybody should've been provided with a copy of the agenda and also all the briefing materials and that. So we'll getting started.

The first item is the approval of the minutes. First, we have the draft minutes of Commission meetings held on September 15, September 22 and also October 6, and they require approval from the Management Commission. I just want to note that the meetings of September 15 and October 6 were in camera meetings of the Commission and the draft minutes satisfy the requirements under section 19 of the *House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act* for us to report decisions of in camera meetings publicly.

I don't know if any Committee Members have any questions or any comments before we call for a motion to adopt those minutes.

Seeing none, I call for someone to move the motion that the minutes of the Management

Commission held on September 15, September 22 and October 6, 2021, be approved as read.

Minister Dempster; moved and seconded by Helen Conway Ottenheimer.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, minutes adopted as circulated.

SPEAKER: Item 2 on the agenda is the audited financial information for the year ending 31st of March 2021. The *House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act* require annual audits of the accounts of the House of Assembly and statutory offices by the auditor appointed by the Commission.

The act states that the Audit Committee must review the audited financial information, the audit report and any recommendations with the auditor and recommend their approval to the Management Commission.

The Auditor General informed the Audit Committee that no significant matters were identified in the report. In correspondence dated September 22, 2021, the Audit Committee recommended that the Commission approve and sign the audited financial information for the House of Assembly and statutory offices for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2021.

The information has been provided to the Committee Members and I just wonder if anybody has any questions before we call for a motion for this particular item.

I think everybody is all good with it. Okay, so we'll call for the motion for the Commission to approve the audited financial information for April 1, 2020, to March 31, 2021, for the House of Assembly and statutory offices as recommended by the Audit Committee.

Can we get a mover for that motion? MHA Petten.

And a seconder? Minister Dempster.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

The third item on the agenda is the audited financial information for the Office of the Auditor General, again, for year ending 31st of March 2021.

Under section 32 of the *Auditor General Act*, the Management Commission appoints a qualified auditor to annually audit the Office of the Auditor General. Subsection 32(3) of the act provides that the auditor appointed submit their report to the Commission and to the Auditor General.

In accordance with the provisions of section 32, the audited financial information for the Office of the Auditor General for the fiscal year ended 31st of March 2021 is presented to the Management Commission.

Again, I'm just wondering if any Committee Members would have any questions. We don't need to take a vote on this one here, but if there are any questions, we'll put it forth.

MHA Dinn.

J. DINN: I had to come back in; my screen froze here. We're still on the audited financial statements?

SPEAKER: We're on the audited financial information for the Office of the Auditor General, item 3.

J. DINN: Oh, so we've moved ahead.

I'd like to ask a question on the previous one because I froze at that time, if that's all right.

SPEAKER: Yeah, that's no problem.

J. DINN: With regard to accrued severance pay, so am I reading it correct – so MHAs are still approved severance?

CLERK (Barnes): Correct.

J. DINN: Can I ask why, when all other public servants no longer do that? And who makes that decision?

CLERK: Actually, it's a recommendation from the Members' Compensation Review Committee. The severance provisions for Members were changed substantively following the latest review by them and the recommendations were accepted by the Management Commission. The policy – I don't know the exact particulars now on the policy, but that is on the website.

J. DINN: So how do we go about removing that provision? Because if we're demanding that all other public servants no longer accrue that, is that something that the House Management makes, or does it go to the House of Assembly? Because I really find it objectionable that the MHAs are receiving this. And MHAs are the ones who've eliminated it for every public servant in this province.

CLERK: I guess there are a couple of things, if I might. There are a couple of things I'd like to respond to on that. Well, first of all, no, the only ones who can make that recommendation is another member of the Compensation Review Committee.

I also point out that MHAs are not the same as employees. When an employee's employment is terminated, they are eligible for EI. There is also, depending on the circumstances of their termination, they are entitled to redundancy. When MHAs, for example, are not elected, they are not eligible for EI.

The other thing we have to keep in mind is that the severance provision has been ratcheted back significantly and that is the only bridging income they have. They don't get any redundancy or anything like that, you know, once their period as an MHA comes to an end.

J. DINN: Thank you very much, but it's an immaterial argument to me. We make the decision. We recognize there's a liability. You enter into politics with your eyes wide open, I would assume. To me, once we made the – we lead by example. So if we've eliminated it

because of the liability for public servants in this province, then I think we need to lead by example.

So, to me, if I remember correctly, the House did decide not to approve the recommended salary increase. So I'm assuming, then, the House can also make a decision on this as well. Correct?

CLERK: It's a legislative change, yes.

J. DINN: Good enough. I note my objection to this, just as I find it actually offensive almost.

Thank you.

SPEAKER: Thank you for your comments.

Back to item 3, the financial information for the Office of the Auditor General. Anybody got any questions or comments on that one?

Hearing none, we'll move on. Like I said, there's no motion required for that one.

Our next item – the third item on the agenda was financial reports. This is also a reporting item for the Commission. *The House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act* states that the commission must “regularly, and at least quarterly, review the financial performance of the House of Assembly as well as the actual expenditures of members compared with approved allocations.”

Financial reports and Members' expense reports for the period of April 1 to June 30, 2021, and also April 1 to September 30, 2021, are included in your briefing package for reporting purposes. Do any Committee Members have any questions related to this agenda item?

Hearing none, we will move to the next one, which is the proposed policy amendments. House officials have identified various proposed routine amendments to the existing House of Assembly policies for the Commission's consideration. Details of the proposed amendments are outlined in the briefing package for the following policies.

The first one is: the Standard Office Allocation for Members and constituency assistants;

Inventory Management Policy; and, thirdly, Purchasing Policy - Under \$200, which applies to Members for the House of Assembly.

Just wondering if you had any questions or comments on the proposed routine amendment?

Excuse me, I'm having some technical problems here; I've got my screen gone.

CLERK: We can see you.

SPEAKER: I can't see you guys though, so – okay, back again.

So does anybody have any questions or comments? You had an opportunity to review the briefing notes?

If not, I'll call for a motion that our policy and communications officer will – Mark, do you have the motion prepared for that one there?

Okay, Mark, would you mind sharing the proposed motion.

M. JERRETT: The proposed motion reads that the Commission directs the following amendment to House of Assembly policies: That the Standard Office Allocation Package for Members be amended to: (a) remove one television, including accessories, not greater than 32 inches; (b) add one television, including accessories, most economical available at time of purchase; (c) remove one camera and accessories; (d) remove one recording device for television; (e) add cable service, installation and maintenance of the most basic package including the local news channels, House of Assembly Broadcast channel and recording device (PVR); satellite services are not permitted.

That the Inventory Management Policy be amended to: (a) remove “Physical counts of all inventory items will be conducted by Corporate and Members Services (or designates) on a periodic basis and at a minimum once every four years;” and (b), add “Physical counts of all inventory items will be conducted by Corporate and Members Services (or designates) on a periodic basis and at a minimum once in each general assembly.”

That the Purchasing Policy be amended to: (a) increase the threshold from \$200 to \$500 for purchases of goods/services by or for Members without quotations/explanations of how fair and reasonable price was established.

SPEAKER: Do I have a mover?

Thank you, MHA Dinn.

Seconder? MHA Pike.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

The last agenda item for today relates to a transfer of funds that's required for Members' resources in accordance with the Transfer of Funds Policy of the caucus funding provisions. Details of the required transfers and amounts are included in the briefing package.

Any questions or comments to this particular item?

Seeing none, I'll call for a motion that the Commission approve the following transfer of funds from: subdivision 1.1.07.01, the Official Opposition Caucus, Salaries, \$10,300 and subdivision 1.1.07.10, Official Opposition, Grants and Subsidies, \$600 to subdivision 1.1.04.01, Members' Resources, Salaries, \$10,300 and subdivision 1.1.04.10, Members' Resources, Grants and Subsidies, \$600.

Can I have a mover to that motion? MHA Petten.

Seconder? Minister Dempster.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

This concludes the agenda items for today. As I mentioned earlier, we are hoping to plan another meeting in the next week or two of the Management Commission. I do thank everyone for their attendance. Please look to your emails and respond regarding your availability over the next couple of weeks.

With that, I'll call for a motion for adjournment.

MHA Conway Ottenheimer.

Seconded by MHA Petten.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

Again, thank you and everybody have a great day.

On motion, meeting adjourned.