



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Information Sheet No. 8 Assembly Time Periods

The business of the Legislative Assembly is divided into different time periods. This information sheet explains the difference between a sitting day, a Sitting, a Session and a Legislative Assembly (or Legislature).

Sitting day

Section 13 of the *Yukon Act* says, “The Legislative Assembly shall sit at least once every 12 months.” Each day that Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) gather in the Assembly Chamber to transact business is referred to as a “sitting day.” Standing Order 2(1) stipulates that the Assembly will meet from 1:00 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. every Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday “unless otherwise ordered.” A Member may move a motion to adjourn the Assembly anytime during the sitting day. This often happens just before 5:30 p.m.

Standing Order 2(5) provides for the sitting hours to be extended on any sitting day. A motion to extend sitting hours “must be moved by the Government House Leader or designate at least one-half hour before the normal hour of adjournment. Such motion shall specify the business to be dealt with and may be moved either with the Speaker in the Chair or while the Assembly is in Committee of the Whole.” Motions to extend sitting hours are rare.

The Assembly does not sit on a holiday (as defined in the *Interpretation Act*). Pursuant to Standing Order 75(1), “There shall be a maximum of 60 sitting days per calendar year.”

Sitting

A “Sitting” is a group of consecutive sitting days. The Standing Orders refer to Spring, Fall and Special Sittings. Standing Order 75(10) says, “The Spring Sitting shall commence the first week of March and the Fall Sitting shall commence the first week of October.” The Premier decides the specific day on which the House will convene. Standing Order 75(11) says, “The start date for a Spring or Fall Sitting may be adjusted in any year in which a general election takes place or if the Premier decides extraordinary circumstances require that the established start date for a Sitting be changed.”

Standing Order 73(2) says that once the Premier has decided when the Assembly will begin sitting, he or she “shall advise the Speaker...in sufficient time to allow the Speaker opportunity to give a minimum of two weeks notice [to MLAs] of the date on which the House shall meet.” This rule does not apply to a Sitting that takes place immediately after a general election.

When the Assembly reconvenes for a Spring or Fall Sitting, the government has five sitting days to introduce all the bills it wants the Assembly to deal with during that Sitting. The unanimous consent of the House is required to introduce a government bill after the fifth

sitting day. House Leaders have until the seventh sitting day to negotiate the number of sitting days for that Sitting. Standing Order 75(2) provides for a minimum of 20 sitting days and a maximum of 40 sitting days for any one Sitting. If the House Leaders cannot reach an agreement, Standing Order 75(3) says the Spring and Fall Sittings shall be a maximum of 30 days each. At the end of the final sitting day of a Sitting the House will be adjourned until it reconvenes in the manner described above.

Session

A Session begins with a Speech from the Throne. It ends when the Session is prorogued or the Assembly is dissolved for a general election. Proroguing a Session wipes clean the *Order Paper* (the Assembly's agenda). Any bills or motions still on the *Order Paper* are removed and the agenda commences anew – new Throne Speech, new bills, new motions, etc. There is no rule that determines how long a Session will be. That is up to the Premier. During the 1980s it was common for there to be a new Session each year. Since the 1990s the tendency has been toward fewer Sessions. There were two Sessions during the 30th Legislative Assembly (2000-2002). The 29th, 31st, 32nd and 33rd Legislative Assemblies were each one continuous Session.

Legislative Assembly (Legislature)

A Legislative Assembly (or Legislature) begins on the day of a general election. The current Assembly – Yukon's 34th Legislative Assembly – was elected on November 7, 2016. Yukon Legislative Assemblies are numbered consecutively beginning with the first wholly-elected territorial Council, which was elected on June 28, 1909.

An Assembly ends when the Commissioner grants the Premier's request for dissolution. The Premier seeks dissolution when he or she wants to have a general election. The Premier has the right to ask the Commissioner to dissolve the Assembly at any time during the term of a Legislative Assembly. A Legislative Assembly, therefore, has no fixed time period, though there is - by law - a maximum length of time for it.

Section 11(1) of the *Yukon Act* says an Assembly can last a maximum of five years from the return of the writs (the official confirmation of results) of a general election. The writs for the most recent general election were returned on November 14, 2016. Accordingly, the 34th Legislative Assembly will, by law, dissolve on Sunday, November 14, 2021 unless the Premier seeks a dissolution prior to that date. To avoid a statutory dissolution of the 34th Assembly, writs for the election for the 35th Assembly must be issued on, or before, Friday, November 12, 2021. Since the adoption of party politics in 1978 no Yukon Legislative Assembly has reached this limit so no Assembly has been dissolved by law.

The number of sitting days per Legislative Assembly varies. There were 211 sitting days during the 31st Legislative Assembly (2002-2006), 283 sitting days during the 32nd Legislative Assembly (2006-2011) and 277 sitting days during the 33rd Legislative Assembly (2011-2016).

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