

The Legislative Assembly Office

Introduction

40. Introduction

The origins of the Legislative Assembly Office can be traced to 14th-century England, when Parliament elected the first Speaker and appointed the first Clerk. Because the Speaker has administrative authority over the office, it is sometimes called the Speaker's department; however, it is not a government department. Its current title was made official when the *Legislative Assembly Act* was passed in 1983.

Within the traditions of parliamentary democracy as constitutionally established in Alberta, the Legislative Assembly Office will

- support the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly in carrying out the duties of office,
- support Members in carrying out their roles as elected representatives of the people of Alberta,
- record the proceedings and maintain and preserve the records of the Legislative Assembly,
- inform and educate the public on behalf of Members and the institution of parliament,
- support the Assembly in protecting its institutions and privileges,
- support the exchange of information and ideas among Legislatures throughout the world, and
- provide services to external clients as required.

The Legislative Assembly Office is organized according to the chart on page ii in the Introduction section. The responsibilities of the presiding officers, the Clerk and senior managers are described in the following paragraphs.

Presiding Officers

41. Speaker of the Legislative Assembly

The Speaker is the presiding officer of the Legislative Assembly and is responsible for its organization as a legislative body and an administrative unit. The Speaker ranks in precedence directly after the Premier and for administrative purposes has the same rank as a minister. Traditionally, the Speaker, while embodying the authority and impartiality that characterize the office, exercises responsibility in three areas:

- presiding over the Assembly's proceedings, maintaining order, regulating debate according to the established rules of procedure and ensuring that all viewpoints may be heard;
- guarding the privileges of the Assembly and protecting the rights of its Members; and
- representing the Assembly in its relationship with Her Majesty and Her representatives, with external institutions and on ceremonial occasions.

In addition, the Speaker is the chief administrator of the Legislative Assembly Office, with ultimate responsibility for the administration and financial management of the Assembly and for providing services to its Members. In this function the Speaker is assisted by the Special Standing Committee on Members' Services.

The Assembly elects the Speaker from among its own Members as its first act at the opening of a new Legislature. The Speaker holds office until the day before the commencement of the next Legislature to ensure administrative continuity during the election period.

42. Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees

Members of the Legislative Assembly elect the Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees to act as Speaker when the Speaker is absent or the office of Speaker is vacant. The chair facilitates meetings of the Committee of Supply and Committee of the Whole. The term of this office continues after dissolution of the Assembly through the day preceding polling day.

43. Deputy Chair of Committees

MLAs elect the Deputy Chair of Committees to act as Speaker when the Speaker and Deputy Speaker are absent. The Deputy Chair facilitates meetings of the Committee of Supply and Committee of the Whole in the place of the Chair of Committees. The term of this office continues after dissolution of the Assembly through the day preceding polling day.

44. Members' Services Committee

The Special Standing Committee on Members' Services is appointed at the commencement of each Legislature. The Speaker is traditionally its chair. This committee approves the annual estimates of the Legislative Assembly Office and may modify certain regulations, orders or directives governing the office's financial and personnel administration. The committee also sets Members' allowances, constituency office allowances and Members' benefits and establishes human resource and financial management policy for the Legislative Assembly Office.

Organization

45. Clerk of the Legislative Assembly

The Clerk is the chief permanent officer of the Legislative Assembly and has authority and responsibility equivalent to that of a deputy minister of a government department. The Clerk has both procedural and managerial responsibilities.

As senior procedural officer of the Assembly the Clerk has overall responsibility for

- providing advice, research and support to the Speaker and Members on procedural matters concerning the privileges, rules, usages and proceedings of the Assembly and co-ordinating procedural services by other officers of the Assembly;
- preparing documents of the Assembly and ensuring the safekeeping of the Assembly's documents and records;
- providing all necessary administrative and support services to the Assembly during its sittings and ensuring that essential services are provided to the Assembly Chamber;
- presiding over the election of the Speaker at the opening of a new Legislature;
- announcing the Assembly's order of business and conducting its recorded votes or divisions during its sittings; and
- supervising the officers of the Assembly, including the Clerk Assistant/ Director of House Services, Clerk of *Journals*/Table Research, Parliamentary Counsel and Sergeant-at-Arms.

As chief operating officer the Clerk has the following managerial responsibilities:

- directing the operation of the Legislative Assembly Office;
- authorizing all financial commitments the Assembly enters into;
- directing the preparation of the Assembly's annual estimates and advising the Members' Services Committee in their consideration and approval;
- acting as liaison at the deputy minister level with government departments on matters related to the Assembly, the Chamber and the Legislative Assembly Office; and

- supervising the managers whose titles and duties follow.

45.1 Communication Services

Under the direct supervision of the Clerk, Communications Services' responsibilities include

- providing expertise in support of the organizational goals of the Legislative Assembly Office;
- providing strategy and counsel to Members and staff of the Assembly;
- providing professional planning, writing and design services for publication and online initiatives;
- producing promotional and informational material to support educational initiatives; and
- managing the broadcast of the Assembly's daily Routine.

46. Clerk Assistant/Director of House Services

The Clerk Assistant/Director of House Services' responsibilities include

- researching and preparing reports on matters of procedure and practice referred to the table;
- producing the Assembly's Order Paper, Votes and Proceedings and *Journals*;
- reviewing and registering all documents related to the operation of the House, including bills, written questions, motions and motions for returns;
- ensuring that all administrative, financial and support services are available for the effective operation of standing and special committees of the Assembly;
- serving as administrative secretary to the Alberta

branch of the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie;

- maintaining custody of Assembly and committee records and co-ordinating their retrieval and disposition;
- supervising the editing, production and indexing of *Alberta Hansard*, the official report of the debates of the Assembly and its committees;
- supervising the operating of the Assembly's sound amplification and recording systems; and
- managing printing for some sessional publications.

In the Clerk's absence the Clerk Assistant has all the authority of the Clerk in procedural matters.

47. Parliamentary Counsel: Legal Services

Parliamentary Counsel are the legal and procedural advisers to the Speaker, the Assembly, its committees, Members and officers of the Legislature when requested. Counsel provide legal services on a confidential and nonpartisan basis and in a variety of areas, including

- defending and asserting the rights, privileges and immunities of Members and the Assembly;
- drafting private Members' public bills and amendments;
- assisting Members in drafting motions, motions for returns and written questions;
- assisting caucuses and Members in interpreting statutory provisions concerning Members' benefits, rights and immunities, including the *Legislative Assembly Act* and Members' Services orders;
- briefing Members and petitioners on procedures for private bills;
- advising the Speaker and Clerk on procedural and legal matters in general;

- certifying the correctness of all bills and amendments;
- serving as table officers in the House with the Clerk, Clerk Assistant and Clerk of *Journals*/Table Research;
- acting as general legal counsel for the Legislative Assembly Office on legal matters, including contractual obligations;
- assisting Members with administering oaths and using their ex officio notarial powers;
- advising Executive Council and Members of reports required to be tabled in the House; and
- providing general education to the legal community, other government departments and the public about the Legislative Assembly.

48. Director of Visitor, Ceremonial and Security Services and Sergeant-at-Arms

The Sergeant-at-Arms is responsible for

- directing the security staff of the Assembly in maintaining order in the galleries and precincts of the Chamber;
- safekeeping of the Mace, Black Rod and fittings and furniture of the Chamber;
- selecting pages and managing the Legislature Page program;
- ensuring the safety and security of MLAs and their offices both inside and outside the capital;
- planning and executing ceremonial events as well as providing advice on ceremonial and protocol matters;
- performing ceremonial functions connected to the daily operation of the Assembly as well as special occasions such as the official opening, Royal Assent and prorogation;

- producing and delivering public education and outreach programs and materials for the Assembly;
- welcoming and assisting visitors, conducting tours, assisting with special events and promoting public visits to the Legislature;
- developing and maintaining the Legislative Assembly Interpretive Centre and Gift Shop; and
- developing business continuity plans for the LAO.

49. Legislature Librarian: Library Services

The Legislature Librarian is responsible for

- providing reference and information services to Members, Legislative Assembly staff and the Alberta public;
- acquiring books, government publications, periodicals and newspapers to support Members' information and research needs;
- co-ordinating the development and provision of electronic services, including regular customized updating services;
- regularly recording Oral Question Period and local news programming;
- alerting Members and their staff to newly acquired information sources;
- providing training in the use of electronic services to Members and their staff;
- maintaining and microfilming Alberta weekly newspapers;
- producing bibliographies and other current awareness services, which Members can access both in print and under Resources on the Legislative Assembly Office website; and
- developing policies, standards and procedures for the acquisition and preservation of information in a variety of formats.

50. Director of Information Technology and Human Resource Services

The director is responsible for all components of Human Resource and Information Technology Services.

Information Technology Services

The director is responsible for

- acquiring, evaluating, installing and maintaining computer hardware and software;
- developing, implementing and maintaining the Assembly's plans for information systems;
- managing databases and data telecommunication and controlling inventory of all computer hardware and software;
- preparing and administering the Information Technology Services budget as well as other individual project budgets for Information Technology Services;
- hiring support staff and consultants as required;
- chairing the Assembly's information systems management committee and representing the Assembly's interests in all related areas;
- keeping abreast of trends in technology;
- establishing policies, standards and procedures for system applications, including managing appropriate security controls; and
- providing advice, support and training for Members and Assembly staff with respect to information systems.

Human Resource Services

The director is responsible for

- advising on employment and policy issues,
- assisting the Members' Services Committee in reviewing Members' benefits and entitlements,
- managing the Legislative Assembly human resource

- and payroll system,
- co-ordinating MLA and staff compensation plans and administering employee and service contracts,
 - managing the recruitment and retention policies for nonpartisan positions,
 - co-ordinating career counselling and learning and development programs,
 - co-ordinating the LAO health and safety program, which ensures safe work practices and promotes health and wellness initiatives, and
 - supplying HR systems and services during election and transition periods and throughout the life of each Legislature.

51. Director of Financial Management and Administrative Services and Senior Financial Officer

The director is responsible for

- administering the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* as it pertains to the Legislative Assembly;
- records management for the Assembly and providing advice and support on records management issues to Members of the Assembly and staff;
- processing financial transactions and administering Members' allowances;
- providing administrative support and services;
- procuring and managing materials, supplies and other Legislative Assembly assets;
- co-ordinating development of the Legislative Assembly Office budget; and
- maintaining the official financial records of the Legislative Assembly Office.