

# PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY



Speaker: Hon. Colin LaVie

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## Standing Committee on Rules, Regulations, Private Bills and Privileges

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DATE OF HEARING: 20 JUNE 2019

MEETING STATUS: Public

LOCATION: COMMITTEE ROOM, J. ANGUS MACLEAN BUILDING, CHARLOTTETOWN

SUBJECT: ELECTION OF CHAIR; CONSIDERATION OF FIRST REPORT OF SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON COMMITTEES; COMPOSITION OF STANDING COMMITTEES

### COMMITTEE:

Hannah Bell, MLA Charlottetown-Belvedere [Chair]  
Sonny Gallant, MLA Evangeline-Miscouche  
Lynne Lund, MLA Summerside-Wilmot  
Sidney MacEwen, MLA Morell-Donagh  
Hon. Matthew MacKay, Minister of Economic Growth, Tourism and Culture  
Gordon McNeilly, MLA Charlottetown-West Royalty

### COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:

none

### MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:

none

### GUESTS:

none

### STAFF:

Emily Doiron, Clerk Assistant (Journals, Committees and House Operations)

Edited by Hansard



The Committee met at 5:15 p.m.

**Clerk Assistant:** Hello, and welcome to the first meeting of the Standing Committee on Rules, Regulations, Private Bills and Privileges.

This is our first meeting, so I'm going to go right into the procedure for electing a chair. So what I'll do first is open the floor for nominations and once we receive nominations, I'll close and then we'll vote on a member to be chair of the committee.

**Mr. MacKay:** I can tell you one fellow that doesn't want it. (Indistinct)

**Clerk Assistant:** And then the Chair can join me up here.

**Ms. Lund:** Can I nominate Hannah?

**Clerk Assistant:** Sure, I'll open the floor for nominations.

**Ms. Lund:** I nominate Hannah.

**Clerk Assistant:** Great.

**Mr. MacKay:** I might as well nominate Sid.

**Clerk Assistant:** Are there any further nominations?

**Mr. McNeilly:** I nominate Sonny.

**Ms. Bell:** We'll all nominate each other, and then we'll just (Indistinct)

**Clerk Assistant:** All right, any further nominations?

Well, I'll declare nominations closed then. So what I'll do is propose each member's name in the order that they were nominated, and when we get to a majority, that person will be declared the Chair of the committee.

So all those in favour of Hannah Bell being the Chair of the committee please signify by saying 'aye.'

**Some Hon. Members:** Aye!

**An Hon. Member:** This could take a while.

**Clerk Assistant:** All those members in favour of Sidney MacEwen being Chair of the Standing Committee on Rules, Regulations, Private Bills and Privileges please signify by saying 'aye.'

**Some Hon. Members:** Aye!

**Clerk Assistant:** And all those members in favour of Sonny Gallant being named as Chair of the Standing Committee on Rules, Regulations, Private Bills and Privileges please signify by saying 'aye.'

**Some Hon. Members:** Aye!

**Clerk Assistant:** All right, I'll –

**Ms. Bell:** Two, two, two (Indistinct)

**Clerk Assistant:** I might seek direction from the committee. If you'd like me to go through the list of names again and we can vote again or how would you like to proceed?

**Mr. Gallant:** Question.

**Clerk Assistant:** Yes.

**Mr. Gallant:** (Indistinct) told there was a tie, we just keep voting and voting until somebody changes. Is that the procedure or is there a different procedure?

**Clerk Assistant:** That's probably the procedure for today, unless I'm otherwise directed by the committee.

**Mr. MacKay:** Try (Indistinct)

**Clerk Assistant:** All right, I'll start with the first nominee again.

So all those in favour of Hannah Bell being nominated as the Chair of this committee, please signify by saying 'aye.'

**Some Hon. Members:** Aye!

**Clerk Assistant:** All right, all those in favour of Sidney MacEwen being nominated as Chair of this committee, please signify by saying 'aye.'

**Some Hon. Members:** Aye!

**Clerk Assistant:** And all those in favour of Sonny Gallant being nominated as Chair of this committee, please signify by saying ‘aye.’

**Mr. McNeilly:** Aye!

**Mr. MacKay:** All right, we go that all (Indistinct)

**Clerk Assistant:** All right, so Hannah Bell had received three votes. That is technically still not a majority of the committee, but I’ll seek my direction from the committee at this point.

**Mr. McNeilly:** I will –

**Mr. MacEwen:** I’m okay.

**Clerk Assistant:** So all those in favour of Hannah Bell being nominated as the Chair of this committee, please signify by saying ‘aye.’

**Some Hon. Members:** Aye!

**Clerk Assistant:** All right. Welcome, Chair.

**Chair (Hannah Bell):** Okay.

**Mr. MacEwen:** So this is the same, right? We vote and if there was a – well, there won’t be a tie, but then the Chair doesn’t vote, right?

**Clerk Assistant:** Yeah. So moving forward, we now have Hannah Bell as the Chair, so if there was an instance –

**Mr. MacEwen:** If there was a motion, it would be up to us – one, two, three, four, five?

**Clerk Assistant:** Yes.

Welcome, I’ll hand it over to you.

**Chair:** Thank you very much.

So for our first order of business we can have the – has anybody had a chance to review the agenda as presented?

Can I have a movement for adoption of the draft agenda?

**Mr. Gallant:** So moved.

**Chair:** So moved by Sonny Gallant.

Thank you.

We’ve got new business on there, so if there’s anything that comes up other than the primary thing we can add it at that point.

So the function of this committee for this initial meeting is the consideration of the first report of the special committee on committees, which is an awful lot of mouthfuls of language, but effectively the committee on committees made a recommendation with the report that was presented.

Did everybody get a chance to have a look at that or do we want to do a quick review? Perhaps the clerk could give us a quick summary of the recommendations?

**Mr. McNeilly:** Yes.

**Clerk Assistant:** Sure, yes, I’d be happy to do that.

**Chair:** Thank you.

**Clerk Assistant:** All right, so the Special Committee on Committees met and reported on June 18<sup>th</sup>, 2019 and they made the following recommendations.

So the first recommendation was to:

Compose this committee with yourselves, and we’re all present today.

The second recommendation was:

That the committee on committees recommends that this committee meet to consider the advisability of realigning the mandates of the remaining standing committees, which is Rule 95 in *Rules of the Legislative Assembly of Prince Edward Island*.

And it also requested that in addition to reviewing Rule 95:

That this committee also consider the advisability of making amendments to Rule 90, which is on committee membership.

They also offered the suggestion that, excluding the standing committee on

legislative management, that the standing committees be limited to five or six and those being the committee on public accounts, this particular committee, and then three to four other standing committees that focus on particular policy areas.

The last recommendation was that this committee hold a public meeting on this topic, and this meeting is in public.

So those were the recommendations of the committee on committees; and I also advise that once this committee, the rules committee, reports back with the standing committees that it will again meet and then compose those committees based on what this particular committee recommends.

**Chair:** Yeah. So the summary of the summary: the committee on committees is the one that determines who sits on all the other committees, but before we can do that, we need to restructure what those look like and it's the rules one that does that.

I'll report back to the House; if that is adopted, would effect those changes immediately.

There is a lot of things that we've talked about in theory to change, but the place to start was this, because this is the work that needs to be done straight away and then the other piece this committee, the rules committee could consider in future meetings, may be other things like the schedule of meetings or the sitting hours of the Legislature – all sorts of other things that we've talked about, but this was the most urgent place to start.

Sidney, does that sound –

**Mr. MacEwen:** (Indistinct)

**Chair:** Yeah, that sounds about right?

The two rules that we looked at:

Rule 90 is the one that says:

(1) The membership of the committees shall be allocated by the Committee on Committees in generally the same proportion as that of the recognized political parties in the House itself, if such approach is practicable.”

Then there's a second part of that that says: (2) Notwithstanding section (1) of this rule, in no case shall the Official Opposition have fewer than two members on any one committee unless there are fewer than two members of the Official Opposition.

(3) Membership on a standing committee shall not exceed eight members.

I think that's that summary – you've got that? Great.

**Mr. MacEwen:** (Indistinct)

**Some Hon. Members:** (Indistinct)

**Mr. MacEwen:** So right now, that would break down proportionally 12 – no, 11, eight, six, right?

**Chair:** So, yeah, so –

**Mr. MacEwen:** (Indistinct)

**Chair:** As it stands currently, for example – of course we've also had lots of other variations, but as it stands right now, it's that the proportions include ministers, which we also know has been somewhat of a challenge.

So I guess it's to open it up to the floor in terms of what do we know that have made committees difficult before and then what would we like to potentially see, or what would I like our recommendation to be.

When we get to the point of making a report, that's when we'd need to go in camera, so right now some discussion would be great. Are there any thoughts?

**Mr. MacEwen:** So if we had – sorry, Chair. Go ahead.

**Chair:** Sure.

Sidney MacEwen.

**Mr. MacEwen:** If we – so according to these rules, and we went with eight members, it would be – we're looking at like, say about seven members. It would be kind of like, would three, two, two be the breakdown?

Like how would we – if we went with the original rules, which I don't want to, I'm just trying to think what it would look like if we went with those original rules. It'd be something like –

**Chair:** Four, three, two or – which doesn't work out to eight, so yeah –

**Mr. MacEwen:** It just says eight would be the maximum, right? So you could go with seven – to three, two, two or, I guess, it's probably how it would kind of break down.

What would you say in the past, Emily? How would it break down? Which way did you –

**Clerk Assistant:** I have done a calculation. For seven members, it would break down approximately to three, two, two. Some numbers you kind of have to round up, round down, if it's kind of – not a perfect correlation between the current; but that's where it ended up being was three, two and two.

**Mr. Gallant:** But then you have to pick the Chair out of that.

**Chair:** Yeah.

**Mr. MacEwen:** That's right.

**Chair:** So to clarify for the members that weren't with us, previously, and I think if anyone can correct me on this, but we had four members of government, two and two was often the ratio on committees with the previous government, so there were four government members.

**Mr. MacEwen:** Both you and Peter sat on every committee? I thought it was like (Indistinct) –

**Chair:** No, you're right, sorry, I'm wrong.

It was four, two and one.

**Mr. MacEwen:** Yeah.

**Chair:** Yeah, my apologies.

**Mr. MacEwen:** No, that's okay.

**Chair:** Gord McNeilly.

**Mr. McNeilly:** With the deferred election happening, we're going to make some decisions before that. I don't know if that affects us in any way because then it could break down a little bit more.

So just a question to figure out if these – if whatever we discuss is going to be okay to make a decision with that in progress.

**Chair:** It's a great question. I think one of the considerations is that we need to have rules that don't need to be changed. We don't want to be changing the rules every time the Legislature changes, because rules should not be reflecting on the political nature of what's going on, but they're meant to just make the place function. So we need to make rules that will stand just about anything.

There are always going to be some – I mean, there have been in the past, obviously, some severe imbalances and the committees still have to work then, too, so there probably will be exceptions in the future; but we need to construct rules that would be robust enough to kind of make it through a new reality of different make-ups.

**Mr. MacEwen:** Chair.

**Chair:** Sidney?

**Mr. MacEwen:** I was one of those people that was really frustrated, say, the last year of the standing committees, simply because we did have a lot of substitutions and people that couldn't come or rescheduling meetings because people weren't available. It became a lot because the government back bench was getting really small; and to be fair to them, they couldn't always make it and they were the majority on all the committees so they always had to fill four positions. So when they were down to very few members, it was tricky.

We as House Leaders have talked about one of the decisions we're going to have to make here is if we should recommend that ministers should sit on standing committees or not. I've weighed this back and forth and I know as an opposition member, it was kind of nice to have a minister there because you could get some good intel or some good questions to them as well, too. Now, if you had ministers subbing in and out all the

time, the continuity would be a concern for sure. I'd like to propose that we do have ministers on the list.

Now that could be a bias thing because there's only two backbenchers; but my other concern is that right now, the Premier has a very small cabinet in the historical sense. If the Premier added to that cabinet or increased it, our backbench gets smaller again. So, I'm okay, I would like to see, to try it with ministers sitting on standing committees, I guess is what I want to do starting up.

The second thing I want to say is I was frustrated for a long time about government majorities on committees. There's nothing wrong with a majority on committee, but when it stifled the work of the opposition, it frustrated me. So, I want to make it so that government does not have a majority, especially because we're in a situation where government doesn't have a majority in the House anyway. I would like to have it that the government doesn't have a majority but has equal representation.

Those are my two points, Chair.

**Chair:** Thank you.

Matthew?

**Mr. MacKay:** I just want to speak on myself as being a minister.

I do know the frustration when ministers couldn't make it. Yes, our calendars are full, but if we know in advance, well, there's no excuse why a minister cannot be here, right? The committee's important. So if we know in three weeks' time there's a committee, it's in my calendar, and I will be here, and I think that should be the message from us to all the ministers around the table.

Like I say, it's not like we're finding out two days prior. There's loads of advance time for them to organize their schedules, so –

**Chair:** So something, the recommendation in there, I think, that's something that we could think about, is how important the scheduling of meetings is going to be.

The other thing, I think to Sidney's point, perhaps before we even talk about

composition, we need to look at the rules, but we need quorum for a meeting. We don't need to have every single committee member there. So if somebody is not able to attend, that doesn't mean the entire meeting has to be cancelled. Right? So if somebody has it in their schedule, isn't able to attend, but we still have quorum, that meeting can still go ahead.

By honouring those two pieces as recommendations as well, that also means that the meetings are more likely to happen, which could allow – like you said, take that pressure off, to go to the point where we look at the different compositions, it would allow it to be a bit more reflective.

Lynne?

**Ms. Lund:** (Indistinct) both points (Indistinct)

**Chair:** Sorry.

**Ms. Lund:** (Indistinct) fantastic, but I was wondering if there is a regular schedule of when committees sit that just comes out that we could have as stable and predictable, or is it more erratic?

**Mr. MacKay:** There's no reason it can't be scheduled.

**Chair:** It has not been, in my experience, a thing, but I think it would, again, that would be for this committee to make recommendations on that basis.

It's not in the scope of what we've been asked to look at right now, but it doesn't mean that we can't speak to it and bring it back to this committee for future deliberation; the next stage, for example.

**Mr. MacEwen:** (Indistinct)

**Ms. Lund:** And how many members are required for quorum?

Sorry, Sidney.

**Mr. MacEwen:** No, that's a good question.

**Clerk Assistant:** It's a majority. So if it's a committee of – today would have been four. A committee of seven –

**Chair:** Would be four.

**Clerk Assistant:** Would be four; eight would be five.

**Ms. Lund:** So even if a minister, for whatever reason, is not able to attend, there's no reason things cannot continue?

**Chair:** That's right.

**Mr. MacEwen:** So, if I can interject: The past of my four years, and Sonny can speak to longer experience than that, but typically you would have certain mornings or afternoons of the week would be kind of held aside for committee meetings.

So at the Standing Committee on Education and Economic Development would typically have like, Thursday afternoon as their time if they so did it.

They always did that because we were sitting on multiple committees, so you'd try not to schedule them at different times.

It's up to the Chair to call that meeting, though. So if a Chair wanted to keep continuing meetings going, like for example Brad Trivers used to chair public accounts by the end of it. He was really wanting to have that same set time all the time. Not everybody could make it all the time.

Then other committees would just be, well either they drifted off or maybe presenters couldn't come at that time so they delayed it another week or two; but I think right now it's written into it, though, it's at the call of the Chair.

**Clerk Assistant:** It's the responsibility of the Chair to call the meeting.

**Mr. MacEwen:** Okay.

**Chair:** So perhaps the Clerk could advise, given the scope of this report, where we have other considerations, what would be the best way to handle that for the report? Would it be to sort of say specifically to the mandate that we were given, here's a recommendation, but that we also must consider –

**Clerk Assistant:** Yes, I think it would be within the committee's mandate and powers

to make other recommendations kind of relating to issues around membership.

**Chair:** Okay, so I am hearing really clearly that a schedule, a coordinated schedule across the committees, particularly where people are going to have to be on multiple committees, would be really, really helpful; that meetings should go ahead as long as quorum can be achieved; and that ministers can sit on committees.

Obviously, the only one they're excluded from currently in roles explicitly is public accounts, but any other committee would be – which would help balance that workload.

What does the committee feel about then how to structure that, given to Sidney's points about not wanting to see a government majority?

**Mr. MacEwen:** So if we went by the current breakdown and we look at – as the Clerk had mentioned – a kind of a three, two, two, that's not a majority for government because there would be four versus three, if you want to call it that.

I mean, I'm okay with putting a proposal forward of having equal membership of two, two and two, so that when you have a Chair, then there's an odd number of people so you'd be able to vote. You wouldn't be deadlocked, so to speak.

I would put forward, rather than making it three, two, two – which is what the breakdown would be now and would not be a majority for government – I would put forward about having equal membership of the parties that are represented in the Legislature as two, two and two.

I think adding one member based on the deferred election, that doing it that way would still kind of keep in time with that. If we're at 11, eight, six now, if it was 12, eight, six, well, that as a government, we're still at that disadvantage of going (Indistinct) – I don't want to say disadvantage – but we'd still be underrepresented on the committees.

If it was the opposition that went to nine, they would still be less numbers than the government members, but would be equal representation; and if it was the third party



went to seven, it just brings you closer in line to having equal member as the official opposition.

So I guess I could move that, that we have equal members on each of the committees.

**Chair:** Is there any other discussion on that proposal or any other items before?

To the point, if we're getting to (Indistinct) of actually making a decision that has to go to in camera, so if there's any other discussion about potential composition first, maybe we could do that before we get to final decisions?

**Mr. MacEwen:** Yes, let's do that.

**Chair:** So, I got a recommendation from Sidney MacEwen on a two, two, two.

**Mr. MacKay:** Chair, I'm good with that, and I know I don't want this to sound negative, but out of all the times in committee, I only ever felt that we – there was one time that I really felt good after we left committee, because the government members had always controlled the votes and so forth.

The best one – Sonny, I think you were on it – is when we talked about the school bus safety issue, whatever, that seemed to be the only one where we really got down to work together and accomplished something.

So I'm certainly in support of it being split that way, and I think it would probably be good. We could do a lot of good things when everybody has a voice, and I'm happy to see it.

**Mr. Gallant:** So just for clarity, two and two and two?

**Chair:** That's what we're considering. We're just discussing that at the moment. We haven't made a decision at this point, but we're discussing.

Are there any other options that anyone has thought of previous to this to bring to the table?

**Mr. McNeilly:** Just being new, I just might add, like, I know that the committees are – there's a few that maybe hold more weight

or power or decision-making opportunities. This is clearly something that we're going to do across the board. We're going to change this and we're going to make sure that everything stays.

**Chair:** Yeah, I think that's another great question. There's a couple of rules that kind of would put, chain, you know – start it again, Hannah – the legislative management committee is exceptional because it has a very specified membership, and that's leadership: leaders, House leaders, whips and so on.

The public accounts committee has a very specified Chair; it has to be a member of the opposition as Chair, not – so, and there is a rule in here that says the opposition cannot have any fewer, so official opposition cannot have any fewer than two members of any one committee.

What would be good about an amendment like this is we don't have to change any of those other rules –

**Mr. McNeilly:** Yeah.

**Chair:** – because they would still be in effect.

**Mr. McNeilly:** Yeah, exactly.

**Chair:** But it is a good point that we would have to double-check and make sure that – my understanding is if we change this, the other rules can all remain the same because they would work within that specified structure, and the structure we're talking about is there may be a future point when you can't do it because we have a completely unbalanced house, but that would be an exception rather than the norm.

**Mr. McNeilly:** Yeah.

**Chair:** Public accounts, in particular, is one that probably would need to meet more often.

**Mr. McNeilly:** Yeah.

**Chair:** So we are asking people on committees to take on – there's a workload involved in doing this work, and I think that's to Matthew's point, is, if you're doing that work, you want that work to have –

**Mr. MacKay:** (Indistinct)

**Chair:** – to have weight and value, right?

Are you aware of any other crossovers that may – I know we went through it a couple of times to sort of look for any of these other potential challenges.

**Clerk Assistant:** No, and I will just state that all committees do have the same powers and that they can examine and inquire such matters that are related to their mandate; and our committees can, by majority decision of the membership, agree to look into certain things. So that particular right isn't kind of all across Canada with committees. With our committees, the majority can decide what they want to look into.

Then I'm just looking at:

Rule 94 (2) That committees shall report to the House from time to time their observations and opinions with the power to send for persons, papers or records.

So that is across all committees in relation to their, I guess, their powers and their roles.

But no, I don't think – and relating to the membership, I don't think there's any other rules that would kind of cross that – sorry, I'm losing my train of thought.

**Chair:** No, that's okay. We're all kind of fuzzy.

**Clerk Assistant:** – that they would, you know, kind of be incompatible.

**Chair:** Yeah.

**Clerk Assistant:** Yeah.

**Chair:** Lynne, did you have any other –

**Ms. Lund:** Mostly, my observations are that people who had served on committees before are telling me that the way they were functioning was dysfunctional, so I'm inclined to take the recommendations that are coming forward. I'm comfortable with what we're saying.

**Chair:** Should we then discuss Rule 95 as well –

**Clerk Assistant:** Sure.

**Chair:** – in discussion before we go in camera, if you've nothing else to add to this?

**Clerk Assistant:** Sure.

**Mr. MacEwen:** Just, can I have one more (Indistinct) –

**Chair:** Certainly, yeah.

**Mr. MacEwen:** Another part of the reason that why I put two, two and two forward, and people have – obviously the idea of a two, two, two, is out there in the public, but people have approached me and they say: Why don't you keep it three, two, two? They've done the math and this kind of thing.

Going back to my time in opposition, I think it's important, because even if you had a three, two, two – which probably still wouldn't be, I'm not sure if it would work out to the same percentage of seats that the government has or not, it might still be less – even if you had three, two, two, even though government members on the committee don't have a majority, it still forces, it would force the opposition parties to not go for Chair; if you know what I mean?

**Chair:** Yeah.

**Mr. MacEwen:** Because if they went for Chair, then you're back to a three, three.

That's why I don't want to say it's taking a step back or giving up power so to speak, but that's why I even go back further to a two, two, two model, because then it allows – you don't have this – you worry about strategy about who's going to be the Chair because of votes and all this stuff.

I hope that would lead to better outcomes and a better functioning committee. So that's why even though three, two, two isn't a majority, we put the idea forward that let's come back even more and make it equal across the board. It would be very significant.

Even with the government in a minority situation who still has the most seats to relinquish any so-called control.

I just wanted to add that in as to kind of why I was going with that.

**Chair:** It's a really important point.

The other interesting piece around that as well are the two structures in the event there's a fourth party in the House. It would actually still work with a maximum committee number of eight. So there is even future proofing for –

**Mr. MacEwen:** That's such a great point, because we just talked about adding one of our members. It's disrespectful to say that – obviously we got four people running in the election, so that's a great point.

We might need to go two, two, two, one; so great point.

**Chair:** We think about how we –

It sounds like we've got some (Indistinct) – before we go in camera though, let's perhaps have a discussion on the other aspect of what we were tasked to look at today if we can while we've still got time and that was around the actual structure of the standing committees that we would recommend.

So to Gordon's point, the legislative management committee is very clearly specified to its membership, but then the other committees are, including this one, are all listed under Rule 95, and currently we have agriculture and fisheries; communities, land and environment; education and economic development; health and wellness; infrastructure and energy; public accounts; and rules, regulations, private bills and privileges.

So one, two, three, four, five, six, seven other standing committees plus leg management, right?

**Clerk Assistant:** Yes.

**Chair:** The recommendation from the committee on committees was to try and actually reduce that.

So I'd be interested to hear from the committee. If anybody had put any thought into how this may be restructured.

**Ms. Lund:** Can I ask one quick question on this?

Having never sat on a committee, I wonder if limiting it to this smaller number means that the amount of stuff you can actually dive deep into will be affected. Do you feel like that's a reality?

**Mr. MacKay:** Definitely. You take some of the committees are quite busy, so if we double them up they could get quite overwhelming for some.

**Mr. MacEwen:** Chair, if I can speak?

**Chair:** Yes, of course.

**Mr. MacEwen:** It's a double-edged sword here. You're 100% right. You say we went with four committees and we grouped all of those – typically committees are loosely based on the departments that have been set by government, right? Because then they follow-up on different ones.

So if you add five departments or four departments to one committee, it's always going to be tough to get your priority to the top of the list in past.

If we only have four, the other side we have seven committees that are focusing on a smaller number of priorities. You might lose some of the intensity or some of the engagement from your committee members because you're spread thin across a whole bunch of committees, too, so you don't focus as much on the task at hand too.

Am I making a little bit of sense?

**Ms. Lund:** Yes.

**Mr. MacEwen:** So I would hope that if we – and I know Hannah, you had proposed at one time an idea of certain breakdowns of committees, which was four or five? Five?

**Chair:** Five, yeah.

**Mr. MacEwen:** If we went to something like, say, five committees, which would be fewer committees, but if we had a better set

schedule, a better mandate of membership, that we might get through those priorities a little bit more efficient, a little faster.

We could turn around reports a little better and we could actually get through more priorities than we have in the past while.

Having said that, there's no doubt that there's the first planning meeting of that committee is going to have about 20 things on it because we've got fresh new MLAs, we've got three different viewpoints from different parties.

The Clerk will know that priority list will be long, but I would like to think that we could have a couple meetings, get through the stuff that we need to get to; the real priorities are going to rise to the top because we don't have a government-dominated committee, we've got – they're going to be working together, they're going to be forced to work together because of the memberships.

It's been my experience that if you could focus on fewer things at once, you're going to do a better job with the committee structure. If we went with that kind of a model, we would get better work done and get through those priorities quicker.

Even though we have a lot of priorities, we could focus on the top ones and start ticking them off, rather than spreading ourselves thin over too many.

That's just my thoughts. I'd like to hear what Sonny has to say, too, because he's been around the longest of us all on committees and has seen good ones and bad ones.

**Ms. Lund:** I appreciate your comments on that.

What do you think, Sonny?

**Mr. Gallant:** Well, the committees can get overloaded, that's for sure. I'd suggest maybe we cut it back one committee, have six. There's eight, and six of us, and two, so we don't know what this election is going to bring, but we have to – we're tasked to make a decision before that.

I don't have a problem with six. And the legislative management, I mean, there's only

certain people that sit on that. That would be House leaders and the Speaker, right?

**Chair:** Yeah, it's House leaders, it's the Speaker, deputy speaker, the leaders of the parties, the House leaders –

**Mr. Gallant:** Public accounts.

**Chair:** Public accounts.

**Mr. Gallant:** – ministers, so there's enough people to sit on that. So I mean, we'll have enough.

**Chair:** And the rules committee ideally wouldn't be meeting a lot, either.

**Mr. Gallant:** Your ministers could sit on some of the committees we have.

I just don't want to shortchange any department, that's all.

**Chair:** One of the recommendation or the suggestion that we had brought forward when we were discussing this in House leaders, was grouping by priority areas.

So, for instance, it was an area around economic development which would include communities and as well; broader than just the department. There was another one around – I can't even remember, I think I've got it somewhere. Here we go. So there would be –

**Mr. MacEwen:** Chair, do you have your list here that you provided before?

**Clerk Assistant:** (Indistinct)

**Chair:** This is great, too – we've got a couple of different examples, but it was rather than using the department names, it allowed us to sort of be a bit more flexible.

For instance, the natural environment one could include water, climate change, agriculture, fisheries, so it allows you to get a little bit more broad. To your point, it makes the mandate of that committee more broad.

**Mr. MacEwen:** No, I was talking about the one that Hannah had put forward.

**Clerk Assistant:** The bottom three options and the top three.

**Chair:** Perhaps you could speak to them?

**Clerk Assistant:** The first three are LMC, public accounts and rules – the first grouping of three I had done a draft kind of hearing the discussion going on, so that's a draft from the committee clerk and below is a draft from – Hannah, you had sent that.

**Chair:** From our department yeah, from our –

**Clerk Assistant:** And they really –

**Chair:** They're very similar.

**Clerk Assistant: Yeah.** So it would just be a matter of kind of figuring out the names and what's going where particularly, what works well together?

If I may, in the past sometimes there was always a question of where, what committee should a particular issue go to, because sometimes it could fall under this one or that one, so kind of matching up the topics that would make the most sense.

**Chair:** Both of these bundles, you've got – as the clerk (Indistinct) – we have the three kind of fixed ones at the top and then three which are more of the functional standing ones that have large buckets of things that go into them, but they're grouped by more of policy or a priority area.

But the other thing as well to add to this is we – and I think the Premier had spoken to this, Sidney – was the interest in having a special committee for a particular topic. So we've had one in the past with democratic renewal.

There's the opportunity for a special committee, for instance, around government renewal. So there is always space there if we have a topic which needs a real hyper focus that a special committee could be struck to do that work on a short-term basis.

**Mr. McNeilly:** Just a couple of comments, is that when I look at this I'm a little bit wary of – once I read all the stuff in health, social services, there's a lot in there, and it

just would be overwhelming to focus on certain areas.

Was there any discussion or thought about structuring around the – I know there's the minister of education and climate change right now – are those types of things. As well, we could also look at dividing it up by budget. Is there any thought about that, like health as a \$700 million budget; maybe it needs to be more of a standalone health and wellness. Those are just my initial thoughts, but I don't have any experience, though.

**Mr. MacEwen:** Well, no, they're good thoughts. Even when we had seven standing committees previously, they've got a lot of topics to deal with. It's not like you say we're in the House of Commons where you have 300 and some odd members; we're limited to our membership here in PEI. Actually, correct me if I'm wrong, but at the last rules committee, Charlie MacKay presented and talked about when we went from 32 members to 27.

I think part of his speech actually talked about the fact that when they did that, did we really give – the (Indistinct), did we really give – if you went out on the street and took a poll right now they would probably say: Yeah, absolutely, reduce from 32 to 27, or reduce even further. But his point was: do you reduce the ability to get the work done?

We're seeing a minority situation forming the Executive Council. It adds a level of issues when you start producing it.

I would put forward that it has been that way, it's been the practice to have a lot of topics under standing committees – and what should have been priorities, should have come to the top; but with a government-dominated majority committee, probably the best ones didn't always get to the top. Sometimes they did – don't get me wrong – there were good committees that did some good work, but not always they would.

**Mr. MacKay:** What happens, too – one thing that I know, is there might be something you're passionate about and it's on the list, but whatever's going on in that time, you get bumped down. So there might be two or three things that pop up that

you're passionate about as well, but there's some that you never get to deal with. They just never get off the paper.

I think at one point, one of the committees, they had like 20 different topics and they were going through – well, which one's the most important, but they're all important, and you've got to decide.

**Mr. McNeilly:** For sure.

**Mr. MacEwen:** I can give you an example right now. Obviously, even with your motion you brought forward on wellness, that'd be something you would like to bring to probably a standing committee and get going.

But if we had a standing committee on health and social services right now, I'm going to go out on a limb and say: wellness wouldn't be the number one. Probably going to look at housing or mental health might go right to the top just because of the climate. I don't want to predispose anything but – and that can be frustrating, but I guess then, if we potentially have equal membership or just simply not a majority, you would hope the real true priorities do come to the top and your turn comes when it comes.

But long story short, yes, there is a lot of topics on each committee, but based on the number of MLAs I think we have in the House, I think we should be careful about how many committees that we do. You could get 15 committees in a heartbeat, right?

**Chair:** Yeah, absolutely

I think another really good example to that is the one that you mentioned and that was (Indistinct) the education committee, which is education and economic development, really broad mandate and I think we spent four meetings of the six meetings we had talking about school bus safety. Because it was – it was really good work that got done – but we did nothing else but that, despite the list of 20 things.

**Mr. MacEwen:** (Indistinct)

**Chair:** And the same as we do with what happens on the floor of the Legislature. There's 92,000 things that need to be done;

but it's coming from all those different factors that determine what the priority is.

Then as you'd mentioned earlier, Sidney, too, the scheduling around this and how things sort of – if we know we're having consistent meetings, then we can bring people forward. We also can put things in place around how do we determine priorities and how long do we give to topics. Can we do more than one topic in a meeting?

**Ms. Lund:** That was my question, actually.

I was just wondering what the history has been like on that so far, as how long a topic is on the table? Or would I expect we would discuss more than one priority in a meeting? Or would our focus generally be one topic for six meetings?

I'm wondering if anyone can give me some context on that.

**Chair:** All of those things.

**Mr. MacEwen:** Well, as the clerk said, it's up to that committee. They have the autonomy to decide on how they want to structure that, all day meetings, just no two-hour meetings? Some committees found they were booking too many people and was getting delayed. Not everybody got a chance to get in.

That's another thing, too, when we talk about the numbers on a committee too. There's something to be said for not having seven, eight members, because it's tricky to get your point across when you've got presenters here and all eight want to get in and talk, and you've got another presenter waiting, too. It's tricky.

One thing I'd like to mention too – and I'll mention it on Sonny's behalf – but especially on the members that, you know, I'm 40 minutes away from where we hold meetings. That's not too bad. We do have members coming from the tips of PEI, and so we have to be careful of their schedule, too. We know how busy the districts are and all of us (Indistinct) on committees; we believe in them, but we have to be careful about making someone come down five times a week for committees if they've got stuff booked as well. So I'll just speak to

those people on the extremities of the Island, too.

**Mr. Gallant:** (Indistinct) –

**Chair:** Sonny?

**Mr. Gallant:** – any Member of the Legislative Assembly can sit on any committee, and they can ask as many questions as they want. They just don't have a vote.

**Ms. Lund:** Have a vote, yes, I asked about that already.

**Mr. Gallant:** So (Indistinct) we could have a bunch of people in our room, depending on the topic.

**Some Hon. Members:** Yes.

**Mr. Gallant:** At our table, I should say.

**Chair:** So for this committee, mindful of the mandate and the time, that that clock's not working, it is now 6:00 p.m. – you're like, that's really pretty sunny – and I know you probably want a little chance to sort of get your head together before – could we, see if we can, hearing that both sides of the concern about workload but also the concern about being stretched too thin, is there anything that people would like to sort of prefer that they would be comfortable with? Do some of these potential ones – are these in a space that we could try, or are there other recommendations?

**Ms. Lund:** If I could say one thing to that, I actually really like these broader headlines because I think there are often times when a topic touches on more than one area.

I like your second set of recommendations, personally.

**Chair:** Social development one, economic development, environmental sustainability?

**Ms. Lund:** I like that, but I have no experience with this. That's – take it for what it's worth.

**Chair:** Keeping in mind that if you want to make recommendations in the report, we're going to need to go to in camera to do that, so this is a chance to sort of discuss –

**Mr. MacEwen:** Clerk?

Like, so just to clarify, this is – is this the proposal you put forward, Hannah, the second one?

**Chair:** The second set is one that we proposed, and the first set of three is the one that the Clerk has proposed.

**Mr. MacEwen:** So (Indistinct) –

**Chair:** They're quite similar.

**Mr. MacEwen:** Is there anything missing in Hannah's? Like topics or subjects or does that even matter at this point? Like, I don't see WCB here, or do we have to start getting into all the individual aspects of it or –

**Chair:** It could be including, but not limited to, and we could ensure that we do a thorough crosscheck without getting bogged down in the super-detail right now, if that would be something people could be comfortable with?

**Clerk Assistant:** Yeah, like if – so whatever the title is, like the Standing Committee on Social Development, so you – maybe a list of kind of the priorities, and then, at the end, and also any other matter that's related to this topic, so that it kind of also includes the different policy items that aren't listed specifically, and then the committee would make a decision if they wanted to look into that particular matter that related to social development, or whatever the committee's mandate was.

**Mr. MacEwen:** (Indistinct)

**Chair:** Sorry, Sidney?

**Mr. MacEwen:** I'm just trying to decide, like – you don't have education. You have education in with the first one –

**An Hon. Member:** Social development.

**Mr. MacEwen:** – you have social development, right? So that's health and education and everything else in the one up top.

**Chair:** Yeah, and the other one – the one on top has it similar to how we have currently, which is education and economic

development. So that may take some of the weight out of the health and social services one to go with that first set's, just because it moves education over.

**Mr. MacEwen:** But you put education in with it, right?

**Clerk Assistant:** And if I may, having looked at both the lists, I think that's really the only significant difference, really, is that, which heading education should fall under.

**Chair:** Yeah, because everything else looks the same.

**Mr. MacEwen:** Yeah, it's –

**Mr. Gallant:** (Indistinct) I like your first set of three. I'd just like to add transportation in with one of them. I don't see it there, unless I missed it. I thought it should be under standing committee on education and economic development because (Indistinct) infrastructure is there and stuff.

**Chair:** Right, yeah.

**Clerk Assistant:** Oh, yes, yes.

**Chair:** Provincial infrastructure is there but not transportation, so that could add in there, yeah.

Would people be comfortable with sort of looking at the three-plus-three model overall?

**Mr. MacEwen:** I am.

**Mr. Gallant:** Yeah, I am.

**Chair:** That sounds really –

**Mr. McNeilly:** Yeah.

**Mr. MacEwen:** Especially with the potential for a special committee.

**Chair:** Yeah.

**Mr. MacEwen:** Probably (Indistinct)

**Mr. McNeilly:** (Indistinct) experience.

**Mr. Gallant:** I'm sorry, what was that, Sidney?

**Chair:** Do you think then we could (Indistinct)

**Mr. MacEwen:** Just, especially with the possibility of a special committee, that the Legislature strikes a special committee on something that was talked about in the throne speech, then this gives you – you know, when you talk about having extra, so –

**Chair:** So what I'll suggest, committee, is that if we can have a motion to move in camera, then we can actually finalize the details in our report for the Legislature if – so could I have a motion from –

**Mr. Gallant:** I'll make a motion (Indistinct) in camera.

**Chair:** Motion from Sonny Gallant.

Can I just have 'ayes' for a majority on that motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** Aye!

**Chair:** So moved.

Thank you.

So we'll just wait for a moment and stretch whilst we switch to in camera, and then we'll be able to do our recommendation report.

**Clerk Assistant:** (Indistinct)

**Unidentified Voices:** (Indistinct)

**Chair:** Thank you.

That's okay?

**Mr. MacEwen:** That's a rule, right? That's a rule we have now, is that reports are in camera?

**Chair:** Reports are in camera because only the Legislature can have the – the Legislature has to be informed before anybody else is, so it's, yeah, so when you do the consideration of your report.

The Committee went in camera