

# Special Standing Committee on Members' Services

Subcommittee on Family-Friendly Workplace  
Practices and Policies

## Final Report - Review of Family-Friendly Practices and Policies for Legislators

Twenty-Ninth Legislature  
Second Session

October 2016



**COMMITTEES**  
OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY



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**MEMBERS OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON FAMILY-FRIENDLY WORKPLACE  
PRACTICES AND POLICIES**

**29<sup>th</sup> Legislature**

Robyn Luff, MLA  
Chair  
Calgary-East (ND)

Kim Schreiner, MLA  
Red Deer-North (ND)

Nathan Cooper, MLA  
Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (W)

Colin Piquette, MLA  
Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater (ND)

Ric McIver, MLA  
Calgary-Hays (PC)

## 1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Subcommittee on Family-Friendly Workplace Practices and Policies (the “Subcommittee”) makes the following recommendations:

### Changes to the Standing Orders

1. That the Standing Orders of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta be amended to explicitly permit Members to bring infants on the floor of the chamber.

### Changes to the *Legislative Assembly Act*

2. That section 34 of the *Legislative Assembly Act* be amended to permit Members to be absent from the Legislative Assembly without financial penalty due to pregnancy, child birth or the care of a Member’s child following the birth or adoption of that child for one regular Spring or Fall sitting of the Legislative Assembly within one year of the birth of the Member’s child or coming into the care of that Member, or in any other circumstance authorized by the Speaker.

### Access of partners, children and caregivers to the Legislature precincts

3. That greater access to the Legislature precincts be provided to the partners and children of Members, as well as the caregivers of Members’ children, including access to parking facilities, the Edmonton Federal Building and the Legislature Building.

### Improved family-friendly facilities and signage

4. That the Government review existing family-friendly infrastructure in the Legislature precincts and identify priority areas for improvement, including installation of infant change devices in more bathrooms, the provision of highchairs and booster seats in the Legislature cafeteria and improved signage indicating the location of family-friendly facilities throughout the Legislature precincts.

### Family Room in Legislature precincts

5. That the Speaker explore the possibility of creating a family room in the Legislature precincts.

### Childcare facility in Legislature precincts

6. That the Government examine the possibility of creating a childcare facility in the Edmonton Federal Building or elsewhere in the Legislature precincts, which includes an assessment of potential demand by Members and staff, the physical space requirements for a childcare centre, the estimated costs and the availability and accessibility of nearby childcare options.

### Guide for Members with young children

7. That a resource guide be prepared for Members who are expecting children or who are new parents to outline the facilities and resources available to Members, including a list of accredited childcare facilities near the Legislature precincts and the procedure for obtaining security access for partners, children and caregivers.

## 2.0 SUBCOMMITTEE MANDATE

On February 9, 2016, the Members' Services Committee passed a motion to appoint a subcommittee to study the feasibility of and:

- (1) recommend changes to the *Legislative Assembly Act* and the Members' Service Committee Orders to ensure pregnant MLAs and MLAs who are new parents are not unfairly penalized for absences from the Assembly;
- (2) recommend any other changes to the Standing Orders, the Members' Services Committee orders, or the *Legislative Assembly Act* that would allow the Legislature to be supportive of MLAs with young families, including:
  - (a) installing change tables in public washrooms in the Legislature and Federal Building;
  - (b) establishing standards that result in a family-friendly precinct, including appropriate procedures and training for all Members for having an infant in the legislative chamber; and
  - (c) designating family rooms for quiet time or feedings;
- (3) explore the feasibility of opening a childcare facility on the Legislature Grounds, with operating costs to be completely covered by users and services to be provided to all on a first-come, first-served basis.

The Members' Services Committee passed a further motion on February 24, 2016, that the Subcommittee be composed of the Chair, Robyn Luff, as well Members Colin Piquette, Nathan Cooper, Ric McIver and Kim Schreiner, and that it report back to the Special Standing Committee on Members' Services once the Subcommittee has completed its work.

The Subcommittee began its review on April 6, 2016.

### 3.0 INTRODUCTION

On February 8, 2016, the House Leader for the Official Opposition wrote to the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly as Chair of the Members' Services Committee to request a review of the family-friendly workplace practices and policies of the Legislative Assembly with respect to Members. A motion was subsequently introduced at the February 9, 2016, meeting of the Members' Services Committee and carried.

This report is the result of the Subcommittee's six month review and contains the seven recommendations agreed to during the Subcommittee's deliberations, including recommendations for amendments to the *Legislative Assembly Act* and the Standing Orders of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta.

## 4.0 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Subcommittee wishes to acknowledge the contributions and assistance of the following individuals:

### **Legislative Assembly of British Columbia**

Hon. Ms Linda Reid, Speaker

The Committee also wishes to acknowledge the assistance of the following Legislative Assembly Office support staff:

### **Legislative Assembly Office Support Staff**

Ms Shannon Dean, Law Clerk and Director of House Services

Mr. Brian Hodgson, Sergeant-at-Arms and Director of Visitor, Ceremonial and Security Services

Ms Stephanie LeBlanc, Parliamentary Counsel

Mr. Trafton Koenig, Parliamentary Counsel

Ms Kyla Rogers, Administrative Assistant to the Sergeant-at-Arms

Mrs. Karen Sawchuk, Subcommittee Clerk

Ms Allison Quast, Subcommittee Clerk

Mr. Duncan Leung, Committee Services Coordinator

Ms Leah Kirtio, Committee Services Assistant



## 5.0 CONSULTATION AND REVIEW PROCESS

The Subcommittee's review of the family-friendly workplace practices and policies at the Legislative Assembly involved a series of meetings, which took place on April 6, May 18, June 22, September 8, and October 18, 2016.

As part of the review process, the Subcommittee invited the Hon. Ms Linda Reid to make a presentation on the practices and policies implemented at the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia to foster a more family-friendly workplace for Members.

The Subcommittee received an oral presentation from Brian Hodgson, Sergeant-at-Arms and Director of Visitor, Ceremonial and Security Services, with respect the shared responsibility for furniture and fixturing of the Legislature Building and precincts, as well as existing washroom facilities for families, including availability of infant change tables.

The Subcommittee also requested research materials, including: cross-jurisdictional summaries of family-friendly practices and policies for legislators in Canada and rules governing Members' absences; a report on the location of existing family-friendly facilities in the Legislature precincts; a list of childcare centres in proximity to the Legislature precincts; and, a summary of the regulations governing the operations of daycares in Alberta.

The Subcommittee then met on September 8 and October 18, 2016, to deliberate on the issues and proposals brought forward from the oral presentations, the research materials and from Subcommittee Members themselves.

This report is the result of the Subcommittee's deliberations and contains seven recommendations to foster a more family-friendly workplace for Members.

## 6.0 COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

### 6.1 Changes to the Standing Orders

The Subcommittee heard that the Standing Orders of the Legislative Assembly do not currently set out any rules with respect to a Member bringing an infant into the legislative chamber during a sitting.

The Subcommittee acknowledged that infants have been brought into the chamber recently during the Spring 2016 sitting, however, they agreed it was valuable to make such practice explicitly permitted in the Standing Orders.

The Committee therefore recommends:

1. **That the Standing Orders of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta be amended to explicitly permit Members to bring infants on the floor of the chamber.**

### 6.2 Changes to the *Legislative Assembly Act*

Section 34 of the *Legislative Assembly Act* requires that a deduction be made from the indemnity allowance of a Member if that Member has been absent in excess of 10 sitting days during a session, except in the case of illness or injury, bereavement or public or official business:

#### **Deductions from allowances**

**34** Deductions shall be made from the indemnity allowance and the expense allowance of a Member at the rates prescribed by the Members' Services Committee for each day in excess of 10 sitting days during a session on which the Member did not either take the Member's seat in the Assembly or a meeting of a committee of the Assembly otherwise than by reason of

- (a) illness or injury,
- (b) bereavement, or
- (c) public or official business.

The rules do not permit Members to be absent without penalty in any other circumstances, including due to pregnancy or child care responsibilities. The Subcommittee heard that to resolve this situation an amendment would need to be made to the *Legislative Assembly Act*.

The Subcommittee examined the changes in Newfoundland and Labrador introduced as part of the *House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act*, SNL 2007, c H-10.1, which permit Members to be absent without financial penalty for reasons of pregnancy, adoption or parental leave. The Subcommittee further considered the directive by the House of Assembly Management Commission providing that absences without financial penalty are to be permitted for up to one regular Spring or Fall sitting of the House of Assembly in Newfoundland and Labrador within one year of a Member's child being born or coming into the care of that Member.

The Subcommittee debated the importance of permitting Members to be absent from the Legislative Assembly as a result of pregnancy or adoption to ensure that Members are not prevented or discouraged from having families due to their responsibilities as elected representatives. The Subcommittee also discussed the unique challenges facing Members and agreed that the Speaker should be provided with discretion to allow Members to be absent without financial penalty when reasonable.

The Subcommittee therefore recommends:

- 2. That section 34 of the *Legislative Assembly Act* be amended to permit Members to be absent from the Legislative Assembly without financial penalty due to pregnancy, child birth or the care of a Member's child following the birth or adoption of that child for one regular Spring or Fall sitting of the Legislative Assembly within one year of the birth of the Member's child or coming into the care of that Member, or in any other circumstance authorized by the Speaker.**

### **6.3 Access of partners, children and caregivers to the Legislature precincts**

The Subcommittee discussed the difficulties associated with getting access to the Edmonton Federal Building and the Legislature Building for the partners of Members, and their children and caregivers, including not being able to re-enter secure areas after leaving to use washroom facilities.

The Subcommittee agreed that the partners of Members and their children and caregivers should be provided with easier access to restricted areas of the Legislature precincts for the purposes of childcare and support.

The Subcommittee therefore recommends:

- 3. That greater access to the Legislature precincts be provided to the partners and children of Members, as well as the caregivers of Members' children, including access to parking facilities, the Edmonton Federal Building and the Legislature Building.**

### **6.4 Improved family-friendly facilities and signage**

The Subcommittee heard that family-friendly facilities were not consistently available throughout the Legislature precincts, including infant changing facilities in public and restricted-area washrooms. The Subcommittee discussed the need to provide improved facilities for families, particularly in priority areas where demand is highest and in areas where no family-friendly facilities currently exist.

The Subcommittee also discussed the possibility of creating one or more washrooms in the Legislature Building or the Edmonton Federal Building that could accommodate a variety of needs for families with young children, persons with disabilities and individuals who prefer to use a gender neutral washroom.

The Subcommittee also identified a lack of signage directing Members, staff and the public to family-friendly facilities as an obstacle to creating a more family-friendly environment.

The cost and feasibility of improving family-friendly facilities was raised several times, particularly with respect to the Legislature Building, which the Subcommittee heard might not be able to accommodate certain infrastructure due to physical or architectural constraints. As a result, the Subcommittee agreed that a request to the Government should be made to assess current infrastructure and determine which improvements are most feasible and would best meet the immediate priorities of users.

The Subcommittee therefore recommends:

- 4. That the Government review existing family-friendly infrastructure in the Legislature precincts and identify priority areas for improvement, including installation of infant change facilities in more bathrooms, the provision of highchairs and booster seats in the Legislature cafeteria and improved signage indicating the location of family-friendly facilities throughout the Legislature precincts.**

## 6.5 Family Room in Legislature precincts

As part of its review the Subcommittee heard that the Speaker has coordinated the installation of a “quiet room” for Members and infants in a space adjoining the legislative chamber. The Subcommittee identified a further need, however, for a space where children could be cared for by family-members or caregivers and which offered basic amenities for older children, such as toys and a napping area.

The Subcommittee debated the best means for determining the feasibility of creating a family room in the Legislature precincts and determined that a request should be made to the Speaker.

The Committee therefore recommends:

- 5. That the Speaker explore the possibility of creating a family room in the Legislature precincts.**

## 6.6 Childcare facility in Legislature precincts

The Subcommittee discussed the possibility of establishing a childcare facility in the Legislature precincts to provide Members with improved childcare options. To assess the feasibility of the project the Subcommittee requested general information regarding the statutory requirements for childcare centres in Alberta as well as the availability of childcare spaces in proximity to the Legislature. The Subcommittee was also provided with a cross-jurisdictional summary describing the facilities available at other Canadian legislatures.

The Subcommittee agreed that the Government should examine the potential demand, feasibility and cost of opening a childcare facility in greater detail.

The Committee therefore recommends:

- 6. That the Government examine the possibility of creating a childcare facility in the Edmonton Federal Building or elsewhere in the Legislature precincts, which includes an assessment of potential demand by Members and staff, the physical space requirements for a childcare centre, the estimated costs and the availability and accessibility of nearby childcare options.**

## 6.7 Guide for Members with young children

The Subcommittee discussed the needs of Members who are expectant parents or who have young families to make them aware of the resources and facilities available to them.

The Committee therefore recommends:

- 7. That a resource guide be prepared for Members who are expecting children or who are new parents to outline the facilities and resources available to them, including a list of accredited childcare facilities near the Legislature precincts and the procedure for obtaining security access for partners, children and caregivers.**

## APPENDIX A: Oral Presentations to the Subcommittee

Name	Organization
Hon. Ms Linda Reid	Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia
Brian Hodgson	Sergeant-at-Arms and Director of Visitor Services, Legislative Assembly of Alberta