



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

The 30th Legislature
Third Session

Standing Committee
on
Privileges and Elections,
Standing Orders and Printing

Tuesday, September 13, 2022
9 a.m.

Transcript No. 30-3-2

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta
The 30th Legislature
Third Session**

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

Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (UC), Chair
Reid, Roger W., Livingstone-Macleod (UC), Deputy Chair
Rosin, Miranda D., Banff-Kananaskis (UC),* Acting Deputy Chair

Aheer, Leela Sharon, Chestermere-Strathmore (UC)
Armstrong-Homeniuk, Jackie, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (UC)
Deol, Jasvir, Edmonton-Meadows (NDP)
Ganley, Kathleen T., Calgary-Mountain View (NDP)
Gottfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (UC)
Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (NDP)
Neudorf, Nathan T., Lethbridge-East (UC)
Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (NDP)
Stephan, Jason, Red Deer-South (UC)
Williams, Dan D.A., Peace River (UC)
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UC)**

* substitution for Roger Reid

** substitution for Jackie Armstrong-Homeniuk

Support Staff

Shannon Dean, KC	Clerk
Teri Cherkewich	Law Clerk
Trafton Koenig	Senior Parliamentary Counsel
Philip Massolin	Clerk Assistant and Director of House Services
Nancy Robert	Clerk of <i>Journals</i> and Committees
Sarah Amato	Research Officer
Christina Williamson	Research Officer
Warren Huffman	Committee Clerk
Jody Rempel	Committee Clerk
Aaron Roth	Committee Clerk
Rhonda Sorensen	Manager of Corporate Communications
Shannon Parke	Communications Consultant
Tracey Sales	Communications Consultant
Janet Schwegel	Director of Parliamentary Programs
Amanda LeBlanc	Deputy Editor of <i>Alberta Hansard</i>

9 a.m.

Tuesday, September 13, 2022

[Mr. Smith in the chair]

The Chair: Good morning, everyone. Welcome to this meeting of the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing.

I'm Mark Smith, MLA for Drayton Valley-Devon and chair of the committee. I would ask the members and those joining the committee at the table to introduce themselves for the record.

Mr. Deol: Good morning. Jasvir Deol, MLA for Edmonton-Meadows. Thank you.

Dr. Massolin: Good morning. Philip Massolin, Clerk Assistant and director of House services.

Ms Robert: Good morning. Nancy Robert, clerk of *Journals* and committees.

Mr. Roth: Good morning. Aaron Roth, committee clerk.

The Chair: I would invite those members joining the meeting via Microsoft Teams to now introduce themselves. We'll start with Ms Rosin.

Ms Rosin: Good morning. This is Miranda Rosin, MLA for Banff-Kananaskis.

The Chair: Mrs. Aheer? Okay. We'll see if she gets on a little later.

Mr. Yao: Tany Yao, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

Ms Ganley: Good morning. Kathleen Ganley, Calgary-Mountain View. My apologies. I can't seem to get my camera to turn on, Mr. Chair, but good morning anyway.

The Chair: Good morning. Been there, done that.

Mr. Gotfried: Good morning, everyone. Richard Gotfried, MLA, Calgary-Fish Creek.

Member Loyola: Good morning, all. This is Rod Loyola, MLA, Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Mr. Neudorf: Good morning. Nathan Neudorf, MLA for Lethbridge-East.

Ms Renaud: Good morning. Marie Renaud, St. Albert.

The Chair: Mr. Stephan? Mr. Williams? Okay. When they get on, we will let them introduce themselves.

I will also note the following substitutions for today's meeting: Ms Rosin as deputy chair for Mr. Reid and Mr. Yao for the hon. Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk.

We have a few housekeeping items to address before we turn to the business at hand. Please note that the microphones are operated by *Hansard* staff and committee proceedings are live streamed on the Internet and broadcast on Alberta Assembly TV. The audio- and videostream and transcripts of meetings can be accessed via the Legislative Assembly website. Those participating by videoconference are encouraged to please turn on your camera while speaking and to mute your microphone when not speaking. Members participating virtually who wish to be placed on a speakers list are asked to e-mail or send a message in the group chat to the committee clerk, and members in the room are asked to please signal to the chair. Please set your cellphones and other devices to silent for the duration of this meeting.

We're now on to part 2 of our agenda, approval of the agenda. Would a member move adoption of our meeting agenda? Thank you, Mr. Deol. We have here: moved by Mr. Deol that the agenda for the September 13, 2022, meeting of the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing be adopted as circulated. Is there any discussion on the motion?

Hearing none, all in favour in the room? Opposed? Members online, all in favour? Any members online opposed? The motion is carried.

We're now on to part 3 of our agenda, the approval of minutes from the previous meeting. Would a member move the approval of the minutes from the previous meeting, May 31, 2022? Moved by Mr. Deol that the minutes of the May 31, 2022, meeting of the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing be adopted as circulated. Is there any discussion on the motion?

Within the room, all in favour? Opposed? Members online, all in favour? Those opposed? Thank you. The motion is carried.

We'll just break here for a second. Mr. Williams, perhaps you would like to introduce yourself for the record.

Mr. Williams: Sure. MLA for the Peace River constituency. I apologize for being a few minutes late.

The Chair: Thank you for being here.

Mr. Williams: Thank you, Chair.

The Chair: Okay. Hon. members, at our May 31, 2022, meeting the committee directed research services to prepare two documents as part of our review of Standing Order 29.1, the interventions rule. Research services has posted to the internal website a crossjurisdictional survey of the interventions processes in various Commonwealth parliaments and also a summary of the feedback received from members through the survey the committee conducted in June 2022.

We shall first open with a discussion on the crossjurisdictional research provided to the committee. I would like to invite Nancy Robert, clerk of *Journals* and committees, to provide an overview of the document. Ms Robert.

Ms Robert: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Good morning again, everyone. First, as the chair suggested, I will just give you a very high-level overview of the crossjurisdictional comparison of the interventions rule in Westminster parliamentary jurisdictions. I trust that you all have seen a copy of it as it was posted to the internal website a ways back.

Just very, very quickly, the survey reviewed 10 other jurisdictions outside of Alberta throughout the Commonwealth. Those include the U.K. House of Commons, Scotland, Wales, New Zealand, the Australia House of Representatives, the Antigua and Barbuda House of Representatives, the Granada House of Representatives, the Jamaica House of Representatives, the Solomon Islands National Parliament, and the Trinidad and Tobago House of Representatives.

The survey sort of gives a general overview of the interventions rule in all of those parliaments and Legislatures, but it did focus sort of on six key questions related to things that research services felt that the committee was interested in finding out more about, particularly involvement of the presiding officer, the number of interventions, timing for interventions, whether interventions are mandatory, that sort of thing.

Just to give you a little synopsis, Alberta's intervention process is unique amongst these other surveyed jurisdictions in two ways. First, Alberta is the only jurisdiction surveyed that has a defined number of permitted interventions, and only Australia and Alberta define a particular time limit when an intervention is accepted. The

survey shows that no jurisdiction has mandatory interventions. In addition, no jurisdiction requires interventions to be taken from all caucuses equally.

With respect to the presiding officer role in interventions in these different jurisdictions a little more than half, so six of the 10 outside of Alberta, do have a bit of a role for the Speaker. In some cases it's, you know, to recognize the member rising to intervene. In some cases it's to recognize the member who's been given permission to intervene to go ahead and start. In some cases it's to say: "You know what? There's not enough time left. You cannot intervene" or "We don't really need an intervention on this because there's already enough question-and-answer process," like the main estimates process in some places. That's sort of the type of involvement in six of the 10 jurisdictions.

That's a basic overview of the document, but I'd be happy to – I don't know if you want me to answer questions on this now or go to . . .

The Chair: We'll break them into two separate documents.

Ms Robert: Okay. Then I'm happy to try to answer any questions you might have. Thank you.

The Chair: Sure. We'll start first, though, by recognizing that I believe Mr. Stephan is now online. Mr. Stephan, if you want to introduce yourself for the record.

Mr. Stephan: Hello. MLA Jason Stephan for Red Deer-South. Thank you.

The Chair: Good morning.

Okay. If there are any questions and comments for Ms Robert with regard to the crossjurisdictional research, please let the chair know. Going once. Thank you very much.

Okay. Ms Robert, if you could provide an overview of the survey results from the members of the Legislature. Thank you.

9:10

Ms Robert: Certainly. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Again, the survey results were posted on the internal website. I trust all members have had an opportunity to have a look at that. Just as a reminder, as all members are aware, a survey was prepared and sent out by the committee to all Members of the Legislative Assembly seeking answers to certain questions and asking for input on the interventions rule. Thirty-eight responses were received: 19 from opposition members, 19 from government members.

Members were generally sort of neutral on their support or how much they like the interventions rule. Some were quite favourable, mostly government members, and others expressed concerns with the process, like, I think, having the Speaker involved and perhaps issues if they say no to an intervention, that type of thing.

There was a general sense that intervention should continue. More than 60 per cent of respondents suggested that. There were numerous suggestions made as to how the process might be improved, including increasing the role of the Speaker in terms of facilitating interventions and also in terms of keeping order and decorum when interventions are refused.

There were some alternating points of view as to whether interventions should be mandatory or remain up to the discretion of the member making the speech. Some members indicated there was difficulty seeing when another member wished to make an intervention due to their location in the Chamber, and opinion was divided as to whether interventions were a preferred process over questions and comments.

Again, I'll leave it there, but happy to try to answer any questions. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms Robert.

Are there any comments or questions in relation to the summary of the survey results? Yes, Mr. Deol.

Mr. Deol: I just want to point a little bit to corrections. You said 19 government members. I think it was 18 government members and one independent, right? That's what the report says. In total, 38 members responded: 18 government members . . .

Ms Robert: Oh. You're correct. I apologize. Yes; 18 government members, 19 Official Opposition caucus members, and one independent member. Yes.

The Chair: Thank you for that clarification.

Are there any other comments or questions that you would have for Ms Robert?

Hearing none, thank you for the work that you've done on behalf of us as MLAs and as a committee.

Hon. members, at this time the committee has received the research in relation to interventions in rule Standing Order 29.1. In addition, the committee has received the feedback of Members of the Legislative Assembly in relation to the interventions rule. I would like to open the floor to any comments or questions in relation to whether members feel it is necessary to seek any further consultation or research in relation to our review. I open this up to the committee. Is there any desire on behalf of this committee to seek more consultation or research? Mr. Yao.

Mr. Yao: Sorry. I just had one question, and that was the crossjurisdictional scan. I noticed no other provinces were in that crossjurisdictional scan. Is it fair to say that Alberta is the outlier in providing this type of intervention?

Thank you.

The Chair: Ms Robert.

Ms Robert: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, Mr. Yao, that's correct. Alberta is the only jurisdiction in the country that has an interventions process in their standing orders.

Mr. Yao: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Are there any other questions with regard to consultation, additional consultation, or research in relation to interventions?

Hearing none, we have arrived at the time in our review where the committee will commence its deliberations. At this time I would like to open the floor to any comments and motions that members may wish to bring forward. Ms Ganley.

Ms Ganley: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would like to move a motion. I believe it was presubmitted, so you probably have it there, the language. I would move that

the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing recommend that Standing Order 29.1 continue in its current form.

I guess I won't wait for you to get the – okay. There it is now. Just by way of a brief rationale, it's my opinion that it's working fairly well as it stands. Obviously, the reaction from various members was somewhat mixed, but I think the process has been working okay. Obviously, there's been a bit of a learning curve. There always is with everything, isn't there? But, yeah, I've enjoyed it. I think it has – I don't know – added to the kind of back and forth and interaction in the House, so I think it's overall been a good process.

Thanks.

The Chair: Mr. Williams.

Mr. Williams: Thank you. I agree with Ms Ganley that it's been working well, but I would agree also that there are some members that say that it needs to run a bit more smoothly. My sense, after the cross-jurisdictional scan and looking at clips from these different parliaments and Legislatures, is that many of the ones that also do not have a role for the presiding officer have had this in for decades, and they've worked out a bit of a culture of helping each other out, noticing when someone is behind them, being really clear when they say, "I will not be taking any interventions," and then the Chamber generally respects that if it's made clear.

I wonder if what we're going through is maybe that we just need to be more clear with each other in the Chamber and set a bit of a culture and a process for how we talk to each other. Maybe even don't be afraid to – I know we're not much of a heckling Chamber, and that's probably for the best – help out those behind and speak and say, "There's someone looking to intervene behind you" if you see that person. It doesn't have to be the Speaker. I see this in other Chambers, like in the U.K. – we watched that – also New Zealand. They'll be helping geographically locate someone behind them if they don't see it, and it's sort of a responsibility taken on by their colleagues on either side of the aisle.

Generally I think that it's been a successful attempt to try and raise the quality of debate, and I would agree it hasn't always been perfect. I myself sometimes have, you know, tried to have a bit of fun and then sometimes ruffle some feathers as I try and push forward interventions from my side. But I think that I and everyone take a respectful decorum when someone declines. That's really, really important for the success of the interventions, or else some folks will just feel intimidated or won't feel comfortable with interventions for fear of that afterwards.

I would support this as well, this motion from Member Ganley, but I do think it's valuable to talk as a committee about how it's been going in terms of the flow and how we can try and make sure that all members are able to, in a smooth way, intervene when they're accepted.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Williams.

Is there anyone else that would like to speak to the motion as presented?

Hearing none, okay. If not, we shall proceed to discuss – I suppose we have to deal with the motion. The motion as it reads: moved by hon. Ms Ganley that the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing recommend that Standing Order 29.1 continue in its current form. All those in favour within the room, please say aye. All those against in the room, please say no. All those online in favour of the motion, please say aye. Any against?

That motion is carried.

Are there any further comments or motions that members wish to bring forward?

If not, we shall proceed to discussing a report to the Legislative Assembly. Hon. members, part B of Motion Other than Government Motion 518, passed on June 7, 2021, directed the committee to "table a report in the Assembly on [its] review, which may include any

amendments recommended by the committee, within 365 days of the day on which the standing committee commences its review." We are now at the point in our review where the committee must consider its report to the Legislative Assembly. I would like to open the floor to a discussion on how members would like to proceed. Any comments?

Okay. I believe we actually have a motion that we could put forward if somebody was prepared to put their name forward with this motion. Could we have that motion up.

9:20

Mr. Williams: Sure. I'll move the motion.

The Chair: You'll move the motion, Mr. Williams?

Moved by Mr. Williams that

the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing direct research services to prepare a draft report of the committee's review of Standing Order 29.1, including any recommendations made by the committee, and that the chair be authorized to approve the draft report after it has been distributed to committee members for their review.

Is there any discussion with regard to this motion?

Hearing none, within the room, all in favour? Any opposed? Online, members on the phone, all in favour, please say aye. Any against?

That motion is carried.

Hon. members, if there are any minority reports that members wish to submit to the draft report before it is tabled, I would ask that they be sent to the committee clerk within five days after the draft report has been circulated to all committee members.

Hon. members, as the committee only meets at the direction of the Assembly and since there is currently no further business that has been referred to it, it is possible that this may be the last time that this committee meets for some time. Would someone be willing to move a motion for the chair to approve the minutes of this meeting after they have been circulated to all committee members for their review? Moved by Mr. Williams that

the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing authorize the chair to approve the draft minutes of the September 13, 2022, meeting of the committee after they have been circulated to all committee members for their review.

Is there any discussion on the motion?

Within the room, all in favour? Any opposed? Online, all in favour? Any opposed?

The motion is carried.

Under other business, do members have any other business that they wish to bring forward?

Hearing none, then at the call of the chair, upon referral of a matter from the Assembly, we will call another meeting of this committee.

Adjournment. Would a member like to move the motion to adjourn the September 13, 2022, meeting? Mr. Deol. All in favour of adjourning this meeting, please say aye. Online? Thank you. Any opposed? This meeting is adjourned. Thank you for your work.

[The committee adjourned at 9:24 a.m.]

