

Environment and Public Affairs Committee

Subject: FW: Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs Inquiry
Attachments: Response to WA committee inquiry Nov 2019 V0.1.docx

From: Drake, Anne LEG
Sent: Wednesday, 11 December 2019 4:06 AM
To: Environment and Public Affairs Committee <env@parliament.wa.gov.au>
Subject: Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs Inquiry

Good afternoon,

In response to your letter to Greg Putz dated October 25, 2019, attached is the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan's submission for your inquiry into the functions, processes and procedures of the Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs.

Please let me know if you need additional information.

Sincerely,

Anne Drake
Procedural Clerk
Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan
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306-787-2365

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Submission to Western Australia Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs inquiry

Petitions Process

The Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly allows members to silently submit one or more petitions to the Table at any time that the Assembly is sitting, except for the final day of our parliamentary calendar. A member may also choose to orally present one petition per sitting day to the Assembly in the period designated for presenting petitions during the Assembly's daily routine proceedings.

Prior to 1991, there were no restrictions which prevented members from using the petitions process as an obstructive tactic. Because members repeatedly used this tactic to delay the consideration of a controversial bill in this year, the Speaker was compelled to limit the period set aside for presenting petitions to one hour. This practice endured through subsequent years and was later codified in 2007 along with other restrictions on the presentation of petitions, such as permitting only one petition per member and one petition per subject matter per sitting day.

Petitions are considered to be read and received on the day following their submission or presentation to the Assembly unless the Clerk has determined that a petition contravenes the form and content guidelines prescribed by the *Rules and Procedures of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan* (see rules 16(4) to 16(6)). If a petition is found to be irregular, the Clerk will report this to the Assembly in the period designated for reading and receiving petitions during the Assembly's daily routine proceedings. In practice, however, a Clerk has never reported a petition back to the Assembly, as issues regarding improper petitions have historically been rectified informally between the Clerk and the sponsoring member. Petitions are recorded in the *Votes and Proceedings* on the day that they are considered to be read and received, and they are available for public scrutiny as a sessional paper.

Petitions are not permitted to be submitted or presented on the completion day of our parliamentary calendar because the next sitting is the prorogation of session when petitions normally cannot be read and received.

Our rules provide that the government may, should it wish to do so, provide a formal written response to any petition tabled in the Assembly. These responses will be recorded in the *Votes and Proceedings*. Since this provision was put in place in 2007, the government has not availed itself of this opportunity. Petitions are not referred to committee, and our petitions process concludes at this point.

Committee Function

Our Standing Committee on the Economy is responsible for considering matters related to the environment, as well as economic development, agriculture, natural resources, rural issues, transportation, and infrastructure. Its primary functions are to consider all bills and estimates referred to it by the Assembly. As a policy field committee, the Assembly may also order it to examine and inquire into other matters related to its subject areas or it may, on its own initiative or at the request of a minister, inquire into any matter concerned with the structure, organization, operation, efficiency and service delivery of any sector of public policy within its portfolio. However, unless the Assembly orders otherwise, inquiries are only to be initiated when the session is adjourned or prorogued so that the committee may focus on its primary functions.

It is not our practice in Saskatchewan to routinely hold inquiries into matters of government policy. Committee inquiries occur infrequently, and they are usually at the request of the Assembly. In our history, a committee has never conducted an inquiry on the substance of a petition.

Rules regarding petitions from the *Rules and Procedures of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan*

Petitions

- Filing of petitions **16(1)** A petition to the Assembly may be submitted by a Member at any time during the sitting of the Assembly by filing it at the Table. More than one petition may be filed during a sitting.
- Oral presentation **16(2)** Any Member desiring to present a petition from his or her place in the Assembly may do so during Routine Proceedings at the period designated Presenting Petitions.
- No debate permitted **16(3)** The period for Presenting Petitions is subject to the following conditions:
(a) The period is not to exceed one hour.
(b) No debate on any matter on or in relation to the petitions is permitted.
(c) A Member will be recognized only once to present a petition.
(d) No more than one petition on a subject may be presented during the period.
(e) The Member may read the prayer, provide a general explanation of the subject matter and location of the petitioners.
- Form of petition **16(4)** The form and content of every petition shall:
(a) be addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan, the Government of Saskatchewan, a Minister of the Crown or a Member of the Assembly;
(b) contain a clear, proper and respectful prayer in reference to matters within the legislative competence of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan or the jurisdiction of the Government of Saskatchewan;
(c) be proper for the prayer to call for the expenditure of public funds;
(d) be written, typewritten or printed on paper of usual size;
(e) be free of alterations and interlineations in its text;
(f) have its subject matter and prayer indicated on every sheet if it consists of more than one sheet of signatures and addresses;
(g) contain only original signatures and addresses written directly onto the petition and not pasted thereon or otherwise transferred to it;
(h) contain at least three signatures from persons other than Members of the Legislative Assembly who are residents of the province of Saskatchewan and, where the signatories have a fixed place of residence, their addresses; and
(i) not contain partisan graphics.
- Responsibility for content **16(5)** Members who present or file a petition shall be answerable that they do not contain impertinent or improper matter.
- Endorsement of petitions **16(6)** Every Member presenting a petition shall endorse his or her name thereon.
- Reading and receiving **16(7)** The Clerk shall examine the form and content of all petitions. On the sitting day following the presentation or filing of a petition, the Clerk shall report on the same if it is irregular or contains a matter in breach of the privileges of the Assembly. If no such report be made, the petition shall then be deemed to be permitted to be read and received.
- Recording of petitions **16(8)** Petitions that are read and received shall be recorded in the *Votes and Proceedings* as a sessional paper.

No petitions
on
Completion
Day

16(9) Petitions shall not be presented or filed on Completion Day of the parliamentary calendar.

Government
may respond
to petition

17(1) The government may provide a written response to any petition that has been read and received. A response to a petition may be made on any sitting day during the session that the petition is read and received.

Response to
be tabled and
recorded in
*Votes and
Proceedings*

17(2) Responses to petitions shall be laid on the Table at the designated time after Routine Proceedings. The response shall be recorded as part of the sessional record in the *Votes and Proceedings*.