



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

The 28th Legislature
First Session

Standing Committee
on
Alberta's Economic Future

Tuesday, July 24, 2012
1:30 p.m.

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Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

Amery, Moe, Calgary-East (PC), Chair
Bikman, Gary, Cardston-Taber-Warner (W), Deputy Chair

Bhardwaj, Naresh, Edmonton-Ellerslie (PC)
Blakeman, Laurie, Edmonton-Centre (AL)
Donovan, Ian, Little Bow (W)
Dorward, David C., Edmonton-Gold Bar (PC)
Eggen, David, Edmonton-Calder (ND)
Fenske, Jacquie, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (PC)
Goudreau, Hector G., Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley (PC)
Hehr, Kent, Calgary-Buffalo (AL)
Jansen, Sandra, Calgary-North West (PC)
Luan, Jason, Calgary-Hawkwood (PC)
McDonald, Everett, Grande Prairie-Smoky (PC)
Olesen, Cathy, Sherwood Park (PC)
Quadri, Sohail, Edmonton-Mill Woods (PC)
Quest, Dave, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (PC)
Rogers, George, Leduc-Beaumont (PC)
Sandhu, Peter, Edmonton-Manning (PC)
Sherman, Dr. Raj, Edmonton-Meadowlark (AL)
Smith, Danielle, Highwood (W)
Starke, Dr. Richard, Vermilion-Lloydminster (PC)
Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (W)
Towle, Kerry, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (W)
Young, Steve, Edmonton-Riverview (PC)
Vacant

Also in Attendance

Kennedy-Glans, Donna, Calgary-Varsity (PC)
Pastoor, Bridget Brennan, Lethbridge-East (PC)

Support Staff

W.J. David McNeil	Clerk
Robert H. Reynolds, QC	Law Clerk/Director of Interparliamentary Relations
Shannon Dean	Senior Parliamentary Counsel/ Director of House Services
Philip Massolin	Manager of Research Services
Stephanie LeBlanc	Legal Research Officer
Giovana Bianchi	Committee Clerk
Corinne Dacyshyn	Committee Clerk
Jody Rempel	Committee Clerk
Karen Sawchuk	Committee Clerk
Rhonda Sorensen	Manager of Corporate Communications and Broadcast Services
Scott Lundy	Senior Communications Adviser
Jeanette Dotimas	Communications Consultant
Tracey Sales	Communications Consultant
Liz Sim	Managing Editor of <i>Alberta Hansard</i>

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[Mr. Amery in the chair]

The Chair: Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen, and welcome. I trust that you all have enjoyed the beautiful Capital EX breakfast this morning.

Mr. Donovan: It was great.

The Chair: Good.

I would like to welcome all the members and staff in attendance for this orientation meeting of the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future.

I would like to call the meeting to order and ask all committee members and the joining staff around this table to introduce themselves for the record. I will start with myself. Moe Amery, MLA, Calgary-East, chair of the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future.

Mr. Bikman: Gary Bikman, MLA for Cardston-Taber-Warner, deputy chair.

Ms Dean: Good afternoon. Shannon Dean, Senior Parliamentary Counsel and director of House services.

Mr. Rogers: George Rogers, Member for Leduc-Beaumont.

Mr. Dorward: David Dorward, MLA for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Ms Olesen: Cathy Olesen, MLA for Sherwood Park.

Mr. McDonald: Everett McDonald, Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Ms Jansen: Sandra Jansen, Calgary-North West.

Mr. Luan: Jason Luan, Calgary-Hawkwood.

Ms Blakeman: Laurie Blakeman, MLA for Edmonton-Centre, to which I welcome each and every one of you because it is such a fabulous constituency, and I'm delighted to have you all in it today.

Mr. Goudreau: Hector Goudreau, Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley.

Mr. Quest: Dave Quest, Strathcona-Sherwood Park.
Delighted to be here, Laurie.

Ms Kennedy-Glans: Donna Kennedy-Glans, Calgary-Varsity. I'm an observer.

Ms Pastoor: Bridget Pastoor, Lethbridge-East, also an observer.

Ms Smith: Danielle Smith, Highwood.
Hello, Mr. Chairman. Nice to see you.

The Chair: Good to see you, too.

Mrs. Towle: Kerry Towle, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

Mr. Donovan: Ian Donovan, Little Bow.

Mr. Sandhu: Good afternoon. Peter Sandhu, Edmonton-Manning.

Mr. Bhardwaj: Naresh Bhardwaj, Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Ms Fenske: Hello. Jacquie Fenske, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

Mr. Quadri: Sohail Quadri, Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Mr. Eggen: Good afternoon. My name is David Eggen, from Edmonton-Calder.

Mr. Young: Steve Young, Edmonton-Riverview.

Mr. Strankman: Rick Strankman, Drumheller-Stettler.

Dr. Massolin: Good afternoon. Philip Massolin, manager of research services.

Mrs. Sawchuk: Karen Sawchuk, committee clerk.

The Chair: Thank you all very, very much.

Just a few housekeeping issues before we begin. The microphones that we have in front of us here are operated by the *Hansard* staff, so there is no need to touch them. Please keep your BlackBerrys and other electronic devices off the table as they can interfere with the audio of the meeting. Audio of committee proceedings is streamed live on the Internet and recorded by *Hansard*, and audio access and meeting transcripts are obtained via the Legislative Assembly website.

The meeting agenda was posted to the committee's internal website last week and is accessible via your LAO laptops, but if anyone requires a paper copy, please let our committee clerk know before we turn to the business at hand.

A few operational items. The first one is the participation in committee meetings by teleconference. Section 6 of the Legislative Assembly Act permits participation in a committee "by means of telephone or other communication facilities that permit all Members participating in the meeting to hear each other if all the members of the committee consent." The committee rooms are equipped to facilitate meeting participation by telephone. Committees have a choice of passing a motion, which needs to be passed unanimously, to approve meeting attendance by telephone for the duration of a Legislature or for the duration of a session. A motion to approve teleconference attendance for the duration of a Legislature does not preclude the committee from determining that personal attendance at a specific meeting is required. In those cases, a motion would be moved at the end of a particular meeting requesting the personal attendance of all members at a subsequent meeting.

Now, I have asked the committee clerk to circulate a draft motion to members so that we have the correct wording and information necessary for this motion. Thank you.

If there are any members participating via teleconferencing for today's meeting, they are unable to vote on this motion. Once the motion passes, they will be able to participate fully in the meeting. I don't think we have anybody participating. Okay. Thank you.

I would like to read the motion for the record.

For the life of the 28th Legislature or for this session the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future permit committee members to participate by teleconference subject to the proviso that the committee may require members' attendance at a particular meeting upon passage of a motion at a previous meeting to that effect.

Is there any discussion? Go ahead.

Mr. Dorward: Well, do we need a mover for that motion, or did you move the motion? I would be prepared to move the motion, except I'd like to remove the words "or for this session" as you read it.

The Chair: Okay. Mr. Dorward moved the motion.

Mr. Dorward: Just for the life of the 28th Legislature. I'll move that motion.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Dorward.

Mr. Bhardwaj.

Mr. Bhardwaj: Thank you very much. Do you want to clarify? Do you want to do it for the whole duration of the 28th Legislature or try it for this session only?

The Chair: Well, let's open this up for discussion, I guess. Ms Blakeman.

Ms Blakeman: We have been trying it. That's why we know to do this at the first meeting, because we have been working with the restrictive conditions prior to this, so I'm comfortable with passing it for the duration of the 28th Legislature. But if others are not, let's hear it.

Mr. Strankman: As a new member to the committee and a member that has to travel a considerable distance – and I've done it particularly for this session – if this motion were to pass and I was to attend from my constituency office, would I be paid the same per diem that I would as if I were to attend? What's the protocol in that regard?

The Chair: Actually, there's no pay for committee members, so nobody gets paid for attending a committee meeting.

Mr. Strankman: I stand corrected as a new member.

The Chair: Okay. Mr. Rogers.

Mr. Rogers: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd just like to speak in favour of the motion as read. It does state at the end that the committee has the power to specify at the end of a previous meeting that attendance in person would be required at the next meeting. I believe that flexibility is very good to have. I think it's also very important in today's day and age and particularly with the vastness of our province – the member before mentioned his distance, and there are other members from the north and various parts of this province – that in 2012 we would embrace the use of technology and better use our resources, that we would allow members to participate in this fashion. So I'm fully in support of the motion as read.

Thank you.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Rogers.

Any others?

Then, on the motion as moved by Mr. Dorward:
for the life of the 28th Legislature.

Okay? Seconders are not required. I would like to call the question. It has to be unanimous. All in favour? Any opposed? Thank you. Let the record show that the motion has passed unanimously. All right. It's carried.

Now, the second item to be discussed is the temporary substitution according to Standing Order 56(2.1). For information purposes, Standing Order 56(2.1) outlines the process for substitution of committee members.

A temporary substitution in the membership of a standing or special committee may be made upon written notification signed by the original Member and filed with the Clerk and Committee Chair, provided such notice is given not less than 24 hours prior to the meeting.

The committee clerk has a template available upon request.

When substitutions occur, it is the responsibility of the original committee member to ensure the substitute has been provided with all the necessary meeting materials. You are reminded, however, that Members of the Legislative Assembly who are not committee members or official substitutions may attend and participate in the meeting, but they may not move motions or vote. Actually, this is only an information item.

1:40

Okay. We're moving right along here. The next item is the approval of the agenda. I trust that you all have received a copy of the agenda as it has been posted on the committee internal website.

Mr. Rogers: I'll move the agenda as circulated, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: All right. Mr. Rogers moved to accept the agenda. Any discussion? All in favour? Any opposed? Motion carried. Thank you.

Now we move to the committee orientation. For our first meeting Shannon Dean, Senior Parliamentary Counsel assigned to assist our committee, will provide an overview of the committee's mandate and processes.

Shannon, it's all yours.

Ms Dean: Good afternoon. I'm pleased to be here today at the inaugural meeting of this committee. Today we'd just like to touch upon a few key areas because it is your first meeting, specifically the powers, rights, and privileges of this committee, the key standing orders that outline your functions and processes, the various types of reviews or inquiries that this committee may undertake, and the committee support that's available from the Legislative Assembly Office. Please feel free as I'm going through these points to interrupt me if you have any questions.

Standing Order 52.01 outlines your mandate: agriculture and rural development; aboriginal relations; international and intergovernmental relations; enterprise and advanced education; tourism, parks, and recreation; and infrastructure. As you can see, your mandate is very broad, and the committee has wide-ranging powers.

Before we delve into the specific standing orders and various types of reviews, I'm going to touch briefly upon parliamentary privilege and the powers, rights, and immunities that exist for you as members of this committee and the committee itself.

As you know, this is a committee of the Assembly as opposed to a committee of the government, and as a committee of the Assembly the powers, rights, and privileges of the Assembly flow to this committee. In other words, the committee is cloaked with parliamentary privilege, which, generally speaking, are the powers, rights, and immunities that enable you as members to conduct your work without interference.

Now, as you know, the most commonly known privilege is freedom of speech. This enables you to speak freely during your committee discussions without fear of being sued for defamation. This privilege stems from article 9 of the Bill of Rights, which goes back to 1689. These privileges and immunities are also codified in the Legislative Assembly Act, specifically sections 13 and 14.

Now, any witnesses that you call before the committee also enjoy the same immunity you have with respect to defamation. This fosters the democratic principle of openness and free discussion without fear of reprisal. Witnesses are also protected in that their testimony before a committee cannot be used in another proceeding that may arise.

The other significant power that a committee possesses is the ability to summon witnesses. Now, of course, the first approach

you would take would be to extend an invitation. If that did not work, then the committee could consider making a decision to summon a witness, and the process would be through an issuance of a warrant from the Speaker. Now, this is a long-standing power that the committee has. To my knowledge it's never been utilized in Alberta, but there are numerous recent examples at the federal level where it's had to be used.

Any questions before I move on to the nitty-gritty standing orders? No?

Okay. Here are some of the key processes that are available to you.

Sorry.

Ms Smith: I'm just wondering about the mechanism for summoning witnesses. Is that something that is done by a vote of the committee, or do you ask the chair and the chair makes the call?

Ms Dean: It would be a decision of the committee.

Okay. Moving on to the standing orders, the first item I've got up there is the consideration of bills referred by the Assembly. Now, whenever a bill is referred to a committee of the Assembly, either that bill or any other subject matter takes precedence in the sense that if the Assembly says that this is what you are to review, then that's your priority rather than other work that you might have undertaken.

Another area of review that you could explore is reviewing regulations: prospective regulations or amendments to regulations that fall within the subject matters within your mandate.

The annual reports of the government departments and agencies, boards, and commissions within your mandate are also referred to you, so you could certainly review those and report back to the House on anything you considered relevant.

You're empowered under the standing orders to inquire into a matter on your own initiative, and it's also possible that a minister could refer a subject matter to you for your review. In those two scenarios there's a six-month timeline for these types of inquiries by which the committee must conclude its work and report to the House. The next step in the process, once the committee concludes its report, is that the government has 150 days to respond.

Finally, the committee may hold public meetings on any matter within its mandate, and you may also recommend to the Assembly the need for legislation.

I touched upon those two points there. Again, you have a six-month timeline when you begin an inquiry into a matter, and there's a 150-day timeline for the government to respond to your report.

Again, we touched upon that the priorities of the committee would be any bill or subject matter that's referred by the House to you.

Just to go back to the bill review process, a bill, as you may know, may be referred after first reading or after second reading. The difference between the two is the scope of review that the committee can undertake. When the bill is reviewed after first reading, you may consider the general subject matter as opposed to looking at the specific wording of the bill. When the committee reports after it completes its review, the report can be broader in a sense that you can make mention of matters outside the scope of the bill. The reason why this is permissible is that the House has not yet approved the principle of the bill.

Compare that to the situation where you're considering a bill that's already received second reading. The House has approved the principle of the bill. Your scope of review is limited, and in terms of your report, as provided for in the standing orders, you're

very limited. You can either report that the bill proceed, proceed with amendments, or not proceed. Again, it's a narrower review.

Finally, to wrap up what happens after you finish your review of a bill and the Assembly votes on your report, with respect to a bill after first reading once the Assembly approves the committee's report that a bill proceed, then the bill goes on notice for second reading. If the Assembly does not approve the report, the bill doesn't go anywhere. For those bills that have received second reading, the bills stand committed to Committee of the Whole unless otherwise ordered. So this would mean that if the committee were to recommend that a bill not proceed, the House would vote on the report, and if the House concurred with the committee's recommendation that the bill not go forward, then the bill would be dropped from the Order Paper.

The reason why I wanted to elaborate on the bill review process is that that was the most common type of activity that took place during the previous Legislature in the policy field committees, which were the predecessor to this type of committee. That's not to say that you can't explore all these other different types of reviews; I just wanted to highlight our recent experience in connection with that.

Now I'm going to turn it over to you, Mr. Chair, and the other staff.

1:50

The Chair: Thank you very much, Shannon.

Now I'd like to turn it over to Karen Sawchuk. As the committee clerk assigned to this committee, she provides administrative, procedural, and general assistance as required. Would you like to elaborate a little bit on your job and the support that you provide?

Mrs. Sawchuk: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The committee clerk is the initial point of contact for these types of committees of the Legislative Assembly. We co-ordinate polling of members. We ensure that members receive the documents that they require for meetings. We maintain the historical and current records of committees of the Assembly. We do agendas and briefing notes. We co-ordinate with the other committee support staff other materials that are required by the committee and draft minutes and perform just general procedural work.

The Chair: All right. Any questions for Karen? Thank you.

Now, Philip Massolin, committee research co-ordinator, is responsible for the research and information needs of the committee as well as drafting of reports as required.

Dr. Massolin: Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's my pleasure to be able to talk to you today about research support for the legislative policy committees. My role is as manager of research services. Our responsibility in terms of providing support is to provide non-partisan support to the committee as a whole. That's important, and by that we mean unbiased, nonpartisan, impartial research for the committee as a whole as opposed to individual members of the committee. Usually how that happens is that the entire committee resolves to assign and direct us to do particular research. Our role is to support the committee at its various stages of a review, whether it's a bill, as Ms Dean pointed out, or any other review that the committee undertakes.

We provide research support and other things, which I'll get to now. The types of research that we do for this type of committee, or at least what we've done in the past, is to provide discussion or information papers, backgrounders, or more in-depth research briefings. We also do crossjurisdictional comparisons of legislation, typically, but other matters as well, including policy

matters, of course, and other briefings as directed by the committee.

We provide the committee with other assistance, including helping the committee draft finalized stakeholder lists. We also summarize the public consultation in terms of the written submissions or oral submissions as need be. As alluded to by Mr. Chair, we also help the committee draft its final report. We do a few other things, but that gives you the gist of it. We await the committee's instructions for direction on our next assignment.

Are there any questions as to what we do?

The Chair: No questions? Thank you very much.

Also, Shannon Dean, Senior Parliamentary Counsel and director of House services, provides legal and procedural assistance to the committee as required and as we have mentioned before. Thank you very much.

Now, communication services with the Clerk's office provides communication expertise to the committee. Anybody here from there? No.

Okay. Any questions?

Mrs. Towle: I have a quick question for you. When was the last time a bill was referred to a policy field committee?

Ms Dean: Two years ago.

Mrs. Towle: Thank you.

The Chair: Any other questions?

Good. Okay. The next step is setting committee priorities and processes. As members are aware, there are no bill reviews or other issues currently referred to this committee for its consideration. With that in mind, I would like to propose a process whereby the chair in consultation with the deputy chair and representatives from other caucuses is tasked with identifying possible matters of interest for the committee's consideration as well as processes that the committee may wish to utilize for public input on matters brought forward on its own initiative. I suggest that members connect with their caucuses to identify issues that the committee could consider and e-mail these ideas to the chair with a copy to Karen Sawchuk. Then we could consult and present refined ideas to the whole committee at our next meeting.

Ms Blakeman: Well, this is new. Is the expectation, then, that the committee would vote on the choices that would then be followed through?

The Chair: Yes. We do.

Ms Blakeman: And am I correct that the majority of the committee members represent the government caucus?

The Chair: That's the way it is.

Ms Blakeman: So ultimately if the government caucus members wish to pursue a particular line, this committee would then do so. Am I correct?

The Chair: Well, this is an all-party committee, and we're all here . . .

Ms Blakeman: Oh, we certainly are all here, and we're delighted to be here.

The Chair: . . . to do what is good for the people who elected us to be here.

Ms Blakeman: Exactly.

The Chair: I discussed this with my deputy chair, and I assured him that we are not going to be partisan in any way, shape, or form. We will deal with the issues as they arise, and we will have an open and transparent discussion.

Ms Blakeman: Excellent. I'm so looking forward to that. And may I just ask for confirmation on the facts, then. Are the majority of the members on this committee representing the government caucus? That would be a factual question.

The Chair: Yes. Of course.

Ms Blakeman: Yes. Okay. Thank you very much.

Ms Smith: Just to seek clarification, Mr. Chairman. Am I to understand, then, that you are saying that every member of the government caucus has a free vote with respect to this committee, that they are able to vote outside the parameters given to them by the government caucus?

The Chair: I think they would vote based on the discussion that we have in this committee, and they will vote their conscience.

Ms Smith: Well, just for the record the Wildrose MLAs do have a free vote. That's how we conduct our caucus. So in case anybody was wondering what the Wildrose MLAs will be doing, you'll have to come to each meeting. You'll be able to see how we vote.

The Chair: What the Wildrose MLAs will be doing is their business. I think we're all here to represent the people who elected us to be here.

Any other questions?

If there are no other questions, I would like to ask the staff to circulate a motion. The motion will read that

the chair of the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future in consultation with the deputy chair and representatives from other opposition caucuses identify matters for consideration within the committee's mandate and suggested processes for public input and report back to the committee by a specified date.

Ms Olesen: I'll move it. What date would you like?

The Chair: Well, September 15.

Any discussion on the motion? Mr. Rogers.

Mr. Rogers: Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just for clarification, I thought that what we were doing here was just ratifying the procedure. I didn't know that this would be specific to any items at this point. Is it not desirable that we would ratify the procedure? That's how I read this. So I don't know that you would have a date because this, in my mind, would go forward in perpetuity for the 28th Legislature. At any time along our process, our continuum, we would utilize this process.

The Chair: That's what I originally thought. That's why I said "specified date." But I think we must have a date.

Mr. Rogers: Well, if I may, Mr. Chairman, I'll just finish. I'll abide by the will of the committee, but I would think it's important that we ratify the process. If we want to set something going forward for the next meeting or two meetings hence, then we can specify a date as another motion. But in my humble

opinion this just ratifies the process that we would use, and it's not specific to any items at this point.

2:00

The Chair: Ms Olesen.

Ms Olesen: Thank you. What I saw was that this is the first go-round, that it would be subject to change as we move forward with the committee, that other dates could come up and we could have another round. But this would get the ball rolling and get the first set of agenda items. That's how I saw it.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Bikman: Mr. Chairman, perhaps the insertion of the words "with first submissions due by."

The Chair: Can you do that again, please?

Mr. Bikman: Well,
back to the committee with first submissions due by September 15.
So it addresses Mr. Rogers' issues but also gives us a bit of a deadline.

The Chair: Does the committee approve?

Mr. Bhardwaj: Mr. Chairman, I guess we need to make an amendment to the motion, then? That's what you're proposing?

The Chair: Is that what you're proposing, to make an amendment?

Mr. Bikman: Yes. Okay.

The Chair: Okay. Can we have a vote on the amendment? All in favour? Opposed? It's carried.

Now the motion as amended by the committee.

Ms Smith: Did you want to suggest a date, then, Mr. Chairman?

The Chair: September 15.

Ms Smith: September 15. Sorry. I missed that.

The Chair: Okay. On the motion. All in favour? Opposed? Carried.

Now, item 5 on the agenda is other business. Are there any other issues for discussion before we wrap up today's meeting?

If not, thank you very, very much for attending this meeting, this first orientation meeting. The next meeting is at the call of the chair in consultation with the deputy chair. The committee chair will poll all of you as to the next available date on your calendars.

Thank you very much, ladies and gentlemen. Have a great summer. We'll see you. I would like to ask for a motion to adjourn. Mr. Bhardwaj. Any objections? Thank you, all. Thank you very much.

[The committee adjourned at 2:03 p.m.]

