



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

The 31st Legislature
First Session

Special Standing Committee
on
Members' Services

Tuesday, September 24, 2024
1:30 p.m.

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Special Standing Committee on Members' Services

Cooper, Hon. Nathan M., Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UC), Chair
Getson, Shane C., Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland (UC), Deputy Chair

Eggen, David, Edmonton-North West (NDP)
Gray, Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP)
Long, Martin M., West Yellowhead (UC)
Rowswell, Garth, Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright (UC)
Sabir, Irfan, Calgary-Bhullar-McCall (NDP)
Singh, Peter, Calgary-East (UC)
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UC)
Vacant

Support Staff

Shannon Dean, KC	Clerk
Helen Cheng	Executive Assistant to the Clerk
Trafton Koenig	Law Clerk
Lianne Bell	Chief of Staff to the Speaker
Andrew Koning	Parliamentary and Engagement Coordinator
Aaron Roth	Committee Clerk
Terry Langley	Sergeant-at-Arms
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Darren Joy	Senior Financial Officer
Amanda LeBlanc	Managing Editor of <i>Alberta Hansard</i>

1:30 p.m.

Tuesday, September 24, 2024

[Mr. Cooper in the chair]

The Chair: Good afternoon, everyone. I'd like to call this meeting to order.

My name is Nathan Cooper. I'm the MLA for the outstanding constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta, and the chair of this committee. I'd like to begin by asking members joining us at the committee table to introduce themselves for the record – that also includes others who have joined us at the table today – and then I will call on members joining us remotely to introduce themselves as well.

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

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

Mr. Rowswell: Garth Rowswell, Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright.

Mr. Langley: Terry Langley, Sergeant-at-Arms.

Mr. Koning: Andrew Koning, Speaker's office.

Mr. Eggen: Good afternoon. My name is David Eggen. I'm the MLA for Edmonton-North West.

Ms Gray: Good afternoon, everyone. Christina Gray, MLA for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Dr. Ludwick: Dave Ludwick, executive director, LAO.

Mr. Koenig: Trafton Koenig with the Parliamentary Counsel office.

Ms Dean: Shannon Dean, Clerk.

The Chair: Mr. Long.

Mr. Long: Martin Long, the MLA for West Yellowhead.

The Chair: Mr. Getson.

Mr. Getson: Shane Getson, MLA, Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland.

The Chair: Mr. Singh.

Mr. Singh: Good afternoon, everyone. Peter Singh, MLA, Calgary-East.

The Chair: Mr. Sabir.

Mr. Sabir: Good afternoon. Irfan Sabir, MLA, Calgary-Bhullar-McCall.

The Chair: Before we turn to the business at hand, a few operational items. Please note that the microphones are operated by *Hansard* staff. 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 cameras while speaking and mute your microphones when you are not. Members participating virtually who wish to be placed on the speakers list are asked to e-mail or send a message in the group chat to the committee clerk. Members in the room, please signal by show of hand to the chair should you choose to be recognized. Please set all your cellphones and other devices to silent for the duration of the meeting.

That brings us to item 2, the approval of the agenda. Are there any proposed additions or revisions to today's meeting agenda? If none, perhaps Ms Gray would like to make a motion that the standing committee on Members' Services approve the proposed agenda for its September 24, 2024, meeting. Is there any discussion? All those in favour, please say aye. Any opposed, please say no. Participating remotely, please say aye. Any opposed, please say no. The motion is carried.

Item 3, the approval of the meeting minutes. Are there any amendments to the meeting minutes from our last meeting? If not, would a member move the approval? Mr. Yao moves that the standing committee on Members' Services approve the minutes of its meeting held February 5, 2024. Is there any discussion? Hearing and seeing none, all those in favour in the room, please say aye. Opposed, please say no. Joining us remotely, please say aye. Any opposed, please say no. The motion is carried and so ordered.

Members, that brings us to item 4, the Interim Report No. 2 of the Members' Compensation, Benefits and Allowances Review Subcommittee. The Members' Compensation, Benefits and Allowances Review Subcommittee has provided the committee with a second interim report. Members will recall that at our January 29, 2024, meeting the committee passed a motion to extend the deadline to report back to the committee to September 30, 2024. Since that time the subcommittee has received additional information and in its report to the committee is requesting additional time to deliberate and make recommendations. Are there any questions, comments with respect to that?

If there are none, I would be happy to hear a motion to accept the subcommittee's recommendation to extend the reporting deadline to February 15, 2025.

Mr. Rowswell: So moved.

Mr. Getson: Yes. Chair, I'd like to move that.

The Chair: Garth beat you to it, but that's fine.

Is there any discussion, comments, concerns with respect to the motion as proposed by Mr. Rowswell?

The motion for the purposes of the record is that Mr. Rowswell moved the following, that

the standing committee on Members' Services accept the subcommittee's recommendation to extend its reporting deadline to February 15, 2025.

All those in favour of the motion, please say aye. Any opposed in the room, please say no. Joining us remotely, in favour, please say aye. Any opposed, please say no.

The motion is carried and so ordered.

That brings us to item 5, allowance for member's residential security system. I also have some additional information about other security changes that I intend to make available to members. As the committee is aware, under constituency service orders Members of the Legislative Assembly are currently entitled to an annual allowance of \$1,500 in relation to the installation and operation of a security system at their permanent residence and their temporary residence. Over the course of the last several months I've received information from members that this amount may not be sufficient to maintain adequate security, including enhanced security such as cameras for inside and outside of members' homes. Therefore, I have directed the LAO administration to make available an additional \$1,000 to all members in support of purchasing, installing, and maintaining security systems at their permanent residence for the balance of this fiscal year.

I will also be making available to members a personal safety device should they wish to avail themselves of this option. I'll be sending a memo to members later this week to provide more details.

The funds to cover both of these items will come from the MLA administration budget. This is a change from previous years, where those costs would have been taken from an MSA, or your member's services allowance, but this change – in subsequent years these funds will be covered from MLA administration.

To ensure these changes are permanent, a draft amending order to the Members Services' Committee was distributed to the committee members last week. Under these changes the cost for a residential security system will no longer come from each member's MSA and instead would be provided as part of standard administrative support provided to members of the Assembly. The amendment would also ensure that members are provided with a personal safety device if they wish to have one. These changes, if approved, would be effective for the 2025-2026 fiscal year. This will allow the Legislative Assembly Office administration to include this in its budget preparations.

To provide further clarity, the additional \$1,000 for members who may choose to use additional security services in their home will come from the MLA administration. At present there is a \$1,500 amount in members' member's services allowance that will also be used out of that budget in this fiscal year. In the next fiscal year all security costs will be covered from the MLA administration.

If anyone has any questions or concerns about either of those, I'm happy to take them. If they have additional questions with respect to the personal security device, the Sergeant-at-Arms is also available at this meeting to provide further clarification. I also know that he is willing to speak to both caucuses about what that may look like in members that elect to have a personal security device. Traditionally this has been an emergency response bracelet. It provides very similar functions, although to a much more enhanced capacity, for members that choose to engage in the personal safety device program.

Are there any questions, comments, concerns? Christina.

1:40

Ms Gray: Thank you. And I just want to say thank you to the Sergeant-at-Arms, who took the time to meet with the New Democrat caucus this morning really quickly so that we could gather any questions prior to the Members' Services Committee meeting. Appreciate his time and what's coming forward.

This is more just a comment, because the personal safety device will be approved through your office, but we understand under the current thoughts that the device would need to be an Apple device, and from our caucus we know there are multiple people who use only Android devices, so just wanting to put forward that thought that we wouldn't want the type of technology to be a barrier for this type of personal safety if that can be considered going forward.

The Chair: Yeah. Certainly, we can take these sorts of challenges into consideration. I understand that they can operate independently from other technologies. So at present it is an Apple product, but it is additional software that is utilized for the Apple product for the actual monitoring of a number of geography, personal – so, broadly, that is the case.

Because there are some operational sensitivities with respect to the actual device that members will have, if there are more technical questions than we've already answered, it may be advantageous to go in camera so that we can provide as much information to members who might like it, but we also want to be sensitive to the operational security issues that the Sergeant's office also has

concerns about. No problem at this point, but if there are more detailed questions, we may entertain a motion to do such a thing.

Are there other questions, comments, or concerns?

Excellent. Seeing and hearing none, I do have – I'm not sure if we proposed the motion.

Ms Gray: Oh, apologies.

The Chair: Yeah. Go ahead.

Ms Gray: If I may make a motion to go in camera to talk about the personal security devices. I hope I haven't missed my opportunity.

The Chair: Sure. That's fine. Yeah.

The hon. Member Gray has proposed a motion to move in camera to speak about personal security devices, and in the motion perhaps she might be willing to include the Sergeant-at-Arms and the Speaker's office personnel or even the staff at the table.

Ms Gray: Yes.

The Chair: Okay. Excellent. For the purposes of this in camera session any questions, comments, or concerns prior to calling the question?

All those in favour, please say aye. Any opposed, please say no. Online, please say aye. Any opposed, please say no. The motion is carried.

[The committee met in camera from 1:43 p.m. to 1:55 p.m.]

The Chair: Excellent. Thank you, members. We are now back on the record.

If the committee is comfortable, there's a draft motion that reads the following, that

the Standing Committee on Members' Services approve the draft administrative services security amendment order 2024 as distributed.

Mr. Yao: Yes.

The Chair: Member Yao. Is there any further discussion, comments, questions, or concerns with respect to the motion?

Hearing and seeing none, all those in favour of the motion, please say aye. Any opposed in the room, please say no. Joining us remotely, please say aye. Any opposed, please say no.

The motion is carried and so ordered.

That brings us to number 6, other business, of which I do not believe there is any.

Item 7, the next meeting date. I intend it to be at the call of the chair; however, I will be reaching out to members of the subcommittee in the relatively short term to try to have a subcommittee meeting quite likely in early November and, depending on a number of factors, perhaps another MSC meeting late November, certainly before we rise for Christmas. The subcommittee will likely meet in the first week of the legislative session here or the first week of November, but I will circulate some dates.

Is there anything else?

Motion to adjourn. Mr. Yao. All those in favour, please say aye. Any opposed, please say no. Online, please say aye. Opposed? The motion is carried and so ordered.

The meeting is adjourned.

[The committee adjourned at 1:57 p.m.]

