



Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing

Final Report - Review of the Operation of Morning Sitzings of the Assembly

Twenty-Ninth Legislature

Second Session

October 2016



COMMITTEES
OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

STANDING COMMITTEE on PRIVILEGES and ELECTIONS, STANDING ORDERS and PRINTING

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October 2016

**To the Honourable Robert E. Wanner
Speaker of the Legislative Assembly
of the Province of Alberta**

As Chair of the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing, I have the honour of submitting the Committee's final report regarding its review of the operation of morning sittings of the Assembly brought into force by Part A of Government Motion 19, which was passed on November 5, 2015.

Sincerely,

[Original signed by the Chair]

Maria Fitzpatrick, MLA
Chair, Standing Committee on Privileges and
Elections, Standing Orders and Printing

c. Mr. Robert Reynolds, Q.C.
Clerk of the Legislative Assembly

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**MEMBERS OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON PRIVILEGES
AND ELECTIONS, STANDING ORDERS AND PRINTING
29th Legislature**

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Vermilion-Lloydminster (PC)

Glenn van Dijken, MLA
Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (W)

Substitutions Pursuant to Standing Order 56(2.1-2.4):

Brian Malkinson, MLA*
Calgary-Currie (ND)

Denise Woollard, MLA†
Edmonton-Mill Creek (ND)

Ronald Orr, MLA‡
Lacombe-Ponoka (W)

Leela Sharon Aheer, MLA§
Chestermere-Rocky View (W)

Dr. A. Robert Turner, MLA**
Edmonton-Whitemud (ND)

* Substitute for Anam Kazim on June 22, 2016

† Substitute for Chris Nielsen on June 22, 2016

‡ Substitute for David B. Hanson on September 14, 2016

§ Substitute for David B. Hanson on October 17, 2016

** Substitute for Chris Nielsen on October 17, 2016

Prab Gill, MLA
Calgary-Greenway (PC)^{††}

Members also in Attendance:

Hon. Brian Mason, MLA^{‡‡}
Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (ND)

^{††} Substitute for Mike Ellis on October 17, 2016
^{‡‡} September 14, 2016

1.0 Introduction

The Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing meets when the Legislative Assembly refers a matter to the Committee for consideration.

On November 5, 2015, the Legislative Assembly of Alberta passed Government Motion 19, which, among other things, provided that the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing meet to review and assess the operation of the morning sittings of the Assembly and report to the Assembly with its recommendations by October 27, 2016.

The Committee met on June 22, 2016, September 14, 2016, and October 17, 2016, to review the operation of morning sittings. At its second meeting the Committee received presentations from Hon. Brian Mason, Government House Leader and Minister of Infrastructure; Mr. Nathan Cooper, Official Opposition House Leader; Dr. Richard Starke, House Leader for the Progressive Conservative caucus; and Mr. Robert Reynolds, QC, Clerk of the Assembly, concerning each presenter's view of the functioning of morning sittings and the implications that this has on Members, staff and the operations of the Assembly. The Committee deliberated on the matter of morning sittings at its October 17 meeting and made recommendations, which are listed below, in section 3.0.

2.0 Order of Reference

On November 5, 2015, the Legislative Assembly passed Government Motion 19, and the portion that is relevant to the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing is as follows:

A. Be it resolved that the Standing Orders of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta effective November 18, 2014, be amended as follows:

**1. Standing Order 3(1) is struck out and the following is substituted:
Sitting times and sessional calendar**

3(1) Subject to suborder (1.1) and unless otherwise ordered, the sitting hours of the Assembly shall be as follows:

Monday:	1:30 – 6:00 p.m.
Tuesday:	9:00 a.m.* – noon, 1:30 – 6:00 p.m.
Wednesday:	9:00 a.m. – noon, 1:30 – 6:00 p.m.
Thursday:	9:00 a.m. – noon, 1:30 – 4:30 p.m.

(1.1) From the first day of main estimates consideration by the Legislative Policy Committees until the day for the vote on the main estimates in Committee of Supply, the Assembly shall not meet in the morning from 9:00 a.m. – noon.

...

B. And be it further resolved that the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing shall meet to review and assess the operation of the morning sittings of the Assembly brought into force by Part A of this motion and report to the Assembly with its recommendations by October 27, 2016, and the Committee may, without leave of the Assembly, meet during a period when the Assembly is adjourned or prorogued ...

*The start time on Tuesday morning was changed to 10:00 a.m. on approval of the motion as amended on November 5, 2015 (see *Hansard* transcript, November 5, 2015, pp. 451-452).

3.0 Recommendations

The Committee commenced its deliberations by discussing the matter of quorum for the Assembly and agreed that the current quorum of 20 Members is appropriate. Accordingly, the Committee recommends

that there be no change in the Standing Orders with regard to quorum.

The Committee discussed the matter of the operation of morning sittings and whether morning sittings ought to continue. Committee members deliberated on the merits of morning sittings as a way in which the Assembly could lessen its reliance on evening sittings yet still have the time to debate Bills and motions and complete its work. Additionally, the Committee discussed the desirability of Assembly sittings that predominately take place during the day – mornings and afternoons as opposed to evenings.

The Committee,

upon completion of its review of the operation of morning sittings brought into force by Part A of Government Motion 19, recommends to the Assembly that the practice of morning sittings continue.

Committee members debated the merits of deferred voting, recognizing that Albertans have a desire to know the position of their elected representatives concerning Assembly matters. The Committee agreed that deferred voting would allow for certainty regarding voting on particular matters. However, it noted that the House Leaders should have the opportunity to further review and deliberate on the appropriateness of deferred voting and make a recommendation on whether the Assembly should adopt this procedure.

Accordingly, the Committee

requests that House Leaders have further discussion on the potential of deferred votes.

