Legislative Assembly of Alberta
The 30th Legislature
First Session

Standing Committee on Legislative Offices
Ellis, Mike, Calgary-West (UCP), Chair
Schow, Joseph R., Cardston-Siksika (UCP), Deputy Chair
Goodridge, Laila, Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche (UCP)
Gray, Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP)
Lovely, Jacqueline, Camrose (UCP)
Nixon, Jeremy P., Calgary-Klein (UCP)
Rutherford, Brad, Leduc-Beaumont (UCP)
Schmidt, Marlin, Edmonton-Gold Bar (NDP)
Shepherd, David, Edmonton-City Centre (NDP)
Sigurdson, R.J., Highwood (UCP)
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP)

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6:15 p.m. Wednesday, December 4, 2019

[Mr. Ellis in the chair]

The Chair: All right. Ladies and gentlemen, good evening. Call to order. I’d like to welcome members, staff, and guests to the meeting of the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices. My name is Mike Ellis, MLA for Calgary-West and chair of the committee. I’d ask that members and those joining the committee at the table introduce themselves for the record. We’ll start to my right, please.

Mr. Schow: Joseph Schow, Cardston-Siksika.

Ms Goodridge: Laila Goodridge, Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche.

Mr. Rutherford: Brad Rutherford, Leduc-Beaumont.

Ms Sigurdson: R.J. Sigurdson, Highwood.

Ms Lovely: Jackie Lovely, constituency of Camrose.

Ms Gray: Christina Gray, MLA for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Mr. Schmidt: Martin Schmidt, Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Ms Sweet: Heather Sweet, Edmonton-Manning.

Mr. Shepherd: David Shepherd, Edmonton-City Centre.

Ms Robert: Good evening. Nancy Robert, research officer.

Dr. Rempel: Good evening. Philip Rempel, clerk of committees and research services.

Ms Rempel: Good evening. Jody Rempel, committee clerk.

The Chair: I’m sorry. We have one more.

Mr. Jeremy Nixon: Jeremy Nixon, Calgary-Klein.

The Chair: Wonderful. Thank you so much. Nobody teleconferencing in. There don’t appear to be any substitutions. Before we turn to the business at hand, a few operational items. Please note that the microphones are operated by Hansard. Committee proceedings are being live streamed on the Internet and broadcast on Alberta Assembly TV. Please set your cellphones and other devices to silent for the duration of the meeting.

We’ll next move to the agenda. A draft agenda has been made available to the committee members. Would anyone like to propose any amendments? Seeing none, would a member like to move the motion to approve today’s agenda as circulated? Okay. I see Ms Goodridge. Ms Goodridge would move that the December 4th, 2019, meeting agenda of the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices be approved as circulated. All in favour? Any opposed? Hearing none, that is unanimous and the motion is carried.

We’ll next move to number 3. That’s the approval of the minutes. Minutes from our last meeting were also distributed for consideration. Are there any errors or omissions to note? If not, would a member like to move that motion?

Mr. Schow: So moved, Chair.

The Chair: Okay. Mr. Schow would move that the minutes of the November 29th, 2019, meeting of the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices be approved as distributed. All in favour? Any opposed? Hearing none, that motion is carried and unanimous.

All right. Next we’ll move to item number 4. That’s the review of the 2018-19 OCYA annual report. Mandate: Government Motion 40. So I’ll read this out for everybody. As we begin our review, I remind everyone that a revised version of the 2018-19 office of the Child and Youth Advocate annual report was tabled in the Assembly this afternoon. For the convenience of committee members this report is posted on the main page of the internal committee website. As we go through the review process, please ensure that you are referring to the current version of the report, which includes today’s date and two appendices. To clarify our mandate regarding the review of this report, I would like to read Government Motion 40, which was agreed to on November 27, 2019, into the record for the benefit of all committee members.

Be it resolved that:
1. The 2018-2019 annual report of the office of the Child and Youth Advocate be referred to the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices for review;
2. The committee may, without leave of the Assembly, sit during a period when the Assembly is adjourned or prorogued;
3. In accordance with section 21(4) of the Child and Youth Advocate Act the committee shall report back to the Assembly within 90 days of the report being referred to it if the Assembly is then sitting or, if it is not then sitting, within 15 days after the commencement of the next sitting.

This is the first time that a report of this office has been specifically referred to the Assembly, to this committee for consideration.

At this point I’ll turn the floor over to Dr. Massolin for further comment. Go ahead, sir.

Dr. Massolin: Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. My comments will be brief, to the relief of everybody around the table, I’m sure.

Just to underline what you’ve said, Mr. Chair, this committee is reviewing this annual report, the 2018-19 annual report of the office of the Child and Youth Advocate, for the very first time. What is its mandate? Well, it’s basically to review that report from page 1 right to the second appendix. I think on that note, I would add, too, that it’s up to the committee to determine a scope for its review because there are a lot of things in this report that it could look at and perhaps would like to scope out. Because the time is limited for this review, as in number 3 of the motion you read out, Mr. Chair, the committee shall report back to the Assembly within 90 days or 15 days.

So what does that mean? That means from 90 days of the referral, which is on November 27. Chances are we won’t get there, right? But it will likely be the second part of that, 15 days after the commencement of the next sitting in the winter/spring. It’s hard to estimate exactly when that would be and how long before the review, but I think it would be in the order of three or four months, the point being that there’s not a ton of time to do this.

I’ll leave it there. If there are any questions...

6:20

The Chair: Okay. Are there any questions for the doctor at this time? Seeing none, I will move on to invitations for technical briefings. Considering the responsibility that we have been given and based on experience with other reviews from other committees, I think that one of the first steps this committee may wish to consider would be to invite briefings on the report from both the officer and perhaps also the Ministry of Children’s Services. Does anybody have any thoughts on that? Comments, concerns?

Okay. Seeing none, we do have a possible motion in regard to this. Is there somebody that would like to – we’ll get it up there. Mr. Shepherd. I’ll read it. I know that the clerk is going to get it up on the screen there. It would be something along the lines of: Mr.
Mrs. Massolin: Yes. However, without some discussion on the membership, like just as far as the numbers, maybe not specific individuals.

Mr. Shepherd: Pardon me, Mr. Chair. I am certainly agreeable to that; I think that two members from each side is reasonable. I just wanted to clarify before we’re putting names forward and making commitments: do we have a sense of how things would work with that committee? Would we be allowing substitutions? Are we allowing teleconferencing? Perhaps the clerk could clarify for us if those are options that the committee needs to clarify now or whether it would simply operate on the same rules as the standard committee.

The Chair: Those are excellent points, sir. Would you like to clarify?

Ms. Rempel: Sure, Mr. Chair. I mean, certainly, you know, a lot of that is at the committee’s discretion and then perhaps also at the subcommittee’s discretion. It is quite common to have subcommittees use teleconferencing. For a draft motion that I pulled, which is just based on what’s been approved recently with Public Accounts and the three LPCs, the committee has included in the motion that substitutions from the membership of the committee are permitted on the subcommittee. If that’s kind of in line with what everyone is thinking, I would put up a draft motion in that regard.

The Chair: Sure.