



STANDING COMMITTEE ON HOUSE SERVICES

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STANDING COMMITTEE ON HOUSE SERVICES

Hon. Randy Weekes, Chair
Biggar-Sask Valley

Ms. Vicki Mowat, Deputy Chair
Saskatoon Fairview

Ms. Carla Beck
Regina Lakeview

Mr. Terry Dennis
Canora-Pelly

Hon. Jeremy Harrison
Meadow Lake

Mr. Greg Ottenbreit
Yorkton

Ms. Nicole Sarauer
Regina Douglas Park

Mr. Doug Steele
Cypress Hills

[The committee met at 09:03.]

The Chair: — Good morning, everyone. Welcome to the Standing Committee on House Services. Today we'll be considering the committee's fifth report, which deals with temporary modifications to the processes, practices, and rules and procedures of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan. I am the Chair of this committee, and today we have the following members present: Ms. Carla Beck, Mr. Terry Dennis, the Hon. Jeremy Harrison, Ms. Vicki Mowat, Mr. Greg Ottenbreit. And substituting in for Ms. Nicole Sarauer is Ms. Conway, and also Doug Steele is in attendance.

Members, we will consider the committee's fifth report. This report reflects the work of the committee in consultation with the House leaders and the Clerks-at-the-Table to identify and develop the temporary modifications to the processes, practices, and rules and procedures of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan in order to facilitate the sittings of the Legislative Assembly during the period of April 6th, 2021 and October 1st, 2021 in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

A draft of the report was provided to the members. Do members want to discuss this report? If so, we will meet in camera to do so. We're okay? If no further questions, I would ask a member to move the following motion:

That the fifth report of the Standing Committee on House Services be adopted and presented to the Assembly.

Mr. Dennis.

Mr. Dennis: — I move:

That the fifth report of the Standing Committee on House Services be adopted and presented to the Assembly.

The Chair: — All in favour? I will recognize Ms. Mowat.

Ms. Mowat: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We're looking at, I think 40, 50, 45 pages here of work that has went into this, so I want to thank the Clerks for being so supportive throughout this. And you know, going back and forth on so many of these issues, there are so many considerations to make around COVID. You know, we've had a number of conversations with government side that have led to this report and are largely in agreement with the content of the report, with the exception of one clause which is in section 3, the masking requirements.

So the report allows for members to remove their masks when speaking in the Chamber. It is the position of the official opposition that if masks were required in December, they're certainly required now. As we look at variants of concern rising in Regina and ICUs [intensive care unit] over capacity, we think we should be doing our part to reduce the risk of transmission. And four months later, we are in quite a grave situation in this city in particular. So with members coming into the city, it is our feeling that we should be masked at all times unless taking a sip of water or something like that.

So given the situation right now, opposition will be voting against the rules, but I did want to clarify why that was happening

and to say that the bulk of this work is something that we agree with and we think will keep people safe. It's just this one provision that we have to take issue with.

The Chair: — Hon. Mr. Harrison.

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And I want to firstly say thank you to the LAS [Legislative Assembly Service] staff who put a huge amount of work into this over the last number of weeks and months, and also in the lead-up to the previous sitting as well where there was a lot of work that went into putting in place rules, modified procedures, such that we are able to operate and conduct business in a safe and appropriate way.

I want to thank the opposition and particularly the Opposition House Leader. I really appreciated working with her through all of this process. And there were a lot of discussions and a lot of very detailed work that went into the 40-plus-page package that is in front of members here at House Services and later today will be in front of the House. So I want to thank her very much for her great work on this as well.

I want to thank Dr. Shahab and his team as well. Dr. Shahab himself was in the Chamber measuring desks and all kinds of different elements, and spent a significant amount of time in reviewing and also giving his okay to what the rules are, with the full understanding that the Legislative Assembly is the master of its own procedure and executive government doesn't dictate to the legislature.

All that being said, we very much wanted to make sure that we have public health orders or rules that are in line with the public health orders as they exist. And we're very comfortable and Dr. Shahab and his team are very comfortable that the rules in front of the Chamber, including those for speaking without a mask, given the distancing between members and the Plexiglas barriers that have been put in place between all of the desks in the Chamber and the Clerks' Table, make that very safe and in line with public health orders.

So I want to say thanks though to everybody involved, and we look forward to having these rules presented to the Chamber and having those adopted and going forward in that fashion. So thanks. And to you, Mr. Speaker, very much your leadership in all of this as well has been appreciated, noted, and very valuable. So thank you.

The Chair: — Thank you, Minister. Just before we go to the motion, I'd also like to thank the government members and the opposition and of course LAS for all the work that went into this fifth report. So I'll go to the motion moved by Mr. Terry Dennis:

That the fifth report of the Standing Committee in House Services be adopted and presented to the Assembly.

All in favour? One, two, three, four. Opposed? Three. It is carried, four to three.

If there is no other business, I would ask a member to move a motion of adjournment.

Mr. Ottenbreit: — I'll make that motion.

The Chair: — Mr. Ottenbreit. The Standing Committee on House Services is adjourned to the call of the Chair.

[The committee adjourned at 09:10.]