

Province of Alberta

The 31st Legislature First Session

Alberta Hansard

Tuesday afternoon, June 20, 2023

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 31st Legislature

First Session

Cooper, Hon. Nathan M., Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UC), Speaker Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie-East (UC), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees van Dijken, Glenn, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock (UC), Deputy Chair of Committees

Amery, Hon. Mickey K., ECA, KC, Calgary-Cross (UC) Arcand-Paul, Brooks, Edmonton-West Henday (NDP) Armstrong-Homeniuk, Hon. Jackie, ECA, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (UC) Boitchenko, Andrew, Dravton Valley-Devon (UC) Boparai, Parmeet Singh, Calgary-Falconridge (NDP) Bouchard, Eric, Calgary-Lougheed (UC) Brar, Gurinder, Calgary-North East (NDP) Calahoo Stonehouse, Jodi, Edmonton-Rutherford (NDP) Ceci, Hon. Joe, ECA, Calgary-Buffalo (NDP) Chapman, Amanda, Calgary-Beddington (NDP) Cyr, Scott J., Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul (UC) Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (NDP) de Jonge, Chantelle, Chestermere-Strathmore (UC) Deol, Jasvir, Edmonton-Meadows (NDP) Dreeshen, Hon. Devin, ECA, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (UC) Dyck, Nolan B., Grande Prairie (UC) Eggen, Hon. David, ECA, Edmonton-North West (NDP) Ellingson, Court, Calgary-Foothills (NDP) Ellis, Hon. Mike, ECA, Calgary-West (UC), Deputy Premier Elmeligi, Sarah, Banff-Kananaskis (NDP) Eremenko, Janet, Calgary-Currie (NDP) Fir, Hon. Tanya, ECA, Calgary-Peigan (UC) Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., ECA, Calgary-Mountain View (NDP) Getson, Shane C., Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland (UC), Government Whip Glubish, Hon. Nate, ECA, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (UC) Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (NDP) Gray, Hon. Christina, ECA, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP) Guthrie, Hon. Peter F., ECA, Airdrie-Cochrane (UC) Haji, Sharif, Edmonton-Decore (NDP) Hayter, Julia K.U., Calgary-Edgemont (NDP) Hoffman, Hon. Sarah, ECA, Edmonton-Glenora (NDP) Horner, Hon. Nate S., ECA, Drumheller-Stettler (UC) Hoyle, Rhiannon, Edmonton-South (NDP) Hunter, Hon. Grant R., ECA, Taber-Warner (UC) Ip, Nathan, Edmonton-South West (NDP) Irwin, Janis, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (NDP) Jean, Hon. Brian Michael, ECA, KC, Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche Johnson, Jennifer, Lacombe-Ponoka (Ind) Jones, Hon. Matt, ECA, Calgary-South East (UC) Kasawski, Kyle, Sherwood Park (NDP) Kayande, Samir, Calgary-Elbow (NDP) LaGrange, Hon. Adriana, ECA, Red Deer-North (UC)

Long, Martin M., West Yellowhead (UC) Lovely, Jacqueline, Camrose (UC) Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (NDP) Lunty, Brandon G., Leduc-Beaumont (UC) McDougall, Myles, Calgary-Fish Creek (UC) McIver, Hon. Ric, ECA, Calgary-Hays (UC) Metz, Luanne, Calgary-Varsity (NDP) Nally, Hon. Dale, ECA, Morinville-St. Albert (UC) Neudorf, Hon. Nathan T., ECA, Lethbridge-East (UC) Nicolaides, Hon. Demetrios, ECA, Calgary-Bow (UC) Nixon, Hon. Jason, ECA, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre Notley, Hon. Rachel, ECA, Edmonton-Strathcona (NDP), Leader of the Official Opposition Pancholi, Rakhi, Edmonton-Whitemud (NDP) Petrovic, Chelsae, Livingstone-Macleod (UC) Phillips, Hon. Shannon, ECA, Lethbridge-West (NDP) Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (NDP) Rowswell, Garth, Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright (UC) Sabir, Hon. Irfan, ECA, Calgary-Bhullar-McCall (NDP) Sawhney, Hon. Rajan, ECA, Calgary-North West (UC) Schmidt, Hon. Marlin, ECA, Edmonton-Gold Bar (NDP)

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Shepherd, David, Edmonton-City Centre (NDP)
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Sigurdson, Hon. R.J., ECA, Highwood (UC)
Sinclair, Scott, Lesser Slave Lake (UC)
Singh, Peter, Calgary-East (UC)
Smith, Hon. Danielle, ECA, Brooks-Medicine Hat (UC),
Premier

Schow, Hon. Joseph R., ECA, Cardston-Siksika (UC),

Government House Leader

Premier
Stephan, Jason, Red Deer-South (UC)*
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP)
Tejada, Lizette, Calgary-Klein (NDP)
Turton, Hon. Searle, ECA, Spruce Grove-Stony Plain (UC)

Wiebe, Ron, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (UC) Williams, Hon. Dan D.A., ECA, Peace River (UC)

Wilson, Hon. Rick D., ECA, Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin (UC)

Wright, Justin, Cypress-Medicine Hat (UC)

Wright, Peggy K., Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (NDP)
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UC)

Yaseen, Hon. Muhammad, ECA, Calgary-North (UC)

Vacant, Calgary-Acadia Vacant, Calgary-Glenmore

Party standings:

United Conservative: 48 New Democrat: 36 Independent: 1 Vacant: 2

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m. Tuesday, June 20, 2023

[The Mace was on a cushion below the table]

The Sergeant-at-Arms: Order! All rise, please.

The Clerk: Good afternoon.

[The Clerk read the Royal Proclamation dated June 9, 2023, summoning the Members of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta to convene on this date]

The Clerk: Please be seated.

Entrance of the Lieutenant Governor

[The Premier, the Clerk, and the Sergeant-at-Arms left the Chamber to attend the Lieutenant Governor]

The Sergeant-at-Arms: Order! All rise, please.

Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor.

[Preceded by the Sergeant-at-Arms, Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor of Alberta, Salma Lakhani, AOE, BSc, LLD, her party, the Premier, and the Clerk entered the Chamber. Her Honour took her place upon the throne]

The Sergeant-at-Arms: You may be seated.

Mr. Amery (Provincial Secretary): Hon. members, I am commanded by Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor to inform you that she does not see fit to declare the causes of her summoning of the present Legislature of this province until the Speaker of the Assembly shall have been chosen according to law. She is therefore pleased to retire from this Assembly, to return at a subsequent hour on the next sitting day to declare the causes of her calling of this Legislature.

Her Honour: Well, I guess there's nothing for me to do, so I shall leave.

The Sergeant-at-Arms: All rise, please.

[Preceded by the Sergeant-at-Arms, the Lieutenant Governor, her party, and the Premier left the Chamber]

The Clerk: Please be seated.

Election of a Speaker

The Clerk: Hon. members, pursuant to the Lieutenant Governor's direction and section 16(1) of the Legislative Assembly Act nominations are invited for the Office of Speaker of this Assembly for the 31st Legislature. Pursuant to Standing Order 11(1) the Speaker shall be elected according to the procedures set out in schedule A of the standing orders. I therefore call for nominations.

The hon. Mr. Horner.

Mr. Horner: Thank you. I rise today to nominate the member from the outstanding constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills for the position of Speaker of this Legislative Assembly of Alberta. As all of you know, the member previously served as the Speaker for the 30th Legislature and did a remarkable job. In 2019 former Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul Mr. Dave Hanson rose to nominate him to stand for the Speaker election and said the following, that

he is indeed an absolute parliamentary and political nerd and that there is no one more suitable for the title of Mr. Speaker than the Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills. I was impressed with his knowledge of and respect for the parliamentary traditions based on the respected Westminster parliamentary system. I was impressed with his respect for our democratic institutions and the decorum required to maintain respectful, productive debate and with his knowledge of protocol, which will be necessary as he represents this House to visiting dignitaries and while he's representing us in other jurisdictions.

The Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills is someone I am proud to call a friend and someone we can all be proud to call our Speaker.

I couldn't have said it better myself, and I hope all members will support him to remain the humble servant of the Assembly.

The Clerk: Mr. Cooper, do you accept the nomination?

Mr. Cooper: Madam Clerk, I do accept the nomination.

The Clerk: Are there other nominations? The hon. Ms Ganley.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Madam Clerk. I'd like to begin by saying that the role of Speaker of the House is important in our system. It's a leadership role that has a huge impact on the Legislative Assembly, which is ultimately responsible for the passage of legislation that governs us all. It's critical to the maintenance of order and the rules that impact how we can communicate, ultimately, to the people of this province. These rules and their application can even, ultimately, impact amendments to those laws.

A crucial part of this work is maintaining a nonpartisan Office of the Speaker to ensure the best possible functioning of our Assembly, to ensure that order and decorum continue to be maintained. In recognition of that importance we see in other parliaments and Legislatures a practice of choosing members for the Speaker's team from multiple parties from within this Legislature.

Above all, the role of Speaker is a leadership role. It requires a quick mind, a calm temperament, and, most of all, a sense of humour. Every one of us should be focused every day on the good of the people of this province but the Speaker of the House in particular. With that in mind – and before I go into this part, I'll just remind all members that it's my understanding that the name of the member can be used in this particular context – I am asking all members of the Assembly to set aside partisanship and consider the nomination of Christina Gray, the MLA for Edmonton-Mill Woods, for Speaker.

I can think of no member of this House who more exemplifies the leadership characteristics necessary for this position. The member has a wealth of experience and a true desire to serve this Assembly impartially. More importantly, she is focused in every moment on the public good, on how best we serve the people of the province and this House. She exemplifies wisdom, grace, and an appreciation for the parliamentary traditions, as she has shown throughout her time as an elected official. Her calm and measured approach, partnered with a gracious sense of humour, will have a positive influence on the tone, demeanour, and smooth functioning and effectiveness of this House.

Above all, in this leadership role – Christina Gray is, in my opinion, just the leader to do this job. She has ably served as House leader for the Official Opposition. She has an easy command of the rules that govern this place. She's quick on her feet and can respond to changing situations in this place, which we all know occur very frequently. She's also able to recognize different visions of good that inspire different members in this House. Those different visions can create conflict in this place, and I think Christina is a

natural in conflict resolution. She is calm, rational, fair, judicious, and measured.

She is passionate about the public good, but she doesn't let that cloud her vision as she works towards her goals. The most effective advocates and decision-makers are those who can set aside their own egos and emotion and relentlessly pursue the public good with focus and determination. Christina Gray is such a leader.

Of course, in all ways representation matters. This Assembly has never before had a woman in the important role of Speaker. It would be a strong signal to the women of Alberta that this Assembly is serious about advancing their rights if we had a female Speaker guiding our collective proceedings. Christina would become the first female Speaker of this Assembly, and I believe there is no one more able to fulfill that role. Representation matters. What our children see in our leaders matters. I think we see a government where young women maybe don't see themselves as the norm, and this would be a concrete step towards fixing exactly that problem.

Christina has proven herself an effective leader as Opposition House Leader but also as a minister. She was always open, reasoned, and well informed. She had an open-door policy to members of both sides of this House. She managed relationships internally and externally to government with strength and grace and, again, worked relentlessly in the public interest while being open to different perspectives. I think she is well respected not only by our caucus and outside stakeholders but by members on the government side as well.

Nominating Christina would mean that young women can more easily see themselves in these roles, and that makes a difference to our future. She would respect and defend the rights of our members and, I think, work hard to improve decorum and respect in this place.

We have an opportunity with the Speaker's team to have representation from both sides of this House. We have an opportunity to set a new relationship between both sides of this House, one where we are more able to work together on the public good in spite of our differing views of what that means, all while sending an important message to Albertans recognizing the value of having strong, experienced, talented women in important roles.

From across Alberta we have come together for the important responsibility of electing a Speaker to this House, and I hope that this will be a truly competitive election. It's my privilege to rise and nominate the hon. Christina Gray, Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods, who I know without hesitation will maintain the respect, wisdom, and impartiality this role requires.

Thank you.

The Clerk: Hon. Ms Gray, do you wish to accept the nomination?

Ms Gray: Madam Clerk, thank you so much to the Member for Calgary-Mountain View for that wonderful nomination; it is so appreciated. I'm very grateful that I can borrow from some of the language we've heard recently and ask Conservatives to please lend me your vote in this situation.

Yes, I will allow my name to stand. Thank you, Madam Clerk.

The Clerk: Are there further nominations?

I declare the nominations closed. The nominees for the position of Speaker are Nathan Cooper and hon. Christina Gray.

Voting will commence after the list of nominees is posted in each voting booth.

[The lists of candidates were posted]

The Clerk: The voting will now begin. Members will vote by printing the first and last name of their preferred candidate on the

ballot paper, then placing their completed ballot in the ballot box on the Sergeant-at-Arms' desk. Please proceed.

[Members voted from 1:49 p.m. to 1:56 p.m.]

The Clerk: Hon. members, please be seated.

Have all voted who wish to do so? I will take that as a yes.

We will now retire and count the ballots. Once we are completed, we will return, ring the bells for one minute, and then we will announce the results.

Thank you.

[Ballots were counted from 1:57 p.m. to 2:04 p.m.]

The Clerk: Hon. members, the number of ballots cast for the election of Speaker, 84; number of spoiled ballots, one; number of votes required to achieve the 50 per cent plus one majority, 43. The member having received the majority of votes cast: Mr. Nathan Cooper. Mr. Cooper is hereby declared the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta for the 31st Legislature.

[The Speaker, with apparent reluctance, was escorted to the chair by Ms Smith and Ms Notley]

The Speaker: Hon. members, as it is my first opportunity to do so, I wish to send my greatest and deepest thank yous to the outstanding constituents of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills for placing their trust back in me to make this afternoon an opportunity.

I also wish to congratulate all members of the Assembly. Whether it is your first election or your re-election, congratulations on being here today, and thank you. Thank you so very much from the bottom of my heart for placing your trust in me to serve as the Speaker of the 31st Legislature of the great province of Alberta.

Whether it's your first time as an MLA or perhaps you've faithfully served this institution, like the Leader of the Opposition, for 5,588 days or perhaps, in the case of the hon. Member for Calgary-Hays, his fourth election and some 4,076 days, I'm sure that they will tell you that coming into the Chamber for the very first time after an election is a very, very special occasion.

My hope for us is that your debates will be vigorous, thoughtful, and amicable. Doing a great job so far. In all of Alberta's history only 984 people have ever been elected to serve this Chamber. As we honour their legacy and their service, let us be mindful that we now set the standard for those who come after us. May we not take this duty or calling lightly. Together we have an incredible opportunity and a responsibility.

Hon. members, we are a reflection of this great province, all 87 of us. Forty of you were born here in Alberta and a further 25 in other provinces in Canada. You've come from Brazil, Chile, Taiwan, Ukraine, Trinidad and Tobago, and Yemen, to name a few of the places around the world which you have come from, but you have chosen – you have chosen – Alberta. You speak 19 languages. You are lawyers and entrepreneurs, teachers and farmers, all who wake up every day with the exact same desire, and that desire is to make our province, the province that we all share, better than when we found it.

It is with a servant's heart that I seek to serve this Assembly, to uphold the high standards of those who have come before, to protect the rights and privileges of all members in the Assembly, and to do my part to make Alberta a better place. As Speaker my authority comes from you, its members. Collectively we chart our own course, a course with a better Alberta for all as the destination. We are all here to serve this most honest House, to make our friends, our family, and our communities and this great province proud.

I encourage you and entrust all of you to remember that in our haste to do good, we must never forget to be good. May God bless you, and may God bless Alberta.

[The Sergeant-at-Arms placed the Mace on the table]

Prayers

The Speaker: Hon. members, please rise for the prayer. On this day of new beginnings we ask for Your guidance in the responsibility we've undertaken and Your help in fulfilling our duties. As Members of the Legislative Assembly may we faithfully serve all Albertans and, in serving them, serve You.

Please be seated.

Election of a Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees

The Speaker: Hon. members, pursuant to section 17(1) of the Legislative Assembly Act and Standing Order 58(1)(a) nominations are invited for the office of Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees for this Assembly for the 31st Legislature. I therefore call for nominations.

The hon. the Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat and Premier of Alberta.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and congratulations on being elected by your colleagues in the role of Speaker to the Legislative Assembly. You've performed your duties over the past four years with dedication and enthusiasm, and I'm confident that you will continue to do the same.

Thank you, in your first few minutes, for confirming what your nomination MLA, Drumheller-Stettler, has said, that you are a very big nerd. You confirmed your nerdiness in those opening stats that you provided, so I thank you for that.

Member's Apology

Ms Smith: I am honoured to rise today and nominate a member of this Assembly for the role of Deputy Speaker. Before I do, however, I'd like to take a moment to address the Ethics Commissioner report from last month. Although I had no ill intent, the Ethics Commissioner found it was improper for me to contact the Minister of Justice in the way I did, and I apologize to all members of the Assembly and to all Albertans for the error.

I've asked my Minister of Justice to develop guidelines for an appropriate way to receive his legal advice on various legal matters, and I look forward to receiving that advice. Further, in her report the Ethics Commissioner provided recommendations, which I accept, including that of mandatory training for MLAs regarding the structure of Canadian government and the roles of the three branches of government. I have directed our government's Justice minister to organize this training for MLAs as well.

Debate Continued

Ms Smith: Now, Mr. Speaker, it's my great privilege to nominate the Member for Airdrie-East as Deputy Speaker of this Assembly. While she is no match for your nerdiness, I can say that she will match you in hard work and good humour.

I must correct the record from previous statements made about this member in the past: she is not a soccer mom; she is a swim mom. She is also a fierce advocate for her constituents. I know that she advocated with great vigour for a college for counsellors, and she has assured me she will advocate with similar vigour for a hospital for north Calgary and Airdrie. She is a wonderful role model for women and girls, and once again I fully expect her to continue to be a fierce advocate for her constituents in this continued role

The member has previously served with honour and dignity as Deputy Speaker of the Assembly for the last several years, and I believe that all members will greatly benefit from having her continue in this important role.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Does the hon. Member for Airdrie-East wish to accept the nomination?

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I do wish to accept the nomination.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Are there other nominations?

Seeing none, I am prepared to declare the nominations closed. The hon, the Member for Airdrie-East has been elected as the Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees.

Election of a Deputy Chair of Committees

The Speaker: Hon. members, pursuant to section 17(1) of the Legislative Assembly Act and Standing Order 58(1)(b) nominations are invited for the office of Deputy Chair of Committees for the 31st Legislature. I will therefore now call for nominations.

The hon. the Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services and Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's truly a pleasure to rise today, at the start of the 31st Legislature. First of all, Mr. Speaker, allow me to take a moment to congratulate you on your re-election to the Speaker's chair. I know your passion for this Chamber will serve this Chamber as well as all 87 members of this Chamber well. I also want to say, as a fellow Mountain View county resident and fellow representative of our great home county, that you've done our county proud, even all of us who call west of the fifth home.

Moving on to the Deputy Chair of Committees, I would like to take a moment to nominate an individual that I think can fulfill the role of Deputy Chair of Committees, which is a role that is not just a figurehead position. Rather, it's a position that serves the necessary function of keeping the Assembly in order, holding decorum, and, most importantly, is responsible, just like you, Mr. Speaker, for maintaining the tradition of this great House. As with the Speaker of this House, the Deputy Chair of Committees position serves an essential purpose and should be filled by a member with great personal dedication to the role and understanding of its importance and, I believe, most importantly, an understanding of the role of the chair to protect each member of this Assembly's rights as members and their role in representing Albertans in this House. I believe the best member for this role is a person who's familiar with House proceedings, a member who's respected by all members of this Chamber, someone who has a presence that can command the House and is passionate about legislative process and the history of the Chamber.

It is my great honour today, Mr. Speaker, to nominate such a person, and as such I nominate Mr. Glenn van Dijken, the Member for Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock, for the role of Deputy Chair of Committees.

The Speaker: Does the hon. Member for Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock choose to accept the nomination?

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do.

The Speaker: Are there any other nominations for the role of Deputy Chair of Committees?

Seeing none, I declare nominations closed and the hon. Member for Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock the Deputy Chair of Committees.

Hon. members, the House stands adjourned until Monday, October 30, 2023, at 3 p.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 2:17 p.m. to Monday, October 30, 2023, at 3 p.m.]

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