



SENATE AGENDA COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Friday, December 5, 2025 from 12:01-1:33 pm via Zoom

Attendees

Senators

D. Fontana, J. Gilbert, J. Lorien (Chair), N. Pindell

Ex Officio

B. Britton, L. Burr, S. Gopalakrishnan, K. Lo, L. Moss, R. Ng (Registrar), W. Norman

Regrets

J. Fox

Senate Staff

C. Eaton (Clerk to Senate), B. Menard (Cmte Secretary)

Call to Order and Land

Acknowledgement

The meeting of the Senate Agenda Committee (the “Committee”) was called to order at 12:01 pm by B. Menard, Secretary. He also provided an acknowledgement of the land.

Agenda

Motion: *That the Committee adopts the December 5, 2025 agenda.*

Moved: J. Lorien
Seconded: B. Britton
Adopted

Minutes

Motion: *That the Committee approves the November 7, 2025 meeting minutes.*

Moved: L. Burr
Seconded: W. Norman
Approved

Election for Committee Chair

The Secretary confirmed that following a call for nominations for the role of Chair, one nomination was received. He announced that Jasper Lorien was acclaimed as elected as chair and expressed congratulations to them.

Change Start Time of Senate Meetings – Next Steps

The Chair reported that the Committee’s motion returned to Senate and resulted in a tie vote of 27 to 27 which meant the motion failed. They explained that the Chair of Senate recommended that the Committee reconsider the matter. They noted that the Committee could not bring the same motion back without additional information or context.

D. Fontana commented that compromise appeared to be the most viable option. He suggested proposing an amendment to set the start time of Senate meetings to 5 pm.



W. Norman noted that it had been positive to see many students participate because they cared about the matter. She expressed openness to compromise but proposed that the Committee also consider other options. She explained that, from a quantitative research perspective, current Senate participants were present because the meeting time worked for them. She explained that individuals who could attend were overrepresented in the discussion and that the Committee had heard limited perspectives from faculty members who had to attend regardless of the meeting time.

W. Norman proposed gathering data from people who were unable to attend Senate at the current time. She suggested that the prospective Senators might form a larger group than those currently able to attend. She expressed confidence in *External Review of the UBC Vancouver Senate* (the Review), which had identified meeting time as an equity issue, and noted that additional information would help the Committee make a more informed recommendation. She proposed that, once more information was collected, the Committee should meet with the Student Senate Caucus (the Caucus) to review the findings before returning any proposal to Senate. She added that while compromise, such as a 5 pm start time, had merit, it did not fully address equity concerns for those with after-school employment, caregiving responsibilities, or daytime work obligations. She noted that the Committee should determine how to collect further information and establish a process that would eventually lead to renewed discussion with the Caucus and a more thoroughly considered recommendation.

The Chair responded that they had consulted colleagues in the Caucus and noted that there would likely be no significant opposition to a 5 pm start time. They supported the view that additional engagement with the student Senators would be beneficial. They added that not all Senators had engaged with the Review, including newly elected student Senators, Senators elected through by-elections, and others. They noted that broader engagement, both on this issue and in general, would be useful.

B. Britton expressed concern that a compromise on the meeting start time would not satisfy participants and would fail to address the existing problem. He noted that the issue had been discussed at the previous Agenda Committee meeting. He added that he and others had engaged colleagues who were prospective members of the Senate. He related conversations at the Faculty Association's annual gathering, where colleagues reacted to the 6 pm start time and identified challenges in finding suitable individuals to join the Senate.

He then expressed concerns about equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility and the relevance of the BC Human Rights Code. He explained that family status was a protected ground and cited an example from the Code that mirrored the situation under discussion. He noted that this example had been referenced



previously by a Senator at the November meeting of Senate, and suggested that the University faced risk under the BC Human Rights Code.

B. Britton continued by discussing additional rights concerns related to fatigue. He observed that collective decision making deteriorated when participants were tired. He then shared a personal experience of relevance to the discussion.

The Chair responded that a broader consultation process could include engagement with the Human Rights Office.

K. Lo asked whether the Caucus continued to meet regularly before Senate.

The Chair replied that the Caucus met about twice per month, including once during the week preceding a Senate meeting.

K. Lo asked whether student Senators expressed concern about attending caucus meetings.

The Chair replied that the caucus typically met at 5 pm, often immediately before Senate. They explained that meetings usually occurred on Mondays or Wednesdays, with schedules adjusted each term based on student availability.

S. Gopalakrishnan suggested that the Committee consider how the Senate meeting agenda was constructed and whether, following recommendations from the Review, a different decision-making model at Senate, including items for approval by consent, could allow for shorter meetings. He questioned whether Senate meetings could be planned to last one hour, and proposed that not every speaker needed a long time to present. He suggested ways to improve efficiency, such as restricting speaking time.

The Clerk responded that it was difficult to predict what matters would generate debate at Senate meetings. He noted that under current rules Senators could speak for up to ten minutes per motion, twice on each motion, which created uncertainty regarding the duration of discussions. He expressed concern that reducing Senate meetings to one hour would be challenging and shared that Senators often wished for more debate and discussion, rather than less. He noted that limiting meetings to one hour could compromise both responsibilities and the perceived value of discussions.

W. Norman explained it would be difficult to have meaningful discussions if too many items were approved via consent. She mentioned the upcoming *2023-2026 Triennial Review* and observed that findings from it may overlap with the Committee's current considerations from the Review. She indicated that one suggestion was to limit Senate meetings to no longer than 90 minutes, which she considered more feasible than a one-hour meeting. She explained that items



could be placed in a consent agenda, allowing Senators the option to request discussion if needed. She cautioned that reducing meetings to less than 90 minutes would be difficult. She noted the importance of showing that Senate was proactive and responsive in advancing the University's goals.

S. Gopalakrishnan responded that he agreed on the need for more robust, proactive discussions in Senate. He observed that the Committee currently spent a significant amount of time on regular business.

L. Burr commented that some Senators often spoke at length and suggested limiting each speaker to three minutes. He also noted that many Senators repeated points made by previous speakers, and he recommended that they could simply indicate agreement without restating the discussion.

The Clerk acknowledged that *Rules and Procedures of the Vancouver Senate* (the Rules) could be changed to limit debate further. He added that, despite repeated requests over many years, Senators continued to restate points of agreement, which created challenges in managing time.

D. Fontana asked about the timeline for collecting data on the start time of Senate meetings and whether it would allow for a motion to take effect for the next triennium. He suggested a possible compromise, such as a 5 pm start while data were collected, and he inquired about who would be responsible for gathering the information.

J. Gilbert suggested working with the Senate Office to conduct a new survey addressing current issues. He observed that the debate had shifted from start times to the broader question of how Senate meetings should be conducted.

The Chair indicated that agenda-setting and the structure of Senate meetings would be discussed later in the meeting.

The Clerk confirmed that past surveys of the academic community and Senators provided some, though dated, data on meeting time preferences. He noted that past recommendations to streamline time at Senate meetings had not always been followed. He explained that presenters often added context, especially for non-unanimous committee decisions, which lengthened discussions.

B. Britton requested clarification on the formal timeline if any scheduling changes were made. He noted the possible options as maintaining the current start time, adopting a compromise start time of 5 pm, revisiting the compromise, or sending the decision back to Senate.

The Clerk responded that any new data collection would likely extend to the end of February due to December being a slow period for such



activities. He outlined the options available. He advised that the Committee consider whether the change would be temporary or longer term, noting that meeting time challenges would affect individuals differently.

W. Norman suggested a temporary compromise as a reasonable approach while gathering additional information. She expressed a desire to share information with the Caucus regarding liability under the BC Human Rights Code. She requested a survey breakdown showing preferences for earlier or later meeting times to inform discussions with the Caucus regarding a potential change to 4 pm. She proposed meeting with students before the January Senate meeting to bring a recommendation forward.

C. Eaton responded that he would attempt to retrieve relevant survey data, noting that historical records likely covered the last five years and that he would verify what could be extracted.

W. Norman recommended meeting with the students before the January meeting and gathering all available evidence to support the Review's recommendation to move the meeting time to 4 pm.

The Chair expressed agreement.

Action:

The Clerk to compile the relevant data to present at a meeting with the Caucus.

The Clerk recommended the Chair and Vice-Chair meet with the Caucus' Co-Chairs.

Action:

The Chair to work with the Clerk on scheduling a meeting between the Agenda Committee Chair and Vice-Chair, the Caucus' Co-Chairs and the Clerk in January.

**In Camera –
Agenda of the
December 17, 2025
Vancouver Senate**

N/A

**External Review
Recommendations
(Continued)**

The Chair proposed prioritizing agenda setting as the topic for the discussion. They suggested that the Committee might benefit from another engagement on the Review with the full Senate, potentially during the January meeting, to facilitate further conversation.

B. Britton noted that the Nominating Committee handled matters related to the Review. He supported further discussion but highlighted scheduling challenges



and said he would draft a report over the break summarizing discussions and joint governance considerations for the Committee.

Action:

B. Britton to draft a report during the December break that summarizes discussions and joint governance considerations for the Committee.

The Chair noted proposals for a consent agenda and confirmed that any recommendations would need to follow the Rules.

W. Norman acknowledged the progress made. She noted the importance of the Senate taking a more proactive role in achieving the University's strategic priorities and suggested that structuring meetings with consent agendas and time management would support this goal.

D. Fontana expressed agreement, noting that committees performed significant work. He suggested providing direction to the Chair of Senate to enforce time allocations and recommended delegating work to allow for more strategic discussions, explaining that the Senate should be comfortable doing less routine work to focus on higher-level matters.

The Chair reflected on their experience on the Board of Governors, noting two practices they considered effective. First, they described the comprehensive work planning undertaken for both committees and the Board, including clearly established calendars that outlined committee items, ongoing issues, and topics of broad academic interest scheduled annually. They suggested that such planning could address issues that were sometimes overlooked in meetings with multiple presentations.

The Chair also observed that the Board delegated authority to committees, which allowed them to complete approval work independently. They indicated that delegating authority and implementing stronger, clearly communicated work planning could improve efficiency.

The Clerk responded that annual planning tools were already in use by the majority of committees. He noted that many committees were dependent on the timing of Faculty submissions, citing curriculum proposals as an example, where submissions had nearly doubled compared to the previous year, which disrupted planning.

The Clerk further commented on delegation of authority to committees, noting that students on Senate often opposed greater delegation because they believed their input was more effectively represented in the full Senate rather than in committee. He added that previous suggestions to delegate authority had been met with poor reactions from past student Senator.



The Chair noted that certain matters could still be delegated to committees, allowing the Senate to focus on more substantive issues.

The Committee Secretary noted that several committees already work under delegation of authority frameworks, for example admissions, awards and curriculum.

B. Britton observed that some Senators lacked awareness of workloads across committees, including the variability and volume of tasks. He suggested that better evidence of committee activity could support targeted delegation to improve efficiency. He also noted that, while committees were reactive to proposals, there was a need for proactive planning.

B. Britton recommended incorporating larger strategic items into planning. He proposed that committees could align their work to anticipated discussions scheduled throughout the triennium, allowing consistent attention to strategic priorities.

D. Fontana proposed that committees could submit items for approval by consent, allowing members who wished to discuss a particular item to request it be moved to the full Senate agenda. He suggested that this approach could balance efficiency with the interests of members who preferred more direct discussion.

The Clerk responded that a consent mechanism had been previously considered, which involved providing a notice period for members to indicate if items should appear on the full Senate agenda. He explained that the approach faced challenges due to tight timelines, noting that adding a notice period could delay approvals rather than expedite them. He highlighted that the frequency of Senate meetings, held monthly, contributed to these constraints, contrasting with the Board of Governors' schedule of every two to four months.

The Clerk added that an alternative considered was delegating additional authority to committees while requiring them to report their decisions at the next Senate meeting, rather than annually. He described that this approach, which would include documentation of Category 2 approvals alongside Category 1 items, was not widely supported but was intended to ensure accountability.

The Chair noted that the Caucus presented a triennial proposal of priorities and suggested that the Agenda Committee could similarly develop a triennial plan for strategic topics to be considered by the Senate.

B. Britton responded with support for this approach, noting that the Agenda Committee could proactively guide planning. He observed that



UBC had advanced in responsible governance and that strategic planning could integrate with other review processes.

D. Fontana remarked that current discussions often involved posing questions without clear proposals or operational follow-through. He suggested a shift toward proposing actions, supported by data and operational norms, to improve decision-making and planning.

B. Britton added that the Senate Office played a central role in operationalizing governance decisions. He proposed that additional staff resources were necessary to support committees and Senate functions, citing the preparation of curriculum proposals, awards, and appeal responses as examples of extensive work managed by the Senate Office.

W. Norman explained that the Review provided a clear work plan to better prepare individuals for their roles. She described assigning roles and responsibilities and working more closely with committee chairs to improve their ability to chair.

W. Norman suggested that it would be reasonable to request additional resources from the President to support the Senate Office. She also expressed support for setting annual and triennial goals. She proposed improving agenda planning within the Committee. She acknowledged that additional resources would be necessary, noting that the Senate Office was already operating at full capacity.

The Chair responded with support for additional resources and noted that current resourcing was insufficient even for existing work. The Chair noted that they planned to create a list of items requiring decisions or recommendations and present them in upcoming meetings.

Action:

The Chair to work with the Senate Office on creating a list of recommendations and actions from the Review and the previous 2020-2023 Triennial Review that fall under the Committee's purview.

The Registrar expressed appreciation for the support and advocacy regarding additional resources but explained that the President had indicated no new resources were available for the Senate. She clarified that the Senate Office operated within the overall Enrolment Services budget, and any additional resources would require reallocating existing operational funds. She noted that she had already avoided cutting resources from the Senate Office and explained that the entire Enrolment Services team was operating at full capacity to meet enrolment targets.

The Chair expressed appreciation for the clarification.



J. Gilbert noted that in recent triennia, the Senate had communicated the issue of additional resources with the President and consistently received the response that no further money was available. He suggested that the discussion should shift toward accomplishing the Committee's work more efficiently with existing resources. He suggested reframing the agenda from a focus on approval to one of action, aligning with recommendations from the Review. He noted that this approach increased the responsibility of chairs, to ensure that the agenda was actionable rather than merely approved.

The Clerk responded that past Presidents had participated in more Senate discussions and understood the increasing workload of the Senates. He explained that as the University became more complex, the President was less directly involved in matters of the Senate.

D. Fontana proposed that the Senate should be more assertive in requesting the necessary resources, noting that the current level of support prevented effective academic governance.

K. Lo noted that the Review had recommended that the Senate Office should not be positioned within Enrolment Services. He questioned what process would be required to move it out, noting that Enrolment Services would no longer need to manage this budget and would be relieved from trading off responsibilities within other parts of Enrolment Services.

The Chair responded that the reporting structure of the Board Secretariat has the Board Secretary report directly to the President.

The Clerk described that when he began his role, the Senate Office had always reported to the Registrar, although the budget had remained separate. He explained that when the budget was moved under Enrolment Services, it became subject to various financial pressures, including large cuts under former presidents and during Enrolment Services restructuring. He clarified that the budget for governance had previously been distinct because the responsibilities of recruitment, records, and admissions differed from the governance responsibilities of the Senate Office. He added that the University later chose to streamline budget lines, resulting in the current situation.

B. Britton commented that the placement of the Senate Office could introduce a conflict of interest. He explained that the Senate aimed to increase efficiency and responsiveness but was currently constrained. He asked how the structural challenge could be resolved and noted that some suggestions had already been made, though a clear decision remained pending.

In response, the Chair confirmed that the reporting structure of the Senate Office was added to their notes.



They expressed appreciation for the conversation, noting that it had been productive.

Other Business

The Chair noted that it was under the purview of the Committee to bring forward topics of broad academic interest for discussion. They requested that the Committee empower them to work with the Senate Office to determine the best method for bringing forward requests on these topics.

W. Norman requested clarification regarding the request. She asked whether the Chair was seeking permission to work with the Senate Office to define a process, and whether the resulting process would then be enacted by the Committee, so that any items brought forward would come to the Committee for discussion before appearing on the agenda.

In response, the Chair clarified that the request related to the method of collecting topics and determining how the Committee would receive them.

W. Norman asked whether this approach would also address the recommendations of the Review and whether it would align with the University's strategic plan, or whether topics would be considered independently of strategic priorities.

The Chair responded that the intention was not to infringe on strategic priorities. They confirmed that they would work with the Senate Office to prepare a proposal for the process and present it to the Committee in January.

Next Meeting Friday, January 9, 2026 from 12-1 pm

Adjournment The meeting adjourned at 1:33 pm.