



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

The 27th Legislature  
Second Session

Standing Committee  
on  
Public Safety and Services

Wednesday, December 9, 2009  
2:05 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-St. 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)  
Griffiths, Doug, Battle River-Wainwright (PC)  
MacDonald, Hugh, Edmonton-Gold Bar (AL)  
Sandhu, Peter, Edmonton-Manning (PC)  
Woo-Paw, Teresa, Calgary-Mackay (PC)  
Vacant

**Support Staff**

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Louise J. Kamuchik	Clerk Assistant/Director of House Services
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Melanie Friesacher	Communications Consultant
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Philip Massolin	Committee Research Co-ordinator
Stephanie LeBlanc	Legal Research Officer
Diana Staley	Research Officer
Rachel Stein	Research Officer
Liz Sim	Managing Editor of <i>Alberta Hansard</i>

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[Mr. VanderBurg in the chair]

**The Chair:** Okay. We're going to get started. I'll call this meeting to order. You have the agenda in front of you, and I have under other business the Alberta Centre for Injury Control & Research request. Any other items?

I'd ask for approval of the agenda. Moved by Hugh MacDonald. All those in favour? Carried.

We have four sets of minutes in front of us. Do you want to do them individually?

**Dr. Brown:** I think you should.

**Mr. Griffiths:** Doug Griffiths here.

**The Chair:** Doug, George here. We've started the meeting.

**Mr. Griffiths:** Yes. Sorry I'm late.

**The Chair:** Okay.

So we'll have the minutes from the March 2 meeting.

**Dr. Brown:** I have a comment on that, George. It's Neil here.

**The Chair:** Okay. Go ahead, Neil.

**Dr. Brown:** It just occurred to me, George, that as you look through the minutes – I don't know how broadly they're circulated – they don't seem to reflect the fact that we had three hours of a presentation and a question-and-answer. I would suggest that under Agenda we put an item there that says something to the effect of what has happened in terms of the meeting, particularly with those ones that are referring to the business plans and the budget estimates. It's not so much on the March one but the subsequent ones. And I've got some wording here that I would like to suggest.

**The Chair:** Okay. On my copies of the minutes it gives a start time and finish time right on the top, underneath the date.

**Dr. Brown:** Yes. I've got that as well.

**The Chair:** So you want more than that, then, you're saying?

**Dr. Brown:** Yeah.

**The Chair:** Okay. What are you proposing?

**Dr. Brown:** Well, on the March 2 one we didn't have any budget deliberations, correct? My comments would refer more to the next one, so if somebody has anything else on March.

**The Chair:** Okay. Can I have a motion to accept the minutes from the March 2 meeting, then? Moved by Peter Sandhu. All those in favour?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Carried.

We'll move on to the April 8 meeting. Neil, go ahead.

**Dr. Brown:** Under Agenda there I just think you should have

something to the effect – and I'm just going to make a suggestion here – that hon. Mr. Zwozdesky made a presentation to the committee, followed by a question-and-answer session between the minister and his staff and the committee members. I mean, somebody reading this thing would wonder what we were doing for three hours because it makes absolutely no reference to the fact that we were in there doing these.

**The Chair:** That's fair enough, and I think that we can put some wording together to reflect that. Do you have some suggested wording?

**Dr. Brown:** Yeah. I'll just repeat that.

The hon. Mr. Zwozdesky made a presentation to the committee, followed by a question-and-answer session between the minister and his staff and the committee members.

**The Chair:** Okay. Any questions on that?

**Ms Calahasen:** No. That's good.

**Mr. Sandhu:** No. It looks good.

**The Chair:** The staff is having a discussion here, Neil.

So we have the addition to the minutes moved by Dr. Brown. All those in favour? Those opposed? It's carried.

Now could I get a motion to approve the minutes as corrected?

**Dr. Brown:** I'll so move, George.

**The Chair:** Moved by Dr. Brown. All those in favour? Those opposed? It's carried.

Okay. We'll move on to the April 15. Same comments, Neil?

**Dr. Brown:** I've got the same wording.

The Hon. Heather Klimchuk made a presentation to the committee on the proposed estimates and business plans of Service Alberta. This was followed by a question-and-answer period between the minister and her staff and the committee members.

**The Chair:** Okay. Moved by Dr. Brown. Any comments? All those in favour? Those opposed? Carried.

Now I'll ask for a motion to approve the minutes as amended. Peter Sandhu. All those in favour? Carried.

We'll move to the April 22 minutes. Dr. Brown, go ahead.

**Dr. Brown:** I would just use the same wording and substitute: the Hon. Alison Redford.

**The Chair:** Okay. Moved by Dr. Brown. All those in favour? Those opposed? It's carried.

Then I'd ask for a motion to approve the April 22 minutes as amended. Pearl Calahasen. All those in favour? Carried.

April 28: same wording, Neil?

**Dr. Brown:** Yeah. That the Hon. Lloyd Snelgrove . . .

**The Chair:** Okay. Moved by Neil Brown. All those in favour? It's carried.

Now to approve the minutes as amended for Tuesday, April 28. Rob Anderson. All those in favour? Agreed. Carried.

Then we'll move to Wednesday, May 6. Dr. Brown?

**Dr. Brown:** Yes. I would propose the same wording: the Hon. Fred Lindsay.

**The Chair:** All those in favour? All those opposed? Carried.

Now I'd ask for a motion to approve the minutes from the Wednesday, May 6, meeting as amended. Peter Sandhu. All those in favour? Carried. Thank you.

We'll move on to item 4, the discussion on the safe communities initiative. Teresa Woo-Paw, one of our members, had approached me and asked me about the Alberta safe communities initiative. Close to a half a billion dollars was spent on this initiative.

**Dr. Brown:** How much?

**The Chair:** Four hundred and sixty-eight million, to be exact.

**Ms Calahasen:** Over three years, though.

**The Chair:** Yeah. It's an initiative over three years to address many recommendations for keeping communities safe. She had asked me if I was aware of the outcomes and if we did get value for money spent and if there was the opportunity to have the ministers appear in front of our committee to give us a report on the safe communities initiative. I told her that we would call a meeting and see if it was the will of the table that we would set up a meeting in the new year to have the Solicitor General and Minister of Justice and their staff come to this committee and tell us about the initiative and about the outcomes and if we did get value for our money. Discussion?

**Ms Calahasen:** It's a good idea, Mr. Chair. I think it's a good idea for us to be able to do that because I think there has been so much money that has been spent as a result of the task force recommendations. It would really be nice to be able to identify whether or not some of these programs are working in the communities where they're needed, and if they are, then we should be able to make some recommendations based on that and then find out which of those are not doing as well and find out what we should do about those.

**The Chair:** I think that if it's the will of the committee to have them, you know, let's have the ministers in front of us, be open-minded about the presentation, and go from there. If there are some strengths, we'll bring those out; if there are some weaknesses, we'll bring those out.

**Ms Calahasen:** Exactly.

**Dr. Brown:** George, I think it's particularly appropriate given the new sort of mandate that the committee has been charged with during the budget process of looking at the budgets of various departments that come within the ambit of this committee. The value-for-money idea really is the second part of it. When we look at the budget, we're projecting into the future what we're spending money on. I think a bit of a retrospective look at where the money is spent and what kind of value that we're getting for that expenditure is very much in keeping with the mandate of the committee.

2:15

When you look at items like the 200 additional police officers hired and, particularly, the allocation specifically of 83 police resources to target the gangs and the drug trafficking, I think it's possible to look at those types of things and come up with some empirical data on what kind of a difference that has made in terms of charges and of, you know, arresting the crime in those particular areas.

**The Chair:** Exactly.

**Mr. MacDonald:** I think it's a good idea. It's an interesting suggestion, and I would certainly make every effort to attend the meeting if it does occur. There are any number of questions that I would have right now if they were present, both the ministers, from Justice or . . .

**Dr. Brown:** Hugh, you're not coming through too clearly there. Can you speak more towards that microphone?

**Mr. MacDonald:** Yes. I apologize.

I think it's a very good idea, and I would like to participate if possible in the meeting whenever it does occur.

I have a question around the information. Would it be the past fiscal year, or would it be two years? I believe some of these safe communities initiatives started in 2007-08.

**The Chair:** Right. I would be open-minded about having the discussion on past, present, and future. I mean, in having any discussion on this item, I don't think we'd want to restrict ourselves to just past years.

**Mr. MacDonald:** Yes. I can remember that a couple of weeks ago I was looking at some of the budget items from 2008-09, and some of the money was unexpended. You know, the first question naturally is: will it be carried over to these programs into the next budget year?

**The Chair:** The ministers would have to ask that. But I would say that we wouldn't have any restrictions on what kind of questions. I think we'd get the presentation, and then let's get after it.

**Mr. MacDonald:** And there would be no time limit on this either. The meeting could last 90 minutes; it could last two and a half hours.

**The Chair:** Well, here's my dilemma on the issue. If this is something that the committee wants to do – and I'd have to ask advice from the staff – there are ministries that don't report to this committee, to Public Safety and Services. You know, there are nine other ministries that are involved in the safe communities initiative. Do we have the authority to ask the other ministers in? I don't know that, but we'd work that out. I think we'd start with the two that are part of our committee. If the conversation starts talking more about Children and Youth Services or about Education, Municipal Affairs, like, do we have that authority? Those belong under other committees. So I would get some advice from these folks, and we'd go from there.

Quite frankly, I don't know if we could even do this in an afternoon. I think this would require some multiple meetings and some thought by the committee.

**Mr. MacDonald:** And the committee can make recommendations.

**The Chair:** Yeah. So by the time we start and the time we report, we have about six months, isn't it, Rob?

**Mr. Reynolds:** Yes.

**The Chair:** Or is that by the time we'd end this process? Let's say the process took five months.

**Mr. Reynolds:** Yes, Mr. Chair. It's six months under Standing Order 52.07(4). "All inquiries must be concluded and a substantive report presented to the Assembly no later than 6 months after the commencement of the inquiry."

**The Chair:** Okay. So I think we have some time, Hugh, on this, but I wouldn't want to . . .

**Mr. MacDonald:** . . . put it all in one day.

**The Chair:** No. I don't think that would be fair to the members and to all of us.

**Mr. Anderson:** I think it's worth noting, though, that the two ministries in our purview here – the Ministry of Justice and the Solicitor General – expend, as far as I understand, the lion's share of this money, so I think it is very appropriate that they'd be the ones that we're asking questions to. I think what I would like to suggest is that the ministers be aware and be prepared for the questions. They usually are. They are both very good ministers.

I would like to look at the actual data. There are a lot of programs. There is a lot of money being spent on, quote, unquote, new and innovative preventative programs and the like. I'd like to see if these are having effect, and that means that there is going to have to be some data presented. I don't want a whole bunch of hugs and, you know, pats on the back and saying that this is just wonderful, that we're doing this preventative thing here, and it's making a big difference. I'd like to see some data on it. So I hope we can make that clear to the ministers.

**The Chair:** I have some of the same comments, too, on the pilot project between the sheriffs and the RCMP. You know, if that falls under the safe communities initiative, I'd like to see some stats. Has this worked? You know, there are some big dollars spent. They'll have the opportunity to read our discussion in *Hansard* and get an idea of what we're looking for.

I think, Mr. Sandhu, you've raised the issue of gang activity in Edmonton and surrounding area. I know where you come from on this.

**Mr. Sandhu:** Yes. I know it's a big issue in the community. Basically, you know, you can see all the drug-related activities from B.C. to Calgary and Edmonton, bigger urban areas. We need to see if the safe communities initiative is working or not working or how we can make it better. I think it's a very good idea to ask all the questions of staff and ministers and figure out how we can do better.

**The Chair:** Doug Griffiths, you had some comments on the other end?

**Mr. Griffiths:** Well, George, you were on Public Accounts. Hugh, you're on Public Accounts. You know that a lot of times we've discussed value for money and outputs and outcomes, not just satisfaction surveys and, as Rob said, big, warm hugs about what we're trying to accomplish. The exercise here is to see if this almost half a billion dollars that's being spent is producing results and what results it's producing. We may find we're getting better value for the money in some areas than others. We may need to focus in other areas. That's the role of this review, so I agree completely with Rob and you, George, that we really want evidence about what the results are, not just what we think is happening or anecdotal stories. We want some concrete evidence to see that we're meeting some targets, meeting some objectives, producing some results.

**The Chair:** Yeah.

**Dr. Brown:** George, I think that's a very good point that Doug is making. I think that if we are going to probe into the utility of some

of these various initiatives that were made and see if we're getting value for money, we need to go beyond questioning the ministers and the upper level bureaucrats like the assistant deputy ministers and so on. We need to get the guy who's the staff sergeant, you know, in downtown Edmonton to tell us that this is making a difference and that where the resources are being spent is the appropriate place or not the appropriate place, as the case may be.

**The Chair:** Right. I'm also interested in finding out if there are barriers that maybe Ottawa has put up that have affected us that our ministers can't get changed. Maybe we can make recommendations that could help us. I'd like to hear from them some of the frustrations that they are experiencing from the federal side, where we have some ideas for some reform and where the safe communities initiative couldn't take us into because there were restrictions from other levels of government. Like Hugh MacDonald has stated, I think this could be very interesting and could be very timely, and it could also take some time.

2:25

I'm hearing a willingness. I also know that our Assembly will sit in February, the second Tuesday, the 9th. I would hope that we could meet maybe on the 8th, start the day before, on the Monday. This will give the ministries enough time to get themselves ready. So if it's the will – it sounds like it's the will – of the committee, I'd ask for a motion to

move forward with a review of the Alberta safe communities initiative.

Moved by Rob Anderson. All those in favour? Agreed.

**Mr. MacDonald:** It'll be on Monday the 8th, or is it a Tuesday?

**The Chair:** For the date of next meeting that's what I would propose, Monday the 8th.

**Dr. Brown:** When does the session start?

**The Chair:** On the 9th. That would give us a day before to travel in, give everybody the morning to get here, and we would commence at 1 o'clock or at noon.

**Ms Calahasen:** What day is that again?

**The Chair:** Monday.

**Ms Calahasen:** Oh, yeah; the 8th.

**The Chair:** At 1 o'clock. Well, maybe we'll come in at noon, and we'll have a working lunch for one hour, and then we'll start with our presentations. Does that work, Hugh?

**Mr. MacDonald:** Yeah. I'm fine. I'm the shortest distance probably. That's Monday the 8th at 12 noon.

**The Chair:** Yeah.

**Mr. MacDonald:** What role, if any, do the legislative researchers play in developing the presentation for this initial meeting?

**The Chair:** Well, first of all, I would think that we will have an invitation sent to the two ministers drafted by staff, and we would ask them to prepare a package for us of what they're going to

provide unless someone specifically has something that they – I have no preconceived notions on this. That’s why I wouldn’t know what to ask for right now.

**Mr. MacDonald:** Okay. Fair enough. Let’s see how this works out.

**The Chair:** Let’s have them present, and then we will go from there. I would expect a full package, you know, 10 days ahead of the meeting from both ministers. February 8 is a long ways away, and I think we’re going to give ample notice. We’ll get a letter drafted right away, and we can have time to go over the package. They’ll read *Hansard*.

Okay. All in favour? Agreed.

We’ll go on to the next item, other business.

**Mr. MacDonald:** Before we proceed, I would like to bring up section 6 of the Legislative Assembly Act if you don’t mind.

**The Chair:** Sure.

**Mr. MacDonald:** It is my view that you must as chair seek consent of the members present for those to participate via telephone or other communications device. It is my knowledge that this has been overlooked for some time, and I’m curious about this section 6 of the Legislative Assembly Act.

**The Chair:** Rob, give me some advice here.

**Mr. Reynolds:** I don’t have it in front of me. I think you’re correct. I think that the assumption for most committees is that when members are on the phone, it’s implied that the rest of the members of the committee agree because the meeting proceeds as such. I mean, if you want to propose a motion that they participate or don’t participate, you’re certainly free to.

**Mr. MacDonald:** Well, I think it’s a good housekeeping practice for not only this committee but all standing committees and policy field committees of the House to abide by this section and formally at the start of the meeting just get the consent of all members. It would particularly be important – as the chair of another committee, on occasion we have teleconferencing – if there was to be an issue around quorum. Then there may be a wrangle, and let’s avoid the wrangles.

**The Chair:** Advice taken.

**Mr. MacDonald:** I’ll propose the motion if you’d like.

**The Chair:** Yeah. And I’ll also ask that staff, when we prepare the agenda, have a roll call and an opportunity for a motion like that to appear as standard procedure.

**Mr. MacDonald:** Okay. Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** I think it’s good advice, and we’ll take that.

**Mr. MacDonald:** Because if we had a wrangle around quorum, then it would be . . .

**The Chair:** We don’t have that at this meeting, but it could be. I think it’s a wise point, some good advice.

**Mr. MacDonald:** So do you need a motion?

**The Chair:** I don’t think we need a motion. If you want to have a motion, I mean, it’s up to you.

**Mr. MacDonald:** No. That’s fine with me.

**The Chair:** But I think from now on we’re going to have it.

When we get on to the other business, I’ve had a request from the Alberta Centre for Injury Control and Research. They’ve asked if they could appear in front of our committee some time in the new year. They’re quite concerned about ATVs and lack of helmets and brain injury and have some information that they’d like to present to this committee. What are your wishes? Would you like them to appear in front of this committee at our February meeting? I would say a half an hour would be ample time.

**Mr. MacDonald:** Sure. Mr. Chairman, I certainly would be agreeable, and I would be interested in hearing from them. It’s an issue that doesn’t seem to go away. I would be pleased to move a motion.

**The Chair:** Okay.

**Mr. Anderson:** I guess my only concern or question – I don’t know if it’s a concern. What kind of precedent would this set? I mean, usually as a committee, you know, if there’s a concern that we have or something we want to look into, we talk amongst ourselves about it, and then we ask people to come and appear before us. Someone asking just to randomly appear before us: is that a precedent that we would like to set?

**The Chair:** No. The other committees have done this and made presentations.

**Mr. Anderson:** Okay. This is normal.

**The Chair:** I think that, you know, since we deal with public safety, they have some public safety findings that they’d like to share with us. Where we go from there with it is up to us, or we may refer it to another committee. Again, I have no problems with a presentation like this. We would ask our staff to get hold of them, set up a half an hour maybe at 1 o’clock on February 8, and have them present us, again, 10 days in advance with a full package of information. I’ve seen some of the brochures and some of the information that they provide. It’s pretty thorough and pretty professional. I think it’s centred here in Edmonton. They have researchers with the U of A and other universities.

**Mr. MacDonald:** And the former standing policy committees under Premier Klein used to meet up in room 512, and they had public hearings that would last half an hour, 40 minutes, 45 minutes all the time.

**The Chair:** Four hours.

**Mr. MacDonald:** Half an hour.

**Ms Calahasen:** Half an hour at the most. Well, it would vary eventually. But basically we’d do it for half an hour, give them half an hour to be able to present.

**The Chair:** So, you know, more than likely a 10-minute presentation or a 15-minute presentation, Member Anderson, and then questions.

So we have that on record.

Rob, anything you want to raise?

**Mr. Reynolds:** I just want to be clear that there is a specific provision in the standing orders that was included, I think in the last round of changes, to allow for public meetings to be held. I mean, they don't have to be part of an inquiry. It's just a group that wants to make a presentation before a policy field committee on an issue within a mandate. It doesn't oblige you to do anything with it. If the committee so wants, it can make a report or identify something to the minister or move it along to a minister, but there's nothing that obliges you to.

**Mr. MacDonald:** Mr. Reynolds, parliamentary privilege certainly applies to all these meetings, correct? And to these field policy committees?

2:35

**Mr. Reynolds:** Yes. These are standing committees of the Legislative Assembly, so they have all the rights and immunities of any

other committee of the Assembly. The same would apply to witnesses because they're witnesses before a committee of the Assembly, so should they ever need it, they have the protection that's afforded people here.

**Mr. MacDonald:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Good.

Anything else, Doug Griffiths, Neil Brown?

**Dr. Brown:** No.

**Mr. Griffiths:** Nothing from me.

**The Chair:** Okay. I'll thank you for participating this way. I know that it's not always possible to drive in to these meetings, especially on winter days.

I'll accept a motion to adjourn. Moved by Rob Anderson. All those in favour? Carried.

Thank you so much.

[The committee adjourned at 2:36 p.m.]







