



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

The 27th Legislature  
Second Session

Standing Committee  
on  
Public Safety and Services

Monday, March 2, 2009  
6:42 p.m.

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**Legislative Assembly of Alberta  
The 27th Legislature  
Second Session**

**Standing Committee on Public Safety and Services**

VanderBurg, George, Whitecourt-Ste. Anne (PC), Chair  
Kang, Darshan S., Calgary-McCall (AL), Deputy Chair

Anderson, Rob, Airdrie-Chestermere (PC)  
Brown, Dr. Neil, QC, Calgary-Nose Hill (PC)  
Calahasen, Pearl, Lesser Slave Lake (PC)  
Cao, Wayne C.N., Calgary-Fort (PC)  
Jacobs, Broyce, Cardston-Taber-Warner (PC)  
MacDonald, Hugh, Edmonton-Gold Bar (AL)  
Sandhu, Peter, Edmonton-Manning (PC)  
Woo-Paw, Teresa, Calgary-Mackay (PC)  
Vacant

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Liz Sim	Managing Editor of <i>Alberta Hansard</i>

6:42 p.m.

Monday, March 2, 2009

[Mr. VanderBurg in the chair]

**The Chair:** I'll call the meeting to order. For *Hansard* we'll go around the table and do self-introductions.

**Ms Woo-Paw:** Good evening. Teresa Woo-Paw, Calgary-Mackay.

**Mr. Sandhu:** Good evening. Peter Sandhu, Edmonton-Manning.

**Mr. Anderson:** Rob Anderson, Airdrie-Chestermere.

**Ms Calahasen:** Pearl Calahasen, Lesser Slave Lake.

**Mr. MacDonald:** Hugh MacDonald, Edmonton-Gold Bar.

**Mr. Reynolds:** Rob Reynolds, Senior Parliamentary Counsel.

**Mrs. Kamuchik:** Louise Kamuchik, Clerk Assistant/director of House services. Good evening.

**Ms LeBlanc:** Stephanie LeBlanc, legal research officer with the Legislative Assembly Office.

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

**Mr. Jacobs:** Bryce Jacobs, Cardston-Taber-Warner.

**Dr. Brown:** Neil Brown, Calgary-Nose Hill.

**Mr. Cao:** Wayne Cao, Calgary-Fort.

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

**The Chair:** George VanderBurg, Whitecourt-Ste. Anne.

Well, good evening, everyone. Thank you for taking the time to attend this evening's meeting. We'll start with the approval of the agenda, and I just have to reverse 4 and 6. Just a time issue tonight. That's my only change. Motion by Teresa Woo-Paw. All those in favour? Carried unanimously. Thank you.

Then we'll move on to the adoption of the minutes from the last meeting. In your circular there was a copy. Any comments? I'd ask for a motion to approve. Moved by Bryce Jacobs. All those in favour? Those opposed? Carried.

Item 6 is a discussion regarding the committee's new responsibilities related to reviewing the estimates of the various departments and reporting to the Committee of Supply. We're going to have a busy April and May. If you can imagine, through that period we're going to have evening meetings where we're going to discuss various ministries, of which we will be responsible for Aboriginal Relations, Justice and Attorney General, Service Alberta, Solicitor General and Public Security. I'm not sure if we'll have four dedicated evenings to it – I would imagine – or if we could do two in one evening, but these are some of the issues that I want to raise with Rob Reynolds here tonight.

Member MacDonald, I understand that we've given the opposition the budget estimates review schedule, and we're going to let the opposition set the dates. That has been passed on today. I imagine you'll have great discussion, and hopefully you can bring on behalf of this committee the need to consolidate in the evenings even if we have to go late an evening or two.

Rob Reynolds, I'm going to ask you for a little bit of guidance because this is all new and to kind of go through what would be expected of this committee and what we should expect from the ministries that will be presenting to us.

**Mr. Reynolds:** Well, thanks very much. As you pointed out, it is a new experience, as it were, so we're just trying to plan it out as best we can to see what might occur. In any event, the rules with respect to the consideration of the main estimates are laid out in Standing Order 59.01 with respect to what occurs. You pointed out, Mr. Chair, that there's a draft schedule circulating. It really is the schedule that's developed by the Government House Leader in consultation with the other House leaders that really guides the practice in terms of when things are going to be considered. If the schedule is not agreed upon, the default position is laid out in the standing orders in the sense that

- (a) Policy Field Committees shall meet . . . Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday evenings from 6:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.,
- (b) no more than 2 Policy Field Committees shall be scheduled to meet at the same time,
- (c) each department's estimate shall receive a minimum of 3 hours' consideration.

As I say, this is the default position if there is no agreement in the schedule.

- (d) the estimates of Executive Council may be considered by one of the Policy Field Committees or may be considered by Committee of Supply for a minimum of 2 hours.

It says that

- (3) The Government House Leader shall table in the Assembly the schedule for consideration of main estimates at any time following the date of the Budget Address being made public and no later than one sitting day following the Budget Address.

What I've laid out is the default position, if you will, but I think it's expected that the policy field committees will meet two at a time at least Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday evenings from 6:30 until 9:30. I'm not sure, obviously, until we see the schedule whether it will just be a department a night or whether a department may shift over two nights or they'll set different times for different departments, so that awaits to be seen.

Just for members trying to envisage this, I think the way that we've at least envisioned it in talking about it is not to think of it so much as a policy field committee, even though it is, but to think of it in terms of what goes on in Committee of Supply. Really, it's the estimates of a department in a Committee of Supply atmosphere being considered by the policy field committees. I think that that's one way to look at it.

The standing orders lay out the speaking times with respect to that. The minister may make opening comments for the first 10 minutes, then for the first hour it's members of the Official Opposition and the minister or the cabinet minister acting on that minister's behalf, and then after that for the next 20 minutes it's the members of the third party and the minister or member of Executive Council, and then after that any member may speak. So it's not all that much different than the schedule that transpired in the Committee of Supply last session with respect to the speaking times for estimates.

Now, with respect to what happens at the end, there's no vote taken on the department's estimates at the end of the committee's consideration. The chair will report to the Committee of Supply on a day that's set for the voting on the estimates, and the chair will report that certain departments have been considered by the policy field committee. Of course, there are five policy field committees, and all the chairs will be reporting. That's the day they'll have a vote, and they'll have a vote on any amendments that are proposed during the PFC review of estimates.

6:50

As I say, I think we anticipate that it'll look a lot like Committee of Supply only in a smaller form. The rules permit officials of the department to be here, but the officials are not allowed to speak. Like in the House, the opposition can have research staff, obviously, present. Frankly, it's almost a matter of geography as to who can sit at the table in the sense of members and staff and that. Certainly, if there isn't room at the table, officials would be right behind the members, whether they're officials of the department or officials of the opposition caucus. But, as I said, officials from the department won't be allowed to speak. It'll be through the minister, who is responding.

Now, that's just a brief review of the standing orders. Louise may have some comments that she would like to make about this.

**Mrs. Kamuchik:** Actually, Rob covered pretty much what we anticipate will be happening with the policy field committees, and we look forward to a different review. It is more or less a mini Committee of Supply, if you will, as he pointed out.

**The Chair:** So in the first hour that the Official Opposition has the floor, would I be able to give them the opportunity to engage in a back-and-forth with the minister during that hour?

**Mr. Reynolds:** Yes.

**The Chair:** And we would set that rule right up front?

**Mr. Reynolds:** Yes, you can do that.

**The Chair:** Or do I just set the rule?

**Mr. Reynolds:** There are 10 minutes' speaking time each, really. I think we go by a 10 minutes limit. And you can combine the times.

**The Chair:** Okay.

**Mr. Reynolds:** Partially it depends on not just the willingness of the committee but, I guess, the minister and the member whether they want to do that, whether they want to facilitate an exchange in the sense of how that occurred in the House, you know, or in the Committee of Supply, where they'd say: well, we'll just combine the 10 minutes and 10 minutes and go back and forth for 20, so there'll be a question and answer, question and answer.

**The Chair:** Would the committee agree that that would be a fair approach, that I would offer that to those that are speaking, that they would have the opportunity to talk for their full 10 minutes or to debate back and forth? I want to make sure that we all know the rules of the game so we can take them back to our individual caucuses.

**Mr. MacDonald:** It's clear in the standing orders.

**The Chair:** It sounds like the standing orders give us the opportunity to ask that question, right?

**Mrs. Kamuchik:** As long as the minister and the member have notified the chair, 59.02(2) does provide for combining the time for 20 minutes, and there's a back-and-forth for the 20 minutes. We'll have clocks indicating when the 20 minutes are up. Jody will be looking after them.

**Dr. Brown:** I think, Mr. Chairman, that you have the discretion as the chair of a committee to order things however you see fit, and I'm sure that you in your eminent good judgment will ensure that proper procedure is followed and that the opposition has, you know, their privileges.

**The Chair:** I agree that we will follow proper procedure, but I want to make it clear that that offer, then, will be made. That opportunity for the engagement back and forth will be made right up front because, personally, I like that better. If I see nobody dissenting to that, I think that's what will be offered right up front.

Go ahead, Rob.

**Mr. Reynolds:** Yes, Mr. Chair. It's very good that you would do that up front because under the standing order it says, as Louise pointed out, that notwithstanding the suborder that says you can only speak for 10 minutes at a time, "provided that the Chair has been notified, a Minister and a private Member may combine their respective speaking times for a total of 20 minutes, with both taking and yielding the floor over the combined period." Certainly, if you raise it at the outset, I mean, obviously, the chair has been notified.

The only thing I'd add is that if the member and the minister aren't in agreement in the sense that the minister says, "Well, I'm not answering anything till everyone is done," there's not much you can do to force them.

**The Chair:** Well, I think everybody has heard my preamble tonight, so I'd make sure that that was offered, and I think that it works well.

As well, just a reminder, and maybe I should have been paying closer attention in previous years. Does the speaker rule – maybe Member Cao can tell me this – on opposition, government member, opposition, government member after the hour and 20 minutes?

**Mr. Cao:** I think our sort of understanding is that we have the Official Opposition the first hour and then the third party comes in and then back and forth.

**The Chair:** Back and forth. Okay. Again, not seeing any opposition, I would prefer that.

Member MacDonald.

**Mr. MacDonald:** Yeah. There's always in main estimates debate a list after that initial time, and it rotates, as far as I can remember, between each respective member regardless of party.

**The Chair:** Okay. Again, the conversation: knowing that tradition has gone that way, I would follow that. I would think that would be a reasonable approach, so everybody could take back to their respective caucuses that that's an approach that I would prefer.

**Mrs. Kamuchik:** One more point if I may, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Yeah. This is all to help us, so everybody has to contribute.

**Mrs. Kamuchik:** I was going to say that the standing orders provide that, as you know, the committee meeting will last from 6:30 to 9:30. If, however, members run out of questions or all their questions have been answered at 9 o'clock, let's say, then the three hours are deemed to have been given to that consideration of those estimates.

**The Chair:** Okay. That would be good. So you're saying that less is better.

**Mrs. Kamuchik:** It's always fascinating.

**The Chair:** So 6:30 to 9:30, and we could end early. More than likely we wouldn't have more than one ministry per evening.

**Ms Calahasen:** It's impossible. How are we going to do that? Till midnight?

**The Chair:** Well, no. I'm just saying that if it's negotiated earlier, but under your orders I guess that's how it would be. Rob?

**Mr. Reynolds:** Well, once again, it depends on the schedule that's produced by the Government House Leader in consultation with the other two House leaders. You're quite right: the default position is between 6:30 and 9:30.

**The Chair:** Okay. Good.

**Dr. Brown:** Well, I just wonder when, Mr. Chairman, we could expect to, you know, get a schedule. We do know when the budget is going to be now, and I guess we have some parameters on Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays thereafter. I wonder when we could schedule the specific departments so we'd have an opportunity to do some preparation.

**The Chair:** Well, again, that proposal has just gone out today. I mean, the House leaders will have to sit down and work that out and then also have the availability of each minister. I would imagine it'll take a week to work out. That would probably be reasonable. As soon as we get that, I'll make sure that our members know our dates. The sooner the better because we all have schedules that are filled, so as soon as that would be possible.

Rob, yes?

**Mr. Reynolds:** Oh, yes. Just agreeing with you, Mr. Chair. That's all. Just agreeing.

**Mr. Cao:** Mr. Chair, we have constituency weeks, so how is that schedule . . .

**The Chair:** No. We'll still be breaking for constituency break. We're not going to interfere with those processes, so those dates will be worked around. That's why I say that April and May will be very busy with Committee of Supply.

**Mr. Cao:** All right. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any other comments to Rob? Rob, thanks for clearing that up and especially refreshing my memory.

**Mr. Reynolds:** Mr. Chair, I'm always pleased when you thank a lawyer for clearing things up.

**The Chair:** I haven't got the bill yet.

I'd ask for a motion to accept the presentation as information.

**Ms Calahasen:** Agreed.

7:00

**The Chair:** Moved by Member Calahasen. All those in favour? Carried.

Item 5. Just hearing our schedule that's going to be in front of us,

are there issues of concern for immediate identification of research needs?

**Ms Calahasen:** Mr. Chair, I don't see any, but I really want to say thank you for the information that I did receive on the research that was done. It was really nicely done. Thank you very much for the work that was done.

**The Chair:** Okay. We're just joined by Member Kang. Good evening.

**Mr. Kang:** Good evening, everybody. I apologize for being late. I think I'm not into the gear of things yet, and I apologize.

I want to thank each and every one of you for the prayers and the best wishes, you know, all of you said regarding my health issue. I think I'm back into it about 70, 75 per cent. Hopefully another 30 per cent will improve over time.

**The Chair:** Well, welcome back.

**Mr. Kang:** Thanks again. It's nice to see everybody.

**The Chair:** So no motion is needed for item 5.

The new item 6, which was item 4. Again, I think given the schedule that's in front of us and in front of staff, I'm going to ask that we talk about this item at the first meeting after the Committee of Supply work has been completed. I'm just thinking that we're going to have a busy schedule in front of us, and I really don't want to get in the middle of starting a new topic. But, you know, I want to hear from you how you feel about that. Everybody is agreeing. It's going to be a good meeting.

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** So, Jody, I think that's what we'll schedule. We'll put that item on the first meeting agenda after our budget estimates have been completed.

Date of next meeting will be negotiated, and as soon as Jody gets it, she will get the relevant information, at least for our committees, to us immediately so that we can get it into our schedules. Remember that it's important that we have a good turnout for the estimates. If you can't make it, I'd ask that you use the appropriate form that Jody will provide you and encourage an alternate to sit in your seat. It's important that we have full representation during those debates.

Jody, maybe I'd just ask for you to send a copy of that to everybody in advance when you start getting those dates down. I won't give you a date just yet because that's being negotiated. Hugh, you don't imagine that'll take longer than a week?

**Mr. MacDonald:** That'll be entirely up to the congeniality of the House leader of each respective party.

**The Chair:** Yeah. That's probably unfair to ask you. Thank you.

I'd ask for a motion to adjourn. Peter Sandhu. All those in favour?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Agreed. Thank you.

[The committee adjourned at 7:04 p.m.]





