



PROVINCE OF NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR
HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY
MANAGEMENT COMMISSION

Seventy-first Meeting

Wednesday, December 19, 2018

HANSARD

Speaker: Honourable Perry Trimper, MHA

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

MR. SPEAKER (Trimper): Thank you very much, and I see we're now live.

I'd like to welcome the Members of the Management Commission to our broadcasted portion of our meeting. I'm going to introduce the meeting by introducing myself. I'm Perry Trimper; I'm the Speaker of the House of Assembly and the MHA for Lake Melville and, thereby, the Chair of the Management Commission.

I'll turn to my left for introductions, please.

MR. CROSBIE: Ches Crosbie, Member for Windsor Lake.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Keith Hutchings, Member for the District of Ferryland.

MS. COADY: Siobhan Coady, Member for St. John's West.

MR. BROWNE: Mark Browne, Member for Placentia West - Bellevue.

MR. WARR: Brian Warr, Member for Baie Verte - Green Bay.

MS. RUSSELL: Bobbi Russell, Policy & Communications Officer, House of Assembly.

CLERK (Barnes): Sandra Barnes, Clerk.

MR. SPEAKER: And on the telephone joining us by teleconference is ...

MS. MICHAEL: Lorraine Michael, MHA, St. John's East - Quidi Vidi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you all very much.

What I'd like to do, first of all, is read into the record decisions from our in camera meeting that we've just concluded of the Management Commission, and I'm going to do that now.

The first decision that we reached was the Commission directed that the Law Clerk to respond, on its behalf, to legal counsel for the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands. The

Commission further directed waiving the two-day waiting period for Commission decisions to expedite sending the response.

Decision number two: In accordance with the *Financial Administration Act*, the Commission directed a write-off of \$12,446.95 in relation to severance overpayments made between April 2017 and November 2018.

And our third and final decision: The Commission deferred a decision with respect to reimbursement of legal expenses for Members.

I thank the Members for their participation this morning in that portion of our meeting. I will now turn to our agenda. The first item on the agenda is approval of the minutes from our previous meeting, which occurred on November 7.

You've had an opportunity, thanks to staff, to review the previous minutes. I look for a mover to accept those minutes of our previous meeting.

So moved by Mr. Browne; I need a seconder.

Seconded by Mr. Hutchings.

All in favour of approving the minutes of November 7, 2018?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Against?

The motion is carried.

On motion, minutes adopted as circulated.

MR. SPEAKER: The next item, in Tab 4, is Speaker's Report, and I have rulings on allowance use. There is no decision required, but I will just indicate that the act does give myself, as the Speaker, authority to make rulings when expenditures of Members have been rejected for payment, provided that ruling is distributed to and receives concurrence of the Management Commission. There were two items, and there's an attached report with details to each for the period ending December 13, 2018.

These expenditures were originally rejected for payment because they were not submitted within

60 days of being made; however, they were both permitted and are in compliance with other provisions of the *Members' Resources and Allowance Rules*. I have that ability and I did approve those, so I'm just reporting that matter.

I will now go to Tab 5. This deals with two budget transfer requests. The first relates to a transfer of funds – I'm sorry, first of all, the transfer of funds policy requires the Management Commission approval to transfer funds to or from the Allowance and Assistance Main Object of expenditure.

So, there are two separate transfers of funds. The first is to cover the cost of mandatory training of MHAs, as ordered by a resolution of the House. That was approved by this House of Assembly on December 4, 2018. The resolution, as per a recommendation of the Privileges and Elections Committee, directed the training to be developed and delivered by the Gardiner Centre.

The second transfer of funds related to the training is to cover the associated costs of MHAs travel to attend this mandatory training. And as the training is requested by the House, the required travel costs will not count as a House-not-in-session trip for MHAs. That is in accordance with section 37.3 of the *Members' Resources and Allowances Rules*. Therefore, these costs cannot be charged to a Member's individual allocation. We have further details in Tab 5.

First of all, is there any discussion on these transfers of funds?

Mr. Browne.

MR. BROWNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Just so I'm clear, there are two requests here to transfer funds for the training and then the travel.

MR. SPEAKER: That's right.

MR. BROWNE: The training, from what I gather, is \$46,800 and travel is \$30,000.

MR. SPEAKER: That's correct.

MR. BROWNE: Okay.

CLERK: (Inaudible) Mr. Browne, the travel is an estimate (inaudible).

MR. BROWNE: I'm just wondering if the cheque to the Gardiner Centre – and I'm not familiar with them. How were they chosen? Was that part of the PEC's work? Did they choose them? Was there any process in terms of seeking different quotes for those services?

MR. SPEAKER: I'll turn to the Clerk, but I would like to make an opening comment that the Privileges and Elections Committee did entertain several options in terms of how this might proceed. I wasn't necessarily a party to all the discussions, but they did submit a proposal to us that the Privileges and Elections Committee reviewed extensively and then brought before the House and it was included in a motion.

Is there anything else to add from the Clerk?

CLERK: No, except that the Gardiner Centre is a public body under the *Public Procurement Act*, and we are allowed to procure services directly from the Gardiner Centre without having to go through the regular call for proposals.

MR. SPEAKER: And given that the amount is less than \$50,000. So there are two considerations there within which this sort of sole-source direction would be allowable.

Mr. Hutchings.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Just as a Member of the Privileges and Elections Committee, just to my colleague's comment, I think there was a recommendation by the Committee to prioritize this specific piece of work, and direction was taken on that after review and consultation with the Gardiner Centre.

To the Member's point on a go-forward basis, my understanding is there would be an open call for similar training in the future and that type of thing on a long-term basis. So that would be taken care of as we move forward.

MR. SPEAKER: That's a good point.

Thank you.

Any further discussion on this?

MR. CROSBIE: In the \$46,800, is the facilities rental fee included?

MS. RUSSELL: Everything is included in that cost. So it would be parking, meals for Members while they're attending training.

MR. CROSBIE: Okay. Well, if you divide 40 people and realize it covers four days, it doesn't seem excessive at all.

MR. SPEAKER: It's actually two sessions of four days.

MR. CROSBIE: Is it?

CLERK: Yes.

MR. CROSBIE: Two sessions of four days?

MR. SPEAKER: Yes.

MS. RUSSELL: Because there are 20 in each session.

MR. CROSBIE: Oh, okay.

MS. RUSSELL: So 20 Members are going to one session and 20 Members are going to another session. So it's really eight days of training, if you take into account both sessions.

MR. SPEAKER: Okay.

I'll read out a motion and then I'll look for a mover to that.

The motion is: the Commission approves the following transfer of funds from subdivision 1.1.04.09 Members' Resources – Allowances and Assistance \$46,800 to subdivision 1.1.04.02 Members' Resources – Training of \$46,800.

Part of the same motion: from subdivision 1.1.04.09 Members' Resources – Allowances and Assistance the amount of \$30,000 to subdivision 1.1.04.02 Members' Resources – Travel, \$30,000.

I need a mover and a seconder.

Moved by Ms. Coady; seconded by Mr. Crosbie.

MS. MICHAEL: Second.

MR. SPEAKER: Okay, Mr. Crosbie.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

The motion is carried.

Thank you.

Finally, under Tab 6, this is the motion of political support staff severance.

Let me provide some background for the Commission and for those watching, if I may. So I'll read, first, some notes.

You may recall that this was first brought to the Commission on the 7th of November at our meeting, but we deferred a decision pending additional consultation with separate caucuses.

In correspondence to myself, of October 18, the Government House Leader requested that the Management Commission meet as soon as possible to consider adopting government's direction with respect to extinguishment of severance entitlement and implementation of a termination benefit for political support staff employed by the Legislature – and there's an attachment there, Attachment 1. Adoption of the Executive Branch policy would align the termination benefits provided to political support staff of both branches.

Currently, upon termination of employment, political support staff employed by the Legislature are provided a severance benefit in accordance with the direction provided in a 1989 order-in-council and specified in their employment contracts. The provisions are outlined in the Briefing Note.

The new Executive Branch policy will provide termination benefits for political support staff upon release from their contracts, regardless of their length of service. Those provisions are also outlined in the note.

This applies to approximately 65 political support staff, and that comprises constituency assistants of MHAs and employees in the caucus offices. All of these people are employed by this Legislature.

Under subsection 21(3) of the *House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act*, the financial and management policies of the Executive Branch do apply to the House of Assembly and its statutory offices unless the Management Commission establishes its own policies.

Should this Management Commission decide to adopt the Executive Branch policy, it would need to provide direction respecting an implementation date. As outlined in the note, the Human Resource unit of Corporate and Members' Services would require sufficient time to update severance due to employees as of the implementation date; process requests for payout of severance and prepare, terminate and reissue contracts for all political support staff.

Should the Management Commission not adopt the Executive Branch policy, it will need to provide direction to continue with the current legislative policy.

CLERK: (Inaudible.)

MR. SPEAKER: It has done that. I'm sorry. Yeah.

So I should read that again, Clerk?

CLERK: Yes. At the November 7 meeting, the Management Commission agreed to continue the current policy until it had an opportunity to further consider this one.

MR. SPEAKER: All right, thank you for the clarification.

So I don't need to introduce the alternative there.

The standard office –

CLERK: (Inaudible.)

MR. SPEAKER: I'm sorry. Yeah, okay. Sorry, I'm stopping there.

I'm looking for a discussion from the Members of the Commission.

Mr. Hutchings – oh.

MS. MICHAEL: Mr. Speaker, could I make one point; not to the discussion, but you're really clear and I can hear the Clerk but when others speak it's not as clear. I don't know if they can speak more loudly, but I just put that out.

MR. SPEAKER: Okay, we'll do our best here.

Thank you for letting us know.

MS. MICHAEL: Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Hutchings.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Just a couple of points that were raised to me for clarification I guess. When this severance initiative in other sections of government went through, there was a letter given to employees in regard to options that's available in regard to transfer, severance, lump sum, those types of things and timelines to be able to do that. Would that be replicated in this process as well, and would it be an identical process?

MR. SPEAKER: I look to the Clerk who confirmed, yes.

MS. RUSSELL: I think the options were in the Briefing Note of what was offered to Executive Branch employees in the same circumstance.

MR. SPEAKER: Any further discussion around the matter before we seek for some direction?

MS. MICHAEL: I'd like to speak to this.

MR. SPEAKER: Ms. Michael.

Yes, please proceed.

MS. MICHAEL: Thank you.

I won't put out where I think we should go. I'm (inaudible) hear more.

I think one of the key considerations we have to make here is the difference between the political

support staff and the public service employees who come under the Executive Branch. I think when it comes to things like the classifications and salary and all that, I think that's fine having the political support staff being treated the same. But when it comes to the issue of severance, I think we need to look at the fact that the political staff, no matter which caucus they're working for, are in a very precarious situation. The work could actually be identified as precarious work. They are at the whim of the political system and so a change in an election, for example, could cause all kinds of changes with political staff.

As a matter of fact, we have an idea of how many people were affected after the last election; how many people no longer had jobs after the last election. So they are working in a very different part of our political system than the public sector workers who, for the most part, are unionized and under the contracts of the collective agreement. A lot of protection for their positions, and positions don't end because there's been an election.

So, I really do think we have to look at the different situations for the political support staff, and that could either be relayed to, (a), the status quo, it's working fine, maintain that; or make changes to it by creating a legislature-specific policy. But I really do think we have to look at our political support staff with the sense of adjustments and equities because of what I've said. They are part of a democratic process. Our caucuses are part of a democratic process, and they are part of that democratic process. I think, we, as the House of Assembly Management Commission, have a responsibility to give them some protection as employees.

So, as I said, either maintain the status quo or come up with a legislature-specific policy. But I do think when it comes to severance that they should be treated exactly the same as the employees under the Executive Branch. And I apologize to the public for my voice. It's a cold problem.

Thank you very much.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms. Michael.

Further discussion?

I'm looking for some direction. We have, I'm counting one, two, three, perhaps, four different ways we can go. We could certainly not approve what's before us, and continue as we are: status quo. As Ms. Michael indicated, or she at least suggested as an option, we could direct a legislature-specific policy with the current policy in the interim, or we could approve the Executive Branch policy and we just need to have an implementation date.

Mr. Browne.

MR. BROWNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm just looking to the Clerk or yourself to provide some background to us. Every four years, the MCRC is convened to review compensation, benefits, salaries and whatnot, for Members. Has it ever been contemplated that constituency assistants be part of that review process? I don't know when the salaries, as an example, for CAs were set. Do you know that?

It seems to be some time since these positions were classified to now, and it appears that we're doing one-offs with respect to political staff. So I'm just wondering: Has there ever been any consideration of having a regular review process similar to that for Members for the political staff?

CLERK: The MCRC only extends to the Members. Under the legislation, it only covers salaries and benefits and allowances of Members. The Management Commission actually has the authority to set administrative policy for the House. So if they wanted to look at it, it would fall to the Management Commission to provide direction in that regard.

The political support pay scales that have been in place for quite some time, as have the other pay scales that are used across government. So I think they were developed and maintained by the Human Resource Secretariat over in Executive Council.

MR. SPEAKER: So, Mr. Browne, any follow-up thought there? No.

Okay, Ms. Coady.

MS. COADY: Thank you very much, and I reflect back on the letter from the Government House Leader back on October 18 that does outline why this is being brought forward. It does arise from, I think, discussions and work that's been going on with the Newfoundland and Labrador Association of Public and Private Employees and other public service unions that have extinguished, basically, severance benefits for non-bargaining unit employees.

What this severance benefit for political support staff does is basically change the current policy so that upon termination of their contracts, the political support staff contracts, they would get a 30-day to a six-week imbursement, a stipend, regardless of their length of service.

I think what we're trying to do here is have some consistency throughout the civil service and ensure that we are applying fairness across the entire system. So I'm supportive of the policy in that it does provide for some transitional funds. Some termination benefits of six weeks to 30 days, depending on what your support staff salary scale is. I think that is consistent then with what's happening with the act that has been moved through the House. Government has taken measures to prevent the further accrual of severance benefits, and I think that is in keeping with that direction.

MR. SPEAKER: I think I would like to follow up. Ms. Coady, did you feel that that's something that should be implemented now soon or at the conclusion of this term?

MS. COADY: I would think, in keeping with what's happened across government, that it would occur soon. It would occur within the next number of months or within a short period of time. That's in keeping with what's happened across government.

MR. SPEAKER: Further discussion?

Mr. Hutchings.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Mr. Speaker, what's the contemplated date if we were to adopt the option one in terms of implementation of that option?

MR. SPEAKER: Initially, it had been envisaged – I believe it was in November.

MR. HUTCHINGS: October I think, wasn't it?

MR. SPEAKER: The end of October.

CLERK: The Executive Branch – of course, the Cabinet made the decision and they implemented as of the end of October. We didn't have the information until then, so it had to go to Management Commission. So we'd have to set another time. We can't do it retroactively.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Okay.

CLERK: Ms. Michael just emailed and said she had difficulty hearing MHA Coady.

MR. SPEAKER: Okay.

CLERK: She was just trying to ascertain the point you were making.

MR. SPEAKER: Perhaps, Ms. Michael, I can paraphrase a little bit for MHA Coady. She was reminding us of the rationale for doing this in the first place, and it was to bring consistency across lines of government and suggesting that by adopting this policy, it would bring this group of people in line with others and the direction that we're going.

MS. MICHAEL: Okay, thank you very much.

If I could make one comment to that then –

MR. SPEAKER: Please.

MS. MICHAEL: – I would say it would bring everybody in line, but everybody is not on an equal footing because of what I said earlier, and that is the precarious nature of the political work of the political staff and their positions. So, everybody is really not in line in that sense. So, for that reason, I think we probably need a legislature-specific policy.

MR. SPEAKER: Okay.

I'm looking to the Commission for some direction. We do have a variety of directions here that we can go.

Perhaps –

MS. MICHAEL: If I can –

MR. SPEAKER: Go ahead, Ms. Michael.

MS. MICHAEL: Okay.

I'm not putting it as a motion or anything, but I'm just wondering if we looked at a legislature-specific policy, they have a working group involved there, a Member or two of the Commission, along with the Clerk's office making representation from caucus offices, maybe the (inaudible) chief of staff, to come up with a proposal for us that we agreed with, a legislature-specific policy, I think it would be good to have the voice of those who are working in those offices involved in this discussion.

MR. SPEAKER: Ms. Coady?

MS. COADY: I'd just remind everyone that political support staff employed by the Executive Branch, this has been implemented as of October 31, so this is across various other political support staff employed by the Executive Branch.

What we're talking about here, now, is political support staff that are employed by the precinct, so I think that's the differentiation, so there is consistency. We are recognizing, what I'm going to call, the termination benefits upon release from their contracts, because it is a different situation than, say, a civil servant, by allowing 30 days or six weeks, depending on salary range, so those things are being recognized.

I'm more supportive of consistency, I guess, than I am – we have to be cognizant of the fact that we are treating people consistent and fair across our entire government and precinct, so that we are recognizing that. I'm not trying to put words in the mouth of Ms. Michael, but I don't know if setting out another group to study this again is effective. We do have some consistency happening here, and we have had acceptance across a wide, consistent swath across government and in the political support staff already.

I'm concerned about moving towards another system where we're re-examining this again, so I'd raise that.

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Hutchings.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Just one comment, and it's somewhat directed to this. My understanding is constituency assistants who leave after any number of years of service are not entitled to adopt the medical plan, which they receive now as a member. So we could have somebody that served 10, 15, 20 years, but they don't have the option, as others in the public service, to adopt that health care plan as they exit, their retirement

–

MR. SPEAKER: So that's not consistent then.

MR. HUTCHINGS: That's not consistent, no.

I just became aware of that recently. I should've known, but when you think of someone that works for 15 or 20 years in these roles or whatever role, but when they leave, everybody else in the public service can access that very important medical plan, but that individual doesn't have that option. So that, to me, is a huge inconsistency.

MR. SPEAKER: I wonder if it's appropriate that I might ask each of the Members of the Commission just what you're thinking and perhaps we might be able to come up with a collective motion.

I'll give people a minute to think here.

Ms. Coady.

MS. COADY: Thank you very much.

I'm reflecting on the letter received on October 18. It does talk about the rationale for moving forward in this and the fact that the *Salary Restraint and Extinguishment of Severance Pay Act* has gone through the House of Assembly; the fact a direction has been taken on political support staff employed by Executive Branch. This is moving forward with the consistency across. It does recognize the type of position that it is by allowing for a termination benefit upon release of the contract, so I think it does recognize that.

Therefore, I'm supportive of this, of moving forward with this plan and proposal and I suggest that we do so as expeditiously as possible.

MR. SPEAKER: So, that would be your motion.

Do I have a seconder for that?

MS. MICHAEL: I am going to need to hear the motion again, Mr. Speaker.

MS. COADY: You didn't ask for a motion; you asked for my position.

MR. SPEAKER: Okay.

I'm sorry, I asked for a position but in terms –

MS. COADY: I can make a motion but I thought you asked for a position.

MR. SPEAKER: She had some preamble but if I may, Ms. Michael, I'll read you a motion that would be applicable to what she said. That would be that the Commission adopts the direction of the Executive Branch with respect to the extinguishment of severance entitlements and implementation of a termination benefit for political support staff with an implementation date of – and to her words – essentially as soon as possible, so potentially effective today.

MS. MICHAEL: (Inaudible.)

MR. SPEAKER: No, no, I'm sorry.

I'm looking to –

MS. COADY: I'm looking for a date. The date might be January 1 or February 1 depending –

CLERK: I would have to confirm with the Corporate & Members' Services. I would think either it would have to be like the end of January or the end of February, because we have a lot more political support staff than the Executive Branch has.

MS. COADY: That's why I said as expeditiously as possible.

MR. SPEAKER: Okay, as soon as possible.

How does that sound, Ms. Coady?

MS. COADY: (Inaudible.)

MR. SPEAKER: Do we have a seconder for that motion or further discussion?

MR. HUTCHINGS: Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Yes, Mr. Hutchings.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Again, is there any appetite for – I get the motion, but I think there are inconsistencies here. I referenced the point in regard to the medical plan and these individuals not being entitled to that. Is there an appetite here to have a look at that and to see why that is and what the history has been on it?

MR. SPEAKER: And Mr. Browne's earlier comment about salary and the Clerk's point that such staff have not had their compensation reviewed in some time. They haven't been part of the MCRC review.

CLERK: The legislation only applies to Members.

MR. SPEAKER: Right, only to Members, not to the CAs or to the caucus staff.

Yes, Ms. Coady.

MS. COADY: Thank you, and respective to that query as to whether or not we – I guess the Management Commission could undertake a review in the next number of months as to whether or not we have appropriate salary levels. That is the purview of the Management Commission, is it not? I don't know who does that.

CLERK: Well, we've always worked very closely with the Executive Branch and our act says adopt the Executive Branch policies unless you come up with your own. But the Management Commission does have oversight of the administrative and financial operations of the Legislature. So, we could ask to review it, yes.

MS. COADY: Put query, then.

CLERK: Yes.

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Hutchings.

MR. HUTCHINGS: My issue wasn't related to salaries, per se, and I understand my colleague, but we're talking about consistency here and extermination of the severance plan and going to another plan. Within that context, we were asked to go back and discuss with staff and people that were affected what issues are important to them. And the issue that came up to me was, and I repeat it, not having access to the medical plan. That's significant in regard to transitioning from life here on to out of that position. When you compare that to the public service and what everybody else is entitled to, it's a glaring omission.

I think it's important, and it's important to these staff. I'm just asking that somebody specifically take a look at that, because it was a huge concern that was addressed to me. And that goes to the consistency of severance and comparably to other people in the public service.

MR. SPEAKER: As Chair, I'm going to make a bold suggestion that I sense not so much opposition to developing a consistent policy, yet a concern that we still make sure we are being consistent on some of these other matters. And given that we cannot move this immediately and we would have some time, and we're contemplating a meeting in January of this Management Commission, could we defer a decision until then, subject to further review? I'm just putting it out there.

Clerk.

CLERK: Mr. Speaker, I just want to say that that's a substantial effort to undertake that type of review, and we have a number of other significant pieces of work that we're working on just now. So resourcing that may be a bit of an issue until probably middle to late spring.

MR. SPEAKER: Okay.

Mr. Browne first.

MR. BROWNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I certainly have listened with interest to my colleague's thoughts on this matter. I think in the interest of consistency, I would support the matter before us in terms of severance and moving on that matter to be consistent with all

employees that are paid by the taxpayer of the province.

I certainly concur with my colleague to my right, but I did listen to Mr. Hutchings's point as well, and perhaps there are other issues pertaining to political staff, whether they are CAs or in our caucus offices, that are inconsistent with the practice of the public service or elsewhere.

Perhaps, we could move on this item that we have before us today and, to Ms. Michael's point, form some type of a working group over the next number of months, recognizing that the House is engaged in a number of other files that perhaps by the next General Assembly, that there could be a framework in place that would apply to the incoming political staff that are coming in after the next general election, where a review would have been done by that point that encompasses the benefits, the salaries, the pensions, whatever benefits they're entitled to and compare it to the public service to ensure that consistency is there and that people are being adequately treated and treated fairly.

But I think that we can move forward on this item.

MR. SPEAKER: Looking to the other Members – Mr. Hutchings.

MR. HUTCHINGS: I just make one comment to that, in respect to my colleague. There may be some people – a lot of these positions are filled by females and someone that spends a vast number of years and, by the next general assembly, some of those could lose their position. As I said, it's been brought to my attention. It's a huge concern with regard to medical benefits plans and not being entitled to that.

I would suggest that if we're going to look at this, we strike something to look it within the next couple of months and report back to the Management Commission. That would be my recommendation.

MR. SPEAKER: And how would you feel about moving on this?

MR. HUTCHINGS: Yeah, I could move on this, but again, I state that I think there's an issue here that we need to look at.

MS. MICHAEL: Mr. Speaker, I can't get what Mr. Hutchings is saying.

MR. SPEAKER: He basically felt that he could move with the adoption of this Executive Branch policy, but he would like to see Management Commission look at this other matter, particularly on the medical benefits, to ensure that this group of 65 is being treated consistently with others that are in this –

Ms. Coady.

MS. COADY: Thank you.

I think we have a motion before us. And while I may be supportive of other considerations, the motion before is on this and I would suggest that we move on this particular piece.

But then, as Mr. Hutchings has pointed out, there are other matters that we may need to also consider as we move forward.

MR. SPEAKER: Okay.

MS. COADY: I'm not suggesting that I'm not supportive of what he's saying, I'm just saying that I don't think it can be added to this motion.

MR. SPEAKER: All right, I'm just trying to read the room.

Do I have a seconder to the original motion by Ms. Coady?

MS. RUSSELL: We need to set an implementation date if we are going to vote on the first motion to adopt the Executive Branch policy – you'd need to set an implementation date, an exact date, so we suggested –

MR. SPEAKER: I thought I heard from staff, though, you weren't sure whether it could be the end of January or the end of February, or do you have a date now?

MS. RUSSELL: Because without that we –

CLERK: When we talked to Dana before –

MS. COADY: We can say February 1 subject to –

CLERK: January 31.

MS. COADY: January 31?

CLERK: And if there's an issue with that, we will come back to the Management Commission.

MS. COADY: Okay.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Got to meet in January, though.

MS. COADY: Yeah.

MR. SPEAKER: We will be.

CLERK: Yeah.

MR. SPEAKER: Okay, let me read the motion again, then, and I'll make sure that I have a mover.

The Commission adopts the direction of the Executive Branch with respect to the extinguishment of severance entitlements and implementation of a termination benefit for political support staff, with an implementation date of 31 January, 2019.

Moved by Ms. Coady, seconded by Mr. Browne.

Further discussion?

All in favour of the motion?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Against?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Nay.

MR. SPEAKER: Okay, we have a majority in support.

So the motion is carried.

I would like to go back to Mr. Hutchings's point in terms of an action or a decision. I would like to record, for the record, the point to bring to this Commission's attention that we will undertake to do a review of these other matters

of consistency, as applied to this group of 65, to ensure they are being treated the same.

MS. RUSSELL: There was some talk of establishing a working group. Is that the intention of Commission Members, or is it just the –?

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Browne.

MR. BROWNE: I think it would be helpful to do a comprehensive review of everything with respect to political staff.

I'm certainly amenable to my colleague, Mr. Hutchings's suggestion, that it be done sooner than the next General Assembly; I'm fine with that. I just think that it hasn't been done in some time, there are obviously some inconsistencies as Mr. Hutchings has raised it, so I think it would be helpful to have a comprehensive review of all the issues pertaining to the political support staff in both our consistency offices as well as the caucus offices.

MR. SPEAKER: Okay. I describe that as a motion that the Management Commission will undertake to do a comprehensive review of this group, political staff versus other political staff, and will bring it back to this Table.

MS. RUSSELL: So in terms of comprehensive review, the intention would be salary and benefits. So everything?

MR. SPEAKER: Yes, I'm seeing agreement.

MS. RUSSELL: So political support staff in the Legislature only. That's the group we're talking about. So it would be –

MR. SPEAKER: This group of 65.

MS. RUSSELL: – constituency assistants –

CLERK: And caucus staff.

MS. RUSSELL: – and caucus staff.

MR. SPEAKER: And caucus staff.

MS. RUSSELL: Okay.

MR. SPEAKER: Okay.

So I take that you'll be a mover of that motion, Mr. Browne.

Do I have a seconder for that?

MR. HUTCHINGS: Seconded.

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Hutchings.

All in favour of this comprehensive review?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Okay. I see support.

Thank you very much.

A further smaller item that came in late –

CLERK: Yesterday.

MR. SPEAKER: – yesterday, as a matter of fact. And this is from one of the Members. Basically, there is approval. The provision by the Clerk of the House of Assembly to approve the purchase of furniture and equipment up to a maximum of \$1,000. As it turned out, the way the invoice was submitted it came in at \$1,512 for a combination of tables and chairs.

If it had been broken up by chairs and by tables, it would have complied with the criterion; however, it did exceed. So we do need approval of the Commission. This is regarding the consistency office for the Member for Lewisporte - Twillingate.

MHA Coady; I'm sorry.

MS. COADY: Thank you.

I'm just reviewing this. Was there any clarification sought by the Member before – I'm just looking for consistency on how we deal with these things. This is over the maximum amount of \$1,000. Was there permission sought prior to the incursion of the expense?

CLERK: What happened was the requisition was issued as appropriate. And they went and got the three quotes, and it wasn't picked up that it was over the amount.

As the Speaker had said, if the chairs had been on one requisition and the tables on another, they would have fit within my authority. The items have actually been delivered to the Member's office but we have given instruction not to unpack anything because we're not authorized and we will not be able to pay the invoice unless the Management Commission approves it. So we'd have to return or repurpose those items without approval.

MR. CROSBIE: If there were two invoices we wouldn't be looking at this.

CLERK: Exactly.

MR. SPEAKER: That's right.

MR. CROSBIE: So it's just housekeeping.

MR. SPEAKER: It is.

CLERK: It is. I mean, it's –

MS. MICHAEL: I have a question. It sounds like the Member is setting up space for leaving. Is there any intention that the tables and chairs (inaudible) purchase and that would replace the Member looking for space for meetings, small meetings?

CLERK: Correct. As it happens, that particular constituency office is in government-owned space. So there is actually room to have meetings in the constituency office. A number of Members have come and looked for tables and chairs for their offices where the space permits them to have those meetings in their offices, and we have approved them.

MS. MICHAEL: Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: I have a proposed motion for the floor.

The Commission approves payment of the invoice in the amount of \$1,512 for the constituency office for the Member for Lewisporte - Twillingate.

Do I have a mover for that motion?

Moved by Mr. Browne; seconded by Mr. Crosbie.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Against?

Let the record show we'll direct the Member for Lewisporte - Twillingate to unpack his boxes.

Any final remarks from the Commission?

I would like to thank you all for your attendance and support. We had a busy year. I feel much has been accomplished. I appreciate all of your support and attention. It's importance that in our time, we come here and everyone's ready. I also, therefore, need to thank the staff for all the great work they do to keep us well armed with much detail and much information so we can make these decisions.

Seeing no further comment, I look for a mover to adjourn.

Moved by Mr. Hutchings; seconded by Mr. Browne.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

Thank you, Ms. Michael.

This Management Commission is now adjourned

On motion, meeting adjourned.