


Legislative Assembly of Alberta

The 31st Legislature
Second Session

# Select Special
# Citizen Initiative Proposal
# Review Committee

Monday, May 11, 2026
8:30 a.m.

Transcript No. 31-2-2

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta**
**The 31st Legislature**
**Second Session**

## Select Special Citizen Initiative Proposal Review Committee

Lunty, Brandon G., Leduc-Beaumont (UC), Chair
Sawhney, Rajan, Calgary-North West (UC), Deputy Chair

Ellingson, Court, Calgary-Foothills (NDP)
Nixon, Jason, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre (UC)
Pancholi, Rakhi, Edmonton-Whitemud (NDP)
Sawyer, Tara, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UC)

### Also in Attendance

Gray, Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP)

### Office of the Chief Electoral Officer Participants

| | |
|---|---|
| Gordon McClure | Chief Electoral Officer |
| Dallas Stoesz | Deputy Chief Electoral Officer |
| Jennifer Maskoske | Director of Operations |

### Support Staff

| | |
|---|---|
| Shannon Dean, KC | Clerk |
| Trafton Koenig | Law Clerk |
| Vani Govindarajan | Parliamentary Counsel |
| Adam Quirk | Legal Counsel |
| Philip Massolin | Clerk Assistant and Executive Director of Parliamentary Services |
| Nancy Robert | Clerk of *Journals* and Committees |
| Abdul Bhurgri | Research Officer |
| Rachel McGraw | Research Officer |
| Warren Huffman | Committee Clerk |
| Jody Rempel | Committee Clerk |
| Aaron Roth | Committee Clerk |
| Rhonda Sorensen | Manager of Corporate Communications |
| Christina Steenbergen | Supervisor of Communications Services |
| Amanda LeBlanc | Managing Editor of *Alberta Hansard* |

Transcript produced by *Alberta Hansard*

## Standing Committee on Citizen Initiative Proposal Review

### Participant

**Ministry of Justice**
Russell Brown, Senior Counsel, Hunter Litigation Chambers

**8:30 a.m. Monday, May 11, 2026**

[Mr. Lunty in the chair]

**The Chair:** All right. Good morning, everyone. I'd like to call this meeting to order. This is a meeting of the Select Special Citizen Initiative Proposal Review Committee, and I'd like to welcome everyone in attendance.

My name is Brandon Lunty, MLA for Leduc-Beaumont and chair of the committee. I'd ask that members and those joining us at the table introduce themselves for the record. We'll begin to my right.

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Thank you. I'm Rajan Sawhney, MLA for Calgary-North West and Minister of Indigenous Relations.

**Mrs. Sawyer:** Good morning. Tara Sawyer, MLA for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Nixon:** Good morning. I'm Jason Nixon, MLA for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre and the Minister of Assisted Living and Social Services.

**Member Ellingson:** Morning. Court Ellingson, MLA, Calgary-Foothills.

**Ms Pancholi:** Good morning. Rakhi Pancholi, MLA for Edmonton-Whitemud.

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

**Mr. Quirk:** Good morning. Adam Quirk, legal counsel.

**Ms Robert:** Good morning. Nancy Robert, clerk of *Journals* and committees.

**Mr. Huffman:** Warren Huffman, committee clerk.

**The Chair:** All right. Thank you, everyone.

For the record I will note that there are no substitutions today.

I do have a few housekeeping items before we turn to the business at hand. Please note that the microphones are operated by *Hansard*. Committee proceedings are being live streamed on the Internet and broadcast on Alberta Assembly TV. As always, please set your cellphones and other devices to silent for the duration of the meeting.

All right. With those housekeeping items out of the way, we will move to approval of our agenda. Are there any changes or additions to the draft agenda? Seeing MLA Pancholi. Please go ahead.

**Ms Pancholi:** Sorry, Mr. Chair. No amendments to the draft agenda. I just wanted to note for the purposes of today's meeting that the Official Opposition will be introducing a number of motions at the other business portion of the agenda. For time allocation I just wanted to raise that.

**The Chair:** All right. Thank you, MLA Pancholi.

With that, would someone like to make a motion to approve the agenda? MLA Nixon, please go ahead.

**Mr. Nixon:** I move that we approve the agenda.

**The Chair:** All right. Thank you.

I'll maybe read it out. Moved by MLA Nixon that the Select Special Citizen Initiative Proposal Review Committee approve the proposed agenda as distributed for its May 11, 2026, meeting. All those in favour? Any opposed? That motion is carried.

Carrying on to approval of minutes. Are there any errors or omissions to the draft minutes from our April 21 meeting? Seeing none, would someone like to make a motion to approve the minutes? MLA Sawyer. All right. I'll read that motion out. Moved by MLA Sawyer that the Select Special Citizen Initiative Proposal Review Committee approve the minutes as distributed for its April 21, 2026, meeting. All those in favour? Any opposed? All right. That motion is carried.

We'll continue on to our agenda item 4, citizen initiative proposal review, section (a), technical briefings. At our last meeting the committee agreed to invite officials from the Ministry of Justice and office of the Chief Electoral Officer to provide the committee with technical briefings on the Citizen Initiative Act. They will each have up to 20 minutes for their presentation. After both presentations are complete, I will open the floor to questions from committee members.

With that, I would like to welcome the hon. Dr. Russell Brown, the representative chosen by the Ministry of Justice to deliver the technical briefing this morning. Dr. Brown is a former Supreme Court justice and currently serves as associate counsel with Hunter Litigation Chambers. He is joining us on videoconference, and I would ask that he now please turn his camera on and unmute his microphone. Dr. Brown, you will have up to 20 minutes for your presentation, and you will be able to see the timer on your screen. I would kindly ask that you please begin when you are ready.

**Dr. Brown:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I should say that – oh, there's the timer. Okay.

Good morning, Chair and members of the committee. I'll apologize now for my voice. I've been under the weather for a little while and may need to stop for a slurp of tea every now and then.

As you indicated, Mr. Chairman, I'm appearing on behalf of Alberta Justice in response to the committee's request for a technical briefing. I appreciate that the committee's mandate is to review the Alberta forever citizen initiative proposal, not to review the Citizen Initiative Act itself or the application or administration of the act in relation to this proposal. That said, I will begin my technical briefing with an overview of the act in the hope that it will provide helpful context for the committee.

The act was enacted in 2021. It is administered by the Chief Electoral Officer, who is an independent officer of the Legislature and the head of Elections Alberta. What it does is allow an elector to apply to the Chief Electoral Officer for the issuance of an initiative petition. The Alberta forever Canada initiative petition is the first such initiative petition brought under the act. The elector who applies for an initiative petition is known under the act as a proponent, and the proponent of the Alberta forever Canada initiative petition is Thomas Lukaszuk. The subject matter of the initiative petition is known as a proposal. There are three kinds of proposals to which an initiative petition can relate: legislative proposals, policy proposals, and constitutional referendum proposals. The Alberta forever Canada initiative petition intends to advance a policy proposal.

Now, the act has been subject to various amendments since its coming into force, and this is significant because section 71.1(4) of the act states that the "Act as it read when an application for the issuance of an initiative petition was submitted" – that is, the version of the act that applied at that time – "[will also] apply in respect of that application and any resulting initiative." The application for the Alberta forever Canada initiative petition was submitted on June 5, 2025, so the initiative petition is governed by the act as it read on that date.

An initiative petition is successful if the proponent gathers a minimum number of valid signatures from Alberta electors within

a specified period of time. The Chief Electoral Officer is responsible for determining whether an initiative petition has met these requirements, so this, as you know, falls outside the scope of this committee's review. The act also requires the Chief Electoral Officer to verify signatures by applying a random statistical sampling method with a 95 per cent confidence level. To be successful, the Alberta forever Canada initiative petition had to gather signatures from at least 10 per cent of all Alberta electors within 90 days. This meant that at least 293,976 signatures were required for the petition to be successful. On December 1, 2025, the Chief Electoral Officer determined that the Alberta forever Canada initiative petition had met the act's requirements.

The next steps for a successful initiative petition depend on the type of proposal to which it relates. The initiative petition here is, as I've already stated, in respect of a policy proposal. Under the act successful policy proposals are tabled in the Legislative Assembly and then referred to a committee of the Legislative Assembly, to you. The act provides that the committee, within 90 days of the proposal being referred to it or, if the Legislative Assembly is not sitting, within 15 days of the commencement of the next sitting, must either table with the Legislative Assembly a report with respect to the policy proposal or table a report recommending that the policy proposal and the report be referred to the Lieutenant Governor in Council for the purpose of a referendum in accordance with the Referendum Act.

So that's where we're at now. In accordance with the act the Alberta forever Canada policy proposal has been referred to this committee for consideration, and the act requires this committee, within that 90-day or 15-day deadline, to either table a report with respect to the policy proposal or table a report recommending that the policy proposal and report be referred to the Lieutenant Governor in Council for the purpose of a referendum in accordance with the Referendum Act. This committee's consideration of the Alberta forever Canada policy proposal is the final legislated step of the citizen initiative process under the act. In other words, once the committee has considered the proposal and tabled its report, the committee has met the requirements in the act and fulfilled its mandate.

***8:40***

What happens after that is discretionary. Specifically, the act as it read on June 5, 2025, when the application was submitted, does not specify what must happen after the committee tables its report. The Legislative Assembly, upon receiving a report from the committee, irrespective of whether the report is accompanied by a recommendation that the policy proposal be referred to the Lieutenant Governor in Council for the purpose of a referendum, retains discretion over what to do with the report, including whether to adopt the committee's recommendation to refer the matter to a referendum.

As I say, at this point in the process the committee will have exhausted its mandate, but just so you're aware of the larger process of which you are an essential part, I'll canvass briefly what happens if the option chosen is a referendum. Referendums in Alberta are governed by the Referendum Act. It is the successor to the Constitutional Referendum Act, which in 2020 was amended to include nonconstitutional referendum questions and renamed the Referendum Act. Under this act the Lieutenant Governor in Council may order that a referendum be held on any question relating to the Constitution of Canada or relating to or arising out of a possible change to the Constitution of Canada, and this is a constitutional referendum. If the Lieutenant Governor in Council considers that an expression of public opinion is desirable on any matter of public interest or concern, this is a nonconstitutional referendum. Referendums may be held in conjunction with a provincial general election or as a stand-alone referendum under the Election Act or in conjunction with a municipal election under the Local Authorities Election Act.

For a constitutional referendum if a majority of the ballots vote the same way on a question, the result is binding. The government that initiated the referendum must, as soon as practical, take any steps within its competence that it considers necessary or advisable to implement the results of the referendum. Despite this, the government that initiated the referendum is not required to implement the results of the referendum if doing so would contravene section 1 to section 35.1 of the Constitution Act, 1982, which includes the Charter of Rights, treaty and Aboriginal rights, and the commitment of the federal government and provincial governments to the principle that certain constitutional provisions relating to Aboriginal peoples cannot be amended without holding a constitutional conference. That's for a constitutional referendum.

For a nonconstitutional referendum if the Lieutenant Governor in Council specifies that the results of the referendum are to be binding and the majority of the ballots vote the same way on a question, the result is binding. As with a constitutional referendum, the government that initiated that referendum must, as soon as practicable, take any steps within its competence that it considers necessary or advisable to implement the results of the referendum. Again, despite this, the government that initiated the referendum is not required to implement the results of the referendum if doing so would contravene sections 1 to 35.1 of the Constitution Act, 1982.

Having set all that out for you, let me return to the Alberta forever Canada initiative petition. Again, it proposes a policy initiative. It asks: do you agree that Alberta should remain in Canada? Although the question asked by the Alberta forever Canada initiative petition is about remaining in Canada, if I may, I would provide the committee with, again, a brief overview of the constitutional framework as it relates to the separation of a province from Canada.

Just as there have been two provincial referendums about joining Canada, both in Newfoundland, there have been two provincial referendums regarding separation, both in Quebec. The first Quebec referendum took place in 1980. For that referendum the government of Quebec asked for a mandate to, and I'm quoting, negotiate a new agreement with the rest of Canada based on a proposal for sovereignty association that had been advanced by the Parti Québécois. The no option obtained a majority of 59.56 per cent of the vote, so just short of 60 per cent.

The second referendum took place on October 30, 1995, and it asked, "Do you agree that Quebec should become sovereign, after having formally offered Canada a new economic and political partnership under the bill respecting the future of Quebec and the agreement signed on June 12, 1995?" I shall return to the decidedly opaque quality of this question shortly. The no option obtained a slim majority of 50.58 per cent.

As both of these referendums resulted in majority votes in favour of Quebec remaining in Canada, there is no precedent as to what would happen in the event of a vote in favour of a province leaving Canada. However, after the 1995 Quebec referendum the Governor in Council brought a reference case to the Supreme Court of Canada asking, among other things, the following question. "Under the Constitution of Canada, can the National Assembly, Legislature, or government of Quebec effect the secession of Quebec from Canada unilaterally?" The court answered this question as follows.

> Quebec could not, despite a clear referendum result, purport to invoke a right of self-determination to dictate the terms of a proposed secession to the other parties to the federation. The democratic vote, by however strong a majority, would have no legal effect on its own and could not push aside the principles of

> federalism and the rule of law, the rights of individuals and minorities, or the operation of democracy in the other provinces or in Canada as a whole. Democratic rights under the Constitution cannot be divorced from constitutional obligations. Nor, however, can the reverse proposition be accepted: the continued existence and operation of the Canadian constitutional order could not be indifferent to a clear expression of a clear majority of Quebecers that they no longer wish to remain in Canada. The other provinces and the federal government would have no basis to deny the right of the government of Quebec to pursue secession should a clear majority of the people of Quebec choose that goal, so long as in doing so, Quebec respects the rights of others. The negotiations that followed such a vote would address the potential act of secession as well as its possible terms should in fact secession proceed. There would be no conclusions predetermined by law on any issue. Negotiations would need to address the interests of the other provinces, the federal government and Quebec and indeed the rights of all Canadians both within and outside Quebec, and specifically the rights of minorities.

No one suggests that it would be any easy set of negotiations.

Now, in 2000 Parliament, motivated at least in part by the unclear quality of that 1995 Quebec referendum question, to which I've already referred, passed An Act to Give Effect to the Requirement for Clarity as Set Out in the Opinion of the Supreme Court of Canada in the Quebec Secession Reference, and the statute is also known as the Clarity Act. The Clarity Act sets out the steps to be taken by the House of Commons and by the government of Canada when a province intends to submit to its voters a referendum question relating to the proposed secession of a province from Canada. These steps are directed towards determining whether voters in the referendum were presented with a clear question; that is, whether it was made clear to them that they were voting on whether the province should separate from Canada.

Section 1 of the Clarity Act focuses on the clarity of the referendum question itself. Section 1(3) requires the House of Commons to consider whether the question would result in a clear expression of the will of the population of a province on whether the province should cease to be part of Canada and become an independent state.

Section 1(5) requires the House of Commons, in considering the clarity of a referendum question, to take into account the view of all political parties represented in the Legislative Assembly of a province whose government is proposing referendum on secession, to take into account any formal statements or resolutions by the government or Legislative Assembly of any province or territory of Canada, any formal statements or resolutions by the Senate, any formal statements or resolutions by representatives of the Aboriginal peoples of Canada, especially those in the province whose government is proposing the referendum on secession, and any other views it considers to be relevant. Section 1(6) prohibits the government of Canada from entering into negotiations on the terms in which a province might cease to be a part of Canada if the House of Commons determines that the referendum question is not clear.

***8:50***

Section 2 of the Clarity Act focuses on whether the outcome reveals the clear expression of the will of a clear majority of the population of that province that the province should cease to be a part of Canada, and section 2(4) specifically prohibits the government of Canada from entering into negotiations unless the House of Commons determines that there has been in that vote a clear expression of a will by a clear majority of the population of that province to secede.

Section 3 of the Clarity Act confirms that a holding by the Supreme Court in the secession reference that the lawful secession of a province would require an amendment to the Constitution of Canada, and as a further limitation section 3(2) prohibits any minister of the Crown from proposing a constitutional amendment unless the government has addressed in its negotiations the terms of secession that are relevant in the circumstances, including the division of assets and liabilities; any changes to the borders of the province; the rights, interests, and territorial claims of the Aboriginal peoples of Canada; and the protection of minority rights.

Finally, part V of the Constitution Act, 1982, sets out the procedure for amending the Constitution of Canada. It is unclear which of the amending procedures would apply in the case of a negotiated secession.

Mr. Chair and members of the committee, may I conclude by thanking you for the opportunity to address the committee. I hope this information will be of assistance as you discharge your mandate to review the Alberta forever Canada citizen initiative. I would be pleased to answer any questions that you might have.

**The Chair:** Well, thank you very much, Dr. Brown, for your presentation. I'm sure our committee members have questions for you.

I will note that we are going to hear from officials from the chief of Elections Alberta first, and then we will open the floor to questions for both parties after that presentation. I see that our officials from Elections Alberta are joining us at the table.

Once again thank you, Dr. Brown. I would ask that you remain online with your camera off and microphone muted during the Chief Electoral Officer's presentation.

With that, I would like to welcome Chief Electoral Officer Gordon McClure to our meeting this morning. Sir, you and your staff will have up to 20 minutes for your presentation. Please begin when you're ready, maybe starting with introducing who has joined you today.

**Mr. McClure:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. With me today is Dallas Stoesz, my Deputy Chief Electoral Officer, and Jennifer Maskoske, my director of operations, who oversaw the citizen initiative petition. Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak to you today.

If I may ask for the passwords so we can advance our slides.

**The Chair:** Yeah. We are just pulling that up now for you.

**Mr. McClure:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. We'll catch up with the imagery.

As Dr. Brown had mentioned, the Citizen Initiative Act came into force April 7, 2022, and on July 3, 2025, applies to the Alberta forever Canada petition as the petition application was approved June 30, 2025. This slide outlines Elections Alberta's responsibilities under the act with regard to this petition. Note that Elections Alberta has other responsibilities under the Election Act and Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act related to this initiative, third-party advertisers, financial reporting and compliance, and other compliance and enforcement matters that we will not touch on in this presentation.

I won't go through all the bullets you can read here, but I'll highlight the dates of the major steps in the process. The proponent, Mr. Thomas Lukaszuk, submitted his petition on June 5. The CEO, which is myself, determined that the requirements of section 2 were met and approved the petition application on June 30, 2025. The petition was issued and signature collection began on July 30, 2025. The signature collection period ended and the petition was received on October 28, 2025, 90 days after it began, as required under section 4(4) of the act. The

proponent completed their obligation to return the signature sheets and provide a signed affidavit confirming the destruction of all copies on October 28 in compliance with section 13(1) of the act.

The signature verification was completed and the petition was determined to be successful on November 15, 2025, well before the December 27, 2025, statutory verification period was set to end, as set out in section 10 of the act. The prescribed financial reports required in part 3 of the act were received on November 27, 2025, on the due date.

The financial filing was deemed complete on November 28, 2025. The proponent was notified, a copy of the proposal sent to the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, and the results announced on the Elections Alberta website, as required under section 12, on December 1, 2025, well before the statutory January 6, 2026, deadline. The act is now spent in terms of our or my office unless and until the initiative vote is ordered by the Lieutenant Governor in Council.

Next slide, please. Now, I want to dispel some common misunderstandings or misrepresentations about the citizen initiative petition we frequently are seeing. We note that it is an offence under section 57(1) for a person to knowingly make false and misleading statements concerning the contents or effect of an initiative petition.

First, the type of initiative petition and what happens when it is successful is determined by the act, as the former justice has mentioned, not the proponent. Section 2 sets out that if the proposal is for new legislation, it is deemed a legislative proposal petition. If the proposal seeks to amend the Constitution of Canada, it is a constitutional referendum proposal petition. If the proposal seeks to have the government of Alberta create and implement a provincial government policy, it is a policy petition proposal. The proponents do not get to decide which of these their proposals fall under. Rather, the law prescribes which type it is based on the contents of the proposal. The only option available for Mr. Lukaszuk's petition was as a policy proposal due to its content.

Second, the proponent does not get to decide what happens in the event their petition is successful. Section 15 sets out the duties that the government must take once it receives a copy of the successful citizen initiative petition proposal. The decision on how to proceed is the government's except in the case of a constitutional referendum proposal, which must be referred to the Lieutenant Governor in Council for the purpose of holding a referendum.

Third, while canvassers for the Alberta forever Canada were not required to see electors' ID, they were required to confirm that people who wanted to sign were eligible electors before they signed a petition and signed a statement on each petition page, as a witness, confirming that they only collected signatures from electors eligible to sign.

I will now turn it over to Jennifer and Dallas to walk you through the process.

**Ms Maskoske:** Thank you, Gordon.

Although the act is spent on this process for Elections Alberta, as noted earlier, we prepared a briefing for the committee on the petition verification process. As we are aware, there's a great deal of interest in it. Under the CIA in force for this petition, section 10, Elections Alberta had 60 days to determine whether the petition was successful or not. For the Alberta forever Canada petition this process began on October 29 and was completed on November 15, 2025.

***9:00***

The threshold requirement for a successful policy proposal petition was set out in section 6(2)(b) of the act as 10 per cent of the total number of electors in the 2023 provincial general election. With 2,939,762 electors on the post election day list of electors, that threshold was 293,976. Elections Alberta follows a robust process to verify a petition, which includes three distinct phases. We'll get into more detail on the next slides, but at a high level this screen outlines the process.

Before we begin, though, it is important to note the following. At all times the petition sheets are carefully monitored, and a strict chain of custody is followed. Security measures are in place at each step to ensure no pages or returned canvasser badges delivered to Elections Alberta from the proponent are accessible to anyone not directly involved in the verification process. This includes 24/7 video monitoring and a locked and secure counting room accessible only to the verification team and the required Elections Alberta employees. Processes, training materials, record sheets, and documentation are stored in a user-restricted network storage location. The service centre agents are not permitted to have food or beverages at their workstations, simply just to prevent spills or damage to any of the petition sheets as they are original documents.

The verification process and formula were reviewed and approved by Treasury Board and Finance. If at any point during the process the number of signatures falls below the required threshold, the process ends and the petition is deemed to not be successful. It's also important to note that there's no petition certification. Elections Alberta completes petition verification to determine if a petition is successful or not. Under section 47(1) of the version of the act in force when the Alberta forever Canada petition was approved, Elections Alberta will retain all records, including the petition signature sheets, for a period of one year from when the petition was submitted. Section 47(3) sets out that petition signatures are not subject to public inspection and may not be viewed except as the CEO considers necessary for the purposes of the act.

Under the act in force for the Alberta forever Canada petition Thomas Lukaszuk, the proponent, submitted the petition to Elections Alberta on the last day of the initiative signature signing period, October 28, 2025. Elections Alberta staff received each box and viewed the contents to ensure the material submitted was petition related. After the initial viewing each box of petition materials was labelled for chain of custody tracking. The labels indicated a box number and the date it was received. These petition material boxes were then placed in a secure storage area with access granted to only a select few. The secure storage area, again, has the 24/7 video monitoring.

The validation process began the next day as per the CIA in force at the time. The initial phase was to ensure the canvassers were registered with Elections Alberta. A received petition material box was opened, and each canvasser package was removed to locate the canvasser name in the registration database. At the time of registration a canvasser would have been confirmed that they met section 5 of the CIA in place at the time. Those legislated requirements of a canvasser include that they are an elector, that they are being registered through the proponent, and that they confirm they have signed the canvasser code of conduct. Once the canvasser was confirmed, the registered canvasser packages were then reviewed to ensure each page was signed by the registered canvasser.

If the package was deemed valid, their canvasser package was then transferred into a smaller petition box which the service agents would use during the validation phase. A label was affixed to this smaller petition box with space for the service agents to indicate their station number and the starting and ending page number of the canvasser package signature sheets. Any canvassers who did not meet these legislative requirements: their signature sheets were not included with the validation process. The transfer boxes were stored in a locked room with access granted to only the service centre

manager; myself, the director of operations; and the warehouse manager.

I'm now going to pass it on to Dallas for the next phase.

**Ms Stoesz:** Thanks, Jen.

For signatures to be counted, section 6(4) requires them to meet the requirements set out in section 4(3). Specifically, signatures have to contain the eligible elector's surname and given name and contact information, including the residential physical address and either a telephone number or e-mail address. There must be a date on which the individual signed the petition, confirmation in writing they were an eligible elector, and, of course, their signature. Note that signing a petition more than once is prohibited under section 4(2), which is why we look for duplicate signatures.

Some additional explanation on this slide. People often wonder why signatures were invalidated, and there were many reasons. Some individuals signing put in the wrong year on their signature line. Others didn't put in a year or put their birthday on the date line. If the canvasser did not sign the statement at the bottom of each sheet, all signatures on that sheet were deemed invalid. Petition sheets were double sided, so if a canvasser did not sign both witness statements on both sides of the page, all signatures on the side of the page without that signature were deemed invalid. You can read some of the other common errors on this slide. It's important to say that no duplicate signatures were found, no fake names like cartoon characters, movie characters, or jokes were found, and there was absolutely no evidence of fraud in the petition.

At the end of this second phase only signatures deemed valid were counted towards the total. The forever Canada petition had 438,568 valid signatures at this point, as described in section 6(4) of the act. Section 6(5) of the act requires that "if an initiative petition meets the applicable signature threshold . . . the [CEO] shall apply a random statistical sampling method with a 95% confidence level" to the signature verification. This process and formula, again, were validated by Treasury Board and Finance. The required random sample determined by the formula meant that a minimum of 384 signatures had to be verified for this petition. We're going to get a little bit mathy here, so bear with me.

Here are the verification steps. First, we apply the required random sample to the petition pages and line numbers to determine which electors would be called. Service agents went and found those selected pages and lines in the physical petition and used the contact information on the sheets to contact those individuals.

Next is verifying the signatures in the sample and determining the number of valid signatures on that sample. This is then multiplied by the initial count, or the raw count. At this point to verify, text messages were sent to electors who had telephone numbers on the sheets to advise them that we would be calling shortly to verify their information. If we did not get a response to our follow-up phone call or to the e-mails that were sent out to electors who provided an e-mail address, we moved on to the next randomly selected entry in the sample. If an elector could not or would not verify the information on the signature sheet, that signature was eliminated and deemed invalid.

The third step is to divide the number of verified signatures in the sample by the total sample size and then multiply this by the validated signatures across the whole petition to calculate the total number of verified signatures in the entire petition.

***9:10***

Again, if we had found duplicate signatures in this petition, which I stress we did not, we would have used the weight of a signature to estimate the total number of duplicates in the entire petition and subtract those from the total. Please note that in future petitions we will individually count all duplicate signatures to have an actual number rather than calculate an estimate and remove those from the valid signatures before verification begins.

With all of these numbers we calculated the number of verified signatures to be 404,293 as required under the act, section 6(4). Since the 404,293 verified signatures exceeded the minimum threshold of 293,976 signatures, we finalized the report. The CEO reviewed the verification results report and determined, as set out in section 12(1), that the petition was successful.

Just to provide you with those final results in a single slide. Again, you see the total number of signatures that was required. The estimated number of electors in the province registered as of May 2025 was 2,966,182. The total number of valid signatures counted was 438,568. The total number of verified signatures was 404,293 after the random statistical sampling was applied. This means that the estimated percentage of electors in the province who signed the signature sheets was 18.6 per cent.

We hope this assists the committee in your considerations and you find this information useful, and we're happy to answer any questions you may have.

**The Chair:** All right. Thank you for your presentation.

At this time I would ask that you stay at the table to address questions from committee members. I would also like to ask Dr. Brown, if he's able, to join us again, go off mute and join us via video, for this portion. Thank you very much, sir.

At this time I will note that committee members will now have an opportunity to ask questions of our presenters today. I will be keeping a list of speakers, so please give me an indication or send a note to the committee clerk if you would like to be added to the list. I see we have MLA Pancholi who'd like to kick us off. Please go ahead.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. First of all, I'd like to thank hon. Justice Brown as well as Mr. McClure and the staff from Elections Alberta for your presentations today. I note that both hon. Russell Brown as well as Elections Alberta have confirmed that the forever Canada petition as it was submitted is a policy proposal. So it appears that it is not, you know, a matter for this committee to determine whether or not it is a constitutional referendum. As both parties made clear in their presentations today, that determination has already been made. Therefore, while the background was helpful on various constitutional and separatism referendums in other jurisdictions, that is not before this committee today, to debate whether or not there should be a referendum on separatism or on the topic of the petition that's before us. Thank you for that. I appreciate that clarification. It sets the work for our committee very clearly.

I want to ask some questions for Elections Alberta, for the Chief Electoral Officer about the verification process, not the validation but the verification process, as you've outlined. It was very helpful. I'll just kind of group them together. They're kind of quick questions that you can maybe answer together. The first is that you mentioned a random sample is done for verification for a petition of this size. How many signatures were in that part of that random sample that were verified?

You clarified that in part of verification you would follow up by either text or phone or e-mail with those signatures that were selected randomly, and I guess the question is that if they did not respond, I understand they were not considered to be verified signatures. Of the portion that were verified for this petition, how many of those signatures were deemed to not be verified because

nobody responded to either the text, the phone, or the e-mail for verification?

I'll leave it at that, and I'm sure there'll be more questions after that. Thank you.

**Ms Stoesz:** Sure. The random sample required in this case was 384 minimum. We pulled 500 names to begin with, in the event that we couldn't get in touch with somebody, and we made sure that we met the minimum. People responded actually very quickly, all within less than 24 hours, so we didn't really have a situation where that was the case. There were no signatures that were deemed nonverified because of nonresponse. We had more than enough.

Then you asked about following up about how many didn't respond. I don't think we captured that information, but I do know that we continued to contact people until we met the minimum threshold.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

I have MLA Nixon next on our list. Please go ahead.

**Mr. Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to the officials from Elections Alberta for being here, Justice Brown as well. I've got a couple of questions, but I'm going to start, first off, in regard to the paperwork. I don't know who's best on this but probably Elections Alberta.

The petition that I have in front of me, at least the application for the citizen initiative petition, says very clearly that "we as represented by the signatory and applicant below propose a referendum on the following question: Do you agree that Alberta should remain in Canada?" Justice Brown, it's certainly clearer than many of the other questions that you referred to in your history lesson, but my question is: the 400,000 people that went across the province, Albertans, when they signed their paperwork, what was presented to them that they were signing? Was it this and the fact that the petition representative was asking for a referendum?

**Mr. McClure:** Individuals would be signing for a policy for the government because it's a policy petition.

**Mr. Nixon:** I understand the reality of it, sections 14 and 15. I'm happy to ask a follow-up question in a minute. What was presented to them at those stations as they received it? There's a cover sheet that was presented at that time, correct? What did it say on the cover sheet?

**Mr. McClure:** The cover sheet would have the question that was presented to myself available to all people who are signing. It would have the canvasser's code of conduct attached as well. Any person signing it would have available to them the question that they were being asked and if they would endorse it as part of the petition.

**Mr. Nixon:** So in line, again, with the petition done by Mr. Lukaszuk, what I have in front of me says that they are asking for, with their signatures, to propose a referendum on the following question signed by Mr. Lukaszuk when he submitted it, and that was the application. I understand the difference between policy and referendums, but that is what was being presented across the province.

**Ms Stoesz:** The question on every single sheet was the question, not the full proposal. The full proposal is available at every signature table for electors to view should they so choose.

**Mr. Nixon:** Okay. So again, to be clear, the full proposal was available at each location? The question was available at each location?

**Ms Stoesz:** The question was available on each signature sheet.

**Mr. Nixon:** Perfect. Thank you. That clarifies that.

Then for Justice Brown, sections 14 and 15 of the act, to your point, establish the framework for policy proposals and circumstances under which a matter may proceed to a referendum. You touched on it a bit. Maybe you can explain a little bit the difference between how policy proposal petitions differ procedurally from legislative proposal petitions underneath this act.

**Dr. Brown:** Well, the next steps for a successful initiative petition, as you say, depend on the type of proposal. Legislative initiatives are tabled in the Legislative Assembly, and then they are referred to a committee of the Legislative Assembly. The committee must either table a report recommending the bill be introduced or table a report recommending that the matter be put to voters by way of an initiative vote. Policy initiatives, if successful, are also tabled in the Legislative Assembly and then referred to a committee of the Legislative Assembly. The committee must either table a report with respect to the policy proposal or table a report, as indicated, recommending that the policy proposal and the report be recommended to the Lieutenant Governor in Council for the purposes of a referendum in accordance with the Referendum Act.

***9:20***

Following a successful constitutional initiative, there's a different process, and it's actually not dealt with through the Legislative Assembly. They're not tabled in the Legislative Assembly. Rather, the Chief Electoral Officer must provide a copy of the successful proposal to the Minister of Justice, who in turn must refer the proposal to the Lieutenant Governor in Council for the purpose of a referendum.

**The Chair:** All right. Thank you.

MLA Pancholi, I saw your hand back up. Please go ahead.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you. I just want to clarify because I want to be sure that all members of the committee take away the same information about the question that was asked previously by Member Nixon, in which he clarified – so on the petition page that over 400,000 Albertans signed and of which over 400,000 were considered verified and valid, the page that they would have been signing for the petition would have had the question: do you agree that Alberta should remain in Canada? It would not have the other language that we see in the formal document, the application document. That would not be on the page that the signatories to the petition would sign. Can you just clarify that piece?

**Mr. McClure:** That is correct.

**Ms Pancholi:** Sorry. Maybe just before the mic turned on. Can you just say that again?

**Mr. McClure:** I said: that is correct. It would have just the question. It doesn't have, I'll call, the preloading of or their proposal; it has the question itself.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you.

In that case, then, it would appear – I mean, we certainly don't know what's in the mind of anybody who signs a petition when they sign it. They could certainly be motivated by different aspects or certain things, but what we can take away from this petition and the verified signatures that your office found was that 404,000 Albertans signed a petition stating that they agree that Alberta should remain in Canada, and then we have both Justice Brown and your office confirming that there is no constitutional question that's

being asked in that; therefore, there is no trigger for a constitutional referendum. There is no proposed legislation that would trigger a legislative proposal. Simply that question is what signatories were signing to and that it is a policy proposal: is that your understanding?

**Mr. McClure:** That is correct.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** All right. MLA Nixon, I saw your hand up. Please go ahead.

**Mr. Nixon:** Yeah. Just to follow up on that, to be clear again, the application – I have it in front of me – signed by the proponent says, "Therefore, we as represented by the signatory and applicant below propose a referendum on the following question: Do you agree that Alberta should remain in Canada?" Is that what the application says? Yes or no?

**Ms Maskoske:** The application that would have been submitted also by the proponent requires you to decide: is this legislative or policy, or is it a constitutional . . .

**Mr. Nixon:** With all due respect, that's not the question I'm asking. Is this document that was signed by Mr. Lukaszuk to do the petition – does it say this or not? "We believe the majority of Alberta's residents are loyal Canadians opposed to any form of separation. Therefore, we as represented by the signatory and applicant below propose a referendum on the following question."

**Ms Stoesz:** Yes, that is correct. The petition proposal application requires the proponent to provide reasoning behind theirs. That is separate from the question that is on the petition sheet. So, yes, that is correct. In the application it is in there.

**Mr. Nixon:** Thank you.

Mr. Chief Electoral Officer, you said that the difference between the cover sheet that would have been presented on the actual signature sheets and what was available at location for those who would know what the petition was about – was that language available at all locations for what the petitioner had submitted?

**Mr. McClure:** Yes.

**Mr. Nixon:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

I saw MLA Ellingson. If you'd please go ahead.

**Member Ellingson:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I want to flip back to the verification and validation so that everybody who is watching or reading *Hansard* has a clear understanding in the creation of the random sample size. I'm wondering if you can maybe talk a little bit about, like: what are the elements or criteria for being in that random sample? Or are you just randomizing; out of the 404,000 you just pick numbers? Then also just a clarification. You had 500 that you pulled, random samples to be pulled to be verified. Then is it the number of those 500 that are verified and then you kind of reverse that calculation to get to the 404,000?

**Mr. McClure:** I'll take the first stab at this. Math is hard. That being said, the signatures that were received on the petitions were cleaned first to make sure they removed anything that did not meet the criteria such as no signature being attached. Of that, then they were assigned a number to each signature as they're counted. That gives you your base. From that, they then use a random number generator to generate a series of random numbers based on the full set that's held. Of that, there were 500 random numbers generated. Then they went back to the sample, which is the complete clean data set. Five hundred random numbers were generated; 364 were needed. They went through them sequentially, so if they could not get hold of someone, they could move on to the next one and determine: was it valid or not?

Sorry, but you'll have to repeat the second part of your question.

**Member Ellingson:** Well, I'll just maybe refine the question. If all 500 had been verified, then the final number of verified signatures would have been that initial 438,000.

**Mr. McClure:** We needed 364 to verify for the full number with a confidence level of 95 per cent. If you actually sample a larger number, the variance in that sample would then diminish, because 364 gives you a plus or minus 5 per cent when you talk about 19 times out of 20 on a confidence level of 95 per cent.

**Member Ellingson:** Yes. You drew 500, you needed 364, and you got something in between.

**Mr. McClure:** That's right. We made sure we sampled and completed 364. Those 500 drawn were to ensure that on our first run-through we would hopefully get all 364. If needed, we would have drawn again from the sample if we did not get a hold of folks, but we did and so we were able to verify based on the statistical sample.

**Member Ellingson:** Thank you.

**Ms Stoesz:** Keep in mind that as lines are drawn, if there is a blank line that is drawn, we need to skip to the next one. So it accounts for things like that. And just to clarify, 384 was the minimum. It's close.

**The Chair:** Thank you, MLA Ellingson.

I had MLA Sawhney next on our list. Please go ahead.

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you, Justice Brown for the presentation and to the Elections Alberta team as well for your presentation. I'm just going to go back to the sampling. I just want to confirm that the way you determined the sample size was through a formula that was approved by Treasury Board and Finance.

**Ms Stoesz:** Yes.

**Mr. McClure:** That is correct.

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Okay. Excellent. I was looking at your slide deck. The very last slide: I'm wondering if we can just bring that up for a second. I had a question around the final number, the 18.6 per cent. Can you tell me how that was calculated? I can't quite calculate that number.

**Ms Stoesz:** It's based on the number of verified signatures compared to the estimated number of electors in the province who were registered in May 2025.

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Okay. So I guess I can't calculate that using any of the numbers on this slide right here?

**Ms Stoesz:** We would have to go back and take another look at that one.

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Okay. Yeah, if you could, because I just was trying to, like I said, back calculate that. I didn't quite get to that number. That would be helpful.

I do have a question for Justice Brown, just switching topics slightly. We might come back to this verification of numbers. It's in regard to judicial review proceedings. Justice Brown, in section 53 of the act it is established that there are requirements respecting judicial review proceedings and the handling of initiative petition records during the legal proceedings. Can you let us know how judicial review applications may affect initiative petition timelines or any associated administrative processes?

***9:30***

**Dr. Brown:** Well, the difficulty is that that's a legal question, the answer to which will depend on the particular matter. It's very fact dependent, and it kind of goes beyond the technical question that I can give straight yes-or-no answers to, I'm afraid. I'm not trying to dodge it. It just will depend on the particular matter before the courts.

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Okay.

**The Chair:** MLA Sawhney, if I might, I might go back to the other side. I'd ask all members to please – been liberal with one or two follow-ups, but we want to make sure that we're making both sides get a chance.

With that, I'll go to MLA Pancholi.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. For Elections Alberta. This was the first petition that your office has had to verify under the Citizen Initiative Act, and as you indicated, the sample size was about 500. You know, that was the statistical sample size. Are there conditions in which you would have increased the sample size based on any concerns that would have popped up? Like, for example, had there been a number of signatures representing, say, 80 per cent of one municipality, would that have been a flag for you to sort of say, "Oh, perhaps we need to do a larger sample size" or any other concerns that might trigger for your office to do a different process if there are concerns with a petition?

**Mr. McClure:** The example of representing 80 per cent of, say, one constituency in this case does not come into play because it is not a constitutional question. Because it's a policy question, it's based on the overall population. Excuse me for a moment. The draw for the 384: we're looking at that for a plus or minus 5 per cent. Statistically we would work through the population, and we drew 500 random names to draw those 384 from initially. It doesn't change. If something irregular comes up, it's representative within that sample. It statistically will create a representation. So in this case we did not have to look for, like in a constitutional question, how many electors in each area. We can use the general population of Alberta.

I'll look to my staff if they have any other additions.

**Ms Pancholi:** Maybe I'll just follow up and say – sorry; just waiting for my microphone to turn on here. Thank you. Maybe I'll follow up and say that you've indicated in your presentation that on the forever Canada petition there was no evidence of fraud. There were no duplicates, no made-up names. There was no reason to be concerned about the validity overall of the petition, but this is the process for the first petition. Would you have done a different verification process if there was reason to believe to be concerned about the validity of all the signatures, or is the process – you know, can it be tailored based on the concerns around a particular petition, or is this the process that's going to be followed for all petitions?

**Mr. McClure:** This is a very robust process, and we developed this right from the beginning to be robust. That's why we work very closely with our counterparts in Treasury Board and Finance and statistics. It would capture irregularities. Now, in cleaning we will go through and look for cleaning data. If we had, in a hypothetical situation, some irregularities, we might go through in trying to clean the data and look for those irregularities, but in terms of sampling and a sample size for statistical analysis it would not change.

**The Chair:** All right. Thank you.

I had MLA Sawyer next on our list. Please go ahead, MLA Sawyer.

**Mrs. Sawyer:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just as a courtesy to the members across – it's been driving me crazy – your guys' name tags are in improper order, so you're referred to as Ellingson as opposed to Pancholi. Just to help you out.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you very much.

**Mrs. Sawyer:** You're more than welcome. I didn't want to interrupt while people were asking questions. I've been waiting to say: let me help you out.

Through the chair, I'm going to go to Dr. Brown if I may. Thank you again to both sides for the presentations. They're helpful. In section 3 of the act it outlines the process for issuing initiative petitions, publishing the notices, and establishing the initiative petition signing periods. Can you explain how the initiative petition period was established for the forever Canada petition, and what information was publicly published by Elections Alberta once the petition was issued?

**Dr. Brown:** Sure. The version of the act that was in effect in June of 2025, that applies to the Alberta forever Canada petition, sets out that the signing period started when the petition was issued, and it continued for 90 days. There were sections in that version of the act that would apply to alter the signing period such as if writs were issued for a general election or if the proponent were to suddenly become deceased, but it's my understanding that there were no events that altered that signing period established for this initiative petition.

Now, the current version of the act contains a different signing period. Section 4(4) provides an initiative petition signing period of 120 days. You know, how this signing period was established specifically for this petition should probably be directed to the Chief Electoral Officer.

**The Chair:** Do you have a follow-up, MLA Sawyer?

**Dr. Brown:** Passing the buck.

**Mrs. Sawyer:** Well, I was going to say that he's perhaps – then I would, if I may, direct to Elections Alberta if they could answer that piece.

**Ms Stoesz:** Could you repeat the question, please?

**Mrs. Sawyer:** What information was publicly published by Elections Alberta once the petition was issued?

**Ms Stoesz:** That information is available on our website still. You will see by date all of the information that was published. The full application was published. The signing period, the collection

periods, the different deadlines: all of that was published on our website throughout the whole process.

**The Chair:** All right. Any other questions? I saw MLA Nixon with his hand up. Do the opposition – MLA Nixon, go ahead.

**Mr. Nixon:** Just quickly back to where I was before, just to finish up, either for Justice Brown or for Elections Alberta officials. On the cover sheet, the application, or the petition sheets that were given to over 400,000 Albertans to sign, is there any language anywhere that says that by them signing, they were asking for a vote in the Alberta Legislature?

**Mr. McClure:** No.

**Mr. Nixon:** Thank you.

I think my colleague has a question.

**The Chair:** I appreciate that. I will note that we do have other business to move to on our agenda, but I did want to acknowledge that we still have some outstanding questions from some of our committee members. I think that's important to note, that we do still have some outstanding questions, but I want to be respectful of our other business.

With that noted, I will move us on to our next agenda item, which is other business. Before I do that, I want to, of course, thank the presenters for speaking with us today and for answering some of our questions. We do have some other business, as I mentioned, to attend to. You're welcome to return to the gallery for the remainder of the meeting if you wish. Otherwise, I hope everyone enjoys the rest of their day.

With that, we will turn to other business. I see MLA Ellingson has his hand up. Please go ahead, sir.

**Member Ellingson:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes. As part of other business I'd like to bring forward a motion to the committee, that being that

> the Select Special Citizen Initiative Proposal Review Committee invite as part of the committee's review of the Alberta forever Canada citizen initiative policy proposal the following stakeholders to make an oral presentation at the next committee meeting: (a) the petition proponent and (b) other stakeholders recommended by the committee, to be provided to the committee clerk by the 13th of May, 2026.

**The Chair:** Okay. I just want to make sure we have your motion correct on the screen and would also, of course, like to give you a chance to speak to your motion.

***9:40***

**Member Ellingson:** That is correct. Thank you.

Yes. I think we've heard in the questions to our presenters today that our presenters today made it quite clear, the legality of this petition and how the proponent themselves could not choose how that petition was going forward, but I think we heard some questions from the other side asking what their understanding was, the people who were signing the petition, some questions around what the proponent was putting to those signatories when they were signing the petition. So I think given that that was raised here and those questions were put to not the proponent, not the people who were standing at the tables gathering the petitions – if we want answers to those questions, then I think that we would want to bring the proponent to this committee to respond to those questions of, "How was the petition presented to the people who were signing it? What was the intent of that petition? What was the understanding of the signatories?" so that we can clear that matter.

**The Chair:** All right. Thank you very much, MLA Ellingson, for that motion.

MLA Nixon, I saw your hand up.

**Mr. Nixon:** Again, just to correct the record, both Justice Brown and the Chief Electoral Officer were very clear on what the petitioner said and asked for when he asked with this petition. It's in writing, as I just already read here once before. Anybody can go look it up, so I don't think it's in question what the petitioner signed and submitted to Elections Alberta. There could be some questions of what Albertans were presented when they signed it, but the language is pretty clear on what was presented inside the petition.

Further to that, Mr. Chair, there are questions that still did not get answered because we ran out of time today. I think we're going to have to figure out what that looks like before we look at who we're going to call. I think this motion, while likely probably relevant, is premature, so I'll simply move

> to adjourn debate,

and then we can rediscuss that at a relevant time.

**The Chair:** All right. Thank you.

We do have a motion to adjourn debate, which is a nondebatable motion. I will therefore call the vote on the motion to adjourn. All those in favour, please say aye. Any opposed? All right.

> That motion is carried.

**Ms Pancholi:** Recorded vote.

**The Chair:** A recorded vote has been requested. I ask those in the room who are in favour of the motion to please raise your hands.

**Mr. Huffman:** Hon. Mrs. Sawhney, Mrs. Sawyer, hon. Mr. Nixon.

**The Chair:** All right. Those in the room who are opposed to the motion, please raise your hands.

**Mr. Huffman:** Mr. Ellingson and Ms Pancholi.

Mr. Chair, for the motion, three; against, two.

**The Chair:** All right.

> That motion is carried.

Are there any additional items for discussion under other business? MLA Ellingson, please go ahead.

**Member Ellingson:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would like to move a motion to committee that

> the chair of the Select Special Citizen Initiative Proposal Review Committee set the date of the next meeting of the committee prior to adjourning the May 11, 2026, meeting.

I see that it is on the screen, and that is correct.

What I would like to say is that it is clear that the proceedings of this committee have been slow rolled by the government and by the government's representatives on this committee, as we have just seen previously in bringing forward a motion and indicating that that motion was premature, that somehow the government is going to just drag this out for as long as they want to drag it out so that it just dies on the vine. To give Albertans some confidence that the work of this committee will actually continue to proceed, that it will actually come to some resolution to put back to the Legislature, I think it is important that we not wait another two or three weeks for the chair to set a date for us to come back and that we know today when we're coming back to continue with the proceedings of this committee.

**The Chair:** All right. Thank you, MLA Ellingson.

Is there anyone who'd like to speak to this? MLA Sawyer, I see your hand. Please go ahead.

**Mrs. Sawyer:** Just, Mr. Chair, to set the record, I got to ask a whopping one question, so I'm not trying to slow roll. I have questions that I would actually like to be able to have.

It is not the practice to have us set a schedule. That's to the chair to do. Given that it is my hope we will have to have the parties back, that's going to be for you and the offices to determine scheduling, so I will not be voting in favour of this motion for that. That's all I have to say.

**The Chair:** Okay. MLA Pancholi, please go ahead.

**Ms Pancholi:** Maybe I'll just seek some clarification, Mr. Chair. This committee has 90 days to complete its work. The first date of this committee meeting was set for day 42 of the 90-day period. In contrast to another committee that the chair also chairs, which is the Electoral Boundaries Committee, a motion passed establishing the committee, and six days later the chair called the first meeting. So perhaps I'll ask the chair of the committee: why did he wait 42 days to set the first meeting of this committee? Unless there is a satisfactory answer to that, my suggestion would be that we as committee members have a right to know when the next meeting is going to be considering we have four weeks left to complete the work of this committee.

**The Chair:** Well, thank you for your comments, MLA Pancholi. Of course, I wouldn't want to comment on any other committee work or committee roles that anyone, including the chair, has.

I, again, appreciate all members for weighing in and would be prepared to call this vote unless there's other input.

All right. All those in favour of this motion, please say aye. Any opposed?

That motion is defeated.

All right. Are there any other items to bring forward?

**Ms Pancholi:** Recorded vote, please.

**The Chair:** Sorry. I didn't catch that, MLA Pancholi.

**Ms Pancholi:** Recorded vote.

**The Chair:** Oh, recorded vote. Sure.

A recorded vote has been requested. Those in the room who are in favour of the motion, please raise your hands.

**Mr. Huffman:** Ms Pancholi, Member Ellingson.

**The Chair:** All right. Those in the room who are opposed to the motion, please raise your hands.

**Mr. Huffman:** Hon. Mrs. Sawhney, Mrs. Sawyer, hon. Mr. Nixon.

Mr. Chair, for the motion, two; against, three.

**The Chair:** All right. Thank you.

That motion is defeated.

MLA Pancholi, I see your hand for other business. Please go ahead.

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'd like to propose a motion. The motion is that

> the Select Special Citizen Initiative Proposal Review Committee recommend that the government move a motion by May 14, 2026, in the Legislative Assembly to ask, "Do you agree that Alberta should remain in Canada?"

Mr. Chair, I don't want to presuppose the outcome of this vote on this motion, but considering that the government members of this committee are afraid to even hear from the petition proponent, Thomas Lukaszuk, I imagine it would not be surprising that they also are afraid to listen to the voices of the 404,000 Albertans who signed the forever Canada petition. We've heard absolutely clear information from both Elections Alberta and the hon. Justice Brown confirming that it is up to this committee to decide what to do next with the petition that has been deemed valid. The option is very much on the table to have a vote in the Legislature. That is something this committee has the ability to propose. The committee has taken a lot of time to try to avoid this.

I should mention that the government members of this committee and in the House have spent the last year bending over backwards changing legislation, overturning court decisions, now even allowing an unprecedented breach of personal information in the electors list to happen, all so that one question could be asked of Albertans, which is whether or not they support a version of separatism. The fact that the UCP members have done that to allow that question to go to a referendum but are afraid to stand in the Legislature and speak to their constituents to answer a very simple question, whether they agree that Alberta should remain in Canada, says everything that we need to know about this government and their party.

They've been taken over by separatists. They're ignoring 400,000, which is more than allegedly have signed the separatist petition. They have taken that position. They're ignoring those voices because they are afraid to speak up and answer to their constituents. So we propose that we should do what is the right thing for our constituents, the right thing for Albertans as elected officials, stand in this House and speak to whether or not every member of that Legislature supports . . .

**The Chair:** Member, if I may, we are at the end of our meeting today, so I do need to ask for unanimous consent to go past our scheduled end time.

Is there anyone who would oppose extending this meeting? MLA Sawyer.

**Ms Pancholi:** You're the one that wanted more time, remember?

**Mrs. Sawyer:** Well, I have another meeting, but thanks.

**The Chair:** All right. Unanimous consent has not been granted to extend past our scheduled end time, so I will therefore ask for a motion to adjourn. That motion is made by MLA Nixon. All those in favour, please say aye. Any opposed? That motion is carried.

[The committee adjourned at 9:50 a.m.]

Published under the Authority of the Speaker
of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta