



PROVINCE OF NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR
HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY
MANAGEMENT COMMISSION

One Hundred and Second Meeting

Wednesday, June 17, 2026

HANSARD

Speaker: Honourable Paul Lane, MHA

The Management Commission met at 9:30 a.m. in the House of Assembly Committee Room.

SPEAKER (Lane): Good morning, everybody.

Welcome to this morning's Management Commission meeting. This is, of course, June 17, and just for the record, I'm going to call the meeting to order.

For the record today, we have with us Minister Lloyd Parrott, MHA Lisa Dempster, MHA Riley Balsom, MHA Jim Dinn, MHA Jamie Korab, and I have our Deputy Speaker, MHA Jeff Dwyer with us as well, and our House of Assembly Management staff, our team.

First item on the agenda is the approval of the minutes for January 21, March 30, April 1, April 21, April 30 and June 1. Further, as required under the *House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act*, I am also advising of decisions from in camera meetings on January 21, April 1, April 21, April 30, June 1, details of which are included in the draft minutes approved today.

Are there any comments, errors or omissions as it relates to the minutes of any of these said meetings?

Hearing none, the motion is that the Commission would approve the minutes of the meetings held on January 21, March 30, April 1, April 21, April 30 and June 21, 2026.

Moved by MHA Dempster; seconded by Minister Parrott.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion is carried.

J. DWYER: You said June 21.

SPEAKER: Did I say 21? Okay, it is June 1, if I said 21 that was my mistake.

That's why I'm lucky I have the deputy dog here with me. Some people think he's here to learn but he's really here to keep me straight, and I appreciate him.

On motion, minutes adopted as circulated.

SPEAKER: Anyway, next we have several items that are required to be reported to the Commission where no decisions are required.

These are as follows: first, there is a report outlining rulings on allowance use of Members since the Commission's last public meeting; second, there are financial reports for the period ending 31 of March, 2026, which are required to be presented to the Commission quarterly in accordance with the *House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act*; finally, under reporting items, there's a report of all budget transfers processed during the 2025-26 fiscal year as required by the House of Assembly Transfer of Funds Policy.

Are there any questions or comments from Members on any of the reporting items before we move on to the next item on the agenda?

Seeing none, we will proceed.

Okay, so next item on the agenda is related to recommendations of the Audit Committee, further to audits completed in the 50th General Assembly. In addition to the annual financial audit required in accordance with the *House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act*, there are two other audits completed by the Auditor General during the 50th General Assembly in accordance with the act and they include compliance audits on Members and ministerial expenses. That's dated July

2024. As well as a compliance audit for the 50th General Assembly and that's dated August 25.

These audits were conducted in accordance with subsections 43(9) and (10) of the *House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act*, which requires a compliance audit be conducted by the Auditor General at least once in each General Assembly. So both audit reports are included in the briefing materials for today's meetings.

In accordance with the Audit Committee's duties and responsibilities under the act, the Committee reviewed and discussed the findings of these audits and they made several recommendations to the Management Commission. Of course, MHA Balsom Chairs that Committee.

The briefing note on this item includes a table which outlines each recommendation of the Audit Committee, as well as action required by the Commission, should it concur with the Committee's recommendation. You will note that not all recommendations require further action by the Management Commission but some will require additional actions, such as amendments to policy.

So for ease of reviewing these matters, I'm going to suggest that we go through each recommendation individually, starting with number one in the table, and the Commission can then discuss or ask questions on that recommendation, if required.

I also invite Members of the Audit Committee on the Commission – that would be MHA Balsom as Chair and MHA Dempster as the other Member sitting on that Committee – to weigh in on behalf of the Audit Committee if they should decide they want to do so.

So we're going to start here. You should have the report here from the Audit Committee. We're going to start with 1.

The first recommendation says: "With respect to a finding in the Auditor General's compliance audit of Member and ministerial expenses (July 2024) related to subsection 5(3) of the *Members' Resources and Allowances Rules*, the Audit Committee confirmed that it supports the requirements in subsection 5(3) that the Management Commission review policies and procedures of the House of Assembly at least annually.

"Should the Commission concur in this recommendation, no further action is required. House officials will proceed to bring all policies and procedures forward on an annual basis for the Commission's review in accordance with subsection 5(3) of the Rules."

Do all Members concur in Recommendation 1?

I'm assuming that you do because I'm not hearing anybody suggest they don't, so we'll move on to Recommendation 2.

Recommendation 2 from the Audit Committee: "With respect to findings in the Auditor General's compliance audit of Member and ministerial expenses (July 2024) related to the Caucus Operational Funding Grants Policy, the Audit Committee directed the following:

"a. That it recommend the Management Commission review the Caucus Operational Funding Grants Policy to determine whether additional restrictions are required further to those already included under 'ineligible items'.

"Should the Commission concur in this recommendation, House officials will proceed with related analysis of the current provisions of the policy, to be brought forward for consideration at a future meeting."

MHA Dempster or Balsom, do you have any comment on, I guess, why that came forward or what it was about?

L. DEMPSTER: The context of the table, Speaker, I was actually going to ask the Clerk just to expand on that a little bit for the table.

SPEAKER: For 2, yes?

L. DEMPSTER: Yes, 2.

CLERK (Hawley George): Certainly, the recommendations of the Audit Committee are the Committee's. I appear before the Committee so I can't speak on behalf of the Committee in terms of its recommendations.

I just will say from a general point of view, the House of Assembly – and I did want to say this for the record – the House of Assembly is subject to a very robust audit and accountability framework. We know that this came from the Green report and so forth and we welcome the Auditor General and Grant Thornton, when they come and they do the management certification. We can always improve on our processes. I'm very glad to have the Auditor General's comments in this context.

With respect to this particular finding, I believe that there was, in the report, a question of clarity in terms of which items are ineligible, in terms of any political items, political branded items. The question is whether or not the policy should be amended to make a reference to that. This is where the Committee was (inaudible).

You go ahead.

B. RUSSELL: I can speak to it a little bit as well from a policy perspective.

The current policy does already list ineligible items and it provides, I guess, some context around that. I guess the question is whether or not the Commission feels that what is there would suffice or whether or not it

would want to add to that. I think the Audit Committee just said, well, maybe the Commission should look at it.

If the Commission concurs, we will take the current policy, do the analysis and say here's what's included, here's the analysis on it and bring it back for the Commission to look at it, with more context around the current provisions.

That would be –

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Bobbi.

We felt, Speaker, given our history that it's good to have (inaudible).

SPEAKER: Okay, so it was more about just doing the review as opposed to some specific ineligible item. When I saw ineligible items, I was thinking maybe there were some specific things there that were unclear or specific items that we had questions about in the past but it's more of a general look, I guess, is it?

L. DEMPSTER: Well, some parts could be deemed a little grey.

SPEAKER: Grey, okay.

L. DEMPSTER: Not black and white.

SPEAKER: I'm sure a lot of it was that –

R. BALSOM: That decision was made prior to (inaudible).

L. DEMPSTER: Yes.

SPEAKER: Yes.

B. RUSSELL: Speaker, you need to recognize them for their mics to be turned on.

SPEAKER: Oh, I'm sorry, I apologize, yes.

Okay, the recommendation would be just for staff to go and have another look at it and

bring some recommendations to this Committee, at a later date, as to any potential – (technical difficulties).

Oh, I'm sorry, MHA Dinn.

J. DINN: Thank you.

This is more or less to seek clarification or clarity on this, because it talks about additional restrictions. So was there some discussion as to what additional restrictions would be? It seems like you wanted to add to the restrictions, the recommendations. I would assume that there were some problems already that were questioned.

It seems to be directing not only to seek the clarity and so on and so forth, but it seems to look at whether there should be additional restrictions under ineligible items. I'm just curious what they might be or what those problems might have been.

SPEAKER: Okay, I'll refer to the Clerk. That's kind of what I was getting at actually when I –

CLERK: Yeah, so my understanding is there was an analysis done of the policy itself. Some of the language was not clear and there was a recommendation by the Auditor General that the language be clarified in the policy and the list of ineligible items to ensure that anything that was politically partisan branded, sort of thing, was clearly listed in the ineligible items in that policy.

J. DINN: Okay, so in other words, it's not a matter of adding. It's more or less adding the items that were already politically branded there.

I'm just wondering if there were, I guess, politically branded items that: wait now, these haven't really been covered, we should look at expanding that list, or is it just simply codifying that list?

CLERK: I think it's more of a clarification of the drafting.

SPEAKER: Okay.

B. RUSSELL: But, again, when that comes back to the Commission, that analysis would be there. This is what the policy currently says, this was the finding from the report, which is also available in your package today. Then, I guess, the Commission would consider that in the context of what the finding was with respect to what the policy currently is and whether or not it needs that clarification, as the Clerk said.

J. DINN: Okay.

SPEAKER: Okay, thank you for that.

Is everybody fine with that recommendation? Does everyone concur with the recommendation for them to have a look and bring it back? Yeah, okay.

So Recommendation 3: "With respect to findings in the Auditor General's compliance audit of Member and ministerial expenses (July 2024) related to the Printing Policy for Members, the Audit Committee directed the following:

"a. That it recommend the Management Commission amend the Printing Policy to include a reference to the Advertising and Publications Policy for Members.

"Should the Commission concur in this recommendation, House officials will proceed to draft the proposed amendment to the Printing Policy for Members, to be brought forward for consideration at a future meeting."

So is there anybody that can – unless one of the Members of the Committee want to comment?

MHA Dempster?

L. DEMPSTER: No, (inaudible).

SPEAKER: Oh, you're fine.

Maybe, again, I'll just defer to the Clerk as to the specifics as to why this –

CLERK: So with respect to the finding that's contained in the report, the finding was that the Printing Policy lacked a reference to the Advertising and Publications Policy and that it should be considered whether or not the former be amended because that provides parameters on permissible content in advertisements including restriction of colours and messaging.

Again, normally, when we do our work, our policies work together. We have all the policies. All the policies apply, but for ease of reference for immediacy, I guess that the Auditor General is suggesting, and the Audit Committee has now recommended, that the policy be amended with respect to just adding a reference to the other policy to make sure that they're working well together.

That is my understanding and that's my understanding of what the Audit Committee's recommendation is.

SPEAKER: That would seem to make logical sense to me.

Anybody have any comment or concern or everyone concur?

Okay. It seems we have concurrence.

We'll move on to 4: "With respect to findings in the Auditor General's compliance ... related to monthly bank reconciliations required by the Caucus Operational Funding Grants Policy, the Audit Committee directed that it recommend the Management Commission consider the following amendments to the policy:

"a. require caucuses to submit monthly bank reconciliations to Corporate and Members' Services;

"b. where a caucus fails to submit bank reconciliations to Corporate and Members' Services over a 3-month period, the Audit Committee will be advised of the non-compliance and issuance of further funding will be withheld until such time as the caucus is compliant."

Again, should the Commission concur, then our staff would do that work.

MHA Dempster, do you have a comment?

L. DEMPSTER: So we did have an extensive discussion around this. It's public funds and there was a couple of scenarios we had learned where months had gone by and monthly bank recs had not come in and that's not really acceptable. We decided to put some parameters around that. This applies to the Government, Opposition, Third Party, unaffiliated, it's everybody. Most do comply, but when we have someone that doesn't, you've got to tighten it up a little bit.

SPEAKER: MHA Balsom.

R. BALSOM: Yes, this is something that came up in both the July 2024 and the August 2025 compliance audit. Like MHA Dempster said, it's something we had a very long discussion about during one of our first meetings of the Audit Committee. It's something that all four of us concurred, that it would be something that would be beneficial to all caucuses and to the House.

This is what we had came back with. It was a good, healthy discussion. It was good and we all agreed on that, so that would be the recommendation from us.

SPEAKER: I recognize the Clerk.

CLERK: Just for the benefit of the Commission, from an administrative point of

view, we would welcome this recommendation.

It is difficult sometimes for the staff not having that information coming in as it is required and filing the follow-up; appreciating that, of course, everybody is very, very busy, we understand all those things, but from an administrative point of view and an accuracy point of view, we would welcome this.

SPEAKER: MHA Dinn.

J. DINN: So what is it now, then? Is it quarterly or –?

CLERK: No, it is meant –

B. RUSSELL: They are required.

CLERK: They are required; they are just not coming in.

J. DINN: Okay, but it is quarterly is it, or is it monthly?

CLERK: Monthly.

J. DINN: Okay.

L. DEMPSTER: Monthly, but now funding will be withheld if someone doesn't comply.

J. DINN: Okay. Fair enough, yes.

Would quarterly make it easier, I wonder? I know anything with CRA, it's a quarterly payment. So depending on what – I'm just wondering because –

CLERK: Yes.

J. DINN: – it's one month, but it is reviewed after three months.

CLERK: If Members would like to approve this recommendation today, we can bring that option back to you, I guess. I mean, it can come back, yes.

J. DINN: Okay.

SPEAKER: Okay.

So this would be to actually submit it to Government Member services, as opposed to –?

CLERK: Corporate and Members' Services.

SPEAKER: Corporate and Members' Services.

In the past, you didn't have to submit it at all?

CLERK: Yes, it is required to be submitted.

SPEAKER: Yes, at the end of the year, though? You wouldn't be submitting it monthly in the past, would you?

CLERK: They are required, yes.

B. RUSSELL: It is a requirement of the current policy, yes.

CLERK: It is, yes.

SPEAKER: Okay.

CLERK: That's the challenge.

SPEAKER: Yes.

Recommendation 5: "With respect to the recommendation regarding the development of a comprehensive entertainment policy, Treasury Board's existing Entertainment and Expenses Policy respecting entertainment expenses and specifically, the purchase of alcoholic beverages, continues to apply to the House of Assembly.

"Should the Commission concur in this recommendation, no further action is required."

So right now, no alcohol, and they're just saying we maintain that, obviously. So everyone's fine with that?

CLERK: That is not correct, Speaker.

SPEAKER: The Treasury Board's existing Entertainment and Expenses Policy, specifically the purchase of alcoholic beverages, continues to apply to the House of Assembly.

CLERK: Yeah, the policy will continue to apply.

SPEAKER: Yes.

CLERK: So, basically, the House of Assembly, as in other instances, is subject to the policies of the government, unless we have our own specific policy. Within the government, there is an approval of a limited amount of alcohol with respect to certain functions. So the point is that we will continue to comply with what is in place in the government itself.

SPEAKER: Okay. I didn't even know that there were limited functions, to be honest with you. I thought there was no alcohol across the board – period. Anyway, that's fine, if that's what the policy is. We're basically saying that we're going to maintain what's already in place.

CLERK: Yeah, to be consistent.

SPEAKER: To be consistent, yeah. So the House comes in line with the government. The House being different.

CLERK: That's correct.

SPEAKER: Yes, gotcha.

Yes, MHA Dempster.

L. DEMPSTER: Do we know where all the other jurisdictions across the provinces and territories are on this? We might have had

discussions on that at audit, but I'm drawing a blank right now.

R. BALSOM: I think we did.

L. DEMPSTER: We had a lot of discussions on this one.

SPEAKER: Does the Clerk want to comment on that?

CLERK: I don't know some of the folks who support the audit; I wasn't involved in the Audit Committee's discussions on this because I'm not part of that.

There are variations across the jurisdictions, of course, but certainly I can speak from personal experience that appropriate levels of entertainment and funding are experienced when we go to different jurisdictions as well. So, as with everything, some are more generous and some are less generous.

SPEAKER: Okay.

Everyone good with that? We'll move on.

Recommendation 6: "With respect to the recommendation regarding the review of public interest disclosure statements, all Members of the House of Assembly should sign a declaration document in relation to claims and requisitions to certify that:

"(1) the Member has no conflict of interest with respect to any matter contained in the claim or requisition; and

"(2) the Commissioner for Legislative Standards has not determined that the Member has a conflict of interest under the *House of Assembly Act* or the *House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act* with respect to any matter contained in the claim or requisition.

"With respect to the recommendation regarding requirements of the *Financial*

Administration Act on commitments, following –

CLERK: No (inaudible).

SPEAKER: Oh wait, that's another.

CLERK: That's a different one.

SPEAKER: Okay, it is just not numbered.

CLERK: Yes.

SPEAKER: Okay.

That's Recommendation 6. Should the Commission concur in this recommendation that no action is required? Basically, when you're putting in a claim, you have to sign to say that you're not in a conflict of interest and that the Commissioner has found that you're not in any kind of a conflict of interest as it relates to that expense.

That would seem reasonable to me.

L. PARROTT: That's just with regular claims?

SPEAKER: Regular claims –

CLERK: Requisitions and claims, yes.

SPEAKER: Yes.

B. RUSSELL: It would something else you'd have to sign as part of when you are submitting yours claims and requisitions.

L. PARROTT: What about an individual who is living in a smaller district with 40 or 50 communities and they are travelling somewhere and they got to stay at night, a motel that's owned by family or whatever is the only one that's there?

CLERK: Well, I mean that –

L. PARROTT: It's a perceived conflict, obviously.

CLERK: It is a perceived conflict in that sense, but I would suggest that you would have to discuss that with the Commissioner for Legislative Standards who determines that aspect. That is a reality of our jurisdiction, it absolutely is. Same with the restaurants and (inaudible) –

L. DEMPSTER: Yes, the same would apply with accommodations. If you are 10 towns down and you are staying there because (inaudible).

CLERK: That's right, exactly, but does it rise to the level of conflict of interest, an actual conflict of interest? So that's a different question.

L. PARROTT: But signing this declaration opens the door to some question of whether or not it is a conflict of interest.

CLERK: The reality is, in terms of the Green report, in terms of the changes that we've had in our jurisdiction since the scandal, it is incumbent upon all Members to take responsibility for their own actions, their claims, et cetera, et cetera. This would be a move to, somebody would say, basically that you're signing this, you don't believe you are in a conflict of interest and the Commissioner has not told you, you are in a conflict of interest.

An operational aspect like that where there is no other thing – I'm not going to speak for the Commissioner but I really doubt that she would say that was a conflict of interest in that instance.

So these are the realities of our jurisdiction. This is in response to an audit of the Auditor General and commentary by her on that. The Audit Committee has done its assessment and has recommended this to the Management Commission in terms of one way to respond to the issues that were identified.

B. RUSSELL: But also take into account some of those nuances of smaller areas.

CLERK: Yes.

SPEAKER: I recognize the minister.

L. PARROTT: I'm not the least bit concerned –

SPEAKER: Your mic is not on there, Minister.

Okay, there you go.

L. PARROTT: I'm not the least bit concerned about what the Commissioner – because I agree, the Commissioner could say this is not a conflict, but it's not the Commissioner that digs into our monthly claims and looks at what's signed, where you stayed and questions it publicly on social media and you become targets of stuff (inaudible) and it happens.

CLERK: From a public point of view.

L. PARROTT: Absolutely.

SPEAKER: MHA Dempster.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Speaker.

We have two other independent partners that serve on the Audit Committee with MHA Balsom and myself, and there was a fair bit of discussion around parameters and when you do a claim, like someone just has to take it at face value. So it was felt that an added obligation and responsibility is put to the Member.

If I'm submitting a claim and I'm willing to put my signature that I am not in a conflict – now, to use your example, which is really, in particular, rural. If somebody looks at my claim and I had to drive to 1,200 kilometres and I claim private with someone connected with me, I would think that's justified because I'd go in a hotel for more than double the cost.

So, in actual fact, you're saving the public purse money by doing that, right? It's defensible.

L. PARROTT: I agree with that.

SPEAKER: Minister Parrott, I just want to make sure we – go ahead.

L. PARROTT: It's not the whole idea that it's defensible. I mean, I'm saying we're opening the door to have to defend it, that's the first thing, by signing and people look and may question. That's the first point I would make.

Secondarily, from scrutiny standpoint, I'll just use – and it has got maybe nothing to do with this, but I will leave sometimes from my district and leave Clarendville and go to St. Brendan's. Then I will leave St. Brendan's and I may go to the end of the island. From a mileage standpoint, as an example, it goes from the outskirts of Clarendville, in the mileage guide, to the outskirts of St. Brendan's. I may get 50 additional kilometres while I'm on St. Brendan's doing stuff and it comes back here and it gets questioned.

It's not always the people doing the claims that question it, but they do. We argue about this all the time. I've had claims rejected for two cents over or two cents under, kind of thing. When you're signing this and the people that scrutinize it – and they're out there. I'm sure every one of us got that one individual who looks at every single claim and goes through stuff. I've got no issue signing it. I'm just saying, what does it open the door to from a scrutiny standpoint?

The Commissioner for Legislative Standards, I'm sure, will have our backs and make sure that that's okay but once it goes out in the public domain, it's the public and the media and the other people who make this the problem. That's (inaudible).

SPEAKER: Okay.

I would just, sort of, to add to that, first of all, when it comes to the public scrutiny piece, whether we sign something or we don't, even right now, as of today, it's still all there for everyone to see. So I don't see that changing the scrutiny piece because it's there now.

So if someone wants to scrutinize it and say, why did you spend on this or where did you go, who did you stay – all that stuff – they can do that today. The only difference is the signature and the signature is not online per se. It's just going to show, like it always does, where you went, what you spent on.

I don't see a change here –

B. RUSSELL: (Inaudible.)

SPEAKER: Yes.

The only thing I would just ask, I suppose, or maybe could be considered is, if your doing the claim and if there's something that's questionable on the form, when you sign it, would you not have a spot there where you could actually put that there for your own protection to say with relation to this piece of my claim, I stayed here and my cousin owns this hotel, but it's the only one in town and do something like that.

L. PARROTT: I'll broaden it.

SPEAKER: Minister Parrott.

L. PARROTT: Say, for example, there's a hotel, whether it's Gander, Corner Brook or St. John's, and the owner of the hotel – they're around – is a major sponsor of a party or an individual. Then that individual goes and he stays at that hotel – I won't say names, but that's where they stay when they're in town or when they're wherever – do you think for a second that people don't look back through donor lists and everything else and then say this is a conflict?

When you sign off saying I'm not in conflict and you know that an individual has donated to the party or donated to wherever, I just think you're opening the door to scrutiny that shouldn't be applied.

SPEAKER: The Clerk.

CLERK: In response to questions at the Audit Committee, this was one of the conversations that we had when the CFO, Wanda Lee Mercer, and I appeared before the Committee. It was an option that was discussed with the Committee and a form was developed.

Certainly, it's up to the Management Commission. The Audit Committee makes a recommendation. The Management Commission can accept that recommendation, it can not accept the recommendation or it can also revise the form, as we would bring it back then and have an explanation, this area, as you are suggesting, Minister.

That is really another option, to make an amendment to that form, should the Commission want to develop that in that way.

B. RUSSELL: I'll say as well, in terms of supporting the Audit Committee, the Audit Committee did hear from the Commissioner for Legislative Standards on this one as well in terms of what was in their recommendation that they came up with. They did hear from a number of folks, getting input and trying to, I guess, come up with the recommendation that's here for the Commission, but as the Clerk said, the Commission can still modify that as well.

SPEAKER: MHA Dempster.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Speaker.

In our dialogue around the table, I don't think we got down to that level, we kind of all rushed to say, yes, we'll sign something because there is so much mistrust out in the

broader general public, sadly, folks who serve anyway, so we were, in terms of clearing ourselves, all happy to sign whatever was in front of us.

I'm looking through the lens of my own district, in my 17 communities. In most towns I don't have choices of hotels so that is probably the lens I was looking for. I have one in L'Anse au Clair, one in Forteau, one in West Saint Modeste or whatever.

In all honesty, if you were in St. John's, a bigger city, where you've got a list of hotels, I don't think anyone would be questioning where you're staying unless you're choosing the \$400 a night on the public purse, as opposed to a \$150 a night. I don't think that would be looked at or how you could be targeted for that.

SPEAKER: Yeah, and I guess, part of that as well is, especially in smaller communities, everyone knows everyone and the argument can be made if you had a hotel, why should you not get any business just because you happen to know the person. That's kind of not fair either.

It's one thing to say you're abusing it in giving someone all this business, there's another thing in saying, well, because I know the person, you can never get any business. There's a fine line, right. Ultimately, there has to be a little bit of trust. I know that's sometimes that is lacking with the public – with some of the public.

MHA Dinn.

J. DINN: If I understand what the minister was saying is that the minute you put your name to it, I guess, what would be inconsequential expenses, you open yourself up to criticism. I understand that. I guess what I was going to say, too, Speaker, is that we used to run into it with teachers. Well, they had an in because they knew someone or they're related, but that also doesn't mean that they should be disqualified automatically.

I guess when I'm listening here, you look at your convention that you had, that's something organized by the party as opposed to the government. It's different there. They're free to organize, leave it to the sponsors whoever, it doesn't make any difference. I guess what it comes down to is, when I'm looking at the conflict of interest, I'm thinking on a much bigger scale in terms of who's getting the contracts to repair this, whatever multi-million-dollar contracts, as opposed to whether you stay at a relative's house. If I stay at a relative's house, I don't always pay, but at the same time, if there is indeed a per diem or whatever, that makes no sense. To me, it's inconsequential. You're saving money.

I know we are all under scrutiny. So what if you end up staying in the same hotel each time because when it comes down to it, it's one where you're comfortable, that kind of thing, in that way. But if, all of a sudden, the only hotel that government members or anyone could stay at is this hotel, then there'd be a greater unjustifiable scrutiny of if there's a conflict of interest here, you're purposely excluding everyone else.

I don't have relatives among the smaller communities so I'm going to stay at whatever one I like, along those lines.

It's a different problem you're dealing with. I understand that. But if you go up to, in your district, MHA Dempster, I think it's the Northern Light Inn.

L. DEMPSTER: Yes.

J. DINN: Basically that's it. It doesn't matter. I'm trying to think where else you would go. I know Red Bay has a place, but that's it. So where do you stay?

Down in Marystown, I know there was always the motel there. I can't think of another one. But most places just want small – anyway, I think if it gets down to this, if people are focusing on this sometimes, then they're missing some of

the bigger issues when it comes to conflict of interest because I think most of the issues of conflict of interest is who's getting the overall contracts, you name it, whatever contract. Was it sole sourced? Did you put out an RFP? That kind of thing.

So I understand it, but I don't see this as a major problem. I will defend anyone's right to go and – if you're travelling, but I understand where the minister is coming from.

SPEAKER: Minister Parrott.

L. PARROTT: So I don't disagree, but what I'm saying is it says that we're going to sign and certify that we say we have no conflict and that the Commissioner for Legislative Standards does not determine. So we're (technical difficulty) to that office on that too, right. So that's the first thing.

CLERK: Well, not necessarily every time.

L. PARROTT: But it is indicating, publicly, that we've done that.

So I guess my question is, in the report, has there been a perceived conflict or a known conflict identified in this matter? There has. Okay.

CLERK: So the report does have a finding by the Auditor General. The Commissioner for Legislative Standards, who's responsible for conflict of interest of Members, did not have a finding on this matter.

With respect to your comment on the form, I understand where you're going with that but the idea behind the reference to the Commissioner is that you're saying, I'm certifying that I'm not in a conflict of interest and the Commissioner hasn't told me I'm in a conflict of interest. That's what it is; not that every time you have to go.

B. RUSSELL: It's in accordance with your annual filing anyway, if there are any

conflicts something would be identified, likely, at that time.

CLERK: The Commission can accept or not accept and determine that it wants to continue as we are.

SPEAKER: Possibly what we could do is we could sign it but we could have a little space there, as well, just to say that if there was a particular part of your claim, i.e. you stayed at a particular hotel and it was a family member who owned it, for argument sake, that you would just put a note there saying, this is my cousin but it's the only place in town, type of thing. If that would make it more palatable for Members, I don't know.

MHA Balsom.

R. BALSOM: Yes, I think it would probably be beneficial to add like a note section that's on the current expense forms to the one that was drafted and presented to the Audit Committee for cases like that. I would agree and support that.

SPEAKER: MHA Dinn. I'm seeing a hand. I'm assuming you –

J. DINN: I don't know, to me that seems – if I owned the hotel, I guess, or I was – like, when we fill out these conflict-of-interest disclosures, it's about: Do we have an interest? Do we benefit directly? Whether my cousin owns a hotel, and not that I know of anyone, but it's not a direct benefit to me if I'm going there and I'm getting to stay there for free every time, that, to me, would be you will receiving a gift of some sort. If you're paying the standard rate, I understand maybe that as a reasonable solution but, man, we're getting into the weeds on this one.

Again, if I'm using the money to somehow bring that benefit to me then that, to me, is a direct conflict of interest. To scratch the surface, we're all connected in some way – so six points of separation. I don't know, I

think that's getting a little bit too much, who owns a hotel. If Lloyd's cousin owns a hotel, I'm not going to say, well, I'm not sticking at that one. I'm going to go there anyway.

Anyway, that's my point. I think it's getting a bit –

L. PARROTT: No, I agree.

J. DINN: Yes.

SPEAKER: Okay, Minister Parrott.

L. PARROTT: My statement is not about conflict. Listen, I don't think anybody does it. My statement is about the perception in the public and how much we are scrutinized as MHAs and how heavily our claims are scrutinized to the nth degree, to the point where I would say it now costs government more than it did prior to the Green report when they were getting ripped off. There are more claims rejected. It takes more time. There is more stuff goes on credit cards and so on and so forth because the claims aren't settled in a timely fashion, all of that.

Adding more to the pile, I think, just makes it so much – and this is simple. I'm not disagreeing with it. I'm just saying, from a perception standpoint, to put in this is so-and-sos, it's not about what we're doing. It's not about how the Commissioner for Legislative Standards is going to rule on it. It's about what happens in the public. It's about what happens when people take these claims and they scrutinize them and they say did you know that MHA so-and-so from this district stayed at this, and it just blows up.

I guess the point is, why? Why do it? That's just my opinion on it.

SPEAKER: MHA Dempster.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Speaker.

Just to, kind of, continue on the dialogue that we had earlier around the table – the

two Third Party Members' chartered accountants, maybe both of them –

CLERK: CPA, Certified Professional Accountants.

L. DEMPSTER: Certified Professional Accountants – so they often come with the lens a little bit different than MHA Balsom and I would have, and that's a good thing. That's wonderful, and they've been there a long time.

It went down the road of when your claim goes to the Commissioner, she's looking, kind of, at it as face value. I think we, at the time, felt it's our claim. We're submitting it for expenses we incurred on the road. We already know that they are intensely scrutinized, as you've referenced.

I've had it come back where I might have had pizza with a high school that was here touring the Legislature and I was supposed to say lunch, or vice versa; or, often, if some of my rental was I and E in the district and some was to get me home and you have to break that up, you can be off by two cents – and it is returned many times, two cents or five cents. Because it is already scrutinized, we felt no issue to sign because already that level of scrutiny is there.

We're, more or less, giving that one layer of extra assurance to the public. This is your money and here's my claim, I'm signing that this is accurate and I'm also signing that I'm not aware that I have any conflict. If the House folks come back and say, oh, did you know you were – that's a totally different story, but I am basically signing, saying I am not aware that I am in any level of conflict here.

SPEAKER: MHA Balsom.

R. BALSOM: This would also have to do with what you declare to the Commissioner in your annual declaration statement of what you have interest in. By signing this, you would say whatever you have, you have no

interest – you have nothing to disclose that would be perceived in a perceived conflict of interest –

L. DEMPSTER: Yes.

R. BALSOM: – with the Commissioner on your annual disclosure.

SPEAKER: Okay.

So we have two choices. We can either agree with the recommendation, that we do it, or we don't do it. One or the other.

Is everybody okay with the recommendation, or is the majority okay with the recommendation? Is there anybody against it? I'll put it that way.

Seeing none, I guess we'll move on.

CLERK: I'm sorry, Speaker, I need to be clear.

Will we add the note, additional details aspect, to the form?

SPEAKER: Oh, okay. Yes, that's different.

Minister Parrott.

L. PARROTT: The question becomes then, what if an individual doesn't put it in? Is it mandatory then? What are the parameters and what are the expectations around all of that?

Again, I'll go back and I'll say, it's not about scrutiny that happens internally. It's not MHA Dinn or MHA Dempster or myself or whoever who goes to the Commissioner for Legislative Standards. It's somebody on the outside looking at this stuff who makes that phone call or sends that email. So now we have a claim and there's a portion there where it says details, and what do you put in?

You know, I'm already signing it saying the Commissioner hasn't notified me or I'm not

in conflict. So if you put something in, then you're expanding on the ability for someone to question and if you don't put it in, then your claim is going to get sent back because you never put it in. I don't know, I just think (inaudible) –

SPEAKER: MHA Korab.

J. KORAB: I'll just make a quick comment, because I kind of stay quiet for a bit here. We sign that we're not going to do anything to put us in conflict every year. We do our disclosure.

L. PARROTT: We swear an oath.

J. KORAB: Yeah. So I just find – I don't want to say this is a form for a sake of a form, but it does seem like overkill to me. If I'm going to go stay – I'm not in a rural place, but if I ate at a restaurant, for argument's sake, that they donated to me, do I have to put that in on the form? I don't know. I just think it's a form for the sake –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

J. KORAB: I know, but if we're saying we're not going to do anything to be in conflict and we swear, why are we bringing another form in? I just don't like forms for the sake of forms. I'm not saying that's what it is, but it just seems like there are more and more things, more hoops we have to go through and there is enough we have to do and sign now to get stuff approved.

I don't love it, I am not against it, but I don't know, I just don't personally see the need if we're signing for the whole year.

Anyway, that's just my comments on it.

SPEAKER: MHA Dinn.

J. DINN: Other jurisdictions, like when it comes to it personally – and I'm not talking about the awarding of government contracts or anything like that but when it comes to personal expenses, I'm just wondering what

is the requirement? Because I would agree this seems to be a bit of overkill in some ways, and we do swear an oath. I mean, I take that seriously. Otherwise, almost it's like an extra layer of, well, we want you to take it even more seriously now.

SPEAKER: The Clerk.

CLERK: I can say other jurisdictions are all across the board; they don't have the history that we have. I hear you all, with respect to the analysis of your claims. The analysis of your claims is based on the act and the rules and it's done by our staff, very diligently, frankly, to protect you and to protect this institution, and I hear you about how difficult it can be and I understand that.

The other thing that I would say is that we have probably the most prescriptive accountability framework in the country, and I understand that, too. This suggestion and conversation started with a response to a report that was discussed at the Audit Committee and the form was developed.

But the other thing that I would suggest the Commission keep in mind is, yes, of course, annually, you do your annual updates by January 31 and you do your commitment to your code and all of that stuff, but you're also required to do your public disclosures with the Commissioner, and if there's a material change, you're required to tell the Commissioner. So all of those things are already entrained.

So I hear you in that this is another form. It was a suggestion in response to a comment in the report. If the Commission feels like it is not necessary, at this time, you can say that you're not going to adopt it at this time and see if you need it another time. We can always keep it in view.

SPEAKER: Okay.

MHA Dempster.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Speaker.

I know we're saying another form, but what we're being asked here is when we put our signature on our claim, we also put our signature at the bottom of a sentence that says: The Member has no conflict of interest with respect to any matter contained in the claim or requisition.

I have no issue with that because, I suppose I have the history of, you know, a lot of things in the province on the airways that we did something that I know in my heart of hearts I did not do – a clean, clear conscience. I've served the province for a long, long time. So for the purpose of this meeting, I understood why we had the discussion at the Audit Committee table when we were looking at the recommendations.

We can say another form, but we're just being asked: Would you sign that you are not in a conflict? We're servants of the people and paid by public purse, I guess we'll go the direction of the majority vote around the table, but I do want to say I have no issue with this. I think we are overthinking it.

We're on the road. If you're on the road for work, you're allowed to stay at a hotel. I don't think it's going to be questioned where you stayed or did you gas up in a community where your family owns the gas bar. All of that, in my 13 years, has never been questioned. You need to have gas.

I will make a point that sometimes when I fly into Labrador – I'll use Goose Bay as an example – and then I do a 420-kilometre drive home, under our rules as Members, the rental has to be a compact vehicle. Sometimes I may have to sign that the medium size – am I using the right language – was the only vehicle available. Folks will come back and say: Why did you have this? I'll check with my CA and that's all that was available, and I'll sign. That's just transparency and I'm good with all of that.

SPEAKER: I would just ask the Clerk, right now, we sign our claims anyway so, as opposed to another form or another line, why can't you just simply have, on the existing form, when you sign your claim, a little statement saying: In signing this, I declare that, to the best of my knowledge, I'm not in any conflict of interest? You sign it today the same as you did yesterday, as opposed to a separate line or a separate piece of paper.

L. PARROTT: Isn't that what we're doing when we're signing it anyway?

SPEAKER: Yes, but specify.

CLERK: It doesn't have that specific language in there.

SPEAKER: Well, can't we change the language?

CLERK: No, we can't, actually, Speaker, because the forms come from –

SPEAKER: That would be too easy.

CLERK: Sorry. It's a great idea and it was explored, but some of these things are generated through the system, we don't have an ability to physically change because they come through the government system as well, the FMS. So that's why the additional form is there, that's all.

SPEAKER: Oh well, I tried.

Minister Parrott.

L. PARROTT: I guess my question is why do we sign our claims? Why do we sign them at all because we are saying we are not in conflict, the information provided is true and we are submitting – that's why we sign them to start with, so why are we doing it again? That's the question.

SPEAKER: The Clerk.

CLERK: I will say, Minister, first of all, there is no certification that there is no conflict in the current form. This suggestion, frankly, came from a discussion at the Audit Committee in response to a report.

If the Members of the Commission feel that the current form is satisfactory for the purpose, together with all of the other aspects of the accountability framework and the oaths that you swear and the disclosures that you make to the Commissioner, then that – I don't have a personal view on it.

SPEAKER: MHA Korab.

J. KORAB: The last comment I'll make. I think it's overkill, but if the Audit Committee recommends it and staff think it's a good idea, again, overkill, unnecessary, but I'm fine with it. Move on because –

SPEAKER: I hear you.

J. KORAB: – it's 6:30 on my watch, so it's a bad example. I need a battery, but anyway.

SPEAKER: Okay. I think we have discussed this to death. I think we need to make a decision now.

Are we okay to concur with the recommendation or are we not?

Those in favour, unless we have a consensus here.

J. DINN: Could we come to (inaudible)?

SPEAKER: We could revisit it, yes.

J. DINN: I'd like to have a formal definition of what exactly qualifies as a conflict of interest, how's that? Whether it's from the Commissioner for Legislative Standards, or the AG, specially what's included, because, at some connection, we're all going to be in some conflict of interest over, I guess –

CLERK: We could defer.

SPEAKER: Okay, we are going to defer this particular one 6 I guess it is.

B. RUSSELL: (Inaudible.)

SPEAKER: Okay, we never got to 7 yet. This is 7 and the one that is marked 7 is actually 8.

B. RUSSELL: Yes.

SPEAKER: Okay, we're going to defer Recommendation 6.

Recommendation 7: "With respect to the recommendation regarding of the *Financial Administration Act* on commitments, following the Management Commission's approval of a pre-commitment of funds where procurement processes are not complete, the Management Commission should be advised of the results of the procurement process, including the names of the successful vendor, once those processes have been complete. These details would then form part of the Minutes of the Management Commission and be tabled in the House of Assembly.

"Should the Commission concur in this recommendation, no further action is required."

Is everybody okay with this particular recommendation or are there any comments? No.

Let's move on.

The final one, 8: "With respect to the recommendation regarding monthly bank reconciliations, the direction in AC 2025-015, contained in correspondence to the Commission dated February 6, 2026, addresses the audit findings respecting the completion of monthly bank reconciliation by caucus offices."

B. RUSSELL: The one that the Commission already discussed, Speaker, Recommendation 4, the same finding was

in both the reports so what the document is saying is that they addressed it in this recommendation –

SPEAKER: Oh, okay, the same thing.

B. RUSSELL: – if the Commission agrees.

SPEAKER: Yes, so we already said we will.

Okay, that's it.

That concludes the public agenda. We're going to take a short recess and then we have a couple of items to consider in an in camera meeting.

The Speaker recessed the meeting to transition to an in camera session.