

2021108 Vancouver Senate Agenda Committee – Final Minutes

Present: Julia Burnham (Chair), Paul Harrison (Vice-Chair), John Gilbert, Joanne Fox, Kin Lo, Claudia Krebs, Sally Thorne, Guy Faulkner, Anisha Sandhu

Regrets: Janine Benedet, Kate Ross

Clerk: Chris Eaton

Call to Order Julia Burnham called to order 12:05

Minutes The minutes of 10 September 2021 were approved as corrected.

Corrections: Senator Sandhu was present, error noted in date.

In Camera – 20 N/A

October 2021

Senate Agenda

Remote

Meetings

The Clerk set out the background of the current rule suspension that allowed for the Senate to meet remotely, noting that it expired at the end of December. Normally, remote attendance is only allowed for medical accommodations. He noted that the Senate needed to decide if it wanted to continue to meet online, wanted to go back to in-person meetings, or if it wanted to attempt a hybrid approach.

Dr Harrison noted that he was looking forward to meeting again in person but was concerned if we had the space to do so with social distancing if required.

The Clerk advised that we would have enough space to do so in the Victoria Theatre but that we were trying to use our larger classrooms for credit course activities for similar reasons.

Senator Fox noted that Committees were given the option of in-person or online and most have elected to remain online, which was an indicator of preferences. She suggested that we should apply a lens of equity and family status to this decision to encourage engagement and participation, including around family status.

Senator Krebs said we could extend the rule suspension to the end of the academic year. She noted that it was hypnotical for the Senate to be concerned around social distancing and ventilation when classes were full.

Senator Jaeger said that she was fine with in person meetings but appreciated the convenience of online meetings. She asked what Public

Health Orders applied to governance meetings: were these events or educational activities?

The Clerk said that they were meetings of a statutory body.

Senator Thorne said we should take mental health, and student mental health in particular, into consideration. We should go with whatever the preference is of the students on Senate.

Senator Sandhu asked if we were only considering this during the pandemic or for the foreseeable future. She suggested that committees should continue to have flexibility but an in-person Senate would have better engagement.

The Clerk advised that the Okanagan Senate planned to remain remote but to have an in-person social event once a term. He noted that Zoom meetings seemed to be more transactional and caused some increases in tension and adversarial situations, perhaps due to difficulties in reading body language.

The Chair said that she and Senator Sandhu would bring the matter to the student caucus for their perspectives. She noted that the Committee wasn't in a consensus but could come forward again in November to make a recommendation to Senate.

Code of Conduct and Conflict of Interest Rules

Senator Harrison asked the Clerk what the status was of this proposal.

The Clerk set out the history of the Code of Conduct and Conflict of Interest Rules originally drafted two years prior. He noted that when sent to senators for consultation, the responses were that it was too regulatory in nature and should be principle-approached instead of legalistic, but others felt that it was too weak. He noted that the idea to move forward was to establish a small working group to come up with a new approach. The Nominating Committee has been asked for a couple names and Agenda could also suggest one or two people to a group to work further on this.

The Chair said that interested members should send in an email.

Senator Fox said that it was a new triennium so many current senators would not have seen this draft.

Forms of Voting

The Clerk noted that this matter came before the Senate in April; given the response, he said it was unlikely that the current proposal would find 2/3rds support without a stronger rationale.

Senator Thorne said that her impression was that the divisiveness of that conversation was a concern around recorded votes being used for public shaming, which felt like more of a Code of Conduct issue.

Senator Lo said that he didn't think the Code of Conduct idea would resolve this, as the public shaming on twitter was beyond just senators.

Senator Fox said that this may be a product of the online mode of the meeting and the meeting being broadcasted.

Senator Krebs said that roll call voting was used for controversial matters and was to remove anonymity and apply pressure on people. It did not feel friendly. On the other hand, she said that Senators should not be ashamed for how they vote.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 1:01 pm.