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WORKPLACE REVIEW - FINAL REPORT

Legislative Assembly of British Columbia

July 2020

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

The Legislative Assembly of British Columbia (hereinafter referred to as the Legislative Assembly) engaged ADR Education - an independent consulting firm with no affiliation or pre-existing relationship with the organization - to conduct a Workplace Review. The process was initiated by the Legislative Assembly Management Committee in response to a recommendation from the Speaker's report (released in January 2019) and was overseen by a working group comprised of three MLAs: Sonia Furstenau, Mary Polak and Janet Routledge. The two practitioners who conducted the Review are partners in ADR Education, Jess McNamara and Jamie Chicanot (The Reviewers). The Reviewers were supported by the Firm's Managing Associate, Mallorie Nicholson and Administrator, Miriam McNamara.

The Reviewers engaged directly with stakeholders – via voluntary, confidential facilitated interview-conversations - to support the development of workplace culture narratives. This included identifying and reflecting on perceived challenges and opportunities while being encouraged to contribute ideas towards the creation of a more functional (i.e. healthier) future-state for the Legislative Assembly. The objective was to learn about stakeholder perceptions regarding organizational health, culture, conflict, relational dynamics, and functionality.

All information gathered through the Workplace Review was treated as private and kept strictly confidential. The Reviewers ensured that all information received during the process was without attribution (i.e. names or other personal identifiers are not present in the data pool, or in this report). Audio recording was not used, and transcripts were not produced from the interview-conversations that took place during the course of the Workplace Review.

Review Process

The Review was initiated in September 2020 and included three phases:

- Phase 1 | Initial Design and Preliminary Scan (Completed November 2019)
- Phase 2 | Data Collection (Completed May 2020)
- Phase 3 | Assessment and Reporting (Completed July 2020)

Themes

Based on the feedback and perspectives generated from the interview-conversations, the Reviewers identified six main themes which they titled as:

1. Positive and Appreciative Reflections
2. Governance and Administration
3. Strategy and Vision

4. Employment Practices and Staff Development
5. Workplace Policies and Procedures
6. Hansard Services and its Employment Model

Recommendations

- Governance Gap Analysis** with an emphasis on reviewing/revising approaches to decision-making.
- Internal Communications Strategy** (i.e. plan) that engages all branches of the organization.
- Participatory Strategic Planning Process** for the entire organization.
- Workplace Policies and Procedures ‘virtual handbook’** (or some other easily accessible resource).
- Performance Appraisal System** for all employees (including senior management at the executive level).
- Professional Development Training Program** in the subjects of conflict resolution and leadership development.
- Team Building and Leadership Retreat** for senior management.
- Working-Group Committee** to explore ideas related to flexible working arrangements.
- Follow-up Review Process** (in approximately 9 – 12 months) to monitor and evaluate progress.

1. Introduction

The Legislative Assembly engaged ADR Education - an independent consulting firm with no affiliation or pre-existing relationship with the Legislative Assembly - to conduct a Workplace Review. The process was initiated by the Legislative Assembly Management Committee in response to a recommendation from the Speaker's report (released in January 2019) and was overseen by a working group comprised of three MLAs: Sonia Furstenau, Mary Polak and Janet Routledge. The two practitioners who conducted the Review were partner's in ADR Education, Jess McNamara and Jamie Chicanot (The Reviewers). The Reviewers were supported by the Firm's Managing Associate, Mallorie Nicholson and Administrator, Miriam McNamara.

ADR Education is a national conflict engagement and capacity development Firm that specializes in supporting organizational growth and improvement. The Firm's approach to conducting Workplace Reviews rests on the belief that learning about workplace culture and dynamics is best achieved by engaging stakeholders in storytelling. A Review is therefore a means to explore people's perceptions and experiences rather than evaluate or judge them. To bring about positive change to any working environment, it is essential that the stakeholders are the agents of that change. Hence, a Workplace Review should focus on discovering the ways people can inform and effectively participate in addressing the particular issues in their workplace. The objective is to identify what is positively contributing to workplace functionality and health, while also identifying problems (i.e. opportunities for change) and exploring ideas for addressing and resolving them.

The Reviewers would like to express their **sincere thanks and appreciation** to all those individuals who voluntarily took the time to meet and share their perspectives and insights. In total, roughly half of all current employees and a number of past employees participated in the Workplace Review. Your willingness to speak openly about your views and experiences is gratefully acknowledged. In addition, your continued commitment to improve your working environment and subsequent willingness to adapt to the use of different modalities for interview conversations during the COVID 19 pandemic is both acknowledged and appreciated.

2. Nature of the Review

The approach to this Workplace Review was informed by a spirit of curiosity and a desire to improve the Legislative Assembly's workplace environment. It was designed and conducted as an exploration of the organization's working culture ***from the perspectives of those who work in it***. It was not led or directed by the Legislative Assembly's management team and was not an investigation or fact-finding exercise of any kind. The Reviewers' job was not to critically determine the trustworthiness or factual accuracy of anything that was heard. On the contrary, the Reviewers were focused on capturing and reflecting the subjective experiences, feelings, and opinions of the Legislative Assembly's workplace community. Doing so enabled the creation of *workplace culture narratives* which illuminated important organizational dynamics, positive workplace qualities, challenges, and opportunities for progressive change.

The Reviewers engaged directly with stakeholders – on a voluntary basis via interview-conversations - to facilitate the telling of workplace culture narratives. This included identifying and reflecting on challenges and opportunities while being encouraged to contribute to the creation of a more functional (i.e. healthier) future-state. The objective was therefore to learn about organizational health, culture, relational dynamics, and functionality rather than determine fault or ascribe blame.

All information gathered through the Workplace Review was private and kept strictly confidential. The Reviewers ensured that all information received during the process was without attribution (i.e. names or other personal identifiers are not present in the data pool, or in this report). Audio recording was not used, and transcripts were not produced from the interview-conversations that took place during the course of the Workplace Review. This is in keeping with the primary objective of better understanding the contributing influences of workplace culture and functionality so they can be addressed and (if necessary) resolved or changed.

Given that this process was not an investigation nor was it intended to address specific workplace complaints, it is important to note that if anyone identified specific complaints or concerns relating to bullying, harassment, discrimination and/or other alleged breaches of Legislative Assembly policy, they were directed to Human Resources for advice and support. In addition, and predictably, during the interviews the Reviewers occasionally heard participants' opinions about particular conflicts involving their co-workers. The themes that emerged from these interviews are dependably included in this report, but the Reviewers did not include comments or make specific references about individual staff or managers.

3. Process Description

To accomplish the Review of the Legislative Assembly's workplace environment and culture, the following three-phase process was employed:

Phase 1 | Initial Design and Preliminary Scan

- Review policies, procedures, and legislation relevant to the Legislative Assembly's work environment.
- Engage, on a voluntary basis, leaders, employee groups, and relevant committees in facilitated interviews and/or focus group style meetings to identify areas of focus for the Review.
- Finalize approach and scope and obtain stakeholder buy-in for the process design.

Phase 2 | Data Collection and Narrative Development

- Facilitate departmental awareness/orientation meetings to explain the Workplace Review process and encourage participation from current and former staff.
- Collect data from participants through a variety of engagement methods. These included voluntary one-on-one interviews (on and off site), focus groups (organized by department), email submissions made directly to a dedicated and confidential email address. The objective was to achieve the widest possible participation (on a voluntary basis) among current and former employees.
- Develop a comprehensive ‘data set’ that reflects a diversity of Legislative Assembly staff lived experiences and cultural impressions/perceptions.

Phase 3 | Assessment and Reporting

- Conduct qualitative (and limited quantitative) analysis to identify recurring themes in the data (i.e. identifying common issues, perceptions, and workplace-culture narratives).
- Consider emerging themes against relevant policies and procedures.
- Draft a Final Report that is descriptive and thematic based on “what was heard”; highlighting organizational strengths, the main issues requiring action and improvement, and provides a set of recommendations for positive change.
- Publish and share the Report with stakeholders for their review and consideration.

4. About This Report

This report aims to be concise and descriptive. It was composed by considering and analyzing all the information shared during the data collection phase of the process. It frames the frequently raised perspectives of those interviewed and does not reflect isolated (i.e. infrequently mentioned) issues. Direct, unattributable quotes are included to help express and contextualize the meanings associated with the different themes. The quotes reflect similar-type statements that were heard frequently and are sufficiently general so as not to identify the person quoted.

In terms of the report format, first, a brief situational overview is provided to set the context for describing and analyzing the main themes. Next, each of the main issues is summarized and briefly analyzed. In these summaries, terms like “many”, “some”, “generally”, “most”, or “a vast majority” will be used. Such terms are intended to give the reader an approximation of how broadly or narrowly a view or opinion was shared. Finally, a set of procedural recommendations are provided to address the themes and are intended to inform the development of an action plan.

5. Situational Overview

Although this Workplace Review is focussed on the current state of the work environment at the Legislative Assembly, it is important to recognize that past practices and Leadership (related to governance and operational administration) have had a significant impact on present-day workplace dynamics and culture. Many people spoke about the way things were run in the past and described a workplace climate of fear, where people were afraid to speak out and did not feel secure in their jobs. Perceptions of unfair employment practices were expressed, specifically that people could be summarily dismissed seemingly without cause. Both current and former employees described situations where they perceived that decision-making was undertaken with little or no rationale, thereby creating uncertainty, suspicion and reducing trust.

“Back in the day we were all just following orders, we couldn’t stick our heads up. People would get fired.”

“It felt like you couldn’t ask questions. Things were decided and you just kept your head down and did what you were told.”

“Abuse of authority at the top creates a climate of fear.”

Notwithstanding the above, people generally reported remaining passionate about their jobs and committed to the work they were engaged in. Furthermore, despite the perceived dysfunction at “higher levels”, most people expressed still feeling a sense of pride working at the Legislative Assembly and valued the predominately positive interpersonal relationships they experienced in their jobs.

Thus, “the events of November 2018” were extremely difficult for people and most felt that the organization’s reputation was significantly tarnished as a result. Many were left feeling as if they were unfairly, “tarred with the same brush” and that public perception shifted dramatically, making them feel somewhat ashamed to be affiliated with the organization. Moreover, people reported that they were shocked and dismayed at what was being revealed and as a result, lost confidence in the Legislative Assembly as a whole.

The resulting investigations and reports have left some people feeling that confidentiality was breached and that they are being unfairly penalized for the actions of a few. All of this was compounded by a feeling of being “rudderless” without a permanent Clerk and Sergeant at Arms in place.

“We were left with the fall out; it was unfair that the actions of a few tainted the whole organization.”

“A couple of people at the top did bad things and it reflected poorly on everyone.”

“The events of the last year have been so hurtful because it is not who we are.”

“We were all tarred with the same brush”

There remains what might be described as a “hangover” effect from past experiences in the Legislative Assembly which causes some to remain suspicious and a little fearful. However, as reflected below, there is broad recognition that things are improving, and that recovery and repair is effectively underway. Hence, many people expressed optimism and hopefulness about the direction of the institution and are excited about its future. Furthermore, many people commented on the resiliency and fortitude of the organization and its staff given how effectively they have “weathered the storm” resulting from “the events of November 2018”.

6. Themes

This section summarizes the main themes consistently identified by most Workplace Review participants. They represent the main subjects, issues and cultural dynamics revealed during data collection and analysis. The information was drawn out of the participant’s workplace culture narratives and consist of people’s thoughts, feelings, perceptions, and impressions and are not a statement of fact. Based on the feedback received and what the Reviewers heard, the following six themes were identified:

1. **Positive and Appreciative Reflections**
2. **Governance and Administration**
3. **Strategy and Vision**
4. **Employment Practices and Staff Development**
5. **Workplace Policies and Procedures**
6. **Hansard Services and its Auxiliary Employment Model**

(*Note to reader: Although theme #6 relates to one particular Branch of the Legislative Assembly, it is being included in this report due to the widespread participation of employees from that Branch).

The Reviewer’s compiled and considered the thematic observations and impressions provided to them and generated descriptions about what they mean to those who spoke about them. As mentioned, direct, un-attributable quotes are included for substantiation, and to demonstrate the meanings and implications associated with each theme. The quotes represent similar statements that were heard frequently and are sufficiently general that they could reasonably have been said by anyone who was interviewed.

1. Positive and Appreciative Reflections

The vast majority of interviewees expressed appreciation, gratitude, and positivity about their workplace. Most people experience a generally supportive, collegial, respectful, and cooperative day-to-day working environment and culture at the Legislative Assembly. Many expressed feeling a sense of pride and principled belief in the overarching “public service” mission of the organization; including its historicity and the essential role it plays in supporting democratic government in British Columbia. Overall, interpersonal relations and dynamics are considered to be professional, responsive, courteous, and constructive. Most people regard their colleagues and co-workers as well-intentioned, honest, dedicated, and hard-working. There is appreciation for the familial and friendly dynamics that feature in many workplace relationships.

When asked about the specific features that people enjoy and value about the working conditions (and organizational culture) of the Legislative Assembly, they consistently identified:

- Access to good pay and benefits
- Strong, compassionate, and dedicated senior leadership (currently in place)
- Availability of professional development and learning opportunities
- Experiencing respectful, courteous, and cooperative interpersonal relations/interactions
- Feeling proud and gratified to be engaged in meaningful (i.e. purposeful) work

“I’m fortunate to be paid well and have job security... it’s generally a happy place to work.”

“Best job I’ve ever had!”

“Very proud to work here – it’s been a very fulfilling and rewarding career with great people.”

Notwithstanding the significant impacts and unsettling effects surrounding “the events of November 2018”, most staff expressed that they remain committed, hopeful, engaged, and grateful for their working conditions and circumstances. There is an increasing sense of optimism that things are improving, and that the organization is heading in the right direction. In sum, the positivity and appreciative qualities consistently identified include: the experience of mostly collegial and respectful relations, capable senior leadership, engaging in meaningful service work, and being well resourced with regards to pay, benefits and professional development opportunities.

“It is a great place to work. People are kind, friendly, supportive and proud of what they do.”

“People are caring, welcoming and inclusive. When pets die, people acknowledge it.”

“People are great, they talk to each other and they care for each other.”

2. Governance and Administration

This is a fairly broad-ranging theme. It includes features such as the organizational structure and hierarchy, the composition and functionality of reporting relationships, decision-making processes and methodologies, mechanisms for task and duty delegation, and the overarching managerial dynamic administered by the Clerk's Office.

The primary concern most consistently identified is a perception that too much power and managerial oversight is concentrated in the Clerk's Office. The impact of the perception that, "all lanes lead to the Clerk's Office" creates a perceived decision-making "bottle-neck" that contributes to delays, inefficiencies and can have a disempowering impact when people feel they are not trusted to exercise their authority and leadership. Many people expressed a concern that the disempowering effect was leading to lethargy and disengagement.

"It is a sense that we aren't trusted to do our work. Branches should and can be trusted to do the work. We are the experts."

"It feels like our expertise isn't acknowledged and it makes people give up. Why put a bunch of work into something when it's going to be stalled or torn apart?"

"It's very frustrating, we are the professionals. We know the job, that's why we were hired, we need that to be acknowledged and respected."

One of the more common refrains regarding how people experience the governance and administrative dynamic of concentrated power and decision-making is the notion of feeling "micro-managed"; whereby work products are heavily scrutinized for the purpose of approval. Adding to this challenge is a common perception that there is not a clear, consistent, and transparent decision-making framework and methodology. The development/design of a renovated (i.e. modernized with best practices) governance system and associated decision-making framework is generally regarded as an important contributor to the organization's continued growth and maturity.

"It's highly reactive and tightly managed... needs to be more delegation and trust in others."

"Decision-making is a huge issue. There's no structure in place which is frustrating."

Many employees consistently identified what they perceive to be the existence of "silos" within the organization, that although not necessarily deliberate by design, can reduce opportunities for inter-branch collaboration, communication, and engagement. While the experience of "silos" within the organization was consistently reported, people recognize that efforts have been made to address this dynamic through the creation of working groups and other all-staff engagement activities.

“We don’t know what each other does. It would be so good to be able to shadow and see what others do”.

“We are starting to do cross branch work but we still don’t understand others’ jobs.”

“There are so many branches that do totally different things. It is still siloed but people are much more willing to work together and when we reach out to other branches, we are getting a “Yes”.”

Furthermore, the perceived absence of a clear and well understood strategic plan contributes to decision-making challenges. People frequently spoke about the need for a coherent vision for the whole organization; one that helps guide decision-making by prioritizing requests and having a clear methodology or framework for moving initiatives forward.

“We need to think strategically as well as operationally.”

Many employees feel that there needs to be greater clarity and transparency with respect to what decisions are made by whom, and under what conditions and circumstances. This observation relates to a perceived concern that managers and leaders may not feel sufficiently empowered (and trusted) to exercise decision-making authority without having to go through a time-consuming review and approval process. This dynamic can contribute to a perception of people not feeling valued and acknowledged for their skills and expertise when they experience not being able to “make the call” and implement a decision. Hence, several people spoke about the importance of establishing a more delegated decision-making approach (i.e. matrix) that enables decision-making to occur at the appropriate level. Beyond the more structurally specific aspects of the current governance and administrative system, the decision-making methodology itself is generally regarded as needing revision and renovation. Some interviewees pointed out what they perceive to be gaps in the skills necessary for effective decision-making (e.g. communicating in conflict, practicing effective time-management, addressing power dynamics, and applying procedural support in group discussions etc.).

“Decision-making needs work. Meetings don’t usually result in clear outcomes and direction; sometimes it feels like we’re just spinning our wheels.”

It should be noted that the Reviewers were made aware that in April 2020, the Legislative Assembly embarked upon an Administrative Restructuring initiative. Its primary objective is to better align the Legislative Assembly’s Administration with key organizational priorities and upcoming strategic objectives in support of the institution and its Membership. This will inevitably be an important contributor to addressing the issues and concerns associated with the Governance and Administration theme.

3. Strategy and Vision

As referenced in the Governance and Administration theme, one of the more consistently identified issues regards the perceived lack of a strategic plan for the entire organization. Many people spoke about what they regard as the highly reactive nature of the Legislative Assembly's governing approach whereby new and changing priorities are established without sufficient strategic consideration. Strategic plans are typically designed to help organize and direct how an organization fulfills its purpose (mission) and evolves to accomplish its preferred future state (vision). Additionally, many people pointed out that because the Legislative Assembly's mandate is primarily focussed on "serving the Members", there is an overarching tendency to say "yes" to requests and "go above and beyond" to meet expectations. This dynamic can be experienced as overwhelming when it lacks a strategic foundation with which to guide organizational goal setting. It can also interfere with achieving an appropriate work-life balance. Put another way, the organization is often perceived to be preoccupied with day-to-day operations without the benefit of a clear (and longer range) strategic focus upon which to develop/align priorities, goals, and associated work plans. The workplace is commonly seen to be lacking an integrated and inclusive vision (i.e. an aspirational, future-oriented state) that would help inform operational decision-making and goal prioritization.

"We focus on the operational side but don't put the effort and time into strategic initiatives. We need a common vision."

"We really need a strategic plan for the whole organization."

"We don't have a common vision, who are we serving?"

According to many, establishing and implementing a strategic plan is particularly relevant and valuable at this stage of the organization's evolution as it works to recover from the troubling and unsettling events of the past. Shifting the organizational culture away from what many described as "entitled" will be facilitated by a strategic direction that unifies and integrates the various branch functions and priorities. As previously mentioned, a clearly articulated and well understood strategic plan will be foundational to the organization's approach to governance and decision-making and by extension goal setting and work planning.

"There's lots going on without knowing how it all fits into the bigger picture... we're lacking a strategic plan or its hidden somewhere."

"Silos still exist but it's getting better. We need to step back from time to time and slow down. Always being consumed with day-to-day operations makes it hard to strategize and think longer term."

A strategic plan is also intended to articulate the core values of an organization which in turn informs the development of its culture and relational atmosphere. Simply put, many people expressed the

importance of knowing and understanding how their work contributes to the greater organizational purpose and mission. Most interviewees who spoke about this theme perceive that by establishing a clear connection between decision-making, work planning and how those elements align with day-to-day operations, it would enhance employee engagement and help bring greater meaning to what people do in their jobs.

4. Employment Practices and Staff Development

This theme encompasses issues such as how recruitment, promotions, termination, and performance management are handled by the organization. It also covers the subject of how staff can advance their careers and develop their skill sets within their work environment; including how to access opportunities for training, learning and developmental assignments at various levels. This theme also touches on what some people identified as concerns related to “work-life balance”.

In the interests of establishing a more transparent, equitable and “non-entitled” organizational culture, many people emphasized the importance of having clear, consistent, and fair employment standards and practices that apply in all circumstances. Notwithstanding the unique implications surrounding the use of parliamentary privilege (and the non-unionized nature of the workforce), it was consistently reported that decisions related to hiring, promotion, and termination should be maximally transparent and aligned with current best practices. Some people raised concerns about what they perceive to be potentially unfair employment practices and decisions which (at times) are perceived to be based more on “who you know” rather than how qualified you are. This concern is more pronounced with respect to being promoted within the organization rather than having to compete for a vacant position. Furthermore, many employees expressed significant disappointment and criticism about how certain employees – mainly in relation to “the events of November 2018” – were terminated (i.e. being unceremoniously escorted out of the building with little to no advance notification that their employment was ending).

“People being marched out of the building without any notice. It scared everyone.”

“It isn’t clear how people get positions here. It makes people talk and speculate.”

“People seem to get different answers about things like sick leave and benefits. That leads to suspicion and feelings of being treated unfairly.”

Bearing in mind that many people expressed appreciation and positively recognize career development opportunities (e.g. training, learning etc.) afforded to them, others identified a lack of consistency regarding how such opportunities are made available and the criteria associated with being eligible to access them. Due in part to the perceived “silo” effect on organizational functioning, some employees expressed a desire for more opportunities to cross-train, move laterally, and access “stretch” assignments that contribute to career advancement and professional development. With increased efforts to promote inter-branch communication and collaboration, many people felt that more possibilities to learn and

develop in other parts of the organization would become available. Lastly, the importance of developing and implementing a more standardized and consistent employee orientation (i.e. on-boarding) process was consistently recognized by many interviewees.

“It is difficult to understand career positions. There is no clear career path or vertical/horizontal mobility.”

“People need opportunities to advance in their careers. The structure is a real barrier to mobility.”

“There are lots of training opportunities, but they aren’t consistent across the board... fairness is key.”

“Cross training would be great. It would create efficiencies and give people the ability to develop in their careers.”

Further to the issue of professional development and career advancement, there is currently no performance management system in place for the organization as a whole. Most people spoke about never having received a performance appraisal of any kind and voiced concern that they are not provided with regular performance feedback. This gap appears to exist at all levels of the institution with several people speaking about the importance of senior executives also receiving performance feedback via some kind of assessment tool.

“There isn’t any kind of formal feedback. It makes it difficult to know if you are doing a good job.”

“We don’t do performance evaluations. I’ve never had one.”

“I think people throughout the organization would benefit from regular performance appraisals. I know I would.”

“While there is a ton of expertise and experience in this building, there are gaps that aren’t being addressed because no one is getting feedback on their performance.”

One of the developmental and performance enhancement needs identified by many staff relates to what could be called “conflict competence”; learning, developing, and applying skills to engage respectfully and effectively in conflict resolution activities. The value in cultivating a more “conflict-capable” culture – particularly at the senior leadership/executive level - is generally regarded as a valuable pursuit.

“Dealing with conflict is usually avoided... or people are left to get away with bad behaviour – blaming instead of problem-solving.”

“Conflict management skills... like having difficult conversations needs lots of work around here.”

Due in part to the structure of the Legislative Assembly (e.g. some branches work significant overtime whereas others do not), and the somewhat cyclical nature of its work, there are times when working hours are increased and long days ensue. Many people voiced concerns about what they perceived as a lack of “work - life balance”, particularly within leadership and management positions. People spoke about the expectations that are set around working long hours when that is what is modeled at the top and expressed concerns that it contributes to a “culture of overtime”. In addition, people expressed fears that a lack of “work - life balance” can lead to burn out and ultimately to illhealth.

“The hours required by some are crazy and not do-able.”

“Ideally we would be an organization where work - life balance is role modeled and encouraged, even required.”

“We are a lean operation, but people are dropping like flies... people work long days and it takes a toll.”

“In some areas, there are too many hours and not enough coverage. People are going to get sick.”

For some, there is also a desire to have access to more flexible working arrangements and a hope that consideration is given to opportunities for job sharing and working remotely.

5. Workplace Policies and Procedures

Acknowledging the overarching appreciation most have for the working conditions within the Legislative Assembly, there remains a perception (among some) that these conditions and benefits are not available consistently across the organization. This adds to what was identified as a perceived lack of fairness and transparency regarding policy application and interpretation. This dynamic contributes to perceptions of inequity, unfairness, and lack of trust. The primary challenges identified with respect to this theme include the perception about a lack of consistent and standardized policy application and a concern about not having effective access to relevant policy information (e.g. about pay, benefits, reclassification, sick-leave, vacations, parking, travel, etc.). Policies are often seen to be applied and interpreted randomly and sporadically (even selectively) between different branches and many voiced concerns that advice and guidance about policy interpretation is sometimes variable and unclear.

“... need more education about benefits. Policies and administrative procedures aren’t always clear or consistent.”

“Accountability measures need to be put in place. Some individuals feel they have power and status so are exempt from rules and regulations. Systems are weak, missing or outdated but getting better.”

Essentially, most people spoke about wanting to have clear, consistent, and transparent policies and procedures in place that are applied fairly across the organization. There is also a strong interest in having policy-related information available and accessible (i.e. centralized) for ease of reference. Accomplishing these objectives will – according to many - contribute to re-building organizational trust. It will also influence a more communicative and transparent approach to information sharing about relevant workplace policies, practices, procedures, and standards.

“There has never been a clear process for how you get things (space, parking, etc.), this creates a perception of privilege – upstairs downstairs.”

“We need a more transparent way of seeing our jobs/pay scale. Job descriptions, pay scales, how is it all run?”

“Many people feel that there is not consistent application of policy around here. It creates feelings of mistrust and inequality.”

Some interviewees revealed being aware that policy re-development and revision work is currently underway and expressed support for that initiative. There is, among many, a sense of optimism and confidence that if workplace policies are standardized, modernized, and consistently applied, cultural perceptions related to organizational unfairness, entitlement and mistrust will diminish. Furthermore, a policy “revamp” that achieves the goals of accessibility, transparency, consistency, and modernization (i.e. being aligned with current best practices) will help protect the Legislative Assembly’s reputation from undue criticism and suspicion from internal and external sources. In sum, there is a common perception that having a robust policy suite that is consistently and fairly applied across the organization will further engender trust in how the Legislative Assembly is being governed; especially with respect to employment practices and standards that are intended to promote fairness and equity and thereby influence the development of a more transparent and communicative information-sharing culture.

6. Hansard Services and its Employment Model

Although this subject relates to a specific branch of the Legislative Assembly, it is being included in this report due to the widespread participation of staff from that branch. However, the following observations – according to those who spoke about the subject – are not intended to be a mini-assessment of a specific workplace within the broader organization. That being said, the primary issues identified relate to the branch’s employment model (primarily staffed by part-time Auxiliaries working intensively when the House is sitting) and how the unit and its employees experience their relationship to the institution as a whole.

Notwithstanding the transparency of Hansard Service’s employment model (i.e. “people know what they are getting into when they get hired”), there are varying preferences when it comes to the ideal employment model given the nature of what the branch does and how it functions. Several people spoke

about appreciating and valuing its flexibility and being very content with the seasonal workflow and dynamic associated with their jobs. On the other hand, there are a number of employees who would much prefer to have a more stable, consistent, and on-going employment status (e.g. permanent part-time) that would allow them to receive benefits and generate increased employment income. The organization has recognized the uniqueness of Hansard Services' employment model by supporting a working group initiative to explore possibilities to augment employment hours for some Auxiliaries. The primary objective being to off-set "down time" when the House is not sitting, by (among other things) offering additional services to other branches of the Legislative Assembly that could benefit from the skills and expertise available within Hansard Services.

The other salient dynamic to consider is how Hansard Services experience their role, relationship and degree of integration and inclusion within the organization as a whole. There is a prevailing perception that Hansard Services is not well understood, recognized, or acknowledged for its important contribution to the Legislative Assembly's overarching mission. This perception is heavily influenced by what many identified as a seeming lack of general awareness of what Hansard Services does and why it exists. As a result, there is a feeling of disconnection which is exacerbated by the separation – both geographically (being located in the bunker) and operationally – from most other branches; plus there are limited opportunities for Hansard Services' staff to participate in engagement activities and inter-departmental interactions thereby increasing the "silo" effect as identified elsewhere in this report.

7. Conclusion

Based on what was heard, the Reviewer's conclude that the Legislative Assembly is a workplace in transition; it is still recovering from "the events of 2018", but there is growing confidence that the organization is heading in the right direction. Trust is being re-established incrementally and most staff expressed being engaged, committed, and hopeful about the future of their workplace and its evolving culture. As reflected in the thematic descriptions of people's lived experiences at the Legislative Assembly, staff are overwhelmingly positive and appreciative about their working conditions and circumstances. There is an overarching desire to see the organization's governance and administration systems revamped and improved. This includes the importance of developing and implementing a decision-making philosophy and framework that is strategically focussed rather than operationally reactive. Empowering and enabling leaders/managers to exercise their skills and competencies is also considered an important objective.

Renovating the institution's system of governance and administration is generally thought to require the development of a strategic plan; one that explicitly expresses the Legislative Assembly's core values, mission, and vision. Doing so, according to many, will assist decision-making by aligning workplans to strategic objectives and also increase staff engagement as individuals more clearly understand how their work (and that of their branch) fits into the "bigger picture". Alongside the importance of a more strategic approach to governance, administration and decision-making is the stated necessity of having clear,

consistent, and fairly applied workplace policies and procedures. Ones that are transparent, accessible, and aligned with current best practices. Doing so would help to ensure that equitable employment standards and staff development opportunities are provided to all staff.

Finally, and in sum, the Reviewers were struck and impressed by how seemingly resilient Legislative Assembly staff have shown themselves to be. Handling the impacts from “the events of November 2018” is a testament to that resilience, strength, and professionalism. Fortunately, the workplace culture is overwhelmingly regarded as healthy, positive, and supportive from a relational standpoint. The primary areas of focus and on-going development for the organization should therefore be concentrated around: enhancing governance and administration, becoming more strategically-oriented (and skillful) in decision-making, and ensuring that workplace policies, procedures, employment standards and practices are transparent, fair and consistently applied.

8. Recommendations

The following recommendations are offered as ideas and strategies to address the main themes (and underlying interests and values) that were identified during the Review. They are deliberately procedural in nature and are intended to inform the development of an action plan. The work-tasks required to formalize the action plan and implement the recommendations should be considered by the appropriate authorities while making best efforts to engage and involve staff.

- Augment the Administrative Restructuring initiative with a **Governance Gap Analysis** with an emphasis on reviewing/revising approaches to decision-making.
- Create an **Internal Communications Strategy** (i.e. plan) that engages all branches of the organization.
- Involve the appropriate expertise to support the design and implementation of a **Participatory Strategic Planning Process** for the entire organization.
- Create and publish an updated and detailed **Workplace Policies and Procedures ‘virtual handbook’** (or some other easily accessible resource).
- Institute a **Performance Appraisal System** for all employees (including senior management at the executive level) that provides standardized and regularized opportunities to obtain performance feedback.
- Expand the Legislative Assembly’s **Professional Development Training Program** to include learning opportunities for all staff in the subject of conflict resolution and for managers in the subject of leadership development.

- Plan and conduct a **Team Building and Leadership Retreat** for senior management.
- Form a **Working-Group Committee** to explore ideas related to flexible working arrangements and mobility opportunities across the organization.
- Carry out a **Follow-up Review Process** (in approximately 9 – 12 months) to monitor and evaluate progress and continue supporting the implementation of the action plan as required.

9. Appendices

1. Workplace Review – Information and Backgrounder, October 2019
2. Invitation to Participate in the Workplace Review, November 2019
3. Email Invitations to Staff and Past Employees, November 2019 & January 2020



DETERMINATION
AGILITY
RESOLUTION

Workplace Review - Information and Backgrounder

About Us – Who is conducting the Review:

The Legislative Assembly has engaged ADR Education - an independent consulting firm with no affiliation or pre-existing relationship with the Legislative Assembly - to conduct a Workplace Review. This process was initiated by the Legislative Assembly Management Committee in response to a recommendation from the Speaker's report (released in January 2019) and is being overseen by a working group comprised of three MLAs Sonia Furstenau, Mary Polak and Janet Routledge. The five practitioners dedicated to this project are Jess McNamara, Jamie Chicanot, Andrew Fulton, Robert Pidgeon and Mallorie Nicholson (the review team). ADR Education is a national conflict engagement firm, with partners and associates located across the country. The partnership was formed in 2001 using the base of 15 years of cross Canada intervention and training delivery services. ADR Education specializes in the design and delivery of a wide array of collaborative conflict engagement processes. These include mediation, facilitated conversations, coaching, workplace reviews/assessments, group facilitation, and workplace restoration processes. More information about the Firm and its personnel can be found here – www.adreducation.ca.

ADR Education has a unique approach to workplace health that accents the need for organizations to learn, grow and move forward from their organizational challenges while building on their strengths and positive attributes. We enter workplaces as invited resources to help identify themes of conflict and define them without attributing blame. Workplace Reviews are used to explore stakeholders' lived experiences - their thoughts, feelings, perceptions, and impressions - of an organization's environment and culture. The Review process is intended to seek ways to enhance organizational health and wellbeing through inclusive engagement and collaborative participation.

The Workplace Review – What is it all about:

The approach to this Workplace Review process is informed by a spirit of curiosity and a commitment to improve the Legislative Assembly workplace environment; it is an enquiry about the working environment of the Legislative Assembly **from the perspectives of those who work in it**; it is therefore NOT lead or directed by Legislative Assembly management and is NOT an investigation or fact-finding exercise of any kind. The reviewer's job is not to critically determine the trustworthiness or factual accuracy of anything that is shared with them. On the contrary, the review team are focused on capturing and reflecting the subjective experiences, feelings, and opinions of members of the Legislative Assembly workplace community. Doing so enables the creation of *workplace culture narratives* which illuminate important organizational dynamics, challenges, and opportunities for positive change.

The intention is to engage directly with stakeholders and to support the development of workplace culture narratives. In order to bring about positive change to any work environment, it is essential that the stakeholders be the influencers and agents of that change. Hence, we believe that Workplace Reviews should focus on discovering the ways people can inform and effectively participate in addressing issues in their workplace to enhance its health and functionality. This includes identifying and reflecting on challenges and opportunities while being encouraged to contribute to the creation of a more functional (i.e. healthier) future-state. The objective is therefore to create safe spaces to learn about organizational

health, culture, conflict and functionality.

All information gathered through the Review process is private and will be kept strictly confidential. The review team will ensure that all information received during the review process is without attribution (i.e. names or other personal identifiers will not be present in the data pool, or any resultant reports etc.). Audio recording will not be used and transcripts will not be produced. This is in keeping with the primary objective of better understanding the workplace issues - rather than ascribing blame or judgment – so that they can be addressed and repaired. Any resultant reports will only identify frequently and consistently raised perspectives (themes) of those interviewed. Direct, un-attributable quotes will be included to help express and contextualize the themes. The quotes will represent similar statements that were heard frequently and are sufficiently general so as not to identify the person quoted.

Given that this process is not an investigation nor is it intended to address specific workplace complaints, it is important to note that if anyone has specific complaints or concerns relating to bullying, harassment, discrimination and/or other alleged breaches of Legislative Assembly policy, they will be directed to Human Resources for advice and support.

The Process – what you can expect:

The Review will be carried out using a phased approach. As a participant-driven methodology, multiple opportunities for voluntary engagement will be provided along the way.

Phase 1 | Initial Design and Preliminary Scan

- Review policies, procedures and legislation relevant to the Legislative Assembly work environment.
- Engage leaders, employee groups, and relevant committees in facilitated interviews and/or focus group style meetings to suggest areas of focus for the review, finalize procedural approach and scope, and obtain buy-in.
- This phase culminates in the development of a Base Case Report.

Phase 2 | Data Collection and Narrative Development

- Facilitate multiple departmental awareness/orientation meetings to explain the Workplace Review process and encourage participation from current staff.
- Review team collects data from participants through a variety of engagement methods. These may include voluntary one-on-one interviews (on and off site), focus groups (organized by department), email submissions made directly to a unique adrededucation.ca email address, and online surveys (data and servers hosted in Canada). The objective is to achieve the widest possible participation among current staff, and an appropriate level of participation (scope) of former staff.
- This phase – emphasizing inclusion throughout - culminates in obtaining a comprehensive ‘data set’ (both qualitative and quantitative) that reflects the diversity of Legislative Assembly staff lived experiences.

Phase 3 | Assessment and Reporting

- Qualitative (and limited quantitative) analysis is conducted to identify recurring themes in the data (i.e. identifying common issues, perceptions and organizational narratives).

- Themes are compared/considered against relevant policies and procedures.
- A Summary Report is drafted that describes organizational strengths, the main themes requiring action and improvement, and provides a set of recommendations for positive change with an accent on restorative and reconciliatory opportunities for the organization.
- Summary Report is presented to the Working Group of the Legislative Assembly Management Committee for discussion and reflection.
- Consideration of workplace restoration/reconciliation activities in response to what discovered in the Review.



INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN THE WORKPLACE REVIEW

At the direction of the Legislative Assembly Management Committee, the Assembly has engaged ADR Education to conduct an independent Workplace Review. A detailed description and explanation of the Workplace Review process was shared with all staff via an Information and Backgrounder document which can be found here (adreducation.ca/bclegreview/). The five practitioners dedicated to this project are Jess McNamara, Jamie Chicanot, Andrew Fulton, Robert Pidgeon and Mallorie Nicholson (the review team).

The approach to this Workplace Review process is motivated by a spirit of curiosity; it is an enquiry about the working environment of the Legislature *from the perspectives of those who work in it*; it is therefore NOT an investigation or fact-finding exercise of any kind. The reviewer's job is not to critically determine the trustworthiness or factual accuracy of anything that is shared with them. On the contrary, the review team are focused on capturing and reflecting the subjective experiences, feelings, and opinions of members of the Legislature workplace community. Doing so enables the creation of *workplace culture narratives* which illuminate important organizational dynamics, challenges, and opportunities for growth and positive change.

The intention is to engage directly with you in order to identify and reflect on workplace challenges and opportunities that contribute to the creation of a healthier and more functional future-state. The objective is to learn about issues from your point of view, explore your ideas for resolution and improvement and for us to suggest procedural ways to tackle what has been consistently identified by those (i.e. you) who know best. Your participation in this project is both essential and entirely voluntary. In order to better understand the Legislature's workplace environment, health and cultural dynamics, we need your help and strongly encourage you to participate in an interview or access other methods of engagement. The interviews are intended to create a safe space where you can share your experiences, privately and confidentially, in a conversational way. You can be interviewed individually, as part of a small group, or have someone represent you and tell your story as part of theirs. You may also submit something via email or over the telephone. The main goal is to learn from you about your experiences.

All information gathered through the Review process is private and will be kept strictly confidential. The review team will ensure that all information received during the review process is without attribution (i.e. names or other personal identifiers will not be present in the data pool, or any resultant reports etc.). Audio recording will not be used, and transcripts will not be produced. This is in keeping with the primary objective of better understanding the issues - rather than ascribing blame or judgment – so that they can be addressed and repaired. Any resultant reports will only identify frequently and consistently raised perspectives (themes) from those interviewed. Direct, un-attributable quotes will be included to help express and contextualize the themes. The quotes will represent similar statements that were heard frequently and are sufficiently general so as not to identify the person quoted. Once we have completed the interviews, we will write a report that identifies main themes and makes recommendations about how to address them. In order to maximize confidentiality and participant anonymity, the information in the report will be without attribution and your name will not be recorded or identified as a process participant.

Please contact us directly at bclegreview@adreducation.ca to set up an interview. Initial round of interviews will be scheduled for December 4-6th, 2019.

Thank you for participating. Sincerely,

Jessica McNamara,
Review Team Lead & Partner, ADR Education

Subject: Invitation to Interview – Workplace Review

Date: November 26, 2019 at 11:10 PM

To: BCLegReview@adrededucation.ca

Hello,

As part of the Legislative Assembly of BC's Workplace Review, the review team would like to invite current and past employees of the Legislative Assembly to participate in personal and confidential interviews on their perspectives on the work environment and culture at the Legislature. Please see the attached invitation for more details.

At this time, we are conducting an initial round of interviews **December 4th, 5th and 6th**. Many more interview dates will be opened up to ensure that everyone who wants to participate in an interview is provided an opportunity.

If you are interested and available to participate in this first round of interviews, please respond to bclereview@adrededucation.ca before Monday December 2nd, and let us know your preferred interview date (Dec 4th, 5th or 6th) and whether you prefer to be scheduled the morning or afternoon.

If you would like to participate, but these initial dates do not work for you, please respond to bclereview@adrededucation.ca, letting us know that. We will add you to a list for future scheduling opportunities. Please note:

- All interviews are strictly private and confidential and any information shared is non-attributable
- Participants are welcome to bring a support person to their interview
- Both onsite and offsite interview locations will be made available.
- Interviews are scheduled for 45 minutes each

Sincerely, The Review Team

From: ADR Education bclegreview@adrededucation.ca
Subject: Invitation to Participate – Workplace Review
Date: January 16, 2020 at 4:15 PM



Hello and Happy New Year,

The Workplace Review of the Legislative Assembly of BC is well underway. The review team has been fortunate to have already engaged roughly 20% of staff through confidential interviews, group interviews and written submissions, and we still hope to reach more. The review team would like to invite current and past employees of the Legislative Assembly to discuss their perspectives on the work environment and culture in personal and confidential interviews, a group interview with colleagues, or by making a written submission. Many more interview dates will be opened up to ensure that everyone who wants to participate in an interview is provided an opportunity. [Please download the invitation here](#) for more details, or check out the video below.

<http://video.leg.bc.ca/videos/ADR%20Video.mp4>

If you are interested in participating, please respond to bclegreview@adrededucation.ca letting us know how you wish to participate, and we will be in touch shortly. Please note:

- All interviews are strictly private and confidential and any information shared is non-attributable
- Participants are welcome to bring a support person to their interview
- Both onsite and offsite interview locations will be made available.
- Interviews are scheduled for 45 minutes each

Thank you for your consideration,
The review team
