

HANSARD

NOVA SCOTIA HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY MANAGEMENT COMMISSION

Tuesday, January 23, 2018

Committee Room

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HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY MANAGEMENT COMMISSION

Hon. Kevin Murphy (Chairman)
Hon. Geoff MacLellan
Hon. Labi Kousoulis
Mr. Gordon Wilson
Mr. Chuck Porter
Hon. Christopher d'Entremont
Mr. Tim Halman
Hon. David Wilson
Mr. Neil Ferguson, Chief Clerk of the House of Assembly
(Non-Voting Member)

In Attendance:

Speaker's Office Adviser
Ms. Deborah Lusby
Director of Administration
Office of the Speaker

Ms. Annette Boucher
Assistant Clerk
House of Assembly

Mr. Gordon Hebb
Chief Legislative Counsel



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

HALIFAX, TUESDAY, JANUARY 23, 2018

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY MANAGEMENT COMMISSION

5:04 P.M.

CHAIRMAN
Hon. Kevin Murphy

MR. CHAIRMAN: We will now move right into the next meeting, which is the regular meeting of the House of Assembly Management Commission. For purposes of the record, the people around the table are the same as the previous meeting. Again, the materials and the agenda were circulated in advance.

We will move on to Item 1, which is the approval of the December 12, 2017, minutes. Mr. Ferguson.

MR. NEIL FERGUSON: Mr. Chairman, the minutes have been circulated. I read them, and I didn't note any errors or omissions, so I guess a motion to accept the minutes would be in order.

MR. CHUCK PORTER: So moved.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Moved by Mr. Porter, and seconded by Mr. Halman. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

Item 2 is to appoint the Auditor General for 2017-18. Mr. Ferguson.

MR. FERGUSON: The Management Commission Audit Committee has passed a motion recommending that the Auditor General be appointed as the auditor for the House of Assembly Management Commission for the 2017-18 audit. It didn't get done previously, so we just need to cross our t's and dot our i's and make sure that the Auditor General has the authority to do the audit that they're doing. So a motion to appoint the Auditor General as our auditor for 2017-18 is in order.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Moved by Mr. Kousoulis, seconded by Mr. d'Entremont. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

Item No. 3 is the House of Assembly Management Commission Annual Report for 2017. Ms. Boucher.

MS. ANNETTE BOUCHER: In the packages the Annual Report for the calendar year 2017 was enclosed for your review. It's in the same manner that we've done it in the past years, it sets the legislative framework, the activities of the Audit Committee and the activities of the House of Assembly Management Commission.

If it's adopted by this group then you direct the Speaker to table it in the House the next time the House sits, in accordance with the Statute.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any questions? We need a motion to accept the annual report.

Moved by Mr. MacLellan, seconded by Mr. David Wilson. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

We'll move on to Item No. 4, the Management Commission Audit Committee Annual Report for 2017. Ms. Lusby.

MS. DEBORAH LUSBY: I just wanted to mention that the report you have in front of you has been updated to include minutes from the January 17, 2017 meeting. It was omitted from the version that was circulated. That's it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay, any questions? We'll have a motion to accept it, please. Moved by Mr. d'Entremont, seconded by Mr. Kousoulis. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

Item No. 5 is the 2017-18 Third Quarter Financials for the House of Assembly. Ms. Lusby.

MS. LUSBY: This quarterly report has been updated to include the budget that was approved in late September 2017 and also has forecast adjustments that weren't included in the second quarter report. I'll just highlight a couple there that are underlined on the report that you have; that for the PC caucus and NDP caucus their amounts were changed, based on the election in 2017, pro-rated based on the change in the number of members. Other than that, everything is under budget actually, which would be a 75 per cent spend as of the third quarter.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any questions? Hearing no questions, can I have a motion to accept the Third Quarter Financials as presented? Moved by Mr. Gordon Wilson, seconded by Mr. Tim Halman. Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried.

That concludes the business of the Management Commission. Thank you very much for attending. Mr. David Wilson.

HON. DAVID WILSON: I don't know procedure-wise how to get something on the agenda but I'll just state it now. In light of more recent situations not only here in the province but around the globe on maternity leave for elected officials, how do we go about looking at a potential standing policy for members of the House who might find themselves pregnant? Currently the situation is that if a female member wants to take time out of the legislative session that permission has to be granted by the Speaker.

I would think that in this day and age there could be a standard policy that would address that, that shouldn't really need to happen. I'm not saying we need to address it today but I think that we need to address it.

I know in the Legislature there's a piece of legislation dealing with municipal elected officials that the government is looking at, which we applaud, but I think in our own House there could be a standard policy that you, Mr. Speaker, shouldn't have to rule over a female member who is pregnant who might need time off. I don't know how that gets on our agenda or how do we come back and address it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Ms. Lusby.

MS. LUSBY: I'm happy to do some homework and jurisdictional scans to see what's happening in other provinces. Someone can tell me how we want to discuss it - a working group or a smaller group committee to talk about it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Gordon Wilson.

MR. GORDON WILSON: I believe the new term is parental leave and it doesn't just define females as the members who would get advantage of that.

MR. DAVID WILSON: I agree 100 per cent. That's why I'm very careful.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Do we want to set that up now or let a little homework be done first? Mr. David Wilson.

MR. DAVID WILSON: I'm hoping that it's not just for this committee. I mean, as the representative for my caucus, I have five female members who would bring a lot more to the table than I would, so if we are allowed to designate maybe a member from our caucus to sit, as we did for the harassment policy, right?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Sure, a great suggestion. What do we need to do now? Mr. Kousoulis.

MR. LABI KOUSOULIS: For clarification, as Deborah looks into this, I think there's two scans to do. One would be if a member is, let's say, having the baby or just had their baby while there is a legislative sitting, and that would be the Speaker excusing that member and what other provinces do. I think the next part of it is a broader look at whether any other provinces have a policy just around paternity leave in general.

I think there are two issues here at play. One is general paternity leave, the other one is - because I think Mr. Wilson was questioning - the Speaker has, let's say, authority over leaves from the House but should the Speaker have authority over paternity leave from the House or is it that some of it should almost be automatic? I think any Speaker in this country would never tell someone they had to be in the House when they were about to have a child. I believe Brendan had his baby while the Legislature was sitting and I think he was granted a week or two of parental leave, so I think that would be the norm. I'm not worried about that but as long as we're looking into it, we might as well look into both areas.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Sure. Would it be a fair approach to let Deborah do a little bit of homework and then when we come back for the next meeting, have an update. The update could be that you haven't had time to look into it, which is fair. We'll deal with it at a future meeting.

MR. D'ENTREMONT: The next full meeting.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Sure. Very good, thank you very much. The meeting is adjourned.

[The commission adjourned at 5:13 p.m.]