



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

The 31st Legislature
First Session

Select Special
Ethics Commissioner and Chief Electoral Officer
Search Committee

Friday, October 25, 2024
1 p.m.

Transcript No. 31-1-11

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta
The 31st Legislature
First Session**

Select Special Ethics Commissioner and Chief Electoral Officer Search Committee

Getson, Shane C., Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland (UC), Chair
van Dijken, Glenn, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock (UC), Deputy Chair

Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (NDP)
Hunter, Grant R., Taber-Warner (UC)
Irwin, Janis, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (NDP)
Petrovic, Chelsae, Livingstone-Macleod (UC)
Rowswell, Garth, Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright (UC)
Sabir, Irfan, Calgary-Bhullar-McCall (NDP)
Wiebe, Ron, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (UC)
Wright, Peggy K., Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (NDP)

Public Service Commission Participants

Julie Barron	Executive Search Consultant, Executive Search
Trish Mills	Director, Executive Search

Support Staff

Shannon Dean, KC	Clerk
Trafton Koenig	Law Clerk
Philip Massolin	Clerk Assistant and Executive Director of Parliamentary Services
Nancy Robert	Clerk of <i>Journals</i> and Committees
Abdul Bhurgri	Research Officer
Rachel McGraw	Research Officer
Warren Huffman	Committee Clerk
Jody Rempel	Committee Clerk
Aaron Roth	Committee Clerk
Rhonda Sorensen	Manager of Corporate Communications
Christina Steenbergen	Supervisor of Communications Services
Lyndsay Tischer	Director of Human Resources
Amanda LeBlanc	Managing Editor of <i>Alberta Hansard</i>

1 p.m.

Friday, October 25, 2024

[Mr. Getson in the chair]

The Chair: All right. All aboard who's coming aboard. I'd like to call the meeting to order. I'd like to welcome all members, staff, guests at the meeting of the Select Special Ethics Commissioner and Chief Electoral Officer Search Committee. I'm Shane Getson, MLA for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland, chair of the committee. I'd like to ask the members to introduce themselves, in the room first, as well as those at the table, and then we'll switch over to those that are participating online. I'd also like to note that there are no substitutions for today, so it's this team and nothing but. Starting with introductions over to my right.

Mr. Rowswell: Garth Rowswell, MLA, Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright.

Mr. Sabir: Irfan Sabir, MLA, Calgary-Bhullar-McCall.

Member Irwin: Janis Irwin, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Mr. Dach: Good afternoon. Lorne Dach, MLA for Edmonton-McClung.

Ms Barron: Julie Barron, executive search.

Ms Mills: Trish Mills, executive search.

Ms Rempel: Jody Rempel, committee clerk.

The Chair: Perfect. We'll go online. I see MLA Wright.

Ms Wright: Thank you. Peggy Wright, MLA, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

The Chair: I see MLA Petrovic.

Mrs. Petrovic: Hi. Chelsae Petrovic, MLA, Livingstone-Macleod.

The Chair: I see MLA Wiebe.

Mr. Wiebe: Ron Wiebe, MLA, Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

The Chair: I see MLA van Dijken.

Mr. van Dijken: Glenn van Dijken, MLA, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock.

The Chair: And I see MLA Hunter.

Mr. Hunter: Grant Hunter, MLA, Taber-Warner.

The Chair: Perfect. A few housekeeping items before we turn to the business at hand. Of course, the microphones are operated by *Hansard*, so members don't have to turn them on and off. Committee meetings are being live streamed on the Internet and broadcast on Alberta Assembly TV. Members participating remotely should ensure they're prepared to speak and vote when called upon, and videoconference participants are encouraged to have their cameras on, if possible, when speaking. Please set your cellphones to the least disturbing setting that you have while the meeting is taking place.

With that, I would like to see if someone would like to make a motion to adopt the agenda. I see MLA Irwin.

Do we have to put it on the screen?

Ms Rempel: No.

The Chair: Okay. Perfect.

All in favour in the room? Opposed? Online, all those in favour? Any opposed? Motion carried.

Draft minutes. We have draft minutes from the last two meetings that were distributed and will need to be addressed individually. So could I get a motion to approve the minutes from September 4? I see MLA Rowswell. All those in favour? Any opposed? Online, all in favour? Any opposed? Motion carried.

Now we're going to move to September 25. Same thing; approve the minutes of the meeting from September 25. MLA Rowswell. All in favour in the room? Any opposed? We'll go online. All those in favour, please say aye. Any opposed? None. Motion carried.

Now we're at the Chief Electoral Officer position. We have some updates, deliberations, and next steps. To protect the privacy of the applicants, it would be appropriate to continue in camera before discussing any of the personal information. Could I have a motion to do so, please? MLA Rowswell.

Mr. Rowswell: I move a motion to move in camera.

The Chair: Okay. All those in favour, please say aye. Any opposed? Online, all those in favour? Any opposed? Motion carried.

With that, we're going to have to clear the room, including *Hansard*. We'll have to run the microphones ourselves while we're in that portion.

[The committee met in camera from 1:04 p.m. to 1:36 p.m.]

The Chair: All right. We're back on record. Thank you, everybody. We're just back in from being in camera.

There were some recommendations in there to move to the next level. Are there any motions at hand to move with recommending that we go ahead with the electoral officer?

Mr. Sabir: If I may, Chair?

The Chair: Sure. Go ahead, MLA Irfan.

Mr. Sabir: At this time I would like to move a motion. I believe that notice was provided to the committee and copies provided to the committee clerk. If you want, you can put it on the screen for other members to see.

The Chair: I'll just put it up onscreen there. And, yes, it did meet all the requirements for notification.

Mr. Sabir: Yeah. So the motion reads that

the Select Special Ethics Commissioner and Chief Electoral Officer Search Committee (a) commence a new round of recruitment for the Chief Electoral Officer position and (b) direct Legislative Assembly Office staff to prepare recruitment strategies for consideration at the next committee meeting.

I will take a little bit of time to explain the rationale and reasoning behind this motion. We can all agree that the Chief Electoral Officer position is an incredibly important position in this province for our democracy, for the institution of democracy to function properly, and Albertans should have full trust and confidence in this office and the person in charge of our elections and democracy. I'm speaking for myself and, I'm sure, for my colleagues that we do not believe that in the preceding round we have found a candidate who is sufficiently qualified for this role. That is why we need to have another round of recruiting, and we need to do everything we can to find a person that can do this job. I hope that all my colleagues will take this motion seriously to ensure that Alberta elections are

well run and Albertans can trust the person running this important office. With that, I move this motion.

The Chair: Okay. With that, is there any further discussion, or would we like to go right to the vote?

Mr. Dach: I wouldn't mind getting on the record on this, Mr. Chair. I would suggest to all committee members that all the candidates were shallow-end swimmers, that this is a deep-end position. It's not a track meet; it's the Olympics, and we need highly qualified people to consider for the position. We do no favours to the candidate who ultimately gets appointed by appointing someone who will be in over their head. We disrespect our mandate and the trust placed in us as legislators to choose an absolutely qualified candidate. We risk losing Albertans' trust and confidence in the legitimacy of our electoral system, in a time when democracies globally are under attack, by appointing an unqualified candidate. We do no favours to the process. I'm deeply disappointed that so far we have not been able to come up with a candidate that, I believe, is qualified for the position, and that is why I fully support the motion to start the process over again. I honestly believe that ultimately there will be a qualified candidate surface for us to choose from that will meet the requirements of the position.

The Chair: Any others wishing to speak? Okay. We may as well go through the whole crew on one side. Go ahead, MLA – well, actually, we'll go to the phones here, so MLA Wright has a chance. She got my attention there.

Ms Wright: Thank you so much, Chair. I really do just want to echo my colleagues' concerns and really start with the people who are in the centre of all of this, and it really is all of the people of Alberta. As my colleagues have talked about, you know, we are certainly in interesting times and we do need someone with a whole lot of depth. We need someone who can shepherd us through these difficult times, making sure that every single election we have, no matter the type of election it might be, whether it's a general election, a by-election, or perhaps a referendum, is really able to not only shepherd us as voters through that more than adequately but to such a high standard. We need to have someone who's able to withstand that high standard, to withstand all the questions, and not only that but has got the scope, the depth, and the breadth to be able to do this job successfully. One of my concerns is that I certainly do not want anyone to fail in this incredibly important position for all of Albertans.

With that, I'll end my remarks. Yes. There you go.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.

MLA Irwin, do you want to round out the ...

Member Irwin: I sure do.

The Chair: I believe there was ...

Member Irwin: I think I was prior anyways.

The Chair: Yep. Go ahead.

Member Irwin: Thank you so much. Yeah. I also want to get on the record. I mean, admittedly, I don't have a whole lot more to add after my colleagues, but, you know, we've made it clear, and I believe everybody on this committee shares the belief in this position being an incredibly important one for Albertans. It might not be as shiny as some other roles in our government, but this is one that absolutely requires somebody who is extremely qualified. If I'm asked by my constituents or by Albertans, "What made this

candidate qualified?" I'm not sure I could defend that, and I really don't think any of us can. So I, too, would like to put it on the record that I support MLA Sabir's motion that requires we do another round of recruiting and do all that we can to find somebody who is well equipped to take on this position and to take on an essential role in Alberta democracy today and in the future.

Thank you.

The Chair: Perfect. Thank you.

I see MLA Hunter.

Mr. Hunter: Yeah, Mr. Chair. I just wanted to get on the record as well by saying that this motion, if I understand correctly, would put us in a position in Alberta where we would not have a Chief Electoral Officer, because the current officer cannot go past November 27. So what would happen if we would go forward with this motion is that we would not have a Chief Electoral Officer, an acting one or a Chief Electoral Officer. I find this completely disrespectful to Albertans, that the NDP would be willing to put Albertans in this position, so I am going to be voting against this.

The Chair: Any other to offer, that hadn't already spoken? All right. Let's wrap this up.

Mr. van Dijken: If I may, Chair? I'd like to be on the record as well.

The Chair: Yeah. Go ahead, MLA van Dijken.

Mr. van Dijken: Okay. Thank you. Contrary to what some of the opposition members have said, I believe we've had qualified candidates who have interviewed well and should be considered for the role, and I believe that we have qualified candidates on the docket. I really think there's no need to start a new round of recruitment. This is already our second round, and I think it's time that we continue to move forward. The candidates that we have been able to interview bring qualifications with extensive experience where they can fulfill the role of the Chief Electoral Officer.

Thank you.

1:45

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.

With that, I'm prepared to call the question. All those in favour of the motion currently on hand in the room, please say aye. All those opposed? We'll go online. All those in favour of the motion online, please say aye. Okay. All of those opposed to the current motion at hand, please say aye. That works, too. All right.

Motion defeated.

Mr. Sabir: Let's have a recorded vote, I think.

The Chair: You want a recorded vote? Sure.

With that, we'll turn it over to the recorded vote. The clerk will take care of this in the room here for us, and we'll just walk through that. Those in favour of the motion in the room, please indicate so by raising your hand.

Ms Rempel: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I see the hon. Mr. Sabir, I see Member Irwin, and I see Mr. Dach.

The Chair: And those opposed in the room, please raise your hand.

Ms Rempel: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I see Mr. Rowsell.

The Chair: And online. Turn your cameras on, please. If you're in favour, please raise your hand, online, and turn your cameras on, please, so we're not counting on a keystroke.

Ms Rempel: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I see Ms Wright.

The Chair: Excellent. And those opposed online, please turn your cameras on and raise your hand.

Ms Rempel: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I see Mr. Wiebe, Mr. van Dijken, Mrs. Petrovic, and the hon. Mr. Hunter.

Mr. Chair, I have five votes against the motion and four in favour.

The Chair: Okay.

Motion defeated.

Do we have any other business at hand to be discussed? Okay.

Hearing none, the next item. It will be that we'll have a meeting on the 30th to review the results.

Then, with that, do we have a motion to adjourn? That would be the next step from there. Moved. In favour? Opposed? I'll try this again. We're going to adjourn. All those in favour, please say aye. Any opposed?

Thanks, folks.

[The committee adjourned at 1:48 p.m.]

