



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Second Session

Standing Committee
on
Privileges and Elections,
Standing Orders and Printing

Monday, October 17, 2016
10 a.m.

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The 29th Legislature
Second Session**

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

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10 a.m.**Monday, October 17, 2016**

[Ms Fitzpatrick in the chair]

The Chair: Good morning, everyone. We can get started. Welcome to the meeting of the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing. I'm Maria Fitzpatrick, MLA for Lethbridge-East and chair of this committee.

Before we actually start the formal part of the meeting, I'd like to begin by taking a few moments to acknowledge the sudden passing of our former Premier Prentice. On behalf of my colleagues and myself I offer condolences to the Prentice family and our Legislature colleagues. As I've said since Mr. Prentice has passed, anyone who puts himself out for public office really does put themselves out there. He served Albertans both federally and provincially, and he served us faithfully.

I would ask if the House leader of the opposition would like to say anything and Dr. Starke when he's online.

Mr. Cooper: Thank you, Chair. I, too, would like to pass along on behalf of the Wildrose caucus and certainly all members of the Assembly our thoughts and prayers to the Prentice family and to the other families who are affected by this horrible tragedy.

I had the opportunity of working both with Mr. Prentice and his family on some federal campaigns and certainly working with his office while he was the Premier and I worked with the Official Opposition. He was always very fair and made an effort to put Alberta's interests ahead of his own political interests, and I think it's something that we can all aspire to do.

My thoughts are also with the PC caucus as they grieve through another very traumatic event. I think it is another reminder to us all to ensure that we prioritize our family, just as Mr. Prentice did. The work that we do is of significant importance, and the work of the province is of significant importance, but we never do know what tomorrow holds, so we ought to keep that in mind while we go about our important work.

Thank you for the opportunity. Again, our thoughts and prayers are with the Prentice family.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Cooper.

Dr. Starke is not here just yet.

I would ask that the members and those joining the committee at the table introduce themselves for the record. I will then call on the members joining the meeting via teleconference to introduce themselves. I will start to my right.

Ms Babcock: Good morning. Erin Babcock, MLA for Stony Plain and the deputy chair of this committee.

Ms Goehring: Good morning. Nicole Goehring, Edmonton-Castle Downs.

Mr. Carson: Good morning. Jon Carson, MLA for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

Loyola: Rod Loyola, MLA for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Dr. Turner: Bob Turner, MLA, Edmonton-Whitemud.

Ms McPherson: Karen McPherson, MLA, Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

Mr. van Dijken: Glenn van Dijken, MLA, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

Mr. Schneider: Dave Schneider, MLA, Little Bow.

Mr. Cooper: Good morning. Nathan Cooper, the MLA for the outstanding constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Dr. Massolin: Good morning. Philip Massolin, manager of research and committee services.

Ms Dean: Shannon Dean, Law Clerk and director of House services.

Mrs. Sawchuk: Karen Sawchuk, committee clerk.

The Chair: On the phone lines. Mrs. Aheer.

Mrs. Aheer: Good morning, everyone.

The Chair: Mr. Coolahan.

Mr. Coolahan: Hi. Craig Coolahan, MLA, Calgary-Klein.

The Chair: Ms Kazim.

Ms Kazim: Good morning. Anam Kazim, MLA, Calgary-Glenmore.

The Chair: Thank you.

For the record I would note the following substitutions: Mr. Gill for Mr. Ellis, Dr. Turner for Mr. Nielsen, Mrs. Aheer for Mr. Hanson.

Dr. Starke, if you'd introduce yourself, please.

Dr. Starke: Yes. Thank you, Chair. Good morning, everyone. Richard Starke, MLA, Vermilion-Lloydminster.

The Chair: I will also go back. Dr. Starke, we did have some words of condolence to the Prentice family, to you, and to the rest of your caucus. If you would like to share a few words, that would certainly be appreciated.

Dr. Starke: Well, thank you, Chair. You know, clearly, this has been a very difficult past few days for all of us in our Progressive Conservative family. Mr. Prentice was certainly widely respected by representatives of all political persuasion, and his tragic death has left a huge void, especially in his family and his significant circle of friends, which is large and includes people right across the country and indeed outside of our nation.

His contributions are being enumerated over the course of the last few days, and they are many, and they are significant. His contributions to Alberta and to Canada are ones that we will forever cherish. You know, I think it goes without saying that to have lost Manmeet Bhullar in the past year and now to have lost Premier Prentice within the space of less than a year is certainly a very difficult thing. I guess the one thing that I heard over the course of the weekend that did make me smile was that someone had said that perhaps by whatever means are available that we don't yet understand on this Earth, two old friends are once again together and enjoying a smile and a laugh together. If there's anything about this whole terrible set of circumstances that is perhaps a silver lining, I'll hold out hope that that is the case.

To everyone that's reached out to the members of our caucus and expressed their condolences, I appreciate your thoughts. I appreciate your prayers and certainly ask that you also forward those on not just to members of our caucus but also to the Prentice family, who obviously have suffered a devastating, devastating loss.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Dr. Starke.

The meeting agenda and other documents were posted to the committee's internal website for members' information. Before we

turn to the business at hand, a few operational items. The microphone consoles are operated by *Hansard* staff. Please keep mobile devices on silent and off the table as they can interfere with the audiofeed. Audio of committee proceedings is streamed live on the Internet and recorded by *Alberta Hansard*. Audio access and meeting transcripts are obtained via the Legislative Assembly website. Again, from me personally, when you speak, if you would please speak right into the mike so I can hear you clearly. Thank you.

Now, would a member move adoption of the meeting agenda? So moved by Mr. Carson.

[An electronic device sounded] Thank you, Mr. Gill.

Mr. Gill: Thank you.

The Chair: All in favour of the agenda, please say aye. Those on the phone? No one opposed, obviously. The motion is carried.

We're moving on to the minutes from our last meeting. Are there any errors or omissions to note? Would a member move adoption of the September 14, 2016, minutes?

Loyola: I so move, Madam Chair.

10:10

The Chair: Member Loyola has so moved. All those in favour, please say aye. On the phone? Anyone opposed? Thank you.

Research services: crossjurisdictional information on deferred votes and quorum. I would ask Dr. Massolin to address the interjurisdictional report, which was also posted to our internal committee website for members' information. The floor is yours.

Dr. Massolin: Thank you. At the last meeting, on the 14th of September, a request was made by the committee for research services to look into two issues, quorum and deferred voting. I've done both of those things, and you have, as you mentioned, Madam Chair, received that report in written form. So I'm just going to go over a few highlights now orally and answer questions if there are any.

To deal with deferred votes first, as the report, the briefing, indicates, several Canadian Assemblies, including the House of Commons, the Senate, Ontario, B.C., and Quebec, have deferred voting. Basically, that's a recorded division or a standing vote, as it's sometimes called.

Another thing I'd like to point out is the time to which a deferred vote is deferred. Basically, Ontario, Quebec, and New Brunswick all have an item of business under the daily Routine called deferred votes, and that is the time when deferred votes are taken. The other jurisdictions have a time that's set by the Speaker in consultation with the whips. It's a fairly complicated matter, that I've set out in this report, for the House of Commons and the Senate, so I won't go over it here.

Another thing to note is that, for the most part, debatable motions are the items for which deferred voting can take place, but there are several restrictions on deferred voting, the most notable of which, I think, is that deferred voting typically doesn't occur for committees of the whole House, items that occur there or votes that occur there.

The other thing that I just wanted to briefly state is that in the second part of this briefing, 3.0, it sets out the quorum in Canadian Assemblies. You can see the quorum numbers are indicated there as well as the total seats in each of those parliaments and the percentage that the quorum makes up of those seats.

That's all I have to say, but I'd be happy to answer any questions. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Dr. Massolin.
Any questions from the floor?

Dr. Turner: Dr. Massolin, the table titled Quorum in Canadian Assemblies details the ratio of quorum to total seats across Canada. Although this wasn't specifically asked for in the research request, did your research find any indication as to what determined quorum in these other Assemblies?

Dr. Massolin: Thank you, Madam Chair. No. I didn't look into that. I would note that in some cases, probably in many cases, although I can't verify this for sure, the quorum number hasn't been revised over time. I mean, as I've indicated in this report, Alberta's current quorum of 20 was set in 1916, so I would imagine that there's not a vigilance with respect to this ratio.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Dr. Massolin.

Dr. Turner: I mean, this could be a centennial project, then.

The Chair: Anything further? Member Cooper.

Mr. Cooper: Thank you, Chair. Thank you, Dr. Massolin and your team, for the brief. It is appreciated.

I just wanted to seek some clarification from you and make sure that I understood. Now, while, you know, there obviously are deferred votes in a number of Canadian jurisdictions, Saskatchewan, Northwest Territories, Nunavut, P.E.I., Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, and Alberta currently don't. Was there any jurisdiction that you found that automatically deferred all votes during a period of time? It seems to me that the majority of them were done on agreement of whips or at House leaders' requests, these sorts of things, just basically setting off a block of time, say – I don't know – in the morning, where all votes would be deferred from the morning. Would that be quite unique in the crossjurisdictional research that was completed?

The Chair: Dr. Massolin.

Dr. Massolin: Thank you, Madam Chair. Mr. Cooper, if I understand your question correctly, you're asking whether or not votes, recorded votes, are deferred as a matter of course. Is that correct?

Mr. Cooper: Yeah, or if they're typically done on House leaders' or whips' agreement, as is outlined in a couple of spots in the document.

Dr. Massolin: Madam Chair, what I can say is that, yes, there are a few methods by which this happens. As you've indicated, Mr. Cooper: whips of recognized parties. That's one method where they make a request when the division is called and the bells are actually ringing. The Speaker, though, invariably has the ultimate decision-making power as to whether or not that vote can be deferred and to what time. Another method is B.C.'s method, where a government motion is actually passed. There is also reference to votes that can be automatically deferred. I mean, there's reference to that as well. I would say that the most common method is that method of a request to the Speaker and the Speaker making the decision. Again, there's nothing automatic in terms of the vote deferral system that's applied elsewhere.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Dr. Massolin.
Mr. Cooper, anything further?

Mr. Cooper: Just one quick follow-up, then. Typically speaking, there would be a request for the vote to be deferred. Do you know

if there needed to be agreement, say, like, from the Opposition House Leader or the opposition whip, on deferring votes or if it's just that one or the other would make the request and typically it would be granted, or would you be speculating?

Dr. Massolin: Madam Chair, through you to Mr. Cooper, it's a request, and of course the Speaker has the ultimate say in that. I would imagine that there's some discussion amongst the whips at the federal level for some of these, but I'm not absolutely sure exactly how that all plays out.

Thank you.

Mr. Cooper: Thank you.

The Chair: Does anybody on the phone have any questions?

Ms Kazim: Hi. I have a question, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Go ahead.

Ms Kazim: Okay. I would like to thank Dr. Massolin for this research. My question is in regard to, again, the fact that eight of the 15 Canadian Assemblies have a deferred division policy for the report. Similar to the previous question, did your research indicate why these Assemblies moved forward with deferred divisions?

The Chair: Dr. Massolin.

Dr. Massolin: Thank you, Madam Chair. I think that the common reason is to defer votes to a point in time when members, like, a goodly portion of members, could be present for the vote. That's one of the reasons, certainly. Predictability, regularity of voting, I think, is one of the major reasons for that. Important votes could be deferred for that very reason. Also, if you have an item in the Routine called deferred votes, I think members will always be aware of when those deferred votes will occur.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Dr. Massolin.

Ms Kazim: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Anybody else on the phone?

Mr. Gill: No.

The Chair: Was that you, Dr. Starke?

Mr. Gill: No. That was me.

The Chair: Okay. MLA McPherson.

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Madam Chair. I have a question about the relationship between quorum and deferred votes, if there is any. Six of the Assemblies with deferred votes actually have a lower quorum ratio than Alberta's, which is 23 per cent. Have you found that there's any relationship between quorum and deferred division, or is it just a coincidence?

10:20

Dr. Massolin: Madam Chair, I think it's just a coincidence.

Ms McPherson: Thanks.

The Chair: Okay. Anything further?

Ms McPherson: No. Thank you.

The Chair: Okay. Anybody else on the phone?

Thank you very much, Dr. Massolin.

We're at the stage now where we have received information via oral presentations as well as research briefings from the Legislative Assembly Office, including both a costing analysis and an interjurisdictional report addressing the issue of sitting times in Canadian jurisdictions at our last meeting. The committee also received an interjurisdictional report on morning sittings in Canadian assemblies at its June meeting. I would suggest that the committee has the information it requires to begin its deliberations today. If the committee decides to make a recommendation with respect to this issue, it will be put forward as a motion for discussion and ultimately for a vote by the committee.

Our LAO staff are here to assist in this respect, including any questions the committee may have with respect to the process as well as with drafting any motions. Would a member like to start our discussions in this respect?

Dr. Starke: Madam Chair, I think the easy thing to start with is the stuff that we can agree on. It's fairly straightforward and it may be a little bit in reverse order, but in my view and given the research that was done with regard to quorum, for Alberta I'm comfortable with a quorum of 20. I would be very uncomfortable with reducing the quorum that we currently have. I think Albertans expect at least a quarter of the members to be a bare minimum for our Assembly. If anything, based on the fact that 20 out of 56 members was the quorum established 100 years ago, if we were to go in any direction, it would be to increase the quorum, certainly not to decrease it as has been proposed.

I would move that

the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing recommend that there be no change in the standing orders with regard to quorum.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you, Dr. Starke.

Any discussion? On the phone, any discussion?

Okay. We have before us a motion. I'm going to ask the staff to advise me. The motion is that there be no change to the quorum. All those in favour, please say aye. On the phone? Anybody opposed? Seeing none, that recommendation is accepted.

Any additional discussion?

Ms Kazim: Yes. Madam Chair, I would like to initiate the discussion in regard to morning sittings. Morning sittings basically lead to less reliance on evening sittings, making the Legislature more family friendly. Keeping evening sittings provides a tool for the Legislature to complete its vital work. Also, morning sittings permit additional debate and less reliance on time allocation. This allows the members of the Assembly to have more time to engage in meaningful debate and improve legislation and discuss the matters that are very important to Albertans.

Therefore, I would like to propose a motion in regard to morning sittings, that

upon completion of its review of the operation of morning sittings brought into force by part A of Government Motion 19, the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing recommend to the Assembly that the practice of morning sittings continue.

The Chair: Thank you, MLA Kazim.

Any discussion? On the phone, any further discussion?

Dr. Starke: We have no issue with the continuation of morning sittings. We did have some discussion, though, as to whether the times of morning sittings should be adjusted from the current

Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday schedule of 10 to noon, 9 to noon, and 9 to noon. There was some suggestion made that if that schedule were altered to be 10 to noon on all three days, it would allow for additional time for cabinet and Treasury Board and other committees to meet starting at 8 o'clock and would also result, hopefully, in a greater level of attendance from members of cabinet, who have been notably absent at most of the morning sittings thus far. I'm wondering if we are going to discuss the possibility of changing the times, or is the intent of the mover to leave the times according to the current schedule?

The Chair: Thank you, Dr. Starke.

Any further comments?

Dr. Starke, are you proposing a motion?

Dr. Starke: No, not really. I'm proposing some clarification. I mean, the motion is that we continue with morning sittings. I don't have any issue with that. I think we should continue with morning sittings. I guess the question is: do we want to continue with the morning sittings as currently scheduled, or is there some adjustment that could be made that would allow, for example, for some committees to meet beginning at 8 o'clock on Wednesday and Thursday mornings and adjourning by 10? Then the members of those committees could participate in morning sittings starting at 10 o'clock. With morning sittings starting at 9, it's difficult to have those meetings.

As was indicated by the Government House Leader, cabinet and Treasury Board quite often meet in the mornings and are therefore precluded from participating in the debate that occurs during morning sittings. I had indicated that I felt that that was a loss to the Assembly, to not have cabinet ministers or members of Treasury Board present when we had those debates.

Ms Kazim: Madam Chair, I would like to confirm that the motion I moved is for the current times without changing the current times we have for the morning sittings.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you, Member Kazim.

Dr. Starke, I believe you would have heard her response, so are you proposing an amendment to that?

Dr. Starke: Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate the response from Member Kazim. That's helpful. You know, I'm okay with leaving it 9 till noon. I would just really like to see some cabinet ministers show up for morning sittings.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Dr. Starke.

Okay. We have a motion. MLA Cooper.

10:30

Mr. Cooper: Thank you, Chair. I, too, am in favour of morning sittings continuing although I do take some objection to the premise that was put forward by MLA Kazim with respect to what it actually does or doesn't do. The member made the case that morning sittings reduce time allocation and other procedural tools that are at the government's disposal. I would suggest that thus far some good working relationships with the opposition have more led to that and, in fact, that it isn't a direct result of morning sittings. Now, morning sittings certainly do decrease the number of evening sittings, I believe, that we have needed, but I think we should just be cautious in making assertions around things that it may or may not have done.

I certainly will support the continuation of morning sittings. I'll have some further discussion once this motion has passed.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you very much, MLA Cooper.

Any further comments? MLA Schneider.

Mr. Schneider: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just for my own clarification and for the record, I've heard this term over and over for about the last year and wonder if the mover of the motion could define the first of her reasons for believing that morning sittings are important, that being that sitting in the morning makes the Legislature a family-friendly place. You and I and Dr. Starke and most of us for the most part travel a long ways to be at the Legislature and stay for the entire week so that we can get it done. It certainly does nothing for my family. If it does something for somebody's family, I'd like to hear it if I could.

The Chair: Okay. MLA Kazim.

Ms Kazim: Yes. Thank you very much, MLA Schneider, for bringing this up. I'm happy to share my thoughts on this. The reason this is more family friendly is that when there are morning sittings, then it allows us to get work done in an efficient manner considering that it allows us to reduce our time sitting in the evenings. In that sense, like, when there is a need to sit in the evening, for discussion, for further debate, for further topics, or for other work that needs to be done that is so important to Albertans, it gives us extra time to get it done in the evenings. But at the same time, if you're able to wrap up things by incorporating morning sittings and finishing early in the evening, in that way it gives us that family-friendly schedule because then we are able to finish off just like any other workplace would do, starting in the morning and finishing early in the evening.

That would be my explanation for that.

The Chair: Thank you very much, MLA Kazim.

Anything further?

Ms Kazim: Sorry. I just would like to emphasize one more thing. It's not only for MLAs either. We understand that the discussions in the Chamber are public, and there are many people who actually follow those discussions online and share their views on different matters that are being discussed in the Assembly. So the hours that we work when we start in the morning are more suitable for Albertans as well to actually participate in the discussions that are taking place in the Chamber.

The Chair: Thank you, MLA Kazim.

Would anyone else like to speak to this? MLA Goehring.

Ms Goehring: Thank you, Madam Chair. As a parent and as a co-worker of many other people other than MLAs that work with us, having morning sittings does reduce the amount of evening sessions that we have. That allows not just the MLAs but all the support staff to have more free evenings, which includes family time. I agree with MLA Kazim that having the morning sittings does actually increase a family-friendly environment for all people that work in the Legislative Assembly.

The Chair: Thank you very much, MLA Goehring.

Any further discussion?

Dr. Starke: Yes. I mean, I really hate on this day to rain on the parade that we are hearing from the members of the government caucus, since there is actually freezing rain out in Lloydminster this morning as well, but I will say that the institution of morning sittings simply means that there is a shift in when the Assembly is doing its work.

The analyses that were provided by the Government House Leader indicating that it had been such a triumph in reducing the number of evening sittings are significantly skewed because in both

this past spring session as well as last fall's session we had estimates to go through. Estimates by their very definition mean that you cannot have evening sittings while estimates are going on. The fact that we had fewer evening sittings has less to do with the fact that there were morning sittings and much more with the fact that we had two consecutive sessions of the Legislature in which estimates were being discussed, and therefore evening sittings could not happen until estimates were concluded. As we know, estimates took up a significant amount of time in both last fall's session as well as this spring's session. So to suggest that morning sittings have somehow been the magical, key answer to reducing the number of evening sittings is simply not borne out by the facts.

Now, if people prefer to sit in the mornings as opposed to the evenings, that is fine, but MLA Schneider makes a very good point, that for the majority of the MLAs that serve in the Chamber, we are away from our families whether we sit in the mornings or whether we sit in the evenings or whether we sit both mornings and evenings. In that regard, I mean, to suggest that somehow morning sittings have magically made the dome a happy place, second only to Disneyland for families, I think is a little bit over the top. You know, I think it is a positive change in terms of bringing about the opportunity for additional debate time, and that's why members of our caucus are supportive of continuing with morning sittings.

But we also want those morning sittings to be useful and to bring about what I would consider fully participatory debate. You know, as much as I hate to bring the issue up again, when we have such poor attendance from members of Executive Council at morning sittings as we've seen in the past two sessions, I would have to say that having these sittings with participation only from private members of the government caucus and members of opposition caucus has been, I think, a less than full and fruitful debate.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Dr. Starke.

Any other discussion?

Okay. I'm going to read the motion again before we call for the vote. I'll ask Karen to read it.

Mrs. Sawchuk: Thank you, Madam Chair. Moved by Ms Kazim that upon completion of its review of the operation of morning sittings brought into force by part A of Government Motion 19, the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing recommend to the Assembly that the practice of morning sittings continue.

The Chair: Okay. You have the motion before you. All those in favour, please say aye. On the phone? Any opposed? Hearing none, the motion has been accepted.

Okay. Are there any other motions? Member Loyola.

Loyola: Thank you, Madam Chair. Through you to all members of the committee I'd like to propose a motion that the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing request that House leaders have further discussion regarding the possible usage of deferred votes.

The Chair: Thank you.

There is another motion on the floor. Any discussion? MLA Cooper.

10:40

Mr. Cooper: Thank you, Chair. I'd like to thank Member Loyola for his bold, bold motion to further discussions. I guess the end result of that bold motion would be that the Government House Leader and the House leaders of the opposition parties come to some sort of conclusion on whether or not deferred votes should

continue. I just would like to speak for the purposes of the record because the vast majority of those discussions will not be part of the public purview. When the House leaders meet, there is no committee staff or *Hansard* available.

I want to acknowledge that deferred votes happen in many jurisdictions, but that doesn't make them right for Alberta. As part of discussions that the House leaders have, I will be making the case that deferred votes are not going to set up our Assembly for more robust and successful debate.

As Dr. Starke has already pointed out on a number of occasions, the attendance of Executive Council, members of cabinet, in the morning certainly hasn't been robust by any stretch of the imagination. In fact, there were numerous times inside the Chamber when no one – absolutely no one – from cabinet was on the front bench. I recall a time when the Leader of the Official Opposition was providing a response to the throne speech and there was no one from cabinet present.

If we take the step of deferring votes, it will magnify and allow government to not attend in the morning. It will simply create an environment that puts less importance on the hours of debate that take place in the morning than in any other session, and I don't think that's good for Albertans.

I think what we're actually seeing here is that the government, at the start of last session, got caught almost losing a vote in the morning, an important vote, on the Deputy Chair of Committees. Now, because we've heard from the Government House Leader – he came and presented and said that he thinks we ought to do that – government members are recommending that we have further discussion around it, so I can guess what those discussions are going to go like. After almost getting caught losing a vote in the morning, they want to make the rules in such a fashion that it's impossible for them to get caught and lose a vote in the morning.

I think it does not create the kind of environment where every hour of the Assembly is equally important. I get that it's important for members to be able to show up and vote and have some certainty on that, but the most important part in any member's day should be what is taking place in the Chamber.

I know that I will be advocating that we don't have deferred votes. I think there's a very realistic possibility that the Official Opposition's position won't be the one that the Assembly arrives at in the end, but deferred votes are good for government and bad for opposition because when the opposition stops debating, votes are called.

So who bears the primary responsibility of debate in the morning? It will be the Official Opposition and members of the opposition. Now, that's not to say that government members don't speak to legislation, but certainly it is the role of the opposition, the role that we take seriously and endeavour to do the best possible, to provide debate, provide alternatives, provide solutions around debate, and the government typically speaks one-third of what the opposition does.

So to make hours of debate less effective, less useful because of the government members knowing that there are not going to be any votes I just don't think is a step in the right direction. It's more about the government – and by government I mean cabinet – being able to go about their business in the morning without being distracted by the important work of the Assembly. I hope that you'll detect some of the sarcasm in my voice when I say "distracted" by the Assembly because they do have important work to do in the morning, and now they're setting up the rules so that they don't have to engage in the Assembly the way that the Assembly deserves.

I certainly will be advocating it. It's difficult to vote against a motion that encourages more discussion – I get that – but I'm not

in favour of more discussion because my concern is that no matter what discussion takes place, on October 31 we're going to see a motion from the Government House Leader, supported by his government colleagues, introducing deferred votes, which, again, is good for the government and bad for opposition.

I thought that when the new government was elected, we were going to work on a lot of these issues to strengthen our democracy, to strengthen the role of the Assembly, to strengthen the role of all voices in the Assembly, and it seems to me that we're actually moving in the other direction.

The Chair: Thank you, MLA Cooper.
MLA Loyola.

Loyola: Thank you, Madam Chair. A couple of points I'd like to make in response to my hon. friend across the way here. One, when the hon. Government House Leader came to present to this committee, he was providing suggestions. He wasn't necessarily tied to any of these ideas. Of course, everybody remembers that he presented three of them, deferred votes being one of them. It was an opportunity. He was providing an opportunity for us to engage in discussion, and from my recollection, as others, I believe, he wasn't necessarily tied to any of them. He was just basically saying: "Well, you know what? These are what other jurisdictions do across our great land, and we should consider them."

That being said, I also want to stress that our government is committed to having both members and ministers in the House for debate, and it has been the case in the previous sittings. Regardless of whether a deferred vote policy is implemented in the future or not, we are committed to having both members and ministers there.

I also want to state very importantly that I hear the member's arguments against, but I'd also like to stress that, you know, Albertans want to know where their representatives stand on particular issues. As the hon. member across the way recognized, yes, members and especially cabinet members do have responsibilities that from time to time call them away from the Assembly. As stated previously, Albertans want to know where their representatives stand, and this would provide an opportunity. I'm just saying that I'm considering all of the options here and the factors. This would provide the opportunity for Albertans to see where their representatives stand on a particular issue because they would then have to be in the House to vote, of course.

I want to thank the research staff for providing the research that they have and then take this opportunity to note that deferred votes would bring Alberta in line with eight of the 14 Assemblies in Canada, especially the larger jurisdictions, and I think that that's something that should be noted.

10:50

This motion is, again, a motion to encourage further discussion on behalf of the Government House Leader and the House leaders of the opposition, to continue discussing whether this is something that we want to do or not. I think that that provides the opportunity for those who are against it or for it or whatever the case may be to discuss it further and to then also stress that it wasn't really in the mandate of this committee to look at deferred votes. It was more to discuss morning sittings, which we have, and I'm happy that we've passed a motion on that. I would encourage all members of this committee to support the motion I have brought forward.

Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, MLA Loyola.
I think somebody on the phone wanted to say something. No? Anybody else here?

Mr. Cooper: Just briefly – and thank you to Member Loyola for his comments – you know, since we're holding other jurisdictions up in such high regard when it comes to formulating our standing orders. As we all know, each Assembly is master of its own domain, if you will. I think there's a *Seinfeld* quote in there somewhere. We've advocated very long and hard about sending legislation to committees, which most other jurisdictions do. Again, it's something that helps expand the legislative process so that members of the community – and I'm sure you've heard me chat about this in the House – experts in the field can have input into legislation. If you wouldn't mind, next time you happen to see the Government House Leader, just while we're talking about the great work that happens in other jurisdictions, perhaps you could encourage some of the other positions that the opposition has advocated for strongly when it comes to other jurisdictions.

I think, at the end of the day, there is . . . [An electronic device sounded] I know; me neither. I think even Siri doesn't understand the government's position on a lot of things.

I think, at the end of the day, while I am comfortable with more discussion – I think having discussion is very important – the end result of where that discussion ends up is quite likely a deferred vote method. Again, there are all sorts of issues there, like because nothing goes to committee here, what are we going to do for Committee of the Whole, and how will that affect the morning? But this sounds to me like these are probably discussions that the House leaders will have.

I think that I will not support the motion because of a lot of the risks that come along with it. When the motion passes, I look forward to having discussions with the Government House Leader on this issue.

The Chair: Thank you, MLA Cooper.
MLA Loyola.

Loyola: Yes. Thank you very much, Madam Chair. You know, I'd really like to take advantage of the fact that we have one of the House leaders, specifically the House leader of the third party, on the committee with us and ask him if he wouldn't mind sharing his thoughts on this particular motion.

The Chair: Dr. Starke.

Mr. Cooper: The former House leader, I might add.

Dr. Starke: Thank you, Chair.

Loyola: I stand corrected.

Dr. Starke: Well, I think that probably the folks in the room have already been informed that I'm no longer the House leader for the Progressive Conservative caucus – I resigned that position last Tuesday – and the new Progressive Conservative caucus House leader is Mr. Rodney. Nonetheless, I will offer some perspective because I was eager to get into this debate and was waiting for my opportunity to speak.

I'm not at all comfortable with leaving this discussion and turning it over to the House leaders of the respective parties. I think that is a big, big mistake. This committee is tasked with the review of the standing orders. If we're going to have deferred votes – and I actually see both the pros and the cons of deferred votes – those deferred votes should be put in place by way of a change to the standing orders, not by way of some backroom handshake agreement between the House leaders. This is a fundamental change in the way we conduct our business in the Legislature, and therefore

it should be governed by a standing order and not governed by an agreement. So I'm opposed to the motion as it has been proposed.

You know, as much as I hate to take issue with a statement that was made by the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie, I do have to say that I take a certain amount of issue with the statement you made that your government is committed to having both private members as well as ministers in attendance in the House. I think, as we pointed out on more than one occasion, that the attendance by ministers in the House in morning sittings has been abysmal.

You stated that it was important that ministers be present but that from time to time their presence away from the Chamber is required because of their various duties. I'm certainly very familiar with that scenario. But when I participated in the previous government, we basically had a standing rule that at the very minimum one-third of Executive Council was to be in attendance at all times in the House participating and listening to the debate that was going on. We never had a situation where the level of attendance was as low as what we have seen for the past 17 months from the current government.

The other thing I want to say about deferred votes is that I think we've zeroed in a little bit too much on deferred votes just in morning sittings. The Official Opposition House Leader has really talked a lot about how that is advantageous to government. I think deferred votes, though, do provide an opportunity for a larger percentage of the Members of the Legislative Assembly to be on the record in the case of a recorded division, and I do think that is important.

I do agree with Member Loyola in stating that I think Albertans expect to know how their elected representatives voted on things. When you have votes that occur basically at any time and given that House duty schedules are such that, you know, over the course of sort of regular debate it is not uncommon for there to only be 40 or 50 members of the 87 present, it means that our constituents often do not know what our position was on a given vote simply because we weren't in the Chamber at the time the vote was taken and at the time the division was recorded, and I do think that's problematic.

I think that deferred votes have a purpose in terms of allowing for members to be on the record as to how they stand on specific issues, and I think that's precisely the reason why in many jurisdictions the deferred vote occurs as a matter of routine business, as a matter of routine Orders of the Day, usually right around the conclusion of question period because, as we know, during question period at least the attendance in the House tends to be pretty close to one hundred per cent. You know, that would be a logical time to have the deferred votes occur.

I know what the Official Opposition House Leader is saying, you know, about how the government will never be sort of caught in a situation where it doesn't have its adequate number of votes in order to move ahead on one of its positions. I think that principle, though, to me, is less critical than the principle of being able to have a greater number of members participating in a recorded division.

In that regard, I especially speak to our two independent members, who, you know, if it is a late night session or an early morning session – and this is the other thing. Deferred votes are not just for morning votes. They could also be used for late night votes. If the attendance in the Chamber has dwindled, as it sometimes does when the debates go into the later hours of the evening, a deferred vote would allow for all members of the Legislature, including those representing very small caucuses or, in fact, independent members, to participate and have their voice recorded and have their division recorded.

So two main points, Madam Chair. I'm opposed to the motion because it turns this decision over to the House leaders. Notwithstanding the fact that I'm no longer a House leader, even if I was still a House leader, I would not want to be in a position where I

was making that decision. This decision properly rests with this committee and not with the House leaders.

My second point is that while I appreciate the points that were made by the Official Opposition House Leader with regard to deferred votes, I think the principle of having a higher rate of participation in a division and having that division recorded with the maximum possible number of members in the Chamber – i.e., during routine proceedings, especially immediately after question period – makes sense. I think that is a practice that we should take a look at, and then we should amend the standing orders accordingly.

Thank you.

11:00

The Chair: Thank you very much, Dr. Starke.
MLA Loyola.

Loyola: Thank you, Madam Chair, once again for giving me the opportunity to speak. I think that I've made it abundantly clear in several committees that, you know, the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie is not unyielding and that I appreciate listening to the different opinions, but it seems that we don't have agreement between the two opposition parties. One likes the idea of deferred votes, and the other doesn't.

One thing that I do want to say and stress is that this government is a hundred per cent dedicated to transparency. Conversations between the Government House Leader and the House leaders of the opposition are a common occurrence. These matters occur perhaps even daily, that there are discussions with the Government House Leader. So I take – well, I'll just say that I don't necessarily consider continuing the discussion about deferred votes and leaving that to the House leaders a backroom deal. Correct me if I'm wrong, Dr. Massolin, but my understanding is that if we were to come to some kind of an agreement on deferred votes, that would have to come through the House. Am I correct in that understanding? I'll wait for a response, please.

The Chair: Dr. Massolin.

Dr. Massolin: Thank you, Madam Chair. I think a method by which a standing order change could occur would be through a government motion, and that would, yes, certainly have to be approved by the Assembly.

Thank you.

Loyola: So, indeed, it would have to be approved by the Assembly, which would mean that there would even be further discussion at a broader level. It just wouldn't be a backroom deal that would occur between the House leaders in secret. A motion would have to come forward before the whole Assembly, and there would be further discussion.

That being said, I'm comfortable with my motion as it stands. I think it encourages further discussion on behalf of all parties and that eventually it will be discussed in the Assembly. We'll see where it goes from there.

The Chair: Thank you, MLA Loyola.

MLA Cooper, did you have something further?

Mr. Cooper: No. Briefly, then, I think I just wanted to seek the same clarification. It's my understanding that there's no other mechanism to change the standing orders than to require a government motion.

But I do share some of Dr. Starke's concerns in terms of my point at the beginning of what from time to time turns into a longer

explanation than it sometimes needs to take. I wanted to be on the record because those House leader meetings do take place separately from the committee structure, so I think that there is some merit to that. But I also agree that this committee's only ability is to make a recommendation to the House and then subsequently make a standing order change there.

I am sympathetic to Dr. Starke's concerns. Also, for all the reasons I laid out earlier, I still have major concerns around deferring votes, which, when we started this discussion, was predominantly about deferring votes in the mornings. It will be interesting to see how that discussion fills out as we go forward, but I will be voting against the motion.

The Chair: Thank you very much, MLA Cooper.
Any further discussion?

Dr. Starke: Chair, just very briefly.

The Chair: Go ahead, Dr. Starke.

Dr. Starke: I just want to pick up on a couple of the comments made by Member Loyola. He's absolutely correct in stating that there are discussions that go on, in some cases on an almost daily basis, between the House leaders of the various caucuses. But I want to make it very clear that those discussions, generally speaking, are just to determine, you know, how many speakers, for example, there will be on a certain issue, how many amendments different caucuses are proposing to bring forward, or on a larger scale, for example, on allocation of questions during question period or allocation of members' statements.

All of those, though, are within the existing framework and structure of the standing orders, and those standing orders, as I stated before, are standing orders that are established by this committee, not by a committee of the House leaders. You know, as Dr. Massolin pointed out, any change that would bring in deferred votes would still, in my view – and I think he bears this out – require a change to the standing orders and would therefore then need to be brought forward to the Assembly for debate and a vote. I just do not feel that a change in the standing orders should be generated or should be initiated from a discussion by the House leaders. I think the proper forum for a change in the standing orders is to have that come from the committee that we sit on. That's my objection to this motion.

I believe that to a certain extent we're abdicating our responsibility, as a committee that is in charge of standing orders, to the House leaders, and I'm not comfortable with that if for no other reason than that those discussions, you know, often exclude the independent members, who are most often included in our discussions by courtesy, but because they do not have official party status within the Assembly, their participation in those discussions is not always something that is done.

Again, I think that if we're going to have deferred votes, if that's something that people want to have a discussion on, as I said before, I would be prepared to look at it. I do see that there are, you know, two sides to the whole discussion with regard to deferred votes, but that discussion and that recommendation for change should come not from a meeting of House leaders but should come from this committee.

The Chair: Thank you, Dr. Starke.

We have a motion before us, and I'll have Karen read it, please.

Mrs. Sawchuk: Thank you, Madam Chair. Moved by Member Loyola that the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections,

Standing Orders and Printing request that House leaders have further discussion on the potential of deferred votes.

The Chair: Okay. You have a motion before you. All those in favour, please say aye. On the phone? All those opposed?

Okay. Could I go back to the phone again, and could you say your name when you vote, please. Okay. The motion has passed.

Okay. We've covered a lot of ground, and I believe that our research staff can be tasked with the drafting of a report based on our discussions and the motions passed.

MLA Cooper.

Mr. Cooper: Sorry. I have an additional motion with respect to morning sittings.

The Chair: Okay. Go ahead.

Mr. Cooper: During the time of our discussion I have spoken at some length about how evening sittings affect morning sittings. We've seen that while the cost per hour over a number of sessions has remained fairly consistent, certainly when we sit in the morning and in the evening, the costs do increase, and there are a lot of other factors with respect to ensuring good governance, not just quantity of governance.

11:10

We see in a lot of other jurisdictions, while we're upholding them in such wonderful light, that there are times that the evening sittings stop no matter what. The motion I'm proposing does have an impact directly on morning sittings, and I'll read it for the record. I move that

the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing recommend that the standing orders be amended to provide for a fixed adjournment time of 10:30 p.m. for evening sittings, which may be extended upon the Government House Leader providing oral notice under Notices of Motions during the daily Routine no later than that day, and if an evening sitting continues past 11 p.m., there shall be no morning sitting the following day.

As I mentioned, much of my concern around three sessions a day is around the ability for the Assembly to function at its peak. I believe that if an evening sitting is going to 12, 1, 2, very often the level of quality of debate decreases, and we see in many jurisdictions that they provide an absolute will-not-go-past time. I think that this motion is quite generous to the Government House Leader, which provides him the ability to continue past 10:30 although I think that debate should never go past that. If, in fact, this is under the premise, if you will, how we arrived here, of a family-friendly Legislature, I can tell you, in debating the level of family-friendliness of the Chamber, I think I've heard from hundreds of Albertans in the constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills that currently are unemployed that they would be more than happy to work under whatever conditions we have to work under.

I think that at times like this, when we're debating our working conditions, sometimes I'm not sure that it's the best, but in this case it allows the Government House Leader to provide notice. So if he wants to try to run the opposition out in their debate, it still provides the release valve if he intends to use that. But then he has to make a decision, based upon if the sitting continues past 11 p.m., that there would be no morning sitting the following morning, which would allow Assembly staff, table officers, security personnel to govern themselves accordingly when it comes to sitting well into the evening and then needing to be there again at 9 a.m.

So I think it strikes a good balance. There's a compromise here that will be required from the government. The first draft of this

motion certainly had just an adjournment of 10:30. I have said much about the rules of the Assembly and how they're weighted in the favour of the government, and I think that this is one of the ways that provides some certainty to the opposition on the agendas of the day.

I hope that you'll support this reasonable compromise and that we can make this recommendation to the Assembly.

The Chair: Thank you, MLA Cooper.

For those of you on the phone, the motion has been e-mailed to you.

Discussion on the motion?

Ms Kazim: Yes.

The Chair: Go ahead, MLA Kazim.

Ms Kazim: Thank you, Madam Chair. In regard to night sittings, the restriction on the time, the reason I would not support the idea of putting a restriction on the time for evening sittings is because it actually allows us to get the important work or discussion ongoing and it reduces the time frame for the session itself. When it comes to the idea of family friendly, a part of it is that many of us are away from our hometowns when we are in the Legislature, so if we do not continue with our debate or if there is something important on hand that is being discussed and we continue without setting a restriction on the time limit, then we are able to reduce session times, and the number of days for us to stay in Edmonton would be lowered that way. In that regard I would basically prefer to have things the way they are because the evening sittings give us that venue to get anything that needs to be done completed in a timely manner.

That would be my comment on this.

The Chair: Thank you, MLA Kazim.
MLA McPherson.

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Madam Chair. I wanted to actually speak against the motion for a few different reasons.

Mr. Cooper: I'm shocked.

Ms McPherson: I know. It is shocking.

The first one is the logistics of cancelling a morning session. There's a lot involved for many people. Pages are one example. For anybody that has any child care or elder care to arrange, it just really disrupts what would otherwise be a reliable schedule. I don't think that does anyone any good.

Secondly, you had mentioned something about the cost of having evening sittings. It costs more, but if we limit the amount of time for evening sittings, then what would logically happen is that the dates that we're sitting would actually extend, so we wouldn't end up saving any money in that regard. We would still have to have the same people there, just at different times.

The third one is that while I appreciate the idea of compromise, the actions of the opposition in the past in extending debates past midnight have not reflected wanting to get home any earlier, so I'm a little surprised by that reasoning.

That's what I have to say. Thanks very much.

The Chair: Thank you, MLA McPherson.
Anything further? MLA Cooper.

Mr. Cooper: Thank you, Chair. It seems to me that Member Kazim earlier in the meeting was arguing one side of the coin and now is arguing the opposite side of the coin with respect to the merits of morning sittings and how we don't have to sit nights. Now she's saying: oh, well, let's just sit till 2 or 3 in the morning because we

need to be able to get home to our families. It does seem a little bit strange that you would, you know, debate both sides of the same coin.

If we look across the jurisdictions, Ontario sits till 9:30 but no later than 12. There is PEI: 7 to 9. Newfoundland: 7 to 10. All these jurisdictions have an actual time that the Assembly stops, so it's not like we're doing anything particularly different. The government likes to be able to limit days of sitting by the use of late-night sittings because it often allows the government to be less accountable because one of the challenges with our system is that question period seems to be the most used or most watched or most paid-attention-to period of the day. What I hear you saying is that you'd like to limit the total number of sitting days that we have, and a direct result of doing that is fewer question periods where the opposition has the opportunity to hold the government to account.

You know, if we want to get into a discussion around the total number of days that the Alberta Assembly sits, which is well and truly in the bottom third of all Chambers across the country, part of sitting is being open and transparent, and passing legislation under the cover of darkness at 2 a.m., 1 a.m., 3 a.m., 4 a.m., as we saw in the last sitting, does not create transparency.

11:20

The solution is not to have the opposition stop debating. The solution isn't to have the opposition stop representing the needs of their constituents or of Albertans. This motion provides for the Chamber to be functioning while more Albertans have the opportunity to watch. It also provides the release valve that from time to time the Government House Leader may need to use on pieces of legislation that both the opposition and the government are stuck on.

One thing that government members may not be aware of is that the Government House Leader isn't required to provide notice of what is to be debated in the morning session until the close of the previous session. While I will acknowledge that the Government House Leader's office has often been willing to provide the projected order of business for the morning, it's only convention that he, or she in the future, has done that. They could choose to not provide notice. Then we're in a situation where the other parties in the Chamber wouldn't know what's to be debated at 9 a.m. until 1, 2, 3, 4 o'clock in the morning. So then to, you know, prepare for that debate at 9 a.m. or 10, depending on the day of the week, presents some real and significant challenges.

This is about trying to ensure that the work that's done in the Chamber is done as effectively as well as openly and as transparently as possible, and I think that this motion checks off many of those boxes. It sounds to me like the government members are going to vote against it, so I'm not going to take all morning to debate the finer points, but I think that this is a very, very reasonable compromise to a challenge that not just the Official Opposition but all members of the Chamber face.

At the end of the day the rules of that place are our rules, and we have the opportunity to make a recommendation to the Government House Leader and to the Assembly – more importantly, to the Assembly – that is a reasonable compromise, that gives all of the legislative tools that the government needs to get through the last eight days of a session or 10 days or whatever it winds up being but also respects everyone that works in the precinct.

The Chair: Thank you, MLA Cooper.
MLA McPherson.

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just a couple of things that I want to address from MLA Cooper's remarks. If we don't

limit the amount of time that we debate in the evening and we are committed to transparency, one tool that we already have and one that we could have would really accommodate that. The tool that we already have is that all the proceedings are recorded, so anyone that's dedicated can definitely go back and take a look if it's too late for them to stay online.

The second thing that struck me while MLA Cooper was speaking was that deferred votes would actually accommodate this very well. So we could debate late in the evening and then have a deferred vote on, say, Wednesday morning so that it would be transparent to all what the outcome was.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, MLA McPherson.

Mr. Cooper: Well, there will be no better way to stop an evening sitting than to recommend a deferred vote because we can't continue voting past the time that the vote is to be called, so I look forward to stopping debate at 10 o'clock, apparently, or whatever time when we use a procedural motion to stop debate so that we can defer it, but it's not the intention ever, rarely, of the opposition to be obstructionary.

Ms McPherson: Really?

Mr. Cooper: I get that government members think we just want to be mean and angry. That's not the case. Our intention is always to work to better legislation. Now, there have been a couple of pieces of legislation that there was some significant differing of opinion on, and as a result the opposition needed to use the tools that it had at its disposal to debate those. Debating pieces of legislation fully and robustly is the role of all of us. I have heard from a number of government members some concern, when we're, like, six, eight hours into debating a piece of legislation, that we're being obstructionary. It's just not the case. We have a responsibility just like you do, and that means that the debate needs to be full. If that means proposing lots of amendments and ideas, then that's the process that we go through.

Now, from time to time there may be pieces of legislation that the Government House Leader and the government members will feel that we are being obstructionary on, and we have left the valve in the motion to prevent that from happening.

The Chair: Thank you, MLA Cooper.

MLA van Dijken.

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'll speak in favour of the motion that's before us. With regard to the desire by all members to apparently make the Legislature more family friendly and in response to comments made by MLA McPherson with regard to the ability to schedule and to work in child care and elder care needs, this motion, in my opinion, actually helps that and gives a little bit more certainty to the closure for an evening sitting and also a little more certainty to the fact that, well, if we do go beyond 11 p.m. and we're going into the wee hours of the night, there will be the ability for members to spend the time in the morning on their family needs and to be able to work in a way that they are not required to be back at the Assembly by 9 a.m. and scheduling child care and elder care appropriately. You know, I think the motion that has come forward from Member Cooper is good in respect of all parties within the Legislative Assembly, and it also helps us as we move forward into what could be construed as more family friendly.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, MLA van Dijken.

Now, anybody on the phone? Any comments on this motion?

I will call the question on the motion. All in favour? On the phone, all in favour? All those opposed to the motion, please say no. One the phone? Okay. Thank you. The motion is defeated.

11:30

Okay. Are there any other motions to come to the floor?

Seeing none, okay. Now, we've covered a lot of ground today, and I believe that our research staff can be tasked with the drafting of a report based on our discussions and the motions passed.

Dr. Massolin, would you have anything to add at this point?

Dr. Massolin: Not really, Madam Chair, except to say that a little bit of rationale for the decisions made by the committee will be added to that in our draft of the report for the committee.

Thank you.

The Chair: Okay. Would a member be prepared to move the following suggested draft motion? That

the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing direct research services to draft a report respecting the committee's review of the operation of morning sittings of the Assembly, incorporating any recommendations approved at the October 17, 2016, committee meeting.

Loyola: I so move, Madam Chair.

The Chair: MLA Loyola. Thank you. Any discussion on this motion? On the phone?

I will call the question. All those in favour, please say aye. On the phone? All those opposed, please say no. Hearing none, the motion has been carried.

Okay. A practice of the various legislative committees has been to authorize the chair and the deputy chair to approve the final report once committee members have had the opportunity to review the draft final report. Is the committee in agreement with this proposal?

Mr. Cooper: I just have one quick question. On a pretty wide swath of committees, particularly in the form of standing committees, legislative policy committees, the deputy chair is often a member of the opposition, so, you know, with the approval of the report in that case, obviously the majority of parties in the Assembly have an opportunity to take a peek at the report prior to its approval. I wonder if there's any ability for us to see a draft copy, and that would at least allow us the opportunity to say: oh, this wasn't quite like we'd expected. You guys still have the ability to approve it, but at least we'd see it and take it from there.

The Chair: Okay. I did say: "once committee members have had the opportunity to review the draft final report."

Mr. Cooper: That will be sufficient for us.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.

Loyola: Madam Chair, I so move the desired motion.

The Chair: Thank you very much, MLA Loyola. Moved by MLA Loyola that

the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing authorize the chair and the deputy chair to approve the final report on the review of the operation of morning sittings of the Assembly.

Any discussion on this motion? On the phone?

I will call the question. All in favour, please say aye. On the phone? Those opposed, please say no. On the phone? The motion is carried.

For members' information, the committee report will be tabled via intersessional deposit on or before October 27. Once committee members have had an opportunity to review the report, please note that minority reports, if any, should be sent to the committee clerk no later than the close of business on Tuesday, October 25, to be appended to the report prior to tabling.

Dr. Massolin, could you give us an idea of the timeline for drafting the report and distribution of the report to the committee?

Dr. Massolin: Thank you, Madam Chair. I will endeavour to prepare the report as quickly as possible, and the hope is to prepare something for the end of business on Wednesday or early on Thursday, and that draft report will then be posted for all the committee.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Dr. Massolin.

Is there any other business for discussion? On the phone?

As members are aware, this committee meets only when the House has referred a matter for consideration.

Now I need a motion for adjournment.

Mr. Cooper: So moved.

The Chair: Thank you very much, MLA Cooper. All in favour? Okay.

I'd just like to say thank you for the discussion this morning and for the work that we did as a committee. Thank you very much.

[The committee adjourned at 11:37 a.m.]

