

Standing Committee on
Procedure and Privileges



Report on the Review of the Rules of the Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly, No. 3

Chair: Ms. Kate Reid

MEMBERS OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON PROCEDURE AND PRIVILEGES

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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, NO. 2**

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**STANDING COMMITTEE ON
PROCEDURE AND PRIVILEGES**

**REPORT ON THE REVIEW THE RULES OF THE
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY, NO. 3**

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).

Speaker Shane Thomson referred three procedural matters to Committee for review. These matters arise from two letters dated November 04, 2025, and December 03, 2025. The Speaker asked Committee to examine whether the Consolidated Rules of the Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly (“the Rules”) require clarification or amendment in the following areas:

1. Time allowed for closing debate
2. Length of time for oral questions
3. The role of the Speaker when a Member proposes an emergency debate

The Speaker also asked Committee to consider if the Rules should be changed to clarify process regarding reporting bills. Committee continues to examine the matter and will provide a report at a later date. The correspondence from Speaker Thompson is attached as Appendix A.

Committee has considered each of these matters and is prepared to provide a report to this House.

Time Allowed for Closing Debate

The Speaker asked whether the limit for closing debate should be reduced from twenty minutes to five minutes. Rule 6.2(7) provides that the mover of a motion may speak a second time to close debate, confirming a distinct right of reply. Read together with Rule 3.2(2), which allows a Member to speak for up to 20 minutes at a time unless expressly limited by another Rule, the mover’s closing reply presently carries a maximum speaking time of twenty minutes. There is no conflict between these Rules. Rule 6.2(7) creates the right to a closing reply, and Rule 3.2(2) supplies the time limit in the absence of a more specific limit.

In his referral, the Speaker noted that the right of reply is intended to summarize the debate and respond to points raised, rather than to introduce new arguments, and asked Committee to consider expressly limiting the closing reply to five minutes. Committee found no evidence that the current limit causes delays or obstructs proceedings. Closing debate is rarely lengthy, and Members noted no concerns in practice.

No change is recommended to Rule 3.2(2) or Rule 6.2(7).

Length of Time for Oral Questions

The Government House Leader asked the Speaker to refer to Committee the question of whether the current 60-minute limit for Oral Questions, set out in Rule 7.2(5), should be reduced. The request noted that since the 2024 amendment reducing supplementary questions from three to two, Question Period has been noticeably more efficient, with Members often able to ask multiple questions within the existing one-hour timeframe

Committee reviewed the request and did not find that the present sixty-minute limit is causing inefficiency or procedural difficulty. Members agreed that the existing duration enables all Regular Members to participate fully and does not impede the Assembly's work. The Committee therefore concluded that no procedural problem has been demonstrated.

No change is recommended to Rule 7.2(5).

Role of the Speaker when a Member Wishes to Propose Emergency Debate

Rule 3.5(1)(a) requires that a Member seeking an emergency debate provide the Speaker with at least one hour's notice. The Speaker asked whether this notice period is sufficient and whether the Rules should more clearly support a pre-screening role for the Speaker, similar to other notices such as Acknowledgements and Written Questions where the Speaker can provide feedback before the motion is brought forward.

Committee noted that emergency debates are infrequent and context-driven. Committee also noted that the Speaker already exercises a gatekeeping role when determining whether a matter is urgent and cannot be addressed through other

procedures. However, Committee agreed that the current wording of Rule 3.5(1) does not clearly reflect this gatekeeping function and the Speaker's role should be made more explicit in the Rules.

Committee considers the one-hour notice requirement reasonable and consistent with the Assembly's needs. To clarify the Speaker's authority to assess whether the conditions have been met to justify an emergency debate, Committee recommends the following amendment to the Rules:

Recommendation 1: The Standing Committee on Procedure and Privileges recommends that Rule 3.5(1) of the Consolidated Rules of the Northwest Territories be amended to replace "subject to the following conditions" with "if the Speaker is satisfied that the following conditions have been met."

APPENDIX A

- Correspondence from Speaker Shane Thompson

Section 3.5 sets out the rules for emergency debates. Rule 3.5(1)(a) requires the Member proposing a motion for Emergency Debate to provide the Speaker with at least one hour notice prior to the sitting of the House. Unlike other items where the Speaker is required to receive notice, the rules surrounding Emergency Debate do not give the Speaker the chance to provide feedback before the motion is brought forward. This differs from other items that require advanced notice, such as Acknowledgements and Written Questions.

In those cases, the Speaker can determine in advance if an item is in order and in keeping with our rules. I ask Committee to consider whether:

- the current period of notice is sufficient; and
- whether the Speaker should have a pre-screening function on proposed topics for Emergency Debate, before allowing time for debate in the House.

If the Committee wishes to hold a public briefing on any of these matters, I encourage you to contact the Office of the Clerk to make the necessary arrangements and have them appear as a witness.



Hon. Shane Thompson
Speaker

- c. Premier
Government House Leader
Ministers
Members
Chief of Staff
Clerk, Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly
Secretary to Cabinet/Deputy Minister, EIA
Deputy Clerk, House Procedures and Committees
Director, Legislative Affairs and House Planning
Committee Clerk, Standing Committee on Procedures and Privileges
Committee Advisor, Standing Committee on Procedure and Privileges

December 3, 2025

MS. KATE REID, CHAIR
STANDING COMMITTEE ON PROCEDURES AND PRIVILEGES

Referral by the Speaker to the 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 it by the Honourable Speaker.

Given the conversation which occurred at our Annual Caucus Planning Meeting on December 1, 2025, alongside the attached correspondence from the Government House Leader I am asking that the Standing Committee on Procedure and Privileges review the length of time provided for Oral Questions in the Rules of the Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly.

Oral questions are used by Members in many ways, including but not limited to obtaining information for the public, determining rationale for government decision making, ensuring accountability for Ministers and their departments, and highlighting the work that is being done throughout the public service. The Guidelines for Oral Questions provide Members with clear expectations and procedures on how this important aspect of our Assembly conducts its business.

When Committee is considering this request, I wish to also provide my own thoughts on how to ensure that Oral Questions are used appropriately and follow the guidelines and intentions set out in the Rules of the Assembly.

I hope that Committee will discuss and consider a rule change that either limits the number of questions a Member can ask during question period to 2 rounds while retaining the currently allotted maximum time of 60 minutes or that Committee considers lowering the amount of time for Oral Question period by 10 minutes to 50 minutes.

.../2

The rationale for both suggestions is that they would look to ensure Members are remaining focused in their preambles and supplementary questions while also ensuring Ministers are the same for their responses.

I look forward to Committee's report on this matter.



Hon. Shake Thompson
Speaker

Attachment

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



November 17, 2025

HONOURABLE SHANE THOMPSON
SPEAKER, LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

Referral of Matter to Standing Committee on Procedure and Privileges – Question Period

I am writing to ask you to consider referring the length of the period provided for oral questions (Question Period) to the Standing Committee on Procedure and Privileges for study.

The Rules of the Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly provide that Question Period shall not exceed 60 minutes. This amount of time is among the longest in Canadian territorial and provincial legislatures. Attached please find a short comparative table of Question Period lengths in Canadian legislatures.

In October 2024, an amendment was made to the Rules to change the number of supplementary questions that may be asked in follow up to an oral question from three to two. With the resultant shortening of each exchange of questions and answers, we have seen that Question Period has become more efficient; it has allowed ample time for each Regular Member to ask a question with additional time available for Members to ask a second question should they wish. In fact, on some days individual Members have had time to pose a third or fourth question, and occasionally a fifth question, during a single Question Period.

To further promote the efficient use of House time, it may be appropriate to study whether the length of Question Period should be reduced. Other measures may be considered that would provide for a more efficient question period and more clarity as to the length of individual exchanges, such as expressly stating the length of questions and replies or providing for a specific number of questions an individual Member can pose during a single Question Period.

Thank you for considering this matter and please let me know should you wish to discuss it further.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jay Macdonald".

Jay Macdonald
Government House Leader

Attachment

c. Distribution List

Distribution List

Premier

Ministers

Chair, Standing Committee on Procedure and Privileges

Chief of Staff

Secretary to Cabinet/Deputy Minister, EIA

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

Attachment - Comparative Table: Question Period in Canadian Legislatures

Jurisdiction	Duration	Questions + Supplementary	Additional Notes
Northwest Territories	60 min	Question + 2 supplementary	
Nunavut	75 min	Question + 2 supplementary	
Yukon	30 mins	Question + 2 supplementary	Brief preamble is permitted before first question and one sentence preamble before each supplementary.
Alberta	50 min	Question + 2 supplementary	
British Columbia	30 min	Question + supplementaries at Speaker's discretion	Questions must be "urgent and important".
Manitoba	40 min	Question + 2 supplementary	Questions and answers shall not exceed 60 seconds for leaders of recognized parties and 45 seconds for other Members and Ministers.
New Brunswick	30 min	Question + 2 supplementary	Questions and replies no longer than 60 seconds. One of the appropriate responses to a question is that the question should be put in writing.
Newfoundland and Labrador	30 min	Question + reasonable number of supplementaries at discretion of Speaker	Speaker shall disallow any question which is not considered urgent or of public importance.
Nova Scotia	50 min	Question + 1 supplementary except party leader's first question gets 2 supplementaries	
Ontario	60 min	Question + reasonable number of supplementaries at discretion of Speaker	
Prince Edward Island	40 min	Question + not more than two supplementaries	Minister may request the speaker direct a question that requires a lengthy response to be put in writing.

Quebec	45 min	Question + one or more supplementaries at the discretion of the President	
Saskatchewan	25 min	Question + two supplementaries	
House of Commons	45 min	Question + one supplementary except for party leader's first question gets 2 supplementaries	Member has 35 seconds to pose question and Minister has 35 seconds to respond.