

Standing Committee on
Procedure and Privileges



Report on the Review of the Rules of the Northwest Territories, No. 4

20th Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly

Chair: Ms. Kate Reid

**MEMBERS OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON
PROCEDURE AND PRIVILEGES**

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MLA Hay River South
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Julian Morse
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Denny Rodgers
MLA Inuvik Boot Lake

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MLA Range Lake

Alternates

Shauna Morgan
MLA Yellowknife North

Hon. Lesa Semmler
MLA Inuvik Twin Lakes

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, No. 4*, and commends it to the House.



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. 4**

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STANDING COMMITTEE ON PROCEDURE AND PRIVILEGES

REPORT ON THE REVIEW OF THE RULES OF THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY, NO. 4

INTRODUCTION

The Standing Committee on Procedure and Privileges (Committee) is pleased to present its fourth review of the Rules of the Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly ("the Rules") during the 20th Legislative Assembly.

Speaker Shane Thompson referred six procedural matters to Committee for review. These matters arise from two letters dated November 04, 2025, and March 19, 2026. 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. Standing Committee review of bills;
2. Clarification on criteria for Private Members' Bills (PMBs);
3. If there should be a change in the location of "Replies to the Budget Address" to item #3 on the day that the budget address is delivered (Day 1) and item #2 every day afterwards (2 through 7);
4. To consider providing the Chair of the Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight (AOC) a reply to the budget address on behalf of committee, without losing the opportunity to provide their own reply as a member;
5. If reporting attendance on additional meetings for committees that Members are not a part of should be eliminated; and,
6. Create a new rule to disallow Chairs of Standing and Special Committees from chairing committees reviewing matters that originate from a motion or bill moved by that Chair.

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.

Standing Committee Review of Bills

The Speaker asked Committee to review section 8.3 of the Rules and determine if any changes are required to clarify the roles and responsibilities of Committees during the review of bills. Rule 8.3(1) provides that a bill “shall not be proceeded with until the Assembly receives a report of the Committee or 120 calendar days pass from the day the bill was given second reading.” Rule 8.3(2) permits a committee to seek an extension of that period by motion. If no report is made when the initial or extended period expires, Rule 8.3(3) allows the sponsor to give “Notice of Intent to proceed with a bill not reported,” after which, on the third sitting day, the Speaker places the bill on the Orders of the Day in Committee of the Whole.

No change is recommended to Rule 8.3(1) or Rule 8.3(2); however, Committee recommends a change to Rule 8.3(3) to enable the sponsor of the bill to speak without losing an opportunity to give a Ministers’ or Members’ Statement:

Recommendation 1: The Standing Committee on Procedure and Privileges recommends that Rule 8.3(3)(a) be amended to read: “8.3(3)(a) Notice of intent to proceed with a bill not reported in accordance with Rule 8.3(1) may be given to the House by the sponsor of the bill under the item “Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills,” and removing the words “Ministers’ Statements” on the Order Paper if it is a government bill, and under “Members’ Statements” if it is a Private Members’ Bill.”

Further Clarification on Private Members’ Bills

On March 19, 2026, the Speaker referred to Committee the question of whether the Rules require additional clarification respecting the limitations of PMBs. Committee was asked to consider whether Rule 1.2(i), which defines PMBs as “bills introduced by a Member who is not a Minister which do not involve the appropriation of public funds or the imposition of any tax,” requires further clarification or whether the Speaker’s ruling on March 19, 2026, provides sufficient precedent to guide the future development of PMBs.

Committee reviewed the criteria for PMBs in light of the Speaker’s ruling on Bill 29 and the existing Rules. Committee noted that the ruling establishes a clear, principled test grounded in the *Constitution Act*, the Rules of the Legislative Assembly, and established parliamentary convention, including the financial initiative of the Crown.

Committee found that the ruling provides sufficient guidance by clarifying that PMBs must not create new, distinct, and unavoidable public expenditures or otherwise compel government spending, even where no explicit appropriation is stated.

As this interpretation aligns with existing legislative provisions and broader Westminster practice, Committee concluded that the current Rules, as informed by the Speaker's ruling, are adequate and that no additional amendments are required.

Change of Location to “Replies to the Budget Address” on the Orders of the Day

Pursuant to Rule 5.5(1) of the Consolidated Rules of the Northwest Territories (“the Rules”) “The Clerk shall place the item “Replies to Budget Address” on the Orders of the Day after “Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery” on the day of the presentation of a budget and for the next six Sitting days.” The daily order of business in the Assembly has Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery as the fifth item (daily order of business) or fourth item (Tuesdays and Thursdays).

Rule 5.4(2) states “Upon receiving notice of a Budget Address, the Speaker shall place the item “Budget Address” on the Orders of the Day for the day of presentation immediately after “Prayer or Reflection,” which makes the Budget Address the second item on the Orders of the Day, before Ministers and Members Statements.

The Speaker asked Committee to consider if the position of “Replies to the Budget Address” in the daily Order of Business should be changed to item 3, immediately following the Budget Address on the day the Budget Address is delivered (Day 1), and to item 2 on each subsequent day (Days 2 through 7). If Committee wishes to make this change, on Days 2 through 7, “Replies to the Budget Address” would immediately follow the “Prayer or Reflection” and before Ministers and Members Statements.

Committee has deliberated and supports the change, noting that it improves coherence in the Order of the Day by aligning replies more closely with the Budget Address itself. The revised placement would provide a more logical sequencing of proceedings, ensuring that replies follow immediately after the Budget Address on Day 1 and are prioritized early on the daily agenda on subsequent days. Therefore, Committee recommends:

<p>Recommendation 2: The Standing Committee on Procedure and Privileges recommends that Rule 5.5(1) of the Consolidated Rules of the Northwest Territories be amended to read “The Clerk shall place the item “Replies to the Budget Address” on the Orders of the Day immediately after</p>

“Budget Address” on the day of the presentation of a budget and immediately after “Prayer or Reflection” for the next six Sitting days.”

Chair of Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight Reply to the Budget Address

Committee considered whether the Rules should be amended to allow the Chair of the Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight (AOC) to deliver a Reply to the Budget Address on behalf of the Committee while retaining the ability to provide an individual reply. Committee noted that the current Rules limit Members to one reply and do not distinguish between individual and committee responses.

Committee also recognized that, in practice, committees already can respond to the Budget Address through committee reports, which allow the Chair and other Members of the Legislative Assembly to speak on behalf of the committee within the existing framework. As such, the functional outcome sought already exists, though not formally structured as a Reply to the Budget Address.

Members discussed that formalizing this practice would represent a change in form rather than substance but could improve clarity and visibility of a committee-level response. Committee therefore agreed to recommend an amendment to the Rules to explicitly permit the AOC Chair to deliver both a committee reply and an individual reply:

Recommendation 3: The Standing Committee on Procedure and Privileges recommends that a new Rule be added after Rule 5.5(2) that states: “Notwithstanding Rule 5.5(2), the Chair of the Standing Committee on Accountability may deliver a Reply to the Budget Address on behalf of the Committee as well as an individual reply to the Budget Address.”

Optional Attendance Reporting

The Speaker has asked Committee to consider whether the current practice of reporting attendance at additional committee meetings by Members who are not members of those committees be discontinued. Section 5 of the Indemnities, Allowances and Expense Regulations of the *Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act*, requires the Speaker to record and table the record of Members’ absences:

5. (1) *The Speaker shall maintain a record setting out the name of a member who failed to attend a sitting or a general meeting of the Legislative Assembly or a*

meeting of a committee of the Legislative Assembly, the date of the absence and the member's reason for failing to attend.

(2) Subject to subsection (6), the Speaker shall, once during each sitting, cause the record referred to in subsection (1) to be laid before the Legislative Assembly.ⁱ

The regulation does not require reporting on attendance at meetings for Members of the Legislative Assembly who are not members of the committee, though documents tabled by the Speaker list the other optional meetings attended by Members during the reporting period.ⁱⁱ

Committee therefore recommends:

Recommendation 4: The Standing Committee on Procedure and Privileges recommends that the practice of reporting attendance for additional meetings for which the Member of the Legislative Assembly is not a committee member be discontinued.

Committee Chair Referral of Motions and Bills

The Speaker asked whether a new rule should be established to prevent Chairs of Standing and Special Committees from chairing committees reviewing matters that originate from a motion or bill moved by that Chair.

Referral of matters to a Committee by the Chair does not happen frequently. If a bill is referred to a Standing Committee by a Member who also sits on that Committee, the bill would likely be a PMB. In such circumstances, the Member would be required to recuse themselves from all proceedings related to the bill, regardless of whether they are the Chair.

Where a motion to refer a matter to a Standing or Special Committee is adopted, it reflects the will of the House. In the absence of a real conflict of interest under section 74 of the *Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act*, there is no procedural reason why a Committee Chair may not refer a matter to the Committee they Chair. Further, the Rules define the role of Chairs of Standing and Special Committees as follows:

Rule 9.3(9) The Chair shall maintain order in Committee and shall decide all questions of order subject to an appeal to the Speaker.

Rule 9.3(10) The Chair of the Committee shall not vote except to cast the deciding vote in the case of a tie.

Committee agreed that, taken together, these provisions underscore that the Chair's role is not to advance a substantive position, but to facilitate orderly proceedings and ensure procedural fairness. Under the Rules, as currently drafted, the Chair functions as the most neutral member of the Committee.

Committee also considered how Chair referrals and recusals are addressed in other jurisdictions. As observed in the NWT, Chair referrals to their own committees are rare. Committee found that no specific Rules exist in other jurisdictions and such matters are adequately addressed through conflict-of-interest legislation and process conventions.

No change is recommended to the Rules.

CONCLUSION

This concludes Committee's report on its review of the Rules of the Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories, No. 4.

APPENDIX A

- Correspondence from Speaker Shane Thompson

ⁱ <https://www.justice.gov.nt.ca/en/files/legislation/legislative-assembly-and-executive-council/legislative-assembly-and-executive-council.r1.pdf>

ⁱⁱ See pages 10-11 of [TD 499-20\(1\) Summary of Members' Absences for the Period October 15, 2025-February 03, 2026](#) as an example.

November 4, 2025

MS. KATE REID
CHAIR
STANDING COMMITTEE ON PROCEDURE AND PRIVILEGES

Referral from Speaker

On October 17, 2025, the Member for Yellowknife Centre rose on a Point of Order on the Standing Committee on Government Operations failing to report Bill 26: *An Act to Amend the Public Service Act* to the House. I allowed debate and took the matter under advisement.

On October 20, 2025, the Chair of the Standing Committee on Government Operations reported on Committee's review of Bill 26 to the House. Committee requested an extension of 120-days, which was granted. With the extension granted, I ruled that the Point of Order was moot and ordered the debate referred to the Standing Committee on Procedure and Privileges for review and, if required, recommended changes to our rules.

Please review section 8.3 of our rules to determine if any changes are required to clarify the roles and responsibilities of Committees during the review of Bills. For reference, the relevant debate is found in Hansard on pages 2683, 2718-2720 and 2744-2745. Please review these pages when considering this matter.

I would like Committee to consider two additional matters:

- the time allowed for closing debate; and
- the role of the Speaker when a Member wishes to propose an emergency debate.

Rule 6.2(7) allows the mover of a motion to speak twice to close debate. However, rule 3.2(2) permits a Member to speak for up-to 20 minutes at a time, unless expressly limited by another rule. Closure of debate is intended to be an opportunity for the mover to summarize main points and respond to new information raised during the debate. I ask Committee to consider if the time allowed for closing debate should be reduced from 20 minutes to 5 minutes.

.../2

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

In addition, I have been asked to refer the following questions to the Standing Committee on Procedure and Privileges for review and consideration:

- If there should be a change the location of "Replies to the Budget Address" to item #3 on the day that the budget address is delivered (Day 1) and item #2 every day afterwards (2 through 7);
- To consider providing the Chair of AOC a reply to the budget address on behalf of committee, without losing the opportunity to provide their own reply as a member;
- If reporting attendance on additional meetings for committees that Members are not a part of should be eliminated; and,
- Create a new rule that would clearly prevent Chairs of Standing and Special Committees from chairing committees reviewing matters that originate from a motion or Bill moved by that Chair.

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



Hon. Shane Thompson
Speaker

Attachment(s)

- 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

The Member asked about the average cost per appointment for prenatal care in the Northwest Territories and the average total cost of prenatal care per person throughout a pregnancy, and what specific services or line items are included in this calculation. The Member asked about the cost per day for a patient's admission to the hospital for birth and postpartum care and average cost of postpartum visits per person following discharge from the hospital.

The level of costing detail requested for these services is not available.

The Member also asked the average length of stay in hospital for birthing and postpartum care.

The average length of stay in the Hay River Health Centre is approximately eight to ten hours. This can extend to twenty-four hours or beyond depending on the individual case and could result in a medevac if required.

The average length of stay at Stanton Territorial Hospital is two days and four and a half hours. At Inuvik Regional Hospital, the average stay is two days, eight hours, and forty-six minutes. In Fort Smith, the average stay is significantly shorter at twelve hours and twenty-nine minutes.

Stanton Territorial Hospital and Inuvik Regional Hospital provide obstetrics services, while Fort Smith and Hay River provide midwifery services. Average lengths of stay are higher at obstetrics sites because they manage more complex births and often need to monitor mothers who have travelled from out of town. In addition, these locations have limited commercial accommodations available for new mothers to stay in after being discharged. As a result, mothers who cannot immediately return to their home community often remain in the hospital longer.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Returns to written questions. Replies to the Commissioner's address. Petitions. Reports of committees on the review of bills. Member from Frame Lake.

Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills

BILL 29:
FIRST RESPONDERS WORKERS'
COMPENSATION AMENDMENT ACT.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, your committee would like to report on

its consideration of Bill 29, First Responders Workers' Compensation Amendment Act.

Bill 29 received second reading in the Legislative Assembly on May 29th, 2025, and was referred to the Standing Committee on Government Operations for review.

Motions extending -- sorry, Mr. Speaker, it's just distracting with the loud voice in the chamber. Sorry, Mr. Speaker.

Bill 29 received second reading in the Legislative Assembly on May 29th, 2025, and was referred to the Standing Committee on Government Operations for review. Motions extending the committee's review of Bill 29 were adopted by the Assembly on October 16th, 2025, and February 13th, 2026.

The committee completed its clause-by-clause review of the bill with the Member for Range Lake on February 25th, 2026. During the review, committee members moved four motions to amend two clauses of Bill 29. The Member for Range Lake conferred with each of those motions.

Mr. Speaker, the committee reports that Bill 29, First Responders' Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, as amended and reprinted, is ready for consideration in Committee of the Whole. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member. Member from Range Lake.

MOTION TO MOVE TO THIRD READING

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I seek unanimous consent to waive Rule 8.2(7) and have Bill 29 moved directly to third reading later today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Range Lake is seeking unanimous consent to move Bill 29 to third reading of bills. Are there any nays? Nay has been recorded. Member from Thebacha.

POINT OF ORDER

HON. JAY MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order on Private Member Bill 29, First Responders' Workers' Compensation Act. The point of order relates to Rule 1.2(i) of the Rules of the Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly and the parliamentary convention across Westminster-style Parliaments which prohibits Private Members' bills from requiring expenditure of public funds. I am rising at the first opportunity in the House now that the standing committee studying the bill has reported the bill, as reprinted, back to the House as ready for consideration in Committee of the Whole.

To be clear, we support the principle of the bill. I rise at this point of order because Bill 29 would require the GNWT to pay a one-time liability payment estimated to be \$4.3 million that is separate and distinct from any existing appropriation. This one-time payment is in addition to an increase of an estimated \$409,000 to the annual rates that the GNWT pays to the WSCC.

Rule 1.2 of our rules defines what a Private Member's bill may not involve. This definition limits Private Members' bills to bills that do not involve the appropriation of public funds or the imposition of any tax. While Bill 29 does not expressly set out the appropriation of a specific amount of funds, over the course of the standing committee's review of the bill, it became clear that the effect of the change put forward in Bill 29 would result in the requirement to allocate new public funds which would need to occur by appropriation. These anticipated amounts go beyond incidental implementation costs that would fall under an existing appropriation.

Bill 29 proposes to change presumptive coverage of listed diseases for firefighters. Bill 29 also proposes changes to the minimum employment period for such coverage. While workers' compensation programs are typically considered as self-funded because the costs of the programs are covered by insurance premiums or assessment fees that are collected from the employers based on set collections in the Northwest Territories, presumptive coverages that are provided for in Act are a bit different. The Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission governance council approves the model for setting rates payable for workers' compensation coverage in the Northwest Territories.

The rate setting model approved by the governance council for presumptive coverage for firefighters places all insurance liability for presumptive coverage for Northwest Territories workers with the GNWT. The Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission has estimated the proposed changes to presumptive coverage put forward in Bill 29, as introduced, would have resulted in a one-time insurance liability payment of \$17 million. The amount of the liability payment for the bill, as modified in standing committee, will be lower but as mentioned is estimated to be nearly \$4.3 million.

Mr. Speaker, if passed, this bill would come into force one year after the date the bill receives assent. This static coming-into-force date does not allow the executive council to have any ability to control incurring the costs associated with the bill.

Mr. Speaker, this bill would involve an appropriation of public funds necessary to implement the amendments according to the WSCC rate setting rules according to a timeline over which the government has no control. The one-time liability payment would be a new and distinct expenditure that is not contemplated in an existing appropriation. This makes such changes improper to be advanced in a Private Members' bill which cannot involve the appropriation of public funds.

Mr. Speaker, I should clearly state that this point of order is not raised about the merits of the changes of presumptive coverage presented in Bill 29. It is simply raised because we have a rule that limits what the Private Members' bill can do. If the effect of Bill 29 is that it results in new and distinct amount that will have to be appropriated, it does not appear to be within the authority of the Private Member to bring it forward. The authority for recommending spending of public money lies with the executive council. This is the source of the limitation on Private Members' bill as reflected in the rules.

As such, I believe this bill is out of order. I look forward to the Speaker's ruling which would provide clarification on the matter that will be of assistance to all Members going forward. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Thebacha. To the mover of the bill. Member from Range Lake.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Rule 1.2(i) states Private Members' bills are bills introduced by a Member who is not a Minister which does not involve the appropriation of public funds or the imposition of tax, which is the subject of the point of order.

I would point out, however, that when signing the Minister -- the Minister moving the point of order cited Westminster parliamentary traditions around Private Members' bills. It is very important to consider that Private Members' bills are different and distinct in each legislature in Canada and, indeed, in the Commonwealth as well, and our Rule 1.1(2) states: In all cases, not provided for in these rules or by other orders of the Assembly, the customs and procedures of this Assembly, the principles and process conventions of consensus government, the House of Commons of Canada, provincial and territorial legislatures, and parliaments and the Commonwealth shall be followed in that order.

So if we are to assess the parameters of a Private Members' bill, we need to look at our precedents first. And there are many

precedents for Private Members' bills in this Assembly. So we don't need to look elsewhere because it wouldn't be a fair comparison because the House of Commons has very different rules that are spelled out in their standing orders, and we have different rules here, which I just quoted, Rule 1.1(i).

So let's look at that rule. So first, the test is, am I a Minister? No, I am not. I am a Member. The second is, does it appropriate public funds or impose a tax? It does not, Mr. Speaker. The bill does not speak to appropriating money the way an appropriations bill does. It does not seek to raise a tax the way we would in an appropriations bill as well or a financial policy instrument.

Mr. Speaker, any action by government will always come at a cost, whether it is the implementation of a Private Member's bill, a government bill, policy work, or programming work by departments. It is the responsibility of the government to make the necessary appropriations to meet their commitments and fund these activities. The coming into force date of this bill has been amended by the standing committee, as mentioned, with my concurrence, to give the government sufficient time to plan their appropriations for future fiscal years. It is 12 months from the day of assent which allows for an entire budget cycle to take place.

In the past, there have been numerous bills introduced by both government and Regular Members that have similarly created situations where subsequent spending was required. Our practice has never been such that a recommendation from our Commissioner for the appropriation of funds is required as long as the bill itself does not appropriate the funds.

I understand that in some jurisdictions, as I mentioned, a similar bill might require a Royal recommendation or Commissioner's recommendation, but that is not and has never been the case in our practices and precedents.

While the bill does not directly appropriate funds, it does strengthen the comprehensive workers' compensation coverage for firefighters and first responders, which is an employer-driven system. Employers will pay more going forward, and that is exactly how the system is intended to work for the benefit and protection of all employees in the territory. The notion that the Government of the Northwest Territories is required to fully and solely fund any outstanding liabilities of the Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission is outside the scope of this bill. It is a result, instead, of the policies of the Commission, the WSCC governance council and, by extension,

the government. This is the reason why the coming-into-force date has been amended, to give our government and, indeed, the Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission, more than sufficient time to explore their policies and options, determine their liabilities, and appropriate any necessary funds through the regular budgeting cycle, Mr. Speaker.

And just to demonstrate this, in the life of this Assembly, Bill 8 received assent on November 1st, 2024. That bill, moved by the Member for Yellowknife Centre, require -- lifted the total funds available for SFA. The government subsequent -- although -- and that was not an appropriation, Mr. Speaker. It was changing a policy. It was changing the limit of those funds. The government subsequently came forward with a supplementary appropriation to fund that change by enhancing the total amount available to SFA funding.

When Bill 8 passed through second reading, committee review, and third reading, the government did not rise a point of order to that bill despite the fact that it followed a very similar path and created very similar obligations on -- you know, according to the logic behind this point of argument.

As for timing, the government -- the bill received first -- Bill 29 received first and second reading in May of 2025, approximately nine months ago. No concerns regarding order or procedural matters were raised when the bill was introduced and read into the House. In fact, when the bill was read a second time on May 29th, 2025, the responsible Minister spoke favourably about it, even stating that Cabinet was in support of the principle. And at that time, no Member of the executive council raised a point of order questioning procedural matters related to the appropriateness or properness of the bill as it relates to our standing orders.

Mr. Speaker, if they're prepared to support -- the government that is -- the government Members to support the principle of this bill and have even suggested in correspondence and conversations that they would bring forward an equivalent piece of legislation to make similar changes, that it stands to reason that the government is, indeed, prepared to appropriate this money. The amendments made by committee, as I said, extend the coming-into-force for 12 months. That's a year of time, Mr. Speaker, plenty of time to manage the appropriation and assess those obligations, as much as they did with Bill 8.

Mr. Speaker, one more thing. The policies of the WSCC -- I want to state this very clearly -- are a decision of the WSCC. They are

making a decision on how to fund liabilities, on what those liabilities are. These are policy decisions that they can make and change and assess as circumstances change. It is not required by Bill 29. Bill 29 does not speak to liability costs. Bill 29 does not speak to employer fees. So it is not an appropriation bill, not in any sense of the word, Mr. Speaker. And, again, I disagree with the Minister. He had plenty -- he had an earliest time to raise concerns with the bill, and that was at second reading. The financial obligations, as he said, were initially assessed at \$17 million, and when the WSCC came before standing committee they brought detailed facts and figures and projections. They were well aware of the financial implications of this bill at the time it was read a second time. That was the earliest time to do so.

Mr. Speaker, for these reasons I believe this point of order is not a question of procedure. Rather, it is a question of politics.

In this chamber, we resolve those questions through decisions. And I recall a conversation I've had with the previous clerk who says -- who's told me, in consensus government, when I was a young Member, procedure is a means to an end not an end in itself. It should not be used to resolve questions that should be resolved through the decisions of Members by way of voting. Accordingly, I ask that you dismiss the point of order and allow this Assembly to decide on the merits of Bill 29 for what they are by voting on it.

I look forward to your decision, and say mahsi cho for allowing me to speak to this question of order. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Colleagues, I thank both the government leader and the sponsor of the bill for their debate on this matter. I will take this matter under advisement, allowing myself time to thoroughly review the transcripts here today, as well as undertake some additional research, as it is something very unique. And I will return my ruling at a later date. Thank you. We will now continue orders of the day.

Reports on the standing committee -- actually, colleagues, being in recognition of the time, we will have a brief break.

---SHORT RECESS

MR. SPEAKER: Reports of committees on the review of bills. Reports of standing and special committees. Member from Frame Lake.

Reports of Standing and Special Committees

COMMITTEE REPORT 36-20(1):
STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT
OPERATIONS REPORT ON BILL 29, FIRST
RESPONDERS WORKERS'
COMPENSATION AMENDMENT ACT,
DEEMED READ, RECEIVED AND
ADOPTED. GOVERNMENT RESPONSE
REQUESTED,
CARRIED

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Your Standing Committee on Government Operations is pleased to provide its Report on Bill 29, First Responders Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, and commends it to the House.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Bill 29: First Responders Workers' Compensation Amendment Act is a Private Member's Bill that originally proposed substantial amendments to the Workers' Compensation Act, including establishing presumptive coverage for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) for frontline emergency workers and expanding presumptive coverage for firefighters to include all cancer types and heart related conditions, subject to a minimum two-year employment requirement. These changes were proposed to take effect on October 27, 2026.

Given the breadth and potential impacts of the bill, the committee undertook an extended and comprehensive review. This work included engagement with the bill's sponsor, the Minister responsible for the Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission, the Minister of Finance, key stakeholders, specifically the International Association of Fire Fighters Local 2890, and the public.

The committee's study focused on the importance of timely and accessible compensation supports for first responders and firefighters who face elevated occupational health risks. The Committee examined the operational, financial, and interjurisdictional implications of expanding presumptive coverage, including the potential financial impact on the Government of the Northwest Territories and impacts on the shared workers' compensation governance framework with Nunavut.

The committee weighed these factors alongside the need for a consistent, evidence-based approach to presumptive coverage that is informed by national standards while maintaining the integrity of the workers'

compensation system. These considerations informed the committee's four motions to amend Bill 29 to limit presumptive coverage to 23 cancers to be set out in regulations, to separate the eligibility criteria for presumptive coverage of heart disease and heart injury from those for cancer, and to change the coming-into-force date to be 12 months from the date of assent.

The committee also presents four recommendations to the Government of the Northwest Territories addressing future work on presumptive coverage and legislative initiatives. I will summarize those now.

Recommendation 1:

The Committee recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories improve its responsiveness to public and stakeholder requests for legislative reviews and amendments to ensure its legislation remains modern, reflective of the needs of residents, and aligned with other jurisdictions. Enhanced responsiveness would also reduce reliance on Private Members' bills, which do not undergo the same comprehensive planning and development processes as government-sponsored legislation.

Recommendation 2:

The Committee recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories conduct detailed public and stakeholder engagement when proposing any future changes to regulations related to firefighter presumptive coverage.

Recommendation 3:

The committee recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories undertake a review on providing presumptive workers' compensation coverage to wildland firefighters similar to other jurisdictions in Canada, given that the Northwest Territories is experiencing more frequent and severe wildfires, which may have a corresponding effect on the health of wildland firefighters.

Recommendation 4:

The Committee recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories provide a response to this report within 120 days.

And with that, Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Great Slave, that the remainder of Committee Report 36-20(1), Standing Committee on Government Operations Report on the Review of Bill 29, First Responders' Workers' Compensation

Amendment Act, be deemed read and printed in Hansard in its entirety. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

***Deemed Read**

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Frame Lake. The motion is in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. All those in favour, please raise your hand. All those opposed, please raise your hand. All those abstaining, please raise your hand. Motion carried.

---Carried

Member from Frame Lake.

MR. MORSE: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Great Slave, that Committee Report 36-20(1), Standing Committee on Government Operations Report on the Review of Bill 29, First Responders Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, be received and adopted by the Assembly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Frame Lake. The motion is in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. All those in favour, please raise your hand. All those opposed, please raise your hand. All those abstaining, please raise your hand. Motion is carried.

---Carried

Member from Frame Lake.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Great Slave, that pursuant to Rule 9.4(5)(a), the Government of the Northwest Territories table a comprehensive response to this report, including all recommendations, within 120 days, or at the earliest opportunity subsequent to the passage of 120 days. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Frame Lake. The motion is in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? All those abstaining, please raise your hand. Motion is carried.

YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**Friday, March 6, 2026****Members Present**

Hon. Caitlin Cleveland, Mr. Edjericon, Mr. Hawkins, Hon. Lucy Kuptana, Hon. Jay MacDonald, Hon. Vince McKay, Mr. McNeely, Ms. Morgan, Mr. Morse, Mr. Nerysoo, Ms. Reid, Mr. Rodgers, Hon. Lesa Semmler, Hon. R.J. Simpson, Mr. Testart, Hon. Shane Thompson, Hon. Caroline Wawzonek, Mrs. Weyallon Armstrong, Mrs. Yakeleya

The House met at 10:03 a.m.

Prayer or Reflection

---Prayer or reflection

SPEAKER (HON. SHANE THOMPSON):

Please be seated. I'd like to thank Jonas Lafferty for the opening prayer.

Colleagues, before we start, I am going to do my ruling today. It's been a very challenging thing to look at this ruling and I had to do a lot of work across Canada to come up with this decision.

Colleagues, I am prepared to deliver my ruling on the point of order raised by the Member for Thebacha on February 27th. I want to start by stating that this is a lengthy ruling. Following my ruling, I will be sending the question of Private Member's bills to the committee on procedures and privileges for further study.

First off, I will address public statements some Members made after I reserved my decision. When a matter is reserved and before me for a decision, it is inappropriate for Members to debate the issue publicly. It can be seen as an attempt to influence my decision.

I further need to remind all Members that allowing debate on a topic is the prerogative of the Speaker. If a Member is rising on a point of order, they should be prepared to speak to it in full and be prepared for a situation where no debate is allowed.

Again, raising a point of order is leaving a decision with the Speaker. It is not a time to seek public support for political gain as the procedures of this House should not be weaponized in this manner.

Members, I must express that I expect a higher standard from all of you. It is my sincere hope that we continue to work collaboratively within our consensus system to make decisions that truly enhance the lives of the residents of the Northwest Territories.

I want to first recognize the work of the Member from Range Lake. I know that this is an important topic for the Member. I also wish to

recognize that the government House leader and any Member can and should seek procedural clarity on the variety of matters that are reviewed by this House and its committees; however, I must also convey my disappointment that we find ourselves in this position today.

I have listened carefully to both sides, each acknowledging that this bill holds great importance and that much of its content is commendable. Yet, rather than uniting in cooperation, we have arrived at this point of division. I hope you take these words to heart and reflect on how we move forward in the final 18 months of our time as Members of the 20th Legislative Assembly. There is so much work left to do, and we need to do it working together.

Moving on, I have reviewed the debate that occurred on February 27th. I have also done extensive research on the purpose of Bill 29, as well as the parliamentary processes and expectations of Private Members' bills both in the Northwest Territories and in other jurisdictions throughout Canada and the Commonwealth. In my review, it has become evident this is an area of parliamentary procedure that is extremely nuanced and does not provide for simple rulings.

The staff of the Office of the Clerk were able to gather data from jurisdictions across the country and the Commonwealth alongside a review of the history of our own Private Members' bills to provide me with detailed information for consideration of this matter. I want to make it clear that this is a very challenging ruling. I reflect again on the additional challenges to my office in ruling on this when Members issue public statements before I have ruled.

A different Speaker may have come to a different conclusion than myself and have been justified to do so. In my ruling, I tried to capture both the conventions of our Assembly alongside my own interpretation of our rules. I wish to first highlight that a point of order differs from a point of privilege, Rule 1.7(3), noting that a Member may always raise a point of privilege at the earliest opportunity. Ideally, a point of order is raised at the earliest possible opportunity however, this is not required. A

point of order can be raised as additional information comes to light or during debate.

A Private Member's bill does not obtain the level of review and scrutiny that a government bill has during drafting, and government cannot rise on a point of order during a committee's review of a Private Member's bill. Although second reading is an appropriate time to rise on a point of order for a bill, it is not the only time available to do so.

Rule 1.2(i) defines a Private Member's bill as a bill introduced by a Member who is not a Minister "which do not involve the appropriation of public funds or the imposition of any tax."

Rule 8.5(1) further provides that the Assembly may not adopt or pass any bill for the appropriation of public revenue except for a purpose recommended to the Assembly by the Commissioner in the session in which the bill is proposed.

The Member for Thebacha's point of order is related specifically to the definition of "Private Member's Bills" in Rule 1.2(i). The question before me is not whether Bill 29 contains an expressed appropriation clause. It does not. The question is whether Bill 29 nevertheless involves the appropriation of public funds in a manner that renders it inadmissible as a Private Member's bill, according to the definition in our rules.

In assessing that question, I have considered our rules, the Northwest Territories Act, and persuasive authorities from other Canadian jurisdictions, including the House of Commons.

Bill 29 amends the Workers' Compensation Act to expand presumptive coverage for certain classes of workers. It:

Extends presumptive PTSD coverage to a class of workers not previously defined in the Act;

- For firefighters, it aims to broaden cancer coverage;
- Reduce latency periods; and
- Expand presumptive coverage for heart disease and heart injury.

The evidence before the Assembly establishes that the coming into force of Bill 29 would result in:

- An immediate insurance liability estimated at approximately \$4.3 million; and
- Ongoing increased annual costs through higher assessment rates

applied to the Government of the Northwest Territories.

However, Bill 29 does not:

- Contain an appropriation clause;
- Authorize the withdrawal of funds from the consolidated revenue fund;
- Fix a specific sum payable from public revenue; or,
- Direct that money be paid out of the consolidated revenue fund.

Members have argued that the test is not whether a bill has financial implications. Many Private Member's bills have financial implications. It has been argued that the test is whether the bill itself provides the authority to withdraw money from the consolidated revenue fund. By this limited scope, one might view the bill as in order because there is no direct line item that appropriates funds. Nevertheless, there is full agreement that the implementation of Bill 29 will have financial consequences.

The Workers' Protection Fund is financed primarily through employer assessments and operates separate from the consolidated revenue fund. There are interpretations from the Speaker's rulings in other jurisdictions that a bill affecting an appropriation of public funds does so immediately upon enactment. Accordingly, because the legislation in question does not direct a transfer of money from the consolidated revenue fund into the Workers' Protection Fund and would require additional action from the government to authorize that transfer, one could conclude that Bill 29 does not constitute an appropriation of public funds. However, I reiterate that the definition of a Private Member's bill in Rule 1.2(i) is not limited to whether Bill 29 is an appropriation bill but whether it involves the appropriation of public funds.

Further, if it is argued that Bill 29 does not provide the authority to compel appropriations then future Private Members' bills could compel government spending on a variety of matters all because they are presenting something that is not in itself an appropriation bill.

It should also be argued that the insurance liability and increased assessment costs incurred by the Government of the Northwest Territories arise from a policy decision rather than Bill 29 itself. The Workers' Compensation Act authorizes the governance council to establish the rate or basis for calculating the assessments to be paid by the employer. The governance council has adopted a policy model establishing that the full liability associated with

presumptive coverage for firefighters be borne by the Government of the Northwest Territories. On this basis, it can be argued that the resulting financial obligations fall on the government because of that policy choice, not because of the bill before us. Again, I present these arguments to reflect on how this bill itself does not appropriate.

However, in my view it cannot be overlooked that the bill involves the appropriation of public funds. The government would necessarily be required to spend public money from the consolidated revenue fund as a result of assuming liability for presumptive coverage and such expenditures would be essential for the presumptive coverage created by the bill to be effective. It cannot and should not be ignored that Bill 29 significantly expands presumptive coverage under the Workers' Compensation Act.

These are not incidental or administrative adjustments. They alter the scope, objects, and conditions of entitlement under the Act. They extend benefits to a broader class of persons and ease the qualifications required to receive compensation. This has been established in the House of Commons as sufficient to be considered a "new and distinct" expense.

Again, the evidence before the Assembly establishes that the coming into force of Bill 29 would result in:

- An immediate insurance liability estimated at approximately \$4.3 million; and
- Ongoing increased annual costs through higher assessment rates applied to the Government of the Northwest Territories.

These amounts are separate from and in addition to any current appropriations. This is not a case of incidental implementation costs that may be absorbed within existing departmental budgets. It is a substantive expansion of statutory entitlements that creates a new financial obligation.

In referencing Bill 8 during the debate on this point of order, which was a Private Member's bill passed by this Assembly, it was stated that an appropriation was required to fulfill the obligations of that bill. This is incorrect. Bill 8 did not compel a supplementary appropriation. However, an additional piece of legislation which increased the revolving fund for the student financial assistance program was brought forward. No appropriation bill was required.

In reviewing other Private Member's bills adopted throughout our Assembly's history, there is little evidence that they required an additional or separate appropriation in order to be enacted. Some of these Private Members' bills contemplated charges on private industry rather than government. Some were policy changes, or authorized government departments to develop new regulations for industries or professions. However, no additional appropriations were necessary to carry out this work.

If the effect of these bills was to increase the workload of a department, the incidental costs incurred could be addressed through the usual budget process.

I wish to also discuss the Commissioner's recommendation.

The Member for Range Lake noted that a bill similar to Bill 29 might require a Royal recommendation in other jurisdictions. The Member was referring to the practice in the House of Commons of including a message from the Governor General recommending that Parliament appropriate the funds necessary to defray the expenses listed in an appropriation bill or for the purposes set out in a bill that authorizes new charges against the consolidated revenue fund.

In the Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly, a similar "Commissioner's recommendation" is included as a preamble to appropriations bills. This recommendation is not included in other bills, including other public bills such as the Workers' Compensation Act, and this practice in the Northwest Territories differs from the practice of the House of Commons in that respect.

Despite this difference, the criteria applied in the House of Commons to determine whether a bill touches on the financial initiative of the Crown is still critical in determining whether a bill introduced in the Legislative Assembly appropriates public funds and therefore whether it would be inadmissible as a Private Member's bill. The absence of a Commissioner's recommendation does not, in itself, render a Private Member's bill procedurally in order.

In summary, I find that Bill 29 creates a new and distinct financial obligation resulting in a real and unavoidable expenditure of public funds; compels the government to spend money in order to meet statutory entitlements; imposes a fixed coming into force date that binds the executive to incur those expenditures, and therefore involves the appropriation of public funds within the meaning of Rule 1.2(l).

Accordingly, Bill 29 does not meet the definition of a Private Member's bill.

There is a valid point of order. Bill 29 is not in order and will not proceed. The bill will be removed from the orders of the day.

Members, this ruling should not stop us as Members from working together. Members on both sides of this House need to advance our shared priorities. We need to stop being adversarial and focus on working together. That is what the residents of the Northwest Territories expect of us. Thank you, colleagues.

Ministers' statements. Minister of the Status of Women.

Ministers' Statements

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 199-20(1): INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY 2026

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge International Women's Day, held on March 8th, to celebrate women's social, cultural, and political achievements throughout history and across nations. International Women's Day also provides the opportunity to showcase commitments towards gender equality, raise awareness of the gaps that persist, and highlight initiatives that promote gender equity. The 2026 theme for International Women's Day is Give to Gain, encouraging generosity and collaboration to advance gender equality.

This theme emphasizes the power of mutual support, and supporting women through resources, time, and mentorship. Give to Gain emphasizes the importance of giving attention and effort to gender equity to gain long-term equality. Contributing to women's advancement helps create a more supportive and interconnected world. When women thrive, we all rise.

Mr. Speaker, gender inequality remains deeply entrenched in our society despite decades of effort. Progress has been hard won in areas like economic participation, political representation, and combating gender-based violence. We need collective action to protect these gains and to prevent backsliding on women rights, access to equitable services, advancement in the workplace, in educational spaces and in society.

The young women and girls of today will be the leaders of tomorrow. We need to support them so they can reach their full potential. Providing better access for women to education, suitable housing, health care, employment, and child

care not only supports women but it benefits society by helping to build a sustainable economy and strengthened support networks. When we address the gaps along the social service continuum, we do our part to ensure all women and girls can achieve their full potential.

Mr. Speaker, we recognize that women face ingrained societal hurdles, systemic barriers and gender-based discrimination. These obstacles perpetuate a cycle of gender inequality.

We must work together to develop and implement strategies to prevent violence against women and girls. We must dismantle systems that disadvantage women, and we must keep updating our policies and programs so they truly support to promote the advancement of women in leadership positions. We must ensure that services are equitable and that we remain committed to keeping women and girls safe in the Northwest Territories. This work is ongoing, but I believe we can continue to make meaningful progress.

Give to Gain is a global call to action. It is an invitation to contribute what you can, whether that is your support, your time, or your knowledge. It highlights how personal commitment, paired with coordinated efforts, can meaningfully elevate and amplify the focus on gender equality.

I thank all women across the Northwest Territories for their invaluable contributions to our communities, our families, and our workplaces today and every day. Women have always given to gain, and they continue to do so in a million unseen ways. This translates into strong families, connected communities, and healthy environments. I encourage everyone to give strategically on this International Women's Day and make targeted contributions to women's events, causes, services, and gender equity advocacy.

When women thrive, again we all rise. I invite each Member of the Legislative Assembly to join me in recognizing International Women's Day 2026. Quyananni, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister responsible for the Status of Women. Ministers' statements. Minister of Infrastructure.

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 200-20(1): ROAD SAFETY AND THE DRIVE SAFE CAMPAIGN

HON. VINCE MCKAY: Mr. Speaker, in the fall of 2024 our government launched the Drive Safe campaign to strengthen road safety awareness across the Northwest Territories.

High-Level Jurisdictional Scan

Jurisdiction	In your jurisdiction, would a bill like Bill 29 be considered a “money bill” (and cannot be brought forward as a Private Member’s Bill)?
House of Commons	Yes
Nunavut	Yes
Yukon	No
British Columbia	Yes
Alberta	No
Saskatchewan	Yes
Manitoba	Yes
Ontario	Yes
Quebec	Yes
New Brunswick	No
Nova Scotia	No
Prince Edward Island	No
Senate of Canada	Yes
United Kingdom House of Commons	Yes



February 2, 2026

HONOURABLE SHANE THOMPSON
SPEAKER
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

Referral of Matter to SCOPP: Private Member's Bills

I am writing to request that you consider referring the topic of Private Member's Bills to the Standing Committee on Procedure and Privileges, to determine whether revision to the Rules of the Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly or any other form of guidance to Members would be appropriate.

Currently, the Rules provide the following parameters of Private Member's Bills in the definition found at Rule 1.2(i):

- (i) "Private Member's Bills" are Bills introduced by a Member who is not a Minister, which do not involve the appropriation of public funds or the imposition of any tax.

No other specific guidance or processes are provided for Private Member's Bills aside from Rule 8.3(3), which clarifies how notice of intent to proceed is to occur for a Private Member's Bill.

In the 20th Legislative Assembly, the contents of some Private Member's Bills have raised questions for the Executive Council about how to interpret "involve the appropriation of public funds" and, if the correct interpretation is that a Private Member's Bill simply cannot include actual amounts to be appropriated, whether that is the most appropriate way to delineate the fiscal limitation for such bills. How does this align with the principle that only the Executive can initiate public spending, and the aims of fiscal planning and budgetary processes for the careful expenditure of public spending?

It would appear timely to consider if the existing Rules reflect the appropriate parameters for Private Member's Bills or if refinement is needed. I draw your attention to the procedural rules of the other territories, both of which use different language to describe those parameters, although more elaboration may still be beneficial; in both Nunavut and the Yukon, Private Member's Bills are not to "involve the expenditure of public funds".¹

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¹ Rule 75 of the Rules of the Legislative Assembly of Nunavut; Subrule 51(3) of the Standing Orders of the Yukon Legislative Assembly.

Should you decide to refer this matter to the Standing Committee, I would be grateful for an invitation from Committee to attend when Committee is briefed by the Office of the Clerk. Thank you for considering this matter and please let me know should you wish to discuss it further.



Jay Macdonald
Government House Leader

- c: 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