



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

The 31st Legislature
First Session

Standing Committee
on
Private Bills

Tuesday, March 26, 2024
6:15 p.m.

Transcript No. 31-1-3

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Standing Committee on Private Bills

Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie-East (UC), Chair
Stephan, Jason, Red Deer-South (UC), Deputy Chair

Bouchard, Eric, Calgary-Lougheed (UC)
Ceci, Joe, Calgary-Buffalo (NDP)
de Jonge, Chantelle, Chestermere-Strathmore (UC)*
Deol, Jasvir, Edmonton-Meadows (NDP)
Dyck, Nolan B., Grande Prairie (UC)
Hayter, Julia K.U., Calgary-Edgemont (NDP)
Petrovic, Chelsae, Livingstone-Macleod (UC)
Sigurdson, Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (NDP)
Wright, Justin, Cypress-Medicine Hat (UC)

* substitution for Chelsae Petrovic

Also in Attendance

Johnson, Jennifer, Lacombe-Ponoka (Ind)
Metz, Luanne, Calgary-Varsity (NDP)

Support Staff

Vani Govindarajan
Jody Rempel
Nancy Robert
Janet Schwegel
Amanda LeBlanc

Parliamentary Counsel
Committee Clerk
Clerk of *Journals* and Committees
Director of Parliamentary Programs
Deputy Editor of *Alberta Hansard*

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[Ms Pitt in the chair]

The Chair: Okay. I'm going to call this committee to order.

Hon. members, my name is Angela Pitt. I'm the MLA for Airdrie-East, chair of this committee. I'd like to ask members of the committee to introduce themselves for the record, starting to my right.

Mr. Stephan: Jason Stephan, MLA, Red Deer-South.

Mr. Dyck: Nolan Dyck, MLA, Grande Prairie.

Mr. Wright: Justin Wright from the charming constituency of Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Ms de Jonge: Chantelle de Jonge, MLA for Chestermere-Strathmore.

Mr. Bouchard: Eric Bouchard, Calgary-Lougheed.

Mrs. Johnson: Jennifer Johnson, Lacombe-Ponoka.

Member Ceci: Joe Ceci, Calgary-Buffalo.

Ms Sigurdson: Lori Sigurdson, Edmonton-Riverview.

Dr. Metz: Luanne Metz, Calgary-Varsity.

Ms Govindarajan: Vani Govindarajan, Parliamentary Counsel.

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

Ms Rempel: Jody Rempel, committee clerk.

The Chair: And on the phones.

Ms Hayter: Julia Hayter, Calgary-Edgemont.

The Chair: Perfect. I'd like to note the following substitution: Ms de Jonge substituting for Mrs. Petrovic.

A few housekeeping items before the business at hand. Don't touch the microphones. Committee proceedings are being live streamed on the Internet and Alberta Assembly TV. The audio- and videostream and transcripts of this meeting can be accessed via the Legislative Assembly website. Members participating remotely are encouraged to turn your camera on while speaking and mute your microphone when not speaking. Remote participants who wish to be placed on the speakers list are asked to e-mail or message the committee clerk, and members in this room should signal to the chair. Otherwise, please set your cellphones and other devices to silent for the duration of the meeting.

I'd like to draw everyone's attention to the draft meeting agenda. Would anyone like to propose any amendments? Would anyone like to approve the agenda? Mr. Ceci.

Mr. Ceci moves that the Standing Committee on Private Bills approve the proposed agenda as distributed for its March 26, 2024, meeting. All in favour, please say aye. Any opposed? So carried.

We've also set minutes from the last meeting. Would anyone propose any amendments? No. But you would like to move it, Mr. Wright?

Mr. Wright moves that the Standing Committee on Private Bills approve the minutes as distributed of its meeting held on November 29, 2023. All those in favour, please say aye. Any opposed? So carried.

Consideration of private bills. At this point I would like to invite Ms Govindarajan to provide us with an overview of the process for reviewing the private bills.

Ms Govindarajan: Thank you, Madam Chair. As a reminder to many committee members the private bills process, the rules that govern private bills are found in chapter 8 of the Standing Orders. While public bills have general application to everyone in the province, private bills provide powers or benefits to specific individuals or corporations or groups to accommodate extraordinary situations where no equitable remedies can be found within the existing law or to provide limited exceptions for the general law. Although a private bill only applies to a specific individual or group, it becomes law like any other law in Alberta and has the same force and effect. Part of the committee's role involves considering the interests of the petitioner as well as potentially affected parties. It is also important to note that private bills are distinct from private members' bills, which is a public bill that, if enacted, applies to the public at large.

Back to the committee's role. The committee is convened today to review the petitions received for this calendar year. For each petition if the committee is satisfied that the petitioner has complied with the requirements in Standing Order 94, the chair reports back to the Assembly, and the bill relating to the petition will be introduced. The bill then stands referred back to this committee to make a recommendation that the bill proceed, not proceed, or proceed with amendment. That consideration involves a hearing scheduled to hear from each petitioner for the private bills, and depending on the subject matter of the bill, the committee may seek comments from government departments.

The key aspects for committee members to keep in mind throughout the process is that a private bill should not be used to achieve a particular result if there's a different legal remedy available, and consideration should be given to ensure that a private bill is not creating an unfair advantage for a particular group or individual.

That's just a brief overview, Madam Chair, but I'm happy to answer any questions.

The Chair: Are there any questions from members of the committee? Mr. Ceci.

Member Ceci: Yeah. It may be premature, but do any of these petitions or bills need comment from administration or a permit?

The Chair: I think we'll probably get to that part on the specific bills.

Member Ceci: Okay. Yeah. I don't have a specific bill. I just heard that that was a step, potentially.

The Chair: Okay.

Ms Govindarajan: Yes. I can just speak to that. I mean, the committee could make a specific request to reach out to a particular ministry. Typically what happens is that Parliamentary Counsel would reach out on behalf of the committee to any ministry that I think may have something to advise or some comment on the bill based on its subject matter.

Member Ceci: Okay. Thanks.

The Chair: Perfect. Any other questions? Seeing none.

Okay. Three petitions have been received for our committee's consideration this spring. I would like to invite Parliamentary Counsel to provide a brief overview of the petitions and the requirements under Standing Orders 90 through 94.

Please go ahead.

Ms Govindarajan: This year the Assembly received three petitions. As I noted in my memo to the committee, all of the petition documents

can be reviewed by any member of the committee. I also have them with me here this evening.

The first petition that we received is for the passage of a bill to amend the Community Foundation of Medicine Hat and Southeastern Alberta Act. I can confirm for the committee that the petitioner has submitted two letters of petition, one to the Legislative Assembly and one to the Lieutenant Governor, the statutory declaration confirming that they advertised in four newspapers in southeastern Alberta, being the *Medicine Hat News*, the *Prairie Post*, the *Brooks Bulletin*, and the *Oyen Echo*, once a week for two consecutive weeks. They've provided a cheque in the amount of \$500 and advised that Mr. Wright has agreed to be the sponsor of the bill. In respect of that petition, my view is that the petitioner fulfilled the requirements set out in the standing orders.

The second petition that was received is for the passage of a bill to amend the Providence Renewal Centre Act. The petitioner submitted two letters of petition, a statutory declaration confirming that they advertised in the *Edmonton Journal* once a week for two consecutive weeks. They provided a cheque from their law firm in the amount of \$500, a draft bill, and advised that Member Calahoo Stonehouse has agreed to be the sponsor of the bill.

Finally, we received a petition from the Rosebud School of the Arts for the passage of a bill to amend the Rosebud School of the Arts Act. In respect of this petitioner, they submitted their two letters of petition, a statutory declaration confirming they advertised in the *Calgary Herald* once a week for two consecutive weeks, a cheque for \$500, and Mrs. Petrovic has agreed to be the sponsor of this bill.

In respect of all three petitions, my view is that the petitioners fulfilled the requirements set out in the standing orders. If members have any questions, I'd be happy to answer them.

The Chair: Perfect. Any questions from the members? Mr. Ceci.

Member Ceci: What is the first one? What are they, the foundation, fund? I don't know them. Are they like the United Way in this area? What do they do?

Mr. Wright: I'm assuming that you're referring to the first one . . .

Member Ceci: The first one, the community foundation. That's right.

Mr. Wright: The community foundation works with a number of nonprofits in order to provide statistical information as well as centralized information where citizens can find services that they are looking for. They work in the entire region to provide overlap. If you give me 30 more seconds, I'll load it up and give what the exact abbreviation is for them.

Member Ceci: Sure. Sounds like it refers to social agencies?

Mr. Wright: From my understanding, yes. Give me 30 seconds.

The Chair: Are there any other questions while we wait?

Member Ceci: And they fund, I imagine, too, the foundation?

Mr. Wright: I don't think they do. The Community Foundation of Southeastern Alberta is a nongovernment, nonpolitical, nonreligious, independent organization that operates under the guidance of a diverse group of community-minded volunteers and board members. The foundation was created to support vibrant and healthy living,

caring communities across southeast Alberta in a way that builds relationships amongst communities.

6:25

Member Ceci: Justin, that's great. That's good.

The Chair: We'll have an opportunity to have the petitioners come in again, so you can ask them all the feel-good questions.

Member Ceci: I don't know if I want to.

The Chair: We're really here to just confirm that they're in compliance with the standing orders to get to this phase. It seems like these petitions are in compliance.

Are there any other questions at this stage? Seeing none . . .

Member Ceci: Just back to that question. Is there any reason that a ministry should be involved in reviewing any of these or providing information?

Ms Robert: Mr. Ceci, that process is next, so right now we're just trying to tell you that the petitions are in compliance with the standing orders. Then the bills are going to get introduced. I'm kind of taking, stealing the chair's thunder here. The bills are going to get introduced. Then the contents of the bills will be sent by Parliamentary Counsel to all the appropriate ministries, giving three or four weeks to comment and make any comments back to the committee that they wish to make. Then there will be a hearing, and during that hearing Parliamentary Counsel will tell everybody what was found from the ministries, I believe, if anything. The petitioners will be here. You can question them. Then the committee recommends whether the bill should go forward or not. Does that make sense?

Member Ceci: Yes.

The Chair: Okay. Any others? No? Okay.

All right. With that, in accordance with Standing Order 99(1) I will provide an oral report to the Assembly tomorrow regarding a review of the petitions, following which the bills may be introduced.

Before we move on to scheduling our next meeting, I would like to advise the committee that earlier today we received correspondence from the petitioners for Bill Pr. 2, the Community Foundation of Medicine Hat and Southeastern Alberta Amendment Act, 2024. The petitioner has advised that they inadvertently missed one of the communities in the draft bill, so when the time comes, they intend to ask the committee to consider an amendment to the bill. Parliamentary Counsel will liaise with the petitioner to ensure that any requested amendments are drafted appropriately.

Member Ceci: Who did they miss?

Mr. Wright: Cypress county.

The Chair: That's a big one. Any other questions on that? Seeing none.

Okay. The final matter for committees to deal with tonight is the scheduling of the hearing when the petitioners come and the committee's deliberations on the bills. The practice of the committee has generally been to schedule a hearing in about four weeks, as said by Ms Robert earlier, after reviewing a petition. This timeline provides petitioners with ample notice of their presentation date, it gives the relevant ministries time to respond to the proposed legislation, and it allows Parliamentary Counsel to report any observations or recommendations on the bill to the committee.

This year if the committee wishes to ensure that there is enough time for the bills to make their way through the Assembly before the end of the spring session, we should consider receiving presentations and completing our deliberations either during or shortly after constituency week. Based on the work of previous committees, we should set aside an hour for each bill. One potential date has been raised. I can assure you there's a lot of time and consideration put into this date, and that will be on the morning of May 7.

Is there anyone with great reservation to this May 7 morning? Okay.

Mr. Stephan: Well . . .

The Chair: Really?

Mr. Stephan: I think that'll work.

The Chair: Good. This is great. This is a nice happy meeting, as you said. You forewarned us.

Okay. Well, would anyone like to move the May 7 morning date?

Mr. Stephan: I'll move.

The Chair: Perfect. Mr. Stephan has moved

that the Standing Committee on Private Bills meet to hear from the petitioners for Bill Pr. 2, Bill Pr. 3, and Bill Pr. 4 and hold deliberations on May 7, 2024, at 9 a.m.

All those in favour, please say aye. Any opposed, please say no. So carried.

Easy. Any other discussions for this committee under other business? The hon. Ms Sigurdson.

Ms. Sigurdson: Just to be clear, it's 9 till noon?

The Chair: Yeah. And/or earlier.

Ms. Sigurdson: That'll give us an hour for each.

The Chair: Yes.

Perfect. With that, our next meeting is the morning of May 7 at 9 a.m.

Would any member like to move to adjourn? The hon. Mr. Ceci has moved that the March 26, 2024, meeting of the Standing Committee on Private Bills be adjourned. All those in favour, please say aye. Any opposed?

We are adjourned.

[The committee adjourned at 6:30 p.m.]

