



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

The 30th Legislature
Second Session

Standing Committee
on
Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills

Bill 207, Reservists' Recognition Day Act

Tuesday, November 24, 2020
7:45 a.m.

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Second Session**

Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills

Ellis, Mike, Calgary-West (UCP), Chair
Schow, Joseph R., Cardston-Siksika (UCP), Deputy Chair

Ganley, Kathleen T., Calgary-Mountain View (NDP)
Glasgo, Michaela L., Brooks-Medicine Hat (UCP)
Horner, Nate S., Drumheller-Stettler (UCP)
Irwin, Janis, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (NDP)
Neudorf, Nathan T., Lethbridge-East (UCP)
Nielsen, Christian E., Edmonton-Decore (NDP)
Nixon, Jeremy P., Calgary-Klein (UCP)
Sigurdson, Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (NDP)
Sigurdson, R.J., Highwood (UCP)

Also in Attendance

Rutherford, Brad, Leduc-Beaumont (UCP)

Bill 207 Sponsor

Rutherford, Brad, Leduc-Beaumont (UCP)

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7:45 a.m.

Tuesday, November 24, 2020

[Mr. Ellis in the chair]

The Chair: All right, ladies and gentlemen, good morning. I'd like to call this meeting of the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills to order and welcome everyone in attendance.

My name is Mike Ellis, MLA for Calgary-West and chair of the committee. I'd like to ask members and those joining the committee at the table to introduce themselves for the record, and then I will call those joining in by Skype. We'll begin to my right.

Mr. Neudorf: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Nathan Neudorf, MLA, Lethbridge-East.

Mr. Rutherford: Brad Rutherford, MLA, Leduc-Beaumont.

Mr. Nielsen: Good morning, everyone. Chris Nielsen, MLA for Edmonton-Decore.

Ms LeBlanc: Good morning. Stephanie LeBlanc, Clerk Assistant and Senior Parliamentary Counsel.

Ms Rempel: Good morning. Jody Rempel, committee clerk.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you. I have a list here of people that are on Skype at the moment, at least with those who've joined in. We'll go in order here, so we'll start with Mr. Horner if you can introduce yourself.

Mr. Horner: Good morning. Nate Horner, Drumheller-Stettler.

The Chair: A little bit of feedback there, Nate, but thank you very much for being here this morning.

Ms Ganley: Kathleen Ganley, Calgary-Mountain View.

The Chair: That sounds good. Thank you.

Member Irwin: Janis Irwin, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Jeremy Nixon: Jeremy Nixon, Calgary-Klein.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms Sigurdson: Good morning. Lori Sigurdson, Edmonton-Riverview.

The Chair: Good morning. Thank you.

Mr. Sigurdson: Good morning. MLA Sigurdson, Highwood.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Schow: Joseph Schow, Cardston-Siksika.

The Chair: Thank you.

At the moment we are missing Member Glasgo.

Ms Rempel: Someone is on the phone.

The Chair: Oh, somebody is on the phone?

Member Glasgo, are you on the phone?

Ms Glasgo: That would be me. Michaela Glasgo, MLA for Brooks-Medicine Hat. Sorry, Skype just won't work.

The Chair: No worries. Thank you for being on the line. Thank you very much.

All right. There are no substitutions. Okay. A few housekeeping items to address before we turn to the business at hand. Pursuant to the November 16, 2020, memo from the hon. Speaker Cooper I'd like to remind everyone of the updated committee room protocols, which require that, outside of individuals with an exemption, those attending a committee meeting in person must wear a mask at all times unless they are speaking. Based on the recommendations of the chief medical officer of health regarding physical distancing, attendees at today's meeting are reminded to leave the appropriate distance between themselves and other meeting participants.

Please note that the microphones are operated by *Hansard*, so members do not need to turn them on or off. Committee proceedings are being live streamed on the Internet and broadcast on Alberta Assembly TV. Please set your cellphones and other devices to silent for the duration of the meeting.

Next, we'll move to approval of the agenda. Are there any changes or additions to the draft agenda? If not, I'd like someone to please make a motion. Thank you very much, Mr. Neudorf. Mr. Neudorf makes a motion that the agenda for the November 24, 2020, meeting of the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills be adopted as distributed. All in favour, say aye. On the phone? I'm hearing ayes. Are there any opposed? Say no. Hearing none, that motion has been passed.

Next, we'll go to the approval of the minutes. We have the draft minutes to review from our previous meeting. Are there any errors or omissions to note? If not, would a member like to make a motion to approve the minutes as distributed? Mr. Nielsen, thank you. Mr. Nielsen moves that the minutes of the November 17, 2020, meeting of the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills be approved as distributed. All in favour, say aye. On the phone? I hear ayes. Any opposed, say no. Hearing none, that motion has been passed. Thank you.

All right. Next, we'll move to the review of Bill 207, the Reservists' Recognition Day Act, and a presentation by Mr. Rutherford, the MLA for Leduc-Beaumont. Hon. members, Bill 207, Reservists' Recognition Day Act, was referred to the committee on Wednesday, November 18, in accordance with Standing Order 74.11. Before proceeding, I would note that the Ministry of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women was contacted about providing a technical briefing on this bill. However, the ministry declined the invitation, noting that it does not have any policy or legislative function in this subject area.

We do have the bill sponsor with us this morning. I'm confident that he can provide us with an overview of what he is proposing in Bill 207. At this time I'd like to invite Mr. Brad Rutherford, the MLA for Leduc-Beaumont, to provide a five-minute presentation, and then I will open the floor to up to 20 minutes of questions from the committee members.

We'll begin with Mr. Rutherford. The floor is yours, sir. Go ahead.

Mr. Rutherford: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Good morning. Once again, I'm Brad Rutherford, the MLA for Leduc-Beaumont and the government of Alberta's liaison to the Canadian Armed Forces. I'm pleased to be here this morning and thank you for having me.

The reserve force is an invaluable component of the Canadian Armed Forces. I want to provide you some history, so I'll use a brief quote from the forces.ca website.

The units of 41 CBG (Canadian Brigade Group) have proud and varied histories, with many soldiers serving with distinction in the First and Second World Wars and the Korean War. Notably, this includes more than six Victoria Crosses won by soldiers in

the brigades' units. Our more recent international assignments and missions include Bosnia and Herzegovina, Afghanistan and Sierra Leone.

Of course, for those who follow the news, you will know that 41 CBG has also recently deployed members to Latvia. That is not an all-encompassing list but highlights some of the deployments.

41 Canadian Brigade Group is an Army Reserve Formation of 3rd Canadian Division and is headquartered in Calgary, Alberta.

Alberta reserve units are located in Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, Calgary, Red Deer, and Edmonton, and of course there are reserve units located in communities all across Canada as well.

Reserves typically train on a weekday evening and a weekend. They may also volunteer for full-time employment and take part in operations at home or abroad. The majority of reservists hold civilian jobs or are enrolled in postsecondary studies in conjunction with their military training. The exceptional skills and qualities that are gained through participating in the reserves leads to a group of men and women that have a high level of discipline and drive to get the job done. They are taught leadership skills and how to work as a team, and they also learn how to function in stressful situations. Reservists are then receiving training that they can apply to their day-to-day lives in their communities and in their civilian jobs. I want this recognition day to be about saying thank you but also be a way of highlighting the skill set and showing employers that when they see "reserves" on a resumé, the person brings with them a unique set of skills as well.

Reservists have played an important role in protecting the safety and security of Albertans and Canadians, not just at home but also abroad. Between all of the reserve units here in Alberta, there are more than 2,100 reservists. These reservists are our peers, colleagues, and members of our community, and that is why on November 18 I introduced private member's Bill 207, the Reservists' Recognition Day Act. Not only have reservists volunteered to protect our values and way of life from threats, but they have continuously shown up in times of need here in the province of Alberta. Reservists have rallied together during massive provincial disasters, like Alberta's recent fires and floods. As it is well stated on the CFLC, Canadian Forces Liaison Council, website, "They are the neighbours who knock on your door . . . to make sure you and your family are safe."

I had the fortune of consulting with key stakeholders directly in or relating to the Canadian Armed Forces. Former Commander of 3rd Canadian Division Steve Lacroix and Brigadier General Dave Awalt, deputy commander and reservist himself, are in support of this day of recognition and subsequently connected me with Carolyn Patton of the Canadian Forces Liaison Council. The CFLC is an organization of more than 140 Canadian volunteers, who work in partnership with the defence team to engage employers, educational institutions, and other organizations to emphasize how valuable the reserve service is to our communities, our province, and our country. In working with the CFLC, it is my hope that this Alberta-born initiative can be taken right across Canada.

7:55

Colonel Kevin Weidlich, regional liaison officer with the CFLC, worked to explore the most opportunistic day to recognize reservists and engaged Colonel Mike Vernon, commander of 41 Canadian Brigade Group. Colonel Vernon was very pleased to hear about the potential for a day of recognition and was in full support of designating the last Saturday in September. The Canadian Forces hosts open houses the last Saturday in September every year. A provincial day of recognition on the same day will create many synergies for the reserves and allow reserve participation in the recognition day to be fully maximized.

In closing, I am proud to share that the government of Alberta is the largest employer of reserve force members as we recognize the strong leadership skills members bring and accept that the time that they require to taking leave for training only improves their exceptional skills and qualities.

Thank you.

The Chair: Wonderful. Thank you very much, Mr. Rutherford.

I'll now open the floor up to questions. As this is a bill from a government member, the convention, of course, is to go to the Official Opposition, so I shall do that. I'm seeing Mr. Nielsen, who is anxious to ask a question of Mr. Rutherford. Thank you very much, sir.

Mr. Nielsen: Well, thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate it. I know everybody is just chomping at the bit here to get at it, but you managed to pick me out, so I appreciate that.

First off, I of course would like to thank you for bringing forward this bill. I appreciate it very much. I do understand that you were a reservist yourself. I guess I'm wondering, through that lens, maybe – and you alluded to it a little bit in your opening remarks. How did it shape the bill that's before us in terms of, you know, how long you served, things like that? Maybe you could get into a little bit of that.

Mr. Rutherford: Of course. I appreciate it, and thank you for the question. I did a few years in the reserves when I was doing postsecondary as well. I remember doing basic training and trying to do that on the weekends as well as do postsecondary studies. So I can appreciate the commitment that it takes to balance both full-time studies or a job if it was the equivalent and to maintain the training as well.

When I was doing the training, I remember some of the qualities that I touched on. There is a strong push for working as a team. You're not there as an individual. You function as a team. You will get through the operations or the tasks that you are given as a team. It teaches you discipline as well and to better focus, I would find. Coming out of high school, going into postsecondary, there were a lot of skills that I was probably short on prior to spending some time in the reserves. It really helped set me up for a career that ended up being in the police service, where you end up learning a lot of the same things. When you go to a training academy in the police, they really push teamwork and leadership and taking initiatives.

I think one of the things that's really helped me throughout my life, actually, is being able to think and function under stress. As you find in politics, as in other places in your life, you cannot avoid stressful situations, so being able to think clearly through them is an important skill.

The Chair: Do you have a follow-up?

Mr. Nielsen: Yes. I guess with that, as we know, Canadian Armed Forces Day is a Sunday in June. It's my understanding, of course, that reservists are recognized on that day as well. I guess I'm wondering what sort of led you to picking that Saturday, that you were mentioning, in September instead of something else, some other day?

Mr. Rutherford: Yeah, that's fair. We did look at a couple of days where we thought we could highlight the work of reservists as best we could. It was the Canadian Forces liaison counsel that brought forward the last Saturday in September, and that was because there were already open houses happening at the armouries, so there would be a prepared day where the reserves are ready to accept members of the public, to have reserves on hand to engage. So to time it with that day I thought would help bring more attention to

the reserves. It can bring more attention and just give people an opportunity to say thank you. It might give people an opportunity to realize that they can explore this as a career option and also to, as I touched on, give people the opportunity as employers to realize the skill sets that are developed by reserves as well.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Horner, go ahead, please, sir.

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Are you still getting some feedback?

The Chair: We're good now. Thank you.

Mr. Horner: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Rutherford, for bringing this thoughtful bill forward. I really appreciated your anecdotal comments about your time in the reserves and in that time of your life. I guess I was hoping that you could kind of comment on some of the outcomes that you hope to see from this bill, some of the challenges that maybe the reserve force is facing. I know you talked about showcasing their skills to potential job employer situations. I'm just wondering if you can talk about that. Is this to help them in other aspects of their lives, help with morale? Just touch on some of the motivations and what you hope to see come out of this.

Mr. Rutherford: Thank you for the question. I certainly hope it raises morale and it gives people an opportunity to say thank you to the reserve force and that they can see that coming from the public. I think we spend a lot of time going through our day-to-day lives appreciating what other people do but not always getting the opportunity to say thank you and to show that appreciation. What I hope is that this day brings that opportunity as well. And, as I had touched on in previous answers, I do want employers to be able to recognize the skills that reservists bring forward and how that education and training does help in their workplaces, that the Canadian Forces provides as well. Did I answer your couple questions?

Mr. Horner: Yeah. Yes, I think so, Mr. Rutherford.

Could I have a quick follow-up, Chair?

The Chair: Yep. Go ahead, sir.

Mr. Horner: I think you also mentioned briefly about the stakeholders you consulted. I wonder if you could just touch on that again, and then I guess I'm just curious if you'd like to see more stakeholders brought in on this process or if it's a straightforward enough bill, that you don't think it's necessary.

Mr. Rutherford: Sure. Colonel Kevin Weidlich; Colonel Mike Vernon, who currently leads 41 Brigade; former commander of 3rd Division Stephen Lacroix; and Carolyn Patton, who is a volunteer with the Canadian Forces Liaison Council: those folks are all very supportive. You'll find that the CFLC is not only appreciative of having the opportunity to recognize the work reservists do, but they will also be more engaged with employers themselves in trying to share what the skill set is so that employers aren't nervous about hiring reservists, that they see the value of that. If there's going to be further stakeholders coming in, I think, you know, Carolyn Patton would be an excellent choice to describe sort of the overall situation from the civilian side on what they're trying to achieve with their organization as well.

The Chair: All right. Thank you.

Do we have a member of the Official Opposition? Go ahead, Mr. Nielsen.

Mr. Nielsen: Thanks, Mr. Chair. I just wanted to touch on the definitions around what's in your bill. I guess to give a little background, as you're probably aware, 97th Street here in Edmonton north of 137th Ave was not officially renamed but was given the name Canadian Forces Trail, which happens to border a good portion of my riding. I was involved with MLA Goehring as well, from Edmonton-Castle Downs, who serves as our liaison, and we had the opportunity to chat with the base commander about the actual name that would possibly be used. In your bill you speak to the definition around Canadian Forces and not Canadian Armed Forces. I know there is, I guess, a feeling that the military would rather see that terminology used, Canadian Armed Forces. I'm just wondering if you might be able to speak to that a little bit.

Mr. Rutherford: Sure. We had similar feedback. The lawyers who drafted the bill utilized definitions from the federal defence act, so that's why it's phrased as it is.

8:05

Mr. Nielsen: Okay. I know that you spoke to some of the consultations that you had. Do you feel that the committee should bring in additional stakeholders? Are there other things that would be necessary for us to hear and then potentially communicate to the Assembly in moving this bill forward?

Mr. Rutherford: As I mentioned before, I think that Carolyn Patton could be a useful stakeholder, and I'll just expand on that. In her work with reservists on the civilian side of things in attempting to ensure that employers are recognizing the value of those skills: there might be some good insight from her for the committee that would further their education on that and then provide insight for within the Legislature.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. R.J. Sigurdson, go ahead please.

Mr. Sigurdson: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I'd also like to thank Mr. Rutherford for bringing forward this bill. I think that we can all agree that we all really appreciate all the hard work that our Canadian Forces do internationally and, as well, domestically. I guess from your experience on that, you've mentioned in your bill about both international and domestic operations. Can you provide some examples of some of those operations and just maybe highlight that and why you mentioned that in your bill?

Mr. Rutherford: Certainly. The fires in Fort McMurray is one incident I referenced, and the floods in Calgary was the second. You can find on the Canadian website, actually, a pretty comprehensive list from across the country of where the military has stepped up to assist in local, provincial states of emergency. It's a fairly lengthy list, actually, but the two that stand out for Alberta are the flood in Calgary and the fire in Fort McMurray. I mention some of the international events that reservists have taken part in as well, and that would be the First and Second World Wars, the Korean War, some international assignments were Bosnia-Herzegovina, Afghanistan, Sierra Leone, and there are some members currently in Latvia as well.

The Chair: Thank you.

R.J., do you have a follow-up?

Mr. Sigurdson: Yes, a quick follow-up, Chair. I guess, if you could just explain, through your stakeholder consultations and as well bringing your personal experience of being a reservist yourself to it: what would you think are the biggest challenges reserve forces are facing right now, and how this recognition day could help address some of those challenges?

Mr. Rutherford: Well, some of the things that we heard from the CFLC were that employers sometimes are hesitant to employ reservists. Given that there are requirements for time off for training for potential deployments, and those deployments can be long periods of time – and what I hope that the day does in conjunction with saying thank you and recognizing the work is that it highlights that although there are times where a reservist is going to require time off for training, they bring a skill set that, I think, more than makes up for that at the same time. That's what I really hope to achieve with this.

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll now go back to the Official Opposition. Anybody on the phone from the Official Opposition?

Okay, we'll go back to the government members' side. Are there any questions from the government members? On the phone? Okay. Hearing none. Thank you very much.

If there are no further questions, then I'd like to thank Mr. Rutherford. Mr. Rutherford, thank you very much for attending and presenting here today.

Ladies and gentlemen, we'll now move to the decisions on the review of Bill 207. Hon. members, the committee must now decide on how to conduct its review of Bill 207. In accordance with our agreed-upon process, the committee may decide to invite additional feedback from stakeholders on this bill at a later meeting, or it may choose to expedite the review and proceed to deliberations. Does anyone have any thoughts on this issue? Go ahead, Mr. Neudorf.

Mr. Neudorf: Thank you, Mr. Chair. In light of the presentation that we've heard from Mr. Rutherford, I do feel that it would be respectful to invite at least the one stakeholder that he indicated to hear her perspective on this bill and how it would impact Alberta. I would like to see us move forward in that direction if that is the pleasure of the committee.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Nielsen, go ahead.

Mr. Nielsen: Yeah. Thanks, Mr. Chair. I would certainly agree with that perspective. I did try to of course ask directly if we should, but I didn't want to necessarily push the issue. I think, you know, it has the potential to allow the committee to gain some insight. We can potentially add any extra comments in terms of the final report that maybe the Assembly might need to consider, to add or something, but I would certainly be in favour of stakeholders as well.

The Chair: All right. I am hearing some agreement, but I'll ask anybody on the phone if they'd like to say anything.

Okay. Hearing nobody else, then I think we might have a motion available for stakeholders. Would somebody like to – Mr. Neudorf.

I'll just look at the clerk to put it on the screen. It would read something like: the invitation to stakeholders and feedback. Mr. Neudorf would move that the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills invite the following stakeholders to make a presentation regarding Bill 207, Reservists' Recognition Day Act, at an upcoming meeting. And then you'll need to list, right? Do we leave it so that each group can pick three if they want? I guess it is ultimately at the will of the committee.

I guess I'll ask for feedback from both groups, the government members' side or the Official Opposition. Do you have specific groups you want to go in, or is there maybe a possible agreement that Mr. Rutherford has the stakeholders that he mentioned? Mr. Nielsen, go ahead.

Mr. Nielsen: Thank you, Mr. Chair. If Member Rutherford, you know, just happened to share his stakeholder list with both sides, I'm sure that wouldn't be a problem.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Rutherford, could you maybe, for the clerk's sake, name those stakeholders again that you think might be of value to the committee?

Mr. Rutherford: Yes, I can, Chair.

The Chair: Sorry. We're going to need their names right now.

Mr. Rutherford: Oh. Right now.

The Chair: Yeah. So we can put it on the list.

Mr. Rutherford: Sorry. I thought that was for the future.

The Chair: I appreciate your co-operation.

Mr. Rutherford: No problem. Let me just flip to the page. Carolyn Patton of the Canadian Forces Liaison Council; Colonel Kevin Weidlich, regional liaison officer with CFLC; Colonel Mike Vernon, commander of 41 Canadian Brigade Group; and it was former commander of 3rd Division Stephen Lacroix.

The Chair: Okay. The clerk will be able to get the proper spelling when necessary.

We'll wait for you to get that on the screen. Fantastic. Mr. Neudorf will move that the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills invite the following stakeholders . . .

Mr. Nielsen: Chair?

The Chair: Yes. Go ahead, sir.

Mr. Nielsen: Sorry. Just on the chance that we maybe have other potential names, are we still able to add those as well?

The Chair: Yes. I believe so. As per the agreement of both parties, I think there's still an opportunity for each to invite three, which has been the standard practice here.

Mr. Neudorf to move that the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills invite the following stakeholders to make a presentation on Bill 207, Reservists' Recognition Day Act, at an upcoming meeting: Carolyn Patton, Colonel Kevin Weidlich, Colonel Mike Vernon, and Commander Stephen Lacroix.

Madam Clerk, I'm just curious if there's a way that we can put in there in regard to the invitations: "potentially, if wanted to be submitted by either party."

8:15

Ms Rempel: And are we going to go with three and three still?

The Chair: Yeah, we'll do that. I mean, if there are less than three, that's fine. Maybe something as per the previous or conventional agreement of both parties.

Ladies and gentlemen on the phone, we're just getting the proper wording here if you don't mind.

I believe it will need to be submitted by a certain date as well.

Ms Rempel: Noon today or tomorrow?

The Chair: Maybe tomorrow.

Mr. Nielsen, would you be good with tomorrow by noon? Okay. The same with you, Mr. Neudorf? Okay. Thank you.

Ms Rempel: Should I read it out first?

The Chair: Yeah. Read it out. Go ahead.

The clerk is going to read it out.

Ms Rempel: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Some possible wording, if it's in agreement with what the member had in mind, would be to add at the end: "and in addition up to three stakeholders chosen by each of the government and Official Opposition caucuses and submitted to the chair by noon tomorrow."

The Chair: Yes. That sounds good.

Mr. Neudorf: In agreement. So moved.

The Chair: Okay. I'll just read it officially again, and then we'll get the vote, yea or nay. Mr. Neudorf will move that the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills invite the following stakeholders to make presentations regarding Bill 207, Reservists' Recognition Day Act, at an upcoming meeting: Carolyn Patton, Colonel Kevin Weidlich, Colonel Mike Vernon, Commander Stephen Lacroix, and in

addition up to three stakeholders chosen by each of the government and Official Opposition caucuses and submitted to the chair by noon, November 25, 2020.

Okay. I see some heads nodding here in the room. All those in favour, say aye. On the phone. Thank you very much. Any opposed, say no. Okay. Thank you very much.

That motion has been carried.

All right. Thank you.

Ladies and gentlemen, fantastic. We'll go to other business, then. Are there any other issues for discussion before we wrap up today's meeting?

A shaking of the heads. Okay. Thank you very much.

The date of the next meeting will be at the call of the chair. We'll get those submissions in by both parties if necessary.

Adjournment. Can I have somebody move – Mr. Nielsen. He's always happy to adjourn. Mr. Nielsen moved that the meeting be adjourned. All those in favour, say aye. On the phone. This has been moved.

Thanks very much, everybody. Have a great day.

[The committee adjourned at 8:19 a.m.]

