



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

The 27th Legislature
First Session

Standing Committee
on
Privileges and Elections,
Standing Orders and Printing

Wednesday, May 14, 2008
5:51 p.m.

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First Session**

**Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections,
Standing Orders and Printing**

Prins, Ray, Lacombe-Ponoka (PC), Chair
Hancock, Hon. Dave, QC, Edmonton-Whitemud (PC), Deputy Chair

Bhardwaj, Naresh, Edmonton-Ellerslie (PC)
Boutilier, Guy C., Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (PC)
Calahasen, Pearl, Lesser Slave Lake (PC)
Doerksen, Arno, Strathmore-Brooks (PC)
Griffiths, Doug, Battle River-Wainwright (PC)
Johnson, Jeff, Athabasca-Redwater (PC)
Leskiw, Genia, Bonnyville-Cold Lake (PC)
Liepert, Hon. Ron, Calgary-West (PC)
Marz, Richard, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (PC)
Mitzel, Len, Cypress-Medicine Hat (PC)
Notley, Rachel, Edmonton-Strathcona (NDP)
Oberle, Frank, Peace River (PC)
Pastoor, Bridget Brennan, Lethbridge-East (L)
Rogers, George, Leduc-Beaumont-Devon (PC)
Stevens, Hon. Ron, QC, Calgary-Glenmore (PC)
Taylor, Dave, Calgary-Currie (L)
Vandermeer, Tony, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (PC)
Weadick, Greg, Lethbridge-West (PC)
Zwozdesky, Hon. Gene, Edmonton-Mill Creek (PC)

Also in Attendance

Blakeman, Laurie, Edmonton-Centre (L)

Support Staff

W.J. David McNeil	Clerk
Louise J. Kamuchik	Clerk Assistant/Director of House Services
Micheline S. Gravel	Clerk of <i>Journals</i> /Table Research
Robert H. Reynolds, QC	Senior Parliamentary Counsel
Shannon Dean	Senior Parliamentary Counsel
Corinne Dacyshyn	Committee Clerk
Jody Rempel	Committee Clerk
Karen Sawchuk	Committee Clerk
Rhonda Sorensen	Manager of Communications Services
Melanie Friesacher	Communications Consultant
Tracey Sales	Communications Consultant
Philip Massolin	Committee Research Co-ordinator
Liz Sim	Managing Editor of <i>Alberta Hansard</i>

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[Mr. Prins in the chair]

The Chair: Well, good evening, everyone. I believe it's probably quarter to 6, or 5:45, the appointed time to start this meeting, so I'd like to call the meeting of the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing to order. First of all, welcome to everybody. I'd like to start by going around the table and just introducing ourselves for the record. My name is Ray Prins, MLA for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mr. Griffiths: Doug Griffiths, Battle River-Wainwright.

Mr. Bhardwaj: Naresh Bhardwaj, Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Mrs. Leskiw: Genia Leskiw, Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Ms Pastoor: Bridget Pastoor, Lethbridge-East.

Mr. Liepert: Ron Liepert, Calgary-West.

Mr. Taylor: Dave Taylor, Calgary-Currie.

Ms Blakeman: Laurie Blakeman. I came especially to welcome you all to my fabulous constituency of Edmonton-Centre, but I'm here as an observer today.

Ms Gravel: Micheline Gravel, Clerk of *Journals/*Table Research.

Mrs. Kamuchik: Louise Kamuchik, Clerk Assistant, director of House services.

Dr. Massolin: Philip Massolin, committee research co-ordinator, Legislative Assembly Office.

Dr. McNeil: David McNeil, Clerk of the Legislative Assembly.

Mr. Reynolds: Rob Reynolds, Senior Parliamentary Counsel.

Mr. Stevens: Ron Stevens, Calgary-Glenmore.

Mr. Johnson: Jeff Johnson, Athabasca-Redwater.

Mr. Vandermeer: Tony Vandermeer, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Oberle: Frank Oberle, Peace River.

Mr. Weadick: Greg Weadick, Lethbridge-West.

Mr. Doerksen: Arno Doerksen, Strathmore-Brooks.

Ms Rempel: Jody Rempel, committee clerk, Legislative Assembly Office.

The Chair: Thank you very much, everyone. The first item on the agenda is Approval of Agenda, so if there are no additions or deletions, I would like to have a motion. Go ahead, Doug.

Mr. Griffiths: I move that the agenda be adopted as it is.

The Chair: Thank you. If there is no comment on that, all in favour? That's carried. Thank you.

The next item on my agenda is Overview of the Committee's Role

Concerning Standing Orders. That's the part of this committee, I believe, that we'll be dealing with tonight. What I'm going to do is just ask our Parliamentary Counsel, Rob Reynolds, to maybe give us a bit of an overview of what the role of the committee is concerning standing orders.

Mr. Reynolds: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I'll be brief with my comments because I realize that you're focused on the standing orders. I'll just say a little bit about the committee itself.

The Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing meets when called upon by the Assembly. It's established pursuant to Standing Order 52(1). Of course, it has 21 members. There has not been a question of privilege referred to this standing committee since 1987. Something was said last year when they met that it hadn't met in 20 years, but as I said, it only meets when something is referred to it by the Assembly. If anyone is curious, the last issue concerned Leo Piquette and speaking French in the Legislative Assembly. Ever since then there hasn't been another motion referred to the committee.

In any event, what you're here for today, of course, is to consider amendments to the standing orders that were made. That mandate was outlined in the government motion that was passed Thursday, April 17. Part B of that motion indicates that this committee is to consider

- (a) the amendments to Standing Orders in this motion by comparing the reforms to the practices in other Assemblies, examining whether the reforms afford open discussion of public policy where Albertans can participate and whether the reforms maximize oversight and accountability;
- (b) the need for additional amendments or reforms to the Assembly's rules and practices to further objectives of open, public discussion of public policy, the role of the Assembly in overall government accountability and the work/life balance of Members; and
- (c) the process used for Committee of Supply consideration of main estimates in 2008, and shall report to the Assembly with its recommendations no later than October 30, 2008.

That's the task that you've been given by the Assembly to work on.

I won't spend much time on this, but of course this committee as a committee of the Assembly is cloaked with all the privileges that exist for other committees in the Assembly with respect to the privilege of free speech in the committee. The committee can find people in contempt should that occasion ever arise. If someone tries to threaten the procedures of the committee, et cetera, they can recommend to the Assembly that there be a finding of contempt. I don't know if that's ever really happened here.

Of course, the other thing is that witnesses are protected and enjoy the same protections as members do when providing testimony. The point is that when reviewing the standing orders, I doubt if you'll be – well, you may in your wisdom choose to call upon witnesses, but it's not likely that there would be. That would arise more if there was a question of privilege that was referred to the committee. If there is one some day, I'll be pleased to provide a fuller briefing on what your jurisdiction is in that matter.

That concludes my comments, Mr. Chair, unless there are any questions.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Are there any questions? Seeing none, we'll go on to the agenda. Mind you, if anybody has a question at any time, you can just put your hand up, and I'll recognize that person.

I believe that we have referred to us now the standing orders, like you just mentioned, that were referred to us on April 17. I guess my

question would be that this probably would not be a good time to review those standing orders because we're still partway through the Legislature. What I'm going to do is encourage all members to make notes for themselves and collect input from colleagues in the House. If you find that you have concerns on the standing orders as we use them today, then take those notes. At some future time when we have another meeting, we will deal with that and decide whether or not to go forward to do research or change those standing orders. If they have to be amended, we can make those comments at that time and decide on any action at that time. Any other questions on that?

I believe the committee also can have referred to it research items. Do you have any comment that you would like to make, Philip, on any of these issues? Maybe mention the kind of research that you can do or that we might be accessing for you.

Dr. Massolin: Thank you, Mr. Chair. There's not a lot to be said except to say that we're research staff available to this committee and to you, Mr. Chair, if you wish us to look at any issues. In the past we've undertaken a bit of research on the standing orders and certain other particular issues when it comes to estimates and seeing what other jurisdictions do. We can do that similar research this time around or anything of the sort that this committee would like us to do. That capacity is there for this committee's use.

The Chair: Okay. But that would happen after we ask you to do that. Say, if we meet again and decide to continue to review the standing orders, we could give you that request at that point in time.

Dr. Massolin: Correct. Yes.

The Chair: Okay. I suppose at that time we could probably invite House leaders to make presentations as well. I only see one House leader here if you would want to comment on that. I think that in the fall or at the next possible meeting House leaders would also be invited to make comments or presentations on standing orders.

6:00

Ms Blakeman: Okay. Sure.

The Chair: Okay. What I'm doing is giving you notice, I guess.

Ms Blakeman: I hear the notice.

The Chair: Good.

My notes say that the desire of the House is that we would have a draft report ready by mid-October. If we go back to this sometime late summer, early fall we could have some kind of report with recommendations similar to the one that was attempted to be fulfilled in the last session. We could have that done by mid-October. That's what I believe we want to do because the final report is due on the 30th of October. That's why we'll do that.

Are there any other issues that members would like to bring to this meeting? Jody is saying that members can ask for research prior to the next meeting so that when we do meet, we can make that available.

If there are no further items for the good of this meeting, then I would ask for someone to make a motion to adjourn. All in favour? That's carried. This meeting is adjourned. Thank you very much.

[The committee adjourned at 6:01 p.m.]

