

Standing Committee on
Procedure and Privileges



Report on the Review of the Rules of the Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly

20th Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly

Chair: Ms. Kate Reid

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SPEAKER OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Mr. Speaker:

Your Standing Committee on Procedure and Privileges is pleased to provide its Report on the Review of the Rules of the Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly.



Kate Reid
Chair, Standing Committee on Procedure and Privileges

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON
PROCEDURE AND PRIVILEGES**

**REPORT ON THE REVIEW OF THE RULES OF THE NORTHWEST
TERRITORIES LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**

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STANDING COMMITTEE ON PROCEDURE AND PRIVILEGES

REPORT ON THE REVIEW THE RULES OF THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

INTRODUCTION

The Standing Committee on Procedure and Privileges (Committee) is pleased to report on its review of the Rules of the Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly (the Rules).

In 2024, Committee received two letters from Speaker Shane Thompson requesting a review of many of the Rules; these letters are attached as Appendix A.

In April 2024, the Speaker requested that Committee review the following matters:

- Terminology of Prayer;
- Timelines for Acknowledgements;
- The Speaker's ability to delivery Members' Statements;
- Provisions to allow the Clerk to produce a consolidation of the Rules;
- Time limits on Replies to Commissioner's Address;
- Restrictions on when a Reply to Commissioner's Address can be given;
- Professional Behaviour in the Chamber via Chapter Three of the Rules;
- Amendments to Motions;
- Motions Location on the Daily Orders;
- Timelines for Returns to Oral Questions;
- Number of supplementary questions in Oral Questions;
- Guidelines for Oral Questions;
- Follow-up Information to Oral Questions;
- Petitions;
- Sitting Hours; and
- Points of Information or Clarification in Committee of the Whole.

In July 2024, the Speaker requested that Committee review the following matters in addition to the matters currently under review:

- Predictability of Sitting Hours;
- Ministers' Statements in Committee of the Whole; and
- Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery.

Further to this, during Committee of the Whole on June 6, 2024, the House adopted a Committee Motion that directed Committee to review and consider the current conventions in the titling of bills and if those conventions should be expanded.

Committee has considered these matters and is prepared to report on nearly all of them.

Prayer

Concern has been raised more than once over the associations that come with the word “Prayer”. The word has very different meaning and connotations for different individuals. Committee considered several more inclusive terms and agreed that changing the references to Prayer in the Rules to “Prayer or Reflection” would be the most appropriate course of action. Therefore, Committee recommends:

Recommendation 1:

The Standing Committee on Procedure and Privileges recommends that Chapter Four be amended by adding the words “or Reflection” after each instance of the word “Prayer”.

Recommendation 2:

The Standing Committee on Procedure and Privileges recommends that Rule 5.4(2) be amended by adding the words “or Reflection” after the word “prayer”.

Acknowledgments

The current rule states that acknowledgments must be filed with the Speaker’s office no later than one hour before the start of the sitting day. However, one hour does not allow for adequate time to ensure the acknowledgement meets the guidelines, format the document and provide copies to interpreters. Committee recommends:

Recommendation 3:

The Standing Committee on Procedure and Privileges recommends that Rule 5.8(2) be amended by deleting the words “one hour” and inserting the words “24 hours”.

Furthermore, Committee was satisfied that the guidelines currently outlined in the Rules for acknowledgments were appropriate and did see an uptake in the usage of acknowledgments in the Spring 2024 sitting.

Speaker's Member's Statements

In the 20th Assembly, the Speaker has commenced a practice of delivering Members' Statements from the Speaker's Chair.

After a jurisdictional scan and a deep look at the Rules, there is nothing that appears to preclude the Speaker from delivering a Member's statement from his Chair. As such, Committee does not see a need for any changes to the Rules for this matter. Committee is supportive of the Speakers participation in Members Statements during House Business.

Consolidation of Rules

Currently, the practice is that all changes to the Rules must occur in the House by way of motion. However, the Speaker asked Committee to examine whether a provision should exist that allows the Clerk to produce a consolidation of the Rules, and the ability to correct spelling, grammatical, and punctuation errors, without requiring those changes to be made through the House.

Committee agrees that this measure will save the time of the House and reduce administrative burdens on Members and staff. Committee sees the process of the Clerk providing a copy of a consolidation of the Rules to Caucus as an information item as sufficient notice for Members of the Legislative Assembly.

Recommendation 4:

The Standing Committee on Procedure and Privileges recommends that the Clerk be granted authority to produce consolidations of the Rules to correct spelling, grammatical and punctuation errors alongside non-controversial changes within the Rules, without requiring those changes to be made by way of motion in the House.

Time Limit on Replies to Commissioner's Address

Replies to the Commissioner's Address have no time limit in the Rules, which is dissimilar to other Replies to Addresses such as the Reply to the Budget Address. However, Committee does not feel a time limit is required considering every Member may only use this provision once per session.

Restrictions on When Replies to Commissioner's Address Can Be Given

In practice, many Members wait until the last sitting day before dissolution to use their one opportunity for a reply to the Commissioner's Address, either to use the opportunity as a farewell or to announce whether they intend to run in the next Territorial General Election. However, this is not the intention of this item on the daily orders. Further, the last day(s) of an Assembly typically deal with large amounts of legislation needing to pass through the House at the end of an Assembly. As such, Committee recommends:

Recommendation 5:

The Standing Committee on Procedure and Privileges recommends that Rule 5.2(2) be amended by inserting the words "or the final sitting day prior to the dissolution of a Legislative Assembly" after the word "prorogation".

Professional Behaviour in the Chamber

The Speaker, at the request of the Government House Leader, referred the matter of professional behaviour in the Chamber for Committee to examine. In particular, the question put to Committee was whether or not Chapter Three of the Rules on Order and Debate provides sufficient guidance for expected conduct in the Chamber supportive of a respectful Legislative Assembly culture.

After careful consideration by Committee, it was agreed that the provisions in Chapter Three of the Rules do provide adequate guidance for Members' decorum in the Chamber, and that any grey area behaviour is a matter for the Speaker to decide upon.

Committee did however call on all Members, on both sides of the House, to be engaged during question period, prepared with questions and responses, and show the public the importance of public policy debate in the chamber.

Motions Location on Daily Orders

The daily orders are different on Tuesdays to allow for business of Standing Committees to occur earlier in a day's proceedings. This way, the important work of Committees is more accessible to members of the media and public and does not get buried under the many other items of business in the daily orders. Viewership is highest in the first few hours of a sitting day.

Considering motions often deal with pressing public issues, Committee agreed that a day where motions can be dealt with earlier on the daily orders would be appropriate.

Recommendation 6:

The Standing Committee on Procedure and Privileges recommends that the following rule be added to Chapter Four:

4.1 (5) the daily orders of business in the Assembly on Thursdays shall be:

1. Prayer
2. Ministers' Statements
3. Members' Statements
4. Motions
5. Returns to Oral Questions
6. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery
7. Acknowledgements
8. Oral Questions
9. Written Questions
10. Returns to Written Questions
11. Replies to Commissioner's Address
12. Petitions
13. Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills
14. Reports of Standing and Special Committees
15. Tabling of Documents
16. Notices of Motion
17. Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills
18. First Reading of Bills
19. Second Reading of Bills
20. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters
21. Report of Committee of the Whole
22. Third Reading of Bills
23. Orders of the Day

Returns to Oral Questions

In the Rules, there is no specified timeline for a Minister who takes a question on notice to provide a return. In order to align the Rules surrounding Returns to Oral Questions with the Rules surrounding Returns to Written Questions, Committee recommends:

Recommendation 7:

The Standing Committee on Procedure and Privileges recommends that rule 7.2(2)(b) be amended by adding the words “within 21 calendar days, or on the first day of the next Sitting if 21 calendar days lapse between Sittings,” after the words “Return to Oral Questions”.

Oral Questions

During Oral Questions, Members are allowed one question and three supplementary questions. However, some questions require background and some answers require substantial context. This has led to a pattern where Members are often being reminded to be as short and brief as possible in their questions so that all Members have an opportunity to pose a question that day.

In an effort to keep questions and answers focused while also allowing Members time for additional rounds of questions during Oral Questions, Committee makes the following recommendation:

Recommendation 8:

The Standing Committee on Procedures and Privileges recommends that rule 7.2(4) be amended by replacing the word “three” with “two”.

Amendments to Motions

Committee reviewed the current process for moving amendments to motions on the floor of the House. While there has been feedback that the process can be administrative in nature, it also ensures that important principles are upheld, such as all Members having the opportunity to be informed and aware of what exactly is being put forward, alongside an opportunity to speak to what is put forward.

The concept of introducing a separate, more expedited process for friendly amendments to motions was considered at length by Committee. However Committee could not come to an agreement on the definition of a friendly amendment. For example, if the mover of a motion concurs with an amendment to their motion, but is unaware that by concurring with that amendment to their motion, they would lose the support of their colleagues, would they still consider it a friendly amendment after the fact? As such, Committee agreed that the current process for amendments to motions, while at times administrative, is the most fair and thorough way to change a motion on the floor before the House.

Guidelines for Oral Questions

The Speaker put a simple question before Committee: do the guidelines for Oral Questions in the Rules reflect current and best practices across the country?

Committee agreed that the guidelines in the Rules are sufficient and have a good measure of leeway for Members to pose questions in a way that reflects their priorities as a Member. Committee also felt that it is the Speaker's purview to interpret and enforce the guidelines in the way he deems most appropriate. Committee respects the Speaker's role in ensuring all Members ask meaningful yet respectful questions and did not wish to over step into the Speaker's role.

Follow-up Information to Oral Questions

A large number of Tabled Documents processed through the House and the Office of the Clerk are documents that originate from Ministers that provide follow-up information to oral questions. Committee agreed that these documents should simply be filed with the Clerk and printed in Hansard rather than processed as individual Tabled Documents. Therefore, Committee recommends:

Recommendation 9:

The Standing Committee on Procedure and Privileges recommends that rule 7.2(6) be amended by deleting the words "table that information in the Assembly" and replacing them with the words "file that information with the Clerk".

Recommendation 10:

The Standing Committee on Procedure and Privileges recommends that rule 7.2(7) be added:

Under the item “Oral Questions”, the Clerk shall inform the Assembly of the follow-ups to oral questions received, deliver copies to the Members who asked the questions, and have the returns printed in Hansard.

Petitions

The Speaker put to Committee whether or not more sites should be approved as a petition platform for Members with the increase in e-petitions seen recently, and how petitions can be made more accessible for residents with disabilities.

Research in how other jurisdictions deal with petitions was not particularly helpful to Committee because most jurisdictions do not allow for websites as approved petition platforms (they either have an e-petition platform built in-house or only accept written submissions). Further, the topic of petition accessibility is fairly new for Legislatures and does not have a large body of research for Committee to review. However, Committee agrees that this topic is important and warrants a response. Committee requires more time to consider this matter fulsomely.

Points of Clarification in Committee of the Whole

In the Speaker’s referral, the Speaker asked Committee to consider if there should be an opportunity in Committee of the Whole for Members to seek points of information or clarification, or other interjections that would allow Members to ask questions of each other more freely.

One avenue Committee considered with this referral was replicating a rule that exists at the Senate of Canada. At the Senate, Rule 6-2 (2) reads as follows:

“A Senator may, with leave of the Senate, speak a second time in a debate for no more than five minutes in order to explain any misunderstanding arising from the original intervention. No new matter shall be introduced while explaining the misunderstanding.”¹

¹ Found at <https://sencanada.ca/en/about/procedural-references/rules/chapter-six-rules-of-debate/>.

After further investigation, Committee came to the conclusion that because the rule at the Senate requires leave of the Senate, this would not allow for the dynamic nature of seeking information or clarification in a Committee of the Whole exchange like the referral suggests.

Committee ultimately decided that the back-and-forth style of questions permitted between Members and witnesses within a Member's allotted 10 minutes during Committee of the Whole provides for sufficient opportunities for Members to seek information or clarification.

Sitting Hours

Sitting hours has been an ongoing discussion throughout the first year of the 20th Assembly. Members desire predictability for sitting hours to make appropriate family arrangements, and for the benefit of the Assembly's interpreters (most of whom are Elders).

Committee considered discussions on this topic that occurred at Caucus as well as a jurisdictional scan as to what sitting hours exist in other Legislatures, and what measures are in place to determine their predictability. Every Legislature is unique and it was challenging to compare these measures with other jurisdictions including the amount of business before an Assembly, how far Members have to travel to be present for a sitting, and the dynamics of party politics that are factored into the Rules of other jurisdictions.

Committee did note that some jurisdictions have designated days of the week that will be late sitting nights in their Rules. The expressed desire for predictability that is currently prevalent in this Assembly is evidence to Committee that late sitting nights should be formalized in the Rules.

Committee makes the following recommendations:

Recommendation 11:

The Standing Committee on Procedure and Privileges recommends rule 2.2(1) be deleted and replaced with the following:

2.2(1) Unless otherwise ordered, the sitting hours of the Assembly shall be as follows:

- (a) Mondays and Wednesdays from 1:30 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.
- (b) Tuesdays and Thursdays from 1:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.
- (c) Fridays from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Recommendation 12:

The Standing Committee on Procedure and Privileges recommends that rule 2.2(2) be amended by replacing the words “At 6:00 p.m. on Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays, and at 2:00 p.m. on Fridays” with “At the designated adjournment time of a Sitting day,”.

Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery

The concept of recognizing visitors in the Gallery is an important one in the Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly. The Legislature is informally known as the ‘Place for the People’ and Members tend to be quite connected to their constituents. While there is currently a practice of some visitors to the Gallery being recognized by multiple Members, this is something that does occur in other Legislatures, and Committee agreed that this practice does not cause disorder or take up too much of the House’s time to require a rule change.

Minister’s Statements in Committee of the Whole

The Rules currently allow for a motion to be moved to refer a Minister’s Statement to Committee of the Whole without notice directly after the Minister delivers the statement. However, once the Minister’s Statement is considered in Committee of the Whole, Members may speak to the Minister’s Statement for up to 10 minutes each and there are no further actions that can be taken. Committee was asked to consider options for how Minister’s Statements can be considered in Committee of the Whole.

Committee concluded that a more meaningful activity that could occur in Committee of the Whole with a Minister’s Statement is an opportunity to ask the respective Minister questions about their statement. Committee also thought it would be appropriate to ensure Ministers can bring senior officials with them to

assist in answering questions in Committee of the Whole. Therefore, Committee recommends:

Recommendation 13:

The Standing Committee on Procedure and Privileges recommends that the following rule be added to Chapter nine:

9.1 (15) When Committee of the Whole is considering a Minister's Statement, questions relating to the content of the statement shall only be directed to the Minister.

Recommendation 14:

The Standing Committee on Procedure and Privileges recommends that the following rule be added to Chapter nine:

9.1 (16) When Committee of the Whole is considering a Minister's Statement, the Minister may have witnesses appear to supply information as required.

Short Titles for Bills

This referral from Committee of the Whole came from the context of a public request for a short title for a Bill. When the Standing Committee on Social Development was reviewing Bill 2: *Missing Persons Act* in Spring 2024, Members of the public requested that Committee rename the Bill to "Frank's Act" to honour a young individual who went missing and whose case sparked substantial public conversation about the lack of missing persons legislation in the Northwest Territories. While the title of a Bill cannot be changed as per the Rules, in other jurisdictions Bills can have two titles: one longer, descriptive title, and one shorter, often more politicized or simple title. The Standing Committee on Social Development could not action this request from the public to add "Frank's Act" as a second title to the Bill because there are no provisions for a Bill to have two titles in Northwest Territories legislation.

Committee sees merit in the positive potential for certain pieces of legislation to have both a long and a short title to simplify for the public what an Act will do. Given ongoing and evolving regulatory changes around legislation, the Government of the Northwest Territories intends to put forward new legislation that sets out the provisions related to the making of statutes. Committee sees this as an opportunity to take note of what many other jurisdictions offer and allow for legislation to have two titles when appropriate. Committee also notes that ultimately, should this

Government bring forward such a Bill, a Standing Committee will have the opportunity to review it in depth and review this matter even further.

Committee makes the following recommendation:

Recommendation 15:

The Standing Committee on Procedure and Privileges recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories bring forward legislation that includes provisions for Bills to have both a technical title and a short title.

This concludes the Committees report on its review of the Rules of the Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories.

APPENDIX A

- Correspondence from Speaker Shane Thompson

April 16, 2024

MLA KATE REID
CHAIR, STANDING COMMITTEE ON
PROCEDURE AND PRIVILEGES

Speaker's Referral of Matters to Standing Committee on Procedure and Privileges

As per the Rules of the Legislative Assembly, the Standing Committee on Procedure and Privileges shall inquire into matters referred to by it by the Honourable Speaker.

In preparing this referral I identified several questions related to the Rules and shared them with all Members. I then asked individual Members to identify any other questions related to the Rules that they would like referred to the Committee for consideration. Several Members responded and their suggestions have been incorporated.

As Speaker, I ask that the Committee please consider and report back on the following matters in relation to the Rules of the Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly.

- **Prayer** – the Rules include “Prayer” on the orders of the day. Concern has been raised over the association with prayer. Committee will be asked to consider whether this item should be changed to a more inclusive term such as opening guiding words or blessing.
- **Acknowledgments** – currently acknowledgments must be filed with the Speaker’s office no later than one hour before the start of the sitting day. This does not provide enough time to review the acknowledgment, ensure it meets the guidelines and format it accordingly. I would like Committee to consider whether 24 hours in advance is appropriate. I would also like to ask Committee to review the guidelines for acknowledgments and see whether their scope can be broadened to encourage Members to use them, and whether increasing the time limit for acknowledgments would increase their use.
- **Members’ Statements** – I will ask Committee to consider whether this section should be updated to reflect new practice of the Speaker delivering Members’ Statement from the Speaker’s Chair, and other associated changes.

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- **Consolidation** – I will ask Committee to propose a new provision that allows the Clerk to produce a consolidation of the rules, and when doing so correct errors without the need for a motion in the house. Minor errors would include spelling errors, grammatical errors, and punctuation errors.
- **Time Limit on Replies to Commissioner’s Address** – There is currently no time limit on this item, unlike other addresses, including the reply to the budget address. Please see the attached letter from the Government House Leader for additional information.
- **Restriction on when a Reply to Commissioner’s Address can be given** – Should replies to the Commissioner’s Address be removed from the Orders on the final day or (days) before dissolution. Many Members wait until the last sitting day before dissolution to use their reply, either to say farewell or speak to their desire to be re-elected. This is not the purpose of the reply, and it can use limited sitting time when there is generally a need to move legislation through in the final days of an Assembly.
- **Professional Behaviour in the Chamber** - Committee may wish to consider whether Chapter 3 of the Rules provide sufficient guidance for expected conduct in the Chamber supportive of a respectful Legislative Assembly culture, and whether there are areas where further guidance may be beneficial. Please see the attached letter from the Government House Leader for additional context.
- **Amendments to Motions** – Committee may wish to review the current process for amending motions, and whether the practice of friendly amendments or other changes should be incorporated.
- **Motions Location on Daily Orders** – Recognizing motions can often garner public attention or deal with pressing public issues, should a similar practice be followed that Motions are moved up to #5 on the Order Paper, every other Thursday to allow debate on motions to occur during the broadcast window.
- **Returns to Oral Questions** – Currently there is no requirement for a Minister who takes a question on notice to provide a return. Should Rule 7.2(2)(b) be amended such that a return is due in 21 days of a question being taken on notice to be consistent with Returns to Written Questions.
- **Oral Questions** – Members are currently allowed one question, and three supplementary questions during oral questions. Should the number of supplementary questions be reduced to two. This may allow more time for additional rounds of questions during oral questions.
- **Guidelines for Oral Questions** – Do the guidelines reflect current practices and best practices across the country.
- **Follow-up Information to Oral Questions** – Remove the requirement of Rule 7.2(6) for Ministerial follow-up information to oral questions to be tabled in the House and instead allow the information to be filed with the Clerk.

- **Petitions** – With the increase of e-petitions, should more sites be approved as a petition platform for Members, and how can petitions be made more accessible for residents with disabilities.
- **Sitting Hours** – now that the sitting schedule has been changed to provide alternate second weekends at home, should early sitting hours on Friday be removed and normal sitting hours occur on Fridays.
- **Committee of the Whole** – should there be an opportunity for Members to seek points of information or clarification, or other interjections that would allow Members to ask questions of each other more freely.

I look forward to Committee's report on these matters.



Hon. Shane Thompson
Speaker

Attachment

- c. Members
Clerk, Legislative Assembly
Deputy Clerk, House Procedure and Committees
Committee Clerk, Procedures and Privileges
Committee Advisor, Procedures and Privileges
Director, Legislative Affairs and House Planning



April 02, 2024

HONOURABLE SHANE THOMPSON
SPEAKER, LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

Referral of Matters to Standing Committee on Procedure and Privileges

Thank you for your letter of March 13, 2024, seeking input on matters for referral to the Standing Committee on Procedure and Privileges. I offer two areas for consideration:

(1) Time Limit on Replies to Commissioner's Address:

At present, Rule 5.2 of the Rules of the Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly (the Rules) allows for each Member to make one reply to the Commissioner's Address, to speak on any matter for any length of time. The opportunity to make a reply remains on the order paper for the duration of a Sitting except the day designated for prorogation. Committee may wish to consider whether it would be appropriate to place a time limit on such replies and consider whether the item should remain on the order paper for a fixed duration. For example, a time limit of 20 minutes is placed on replies to the Budget Address, and the opportunity for making such reply remains on the order paper for seven Sitting days, including the day on which the budget is presented.

(2) Professional Behaviour in the Chamber:

Chapter 3 of the Rules on Order and Debate sets out for Members the expectations respecting certain aspects of conduct in the Chamber and provides specific limits on speech during debates, to facilitate maintenance of order. Committee may wish to consider if the existing Rules provide sufficient guidance for expected conduct in the Chamber supportive of a respectful Legislative Assembly culture, and whether there are areas where further guidance may be beneficial.

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The British Columbia Legislative Assembly Working Group on Parliamentary Culture issued a report in February 2024 called “Working Together to Build a Better Parliamentary Culture at the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia”. One of its recommendations to the Speaker and Members of the BC Legislative Assembly is to “[e]stablish clear and updated guidance, with cross-party support on unacceptable and unprofessional behaviour in the Chamber, and re-state this guidance at the beginning of every parliamentary session, with House Leaders and caucuses playing an active role in enforcing these guidelines.” The findings related to this recommendation acknowledge that assessing unparliamentary behaviour is complex, especially when Members have different lived experiences that impact how certain behaviours are perceived, and when keeping in mind that Members should not be undermined in their ability to speak freely on behalf of their constituents. With that said, the report highlights how behaviour in the Chamber can have impacts beyond the Chamber, including on relationship-building. Since relationship-building is particularly important in the consensus government context of this Legislative Assembly, this issue warrants further study.



R.J. Simpson
Government House Leader

- c: Premier
Ministers
Chair, Standing Committee on Procedure and Privileges
Principal Secretary
Secretary to Cabinet/Deputy Minister, Executive and Indigenous Affairs
Clerk of the Legislative Assembly
Deputy Clerk, House Procedures and Committees
Deputy Secretary, Premier’s Office
Director, Legislative Affairs and House Planning
Clerk, Standing Committee on Procedures and Privileges
Advisor, Standing Committee on Procedures and Privileges

July 15, 2024

MLA KATE REID, CHAIR
STANDING COMMITTEE ON
PRIVILEGES AND PROCEDURES

Referral by the Speaker to the Standing Committee on Privileges and Procedures

As discussed at Caucus during the last sitting of the Legislative Assembly, I am referring the question of sitting hours to the Standing Committee on Privileges and Procedures. In addition to the question of sitting hours, I wish to refer some additional questions to the Committee based on feedback from Members.

Sitting Hours

In terms of the question of sitting hours, Members have expressed a desire for a degree of predictability for when the House will be sitting extended hours. This is in recognition of family obligations on both Members and employees and demands on our Indigenous interpreters and technical staff.

I have attached for Committee's consideration a summary of comments made by Members during the Caucus discussion. I expect these comments will be informative for Committee's deliberations and the development of a recommendation.

Ministers' Statements in Committee of the Whole

I am referring Rule 5.3(3) to Committee. This rule provides for the referral of Minister's Statements into Committee of the Whole. Right now, once a statement is referred to COW, Members are only able to speak once, for up to 10 minutes. There are no witnesses, no questions and cross-debate. A suggestion has been made that a take-note debate approach may be an alternative format. I would ask Committee to consider several options for how Ministers' Statements could be considered in COW and make a recommendation.

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Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery

I am referring Rule 5.7(1) to Committee. This rule provides for recognition of visitors in the gallery. A suggestion has been made that recognition of visitors should be limited to the prerogative of the Speaker. While this may be too much of a restriction, I do believe there is merit to reviewing this progress generally. I look forward to a recommendation from Committee. Alternatives may be restrictions on limited recognition to constituents, not allowing for multiple recognitions of the same person, etc.

I look forward to receiving Committee's recommendations.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Thompson', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Hon. Shane Thompson
Speaker

Attachment

- c. Members of the Legislative Assembly
Clerk, Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly
Clerk, Standing Committee on Procedure and Privileges
Advisor, Standing Committee on Procedure and Privileges

Member comments on extended hours:

- Limit the length of sittings – hard with small children. 24 hours notice for extended hours outside of Tuesday
- Potentially extend the weekend break – allows out of town members to go home (ie. Return to sit on the Tuesday or no sitting on a Friday).
 - Flight schedules have changed and makes it more difficult to get home.
- Rules = Time to debate a budget as opposed to limiting hours
- More sitting days
- Going back and forth – time has shrunk – making the schedule more flexible
 - Flights have changed
 - Do we need to sit on Fridays
 - Change schedule to be more accommodating.
- Fatigue is a good reminder – people getting frustrated. I support Friday's off so people can go home. The rules need to be updated to the times.
- I am against more days – it creates more process
- Difficult to maintain a marriage and family with the hours – these hours are holdovers from the old times
- Maybe we need to look at the ways we do out budgets – review our practices
- In last 4 years – budget is a slog. Adding days is not the best decision as its emotional work. Out of town members have a number of different issues
 - Sitting days & hours: don't be restrictive so we can't be responsive.
 - I am just asking for respect – we have spouses who are out of town for a significant amount of time. We are single parents and need time to book sitters (childcare)
 - Our kids also need to know when their parents wont be home.
- Would love to send this to rules committee to make this a place of governance that is different
 - Don't be constrained by the history of parliaments.
 - We have things here that are different – we get the budget in advance/ legislation before it hits the floor.
 - Opportunity to do stuff differently here – be respectful, shining beacon of progressiveness, inclusivity.
 - Public servants – seeing someone in your role doing those things lets me know its okay
 - Staff who come in and support us and work behind the scenes – and our interpreters who are elders. They are having to maintain the same hours.
 - If we need longer breaks – that's great. But we have the ability to craft that ourselves.
- Appreciate the comments – I would benefit for longer breaks during session
- For me – the uncertainty of not knowing is psychologically challenging