Legislative Assembly of Alberta

The 31st Legislature
First Session

Standing Committee
on
Families and Communities

Public Sector Compensation Transparency Act Review

Monday, May 13, 2024
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First Session

Standing Committee on Families and Communities

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Standing Committee on Families and Communities

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Alex Rayner, Executive Director, Talent Acquisition, Classification and Compensation Services
Avy Wolf, Acting Executive Director, Public Agency Secretariat

9 a.m. **Monday, May 13, 2024**

[Ms Lovely in the chair]

The Chair: Good morning, everyone. I'd like to welcome members, staff, and guests to this meeting of the Standing Committee on Families and Communities.

My name is Jackie Lovely, MLA for the constituency of Camrose and chair of this committee. I'd ask that members and those joining the committee at the table introduce themselves for the record, starting to my right.

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

Mr. Lunty: Good morning, everyone. Brandon Lunty, MLA, Leduc-Beaumont.

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

Mr. Singh: Good morning, everyone. Peter Singh, MLA, Calgary-East.

Mr. Long: Martin Long, the MLA for West Yellowhead.

Mr. Ammann: Mark Ammann, barrister and solicitor for Alberta Justice.

Ms Moncrieff: Jackie Moncrieff, director of compensation and service delivery with the Public Service Commission.

Mr. Rayner: Alex Rayner. I'm the executive director of talent acquisition, classification, and compensation services with the Public Service Commission.

Ms Wolf: Avy Wolf. I'm acting executive director of the Public Agency Secretariat with the Public Service Commission.

Ms Latham: Good morning. Susan Latham. I'm a policy adviser with the Public Service Commission.

Member Batten: Diana Batten, MLA, Calgary-Acadia. Good morning.

Dr. Metz: Luanne Metz, MLA, Calgary-Varsity. Good morning.

Ms Goehring: Good morning. Nicole Goehring, MLA for Edmonton-Castle Downs and deputy chair of this committee.

Ms Steenbergen: Good morning. Christina Steenbergen, LAO communications.

Ms Govindarajan: Vani Govindarajan, Parliamentary Counsel.

Mr. Bhurgri: Good morning. Abdul Aziz Bhurgri, research officer.

Ms Robert: Good morning. Nancy Robert, clerk of *Journals* and committees.

Ms Rempel: Good morning. Jody Rempel, committee clerk.

The Chair: For the record I'd like to note the following substitution. Rowswell has substituted for Boitchenko.

A few housekeeping items before we turn to the business at hand. Please note that the microphones are operated by *Hansard*, so members do not need to turn them on or off. Committee proceedings are being live streamed on the Internet and broadcast on Alberta Assembly TV. We do not have any members participating remotely. Please set your cellphones and other devices to silent for the duration of the meeting.

Has everyone reviewed the draft meeting agenda? Would anyone like to propose any amendments, or is there a member ready to move a motion to approve the agenda? Moved by Peter Singh. All in favour? All right. Carried.

Approval of the minutes from the previous meeting. Would anyone like to propose any amendments to the draft minutes, or would someone like to move a motion to approve the minutes? Ms Goehring. All in favour? Okay. Carried.

I'll begin by noting for the record that the written updates regarding website traffic and the crossjurisdictional comparison were provided in response to questions raised at our last meeting. These documents were received and provided to committee members two weeks ago. Does anyone require any clarification regarding either document? Go ahead.

Dr. Metz: I just have a question. I'm wondering about the web form. Does that mean that individuals first went to the website, the Families and Communities website, and then filled out the web form? Would they be counted in both counts?

The Chair: Let's have Christina address that, please.

Ms Steenbergen: Yeah. Thank you, Madam Chair. To answer that question, basically that many people clicked on the web form, not necessarily filled it out. They went to the main page. They may have clicked on the web form to see what it was and then either filled it out or left. We don't have the numbers right now to distinguish.

Dr. Metz: Okay. Along that line, then, 187 users engaged with the web form, and there were 29 that submitted. Would some of those people that engaged have been repeat engagers? Maybe they would count within the 29 and might have been repeatedly the same person?

Ms Steenbergen: That is definitely possible. I did not go that in depth. I don't actually know if our data tracking goes that in depth.

Dr. Metz: But that could happen.

Ms Steenbergen: It could definitely happen. You bet.

Dr. Metz: Okay. Then in April we got a communications summary that indicated that in January 2024, between the 2nd and the 30th, the committee page engagement was 1,317 page views and 632 users. Then these numbers up above are – I'm just trying to explain or understand the discrepancy. These numbers are a lot lower than that.

Ms Steenbergen: Sure. These numbers basically are just straight off our Google analytics. They don't necessarily draw in other numbers like X or Twitter, which included some of the engagements. These ones just reflect the numbers that went strictly to the main page that had the link on there.

In the other analytics that we did do, some of those could have incorporated people that went a little bit further in depth onto the page, if that makes sense, or, like, clicked around and saw the minutes, that kind of thing. Yeah. The analytics definitely aren't cut and dried. Again, we could do further digging if necessary, but this just captures kind of the higher level tracking.

Dr. Metz: Thank you. I mean, the purpose of my question is just to understand what that is, because we had decided this would be a no-cost engagement and just to see how effective it is for the future. We don't get a lot of engagement.

Ms Steenbergen: Yeah. That's fair. I guess, to clarify, if we did any boosting with this particular submission, you would see possibly higher reach, slightly more engagement, but there's no way to really know unless you go through and do the analytics on every single platform, which we can absolutely do. It's just that this captures a higher level average, so to speak.

Dr. Metz: Okay. Thank you very much.

Ms Steenbergen: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: The committee also requested an issues and proposals summary to be prepared for our consideration of the Public Sector Compensation Transparency Act. This is a document that compiles and summarizes the input received by the committee during the review process. The document itself does not make recommendations, nor is it intended to limit the scope of our deliberations. However, it is a convenient reference tool often used by committees to organize their deliberations.

Before I open the floor to questions, I'll ask Mr. Bhurgri to provide us with a brief overview of the document.

Mr. Bhurgri: Thank you very much, Chair. What I'm going to do is give a high-level overview of the issues and proposals document that we have prepared. The issues and proposals document is essentially a summary of all the proposals and issues that were brought forward to the committee either through written submissions or through oral submissions.

The document itself is divided into five main sections, and I'll briefly go through each of them. The first one is just the introduction. In the second section we talk a little bit about how the committee may use this document. It is entirely up to the committee to decide which issues they want to consider. If there are certain issues that the committee may wish to consider that are not mentioned within this document, it is entirely up to the committee.

The third section has the executive summary. There are seven sort of issues that we have divided that executive summary into. The first one is just about the disclosure reporting system generally, but after that we have tried to chronologically follow the act itself. The way that the act is sort of designed: we have tried following that sequence.

After that, section 4 and section 5 have all the issues and proposals that were essentially made. Section 4 goes through all of them, the seven sort of sections that we had decided on. I'm not going to go into detail on each one of them, but what I will do is explain the rationale behind the way we have divided it. You see that on page 3 of the issues and proposals document we have a table, and that table is divided into four columns. I'll just go through what the purpose of each column is.

In the first column we usually give an overview of what the main issue is, and in the second column we actually have the recommendation or the proposal itself. This would always include whichever entity or individual, be it either a member of the public or a stakeholder, has made that recommendation or proposal. The third column would then have the relevant section of the act. In this case, whatever section the proposal may relate to, that section is mentioned in the third column. The fourth column is the notes column. In this column in some cases we have expanded on the rationale behind the recommendation that was made. In other cases there may also be references made to the crossjurisdiction, again, where relevant for the committee. If there are a lot of rationales that were offered, we may also refer the committee to the summary of submissions that we prepared at research services or the original submission that was made, so the committee can look at all the detail.

9:10

The idea of the notes section, again, is just to provide relevant contextual information with regard to the proposal or the issue that was raised. These are the factors that may sort of be included. I'm not going to go into detail in terms of the content, but this is roughly how we have summarized the document.

If there are any questions, I'm more than happy to answer.

The Chair: All right. We'll pause for questions.

All right. Seeing none, we have another member joining us. Please introduce yourself for the record.

Member Tejada: Hello. MLA Lizette Tejada, Calgary-Klein.

The Chair: Thank you so much.

All right. Let's move along now to the deliberations and recommendations. This takes us into the final stages of our review of the Public Sector Compensation Transparency Act. I'll remind committee members that we began our review on December 4, and we have six months to complete our review of the act and report back to the Assembly. Considering our progress made to date, I think it is quite reasonable for this committee to plan to report back to the Assembly before session is scheduled to adjourn on May 30.

With that, I open the floor for discussions. I know we have a few motions on notice for potential consideration today. Who would like to start us off?

Mr. Lunty: I move that

> the Standing Committee on Families and Communities recommend that the types of benefits to be considered nonmonetary benefits for the purpose of the Public Sector Compensation Transparency Act be set out in or prescribed under that act.

The Chair: Thank you.

Moved by Brandon Lunty. Any discussion?

All right. All those in favour?

Member Batten: No, no. I'd like to speak to it, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Sure. Go ahead.

Member Batten: I guess the main deal here or my main concern is that setting kind of a prescribed list under the act does not allow – we've heard a lot from our stakeholders who have engaged that their individual companies have different requirements, different concerns about the list, et cetera, so a concern about having this prescribed in the act would therefore further limit and contribute to some concerns we've heard from our stakeholders.

The Chair: Okay. Is there any other discussion? Go ahead.

Mrs. Petrovic: Thank you, Chair. I think this recommendation is – honestly, it's based on the written submission of Justice and the Public Service Commission. In their written submission the PSC mentioned that one of the topics that continues to generate questions and possible confusions across the different agencies, boards, and commissions is what comprises nonmonetary benefits. I think that's where, if I may so say, my colleague is coming from on this.

The Chair: Go ahead.

Member Batten: Thank you for that. I would say, though, that this is nonmonetary that we're talking about. When we're talking about

– like, this entire statute is all about the monetary. Now we're moving to nonmonetary. I think that's pretty clear, what is nonmonetary – right? – so literally whatever is not money. I'm just not sure if this is required.

Mrs. Petrovic: It sets the same standards for everyone, and it's based on the feedback that we've already received.

Mr. Singh: The reason I support this motion here is that the term "non-monetary benefits," which is defined in section 1(i) of the act, could be further classified to avoid the many, many confusions people have.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

Dr. Metz: In the document already it says that for the government of Alberta employees it's the amount provided on behalf of an employee by the government of Alberta, and for public-sector bodies it's anything that is provided that is not required for taxation purposes. The value of these definitions is that they keep it broad rather than getting more defining. It's hard to imagine that this doesn't cover something. In the document that we received, the note was talking about liability, say, public-sector liability, but that isn't related to an individual; that's related to a fund. So it's unclear how that would come into the act when you're putting individual compensation out there.

The Chair: Anyone else?

All right. Well, let's vote on that. All those in favour? All those opposed? Okay.

That's carried.

Any other motions? Go ahead.

Mr. Long: Thank you, Chair. I move that

> the Standing Committee on Families and Communities recommend that the disclosure requirements in respect of employee severance as set out in section 2(3) of the Public Sector Compensation Transparency Act and section 2.1(3) of the public sector compensation transparency general regulation be repealed.

The Chair: All right. Any discussion?

Dr. Metz: This is a duplication. It will result in the severance being reported twice because it's already included, right?

Mr. Long: It's saying to repeal, correct? It's based on the written recommendation from AHS to combine the disclosure dates.

Dr. Metz: So this will make one disclosure date?

Mr. Long: Yes.

Dr. Metz: Okay. All right.

The Chair: All right. Any further discussion?

All right. Let's vote. All those in favour? Any opposed? Okay.

Carried.

Were there any further motions? Go ahead, Peter Singh.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Madam Chair. I would like to move a motion that

> (a) the Standing Committee on Families and Communities direct the Legislative Assembly Office to prepare a draft final report on the committee's review of the Public Sector Compensation Transparency Act and (b) authorize the chair to approve the report after members have had an opportunity to review and provide comments on the draft.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Okay. I think what we need to do is turn it over to Ms Robert to have maybe a quick overview if that's okay. I see members have some questions, but let's get some detail.

Ms Goehring: This is just – we're not there in the agenda yet. Perhaps that could just pause the motion, and we'll hear from you, and then we can go back to the motion.

The Chair: Sure. Yeah. Thank you.

Go ahead.

Ms Robert: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes. I think that once deliberations are over, that's when we would go to this. So if deliberations are over, then certainly I can talk about, like, what is normally included in the report. Is that what you'd like me to do?

The Chair: Yes.

Ms Robert: Yeah. Okay. Sure. If deliberations are over, what typically happens now is that a motion is moved, as Mr. Singh has done, to direct research services of the Legislative Assembly Office to draft a final report for the committee's consideration.

For the benefit of those members who are new to the Assembly and this is your first time sort of going through this, these reports will typically include an overview of everything the committee has done with respect to the review – when it has met, who it received submissions from, who it heard from orally, things like that – and then it will also include, of course, the recommendations that the committee has agreed to and any contextual information with respect to those recommendations. That's basically what these reports include. Once they're drafted, they are provided to the committee for its review, and the committee kind of takes it from there.

That's sort of a high-level overview of it. I'm happy to answer any questions if you have any.

Thanks.

The Chair: Thank you for the explanation.

I note that the wording for a standard motion which would facilitate the final stages of the review was provided along with the motion put on notice by committee members.

Is there any committee member – well, we've already heard the motion. Any further discussion?

9:20

Ms Goehring: Just to clarify, it's not in there, but will members of the committee be provided an e-mail draft? Is that how we're going to approve it?

Ms Rempel: Thank you, Madam Chair. Usually the mechanism that's used is the internal website, but, yes, once the report is drafted, it would be posted. We'd send you a quick note so that you know that it's there. Then, you know, there's a due date to kind of get some feedback, and then, hopefully, that wraps it up.

The Chair: Perfect. Thank you.

Is there any further discussion?

All right. We have a motion on the table. Let's vote. All those in favour? Any opposed?

Carried.

All right. Let's move along now to other business. Are there any other items for discussion under other business?

All right. Wow, this is a short meeting.

All right. The next meeting date will be at the call of the chair.

Would anyone like to move to adjourn? Martin Long moved to adjourn. All those in favour?

Ms Goehring: Before we adjourn, can I just ask that a poll be sent out as opposed to just the call of the chair, that members be polled for their availability?

The Chair: Absolutely.

Ms Goehring: Thank you.

The Chair: All right. All those in favour? All right. Meeting adjourned.

Thanks, everyone.

[The committee adjourned at 9:21 a.m.]

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