



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

The 28th Legislature
First Session

Select Special
Conflicts of Interest Act
Review Committee

Tuesday, May 7, 2013
6:17 p.m.

Transcript No. 28-1-5

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta
The 28th Legislature
First Session**

Select Special Conflicts of Interest Act Review Committee

Allen, Mike, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (PC), Chair
Luan, Jason, Calgary-Hawkwood (PC), Deputy Chair

Blakeman, Laurie, Edmonton-Centre (AL)
Dorward, David C., Edmonton-Gold Bar (PC)
Fenske, Jacquie, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (PC)
Johnson, Linda, Calgary-Glenmore (PC)
McDonald, Everett, Grande Prairie-Smoky (PC)
Notley, Rachel, Edmonton-Strathcona (ND)
Saskiw, Shayne, Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills (W)
Wilson, Jeff, Calgary-Shaw (W)
Young, Steve, Edmonton-Riverview (PC)

Office of the Ethics Commissioner Participants

Neil R. Wilkinson	Ethics Commissioner
Brad Odsen, QC	Registrar, Lobbyists Act, and General Counsel

Ministry of Justice and Solicitor General Participant

Joan Neatby	Solicitor, Legislative Reform
-------------	-------------------------------

Support Staff

W.J. David McNeil	Clerk
Robert H. Reynolds, QC	Law Clerk/Director of Interparliamentary Relations
Shannon Dean	Senior Parliamentary Counsel/ Director of House Services
Philip Massolin	Manager of Research Services
Stephanie LeBlanc	Legal Research Officer
Sarah Leonard	Legal Research Officer
Nancy Zhang	Legislative Research Officer
Nancy Robert	Research Officer
Corinne Dacyshyn	Committee Clerk
Jody Rempel	Committee Clerk
Karen Sawchuk	Committee Clerk
Christopher Tyrell	Committee Clerk
Rhonda Sorensen	Manager of Corporate Communications and Broadcast Services
Jeanette Dotimas	Communications Consultant
Tracey Sales	Communications Consultant
Liz Sim	Managing Editor of <i>Alberta Hansard</i>

6:17 p.m.

Tuesday, May 7, 2013

[Mr. Allen in the chair]

The Chair: Okay. Good evening. I'm going to call this meeting to order. We do have quorum now. I hope everybody got a chance to eat.

Welcome to today's meeting of the Select Special Conflicts of Interest Act Review Committee.

I'd ask that members and those joining us at the table introduce themselves for the record. We'll start here, on my right.

Ms Fenske: Jacquie Fenske, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

Mr. McDonald: Everett McDonald, Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Ms L. Johnson: Linda Johnson, Calgary-Glenmore.

Ms Blakeman: I'd like to welcome each and every one of you to my fabulous constituency of Edmonton-Centre. My name is Laurie Blakeman.

Mr. Wilkinson: Neil Wilkinson, Ethics Commissioner.

Mr. Odsen: Brad Odsen, office of the Ethics Commissioner.

Ms Neatby: Joan Neatby, Alberta Justice and Solicitor General.

Mr. Wilson: Jeff Wilson, MLA for Calgary-Shaw.

Ms Sorensen: Rhonda Sorensen, manager of corporate communications and broadcast services at the LAO.

Ms Zhang: Nancy Zhang, legislative research officer.

Ms Robert: Nancy Robert, research officer.

Dr. Massolin: Good evening. Philip Massolin, manager of research services.

Ms Rempel: Jody Rempel, committee clerk, Legislative Assembly Office.

Mr. Luan: Jason Luan, Calgary-Hawkwood MLA.

The Chair: Just joining us, Mr. Saskiw.

Mr. Saskiw: Shayne Saskiw, Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

The Chair: Welcome, Ms Notley.

Ms Notley: Hello. Good to be here.

The Chair: Thank you.

Before we turn to the business at hand, just a couple of operational items. Of course, we're all aware that the microphone consoles here are operated by the *Hansard* staff. We ask as well that you keep your cellphones and BlackBerrys off the table as they can interfere with the audiofeed. Audio of these committee proceedings is streamed live on the Internet and recorded by *Alberta Hansard*. Audio access and meeting transcripts are obtained via the Legislative Assembly website.

Having said that, we'll move on. First of all, you have your agenda in front of you, I assume. Is there any discussion, addition, or amendment to the agenda? Seeing nobody rushing to their microphone, I will then ask for a motion that the May 7, 2013, agenda of the Select Special Conflicts of Interest Act Review

Committee be adopted as distributed. Ms Fenske. All in favour? That's carried unanimously. Thank you.

The next item on the agenda is our minutes from the previous meeting. Are there any errors or omissions to note?

Seeing none, I'll ask for a motion that the minutes of the February 25, 2013, meeting of the Select Special Conflicts of Interest Act Review Committee be adopted as circulated. I believe Mr. Wilson moved that. All in favour? Thank you. That's carried.

We'll move through our agenda here. I'd like to remind committee members that we're restricted to just one hour this evening as we are in session. Although we'll touch on two other matters tonight, our primary purpose is to make some decisions on how we wish to proceed with oral presentations. Please remember that our support staff and our guests from Alberta Justice and the office of the Ethics Commissioner will continue to be available as we conduct our review, and we thank you very much for your diligence in that with the committee.

With that said, perhaps we can take a moment or two to touch on our committee research support documents. First of all – and I hope you all got a chance to review this in advance – we have the crossjurisdictional comparison that was prepared by Ms Robert. Would you please give us a quick summary of this document?

Ms Robert: Sure. Thanks, Mr. Chair. Good evening, everyone. I will try to give you a really quick overview of this document. The purpose of the crossjurisdictional comparison was to provide information as to how Alberta's Conflicts of Interest Act compares to equivalent legislation in other Canadian jurisdictions on a number of issues. Given the number of issues considered in this review, a comparison of each of the 12 provincial jurisdictions would have been difficult to manage. Therefore, apart from Alberta, research services chose to review conflicts legislation in British Columbia, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, and Nova Scotia. These five jurisdictions were chosen because they include a cross-section of small, medium, and large jurisdictions that represent each of the major geographical areas in Canada, and in the cases of Quebec and Nova Scotia they include legislation that was enacted quite recently, in 2010.

The federal conflicts of interest legislation that applies to members of the House of Commons, public office holders, and Senators was also surveyed. In addition, at the request of a committee member conflicts legislation in the state of Texas was considered where applicable in the comparison. Finally, at the suggestion of the office of the Ethics Commissioner the conflicts legislation in New South Wales has been considered where applicable.

I'm not sure if you've had an opportunity to go through the document, but at the beginning there's an introduction section, a background section, an executive summary. The main part of the report starts in section 4. It's entitled What Constitutes a Conflict of Interest? This part of the document goes through each of the obligations of members in Alberta's act and compares them to other jurisdictions. It starts with the prohibitions on furthering private interests. There's a chart that provides an overview of the provisions from each jurisdiction related to a member's obligation to not make decisions, use his or her position as a member to influence the decisions of others, or use insider information to advance the member's private interests or the private interests of a third party.

Following the chart there's a narrative discussion of several different issues. One is the definition of private interest. Members of the committee were interested in finding out if other jurisdictions define private interest in terms of what it is as

opposed to what it is not, so that was looked at. Use of the term “improperly” in relation to furthering private interests was also considered.

The term “persons directly associated” with a member, which is used in Alberta’s legislation, was looked at to see what that term includes and how it compares to other legislation.

Inclusion of adult children of members in some sections of part 2, obligations of members, was considered. Part of the way that that was looked at was: is there a distinction in other jurisdictions regarding the use of adult children versus minor children of members under the obligations of members?

Then the report goes on to discuss the obligations of members in the following other areas: restrictions on a member holding office or being employed by the Crown, restrictions with respect to the receipt of gifts. It should be noted that appendix B contains the provisions in all of the selected jurisdictions regarding the receipt of gifts: what the limit is, what the rules are, what the exceptions are. It was just too big to put in the main body of the document, but you can find it in appendix B.

6:25

The next section talks about restrictions with respect to travel on noncommercial aircraft, followed by restrictions with regard to entering contracts of a certain class with the Crown, and then restrictions regarding accepting payments from the Crown. Now, one thing I’d like to point out is in regard to members’ relationships with the Crown: holding office or employment with the Crown, accepting payments from the Crown, entering contracts of a certain class with the Crown. There are provisions for restrictions in each of the jurisdictions that were surveyed, but it should be noted and it is important to note that in pretty much every jurisdiction there is other legislation outside of the conflicts of interest legislation that has different restrictions on members in relation to those three relationships with the Crown. Because our focus is conflicts legislation, we couldn’t get into all the other legislation that affects this issue, but what we did do in appendix C is that we reproduced the provisions in other legislation in other jurisdictions and in Alberta that restrict members in certain ways in their relationships with the Crown. So if you want to look at that, that’s in appendix C.

The next part of the report is entitled Other Restrictions and Prohibitions. There’s a discussion on the prohibition on debating and voting on matters in which a member has disclosed a conflict of interest and the rules that apply in the different jurisdictions. There’s a discussion on the cooling-off period, as it’s known, the postemployment restrictions with regard to ministers and political staff members. It should be noted that appendix A contains the statutory provisions for cooling-off periods for members or ministers and political staff members or public servants or whomever it applies to in other jurisdictions. Again, it was too big to put it all in the main body of the main document, but it all exists in appendix A if you’d like to see it.

Then there is a section on the restrictions applicable to ministers and the Leader of the Official Opposition in Alberta. A survey was done to see if any kinds of restrictions apply to the Leader of the Official Opposition or people other than ministers in other jurisdictions. So that was done.

The next section talks about the process for making public disclosure statements available to the public. In Alberta that’s done via the office of the Clerk in, I believe, paper and electronic format. There’s some question as to whether online availability should be considered, so that is discussed in relation to the other jurisdictions.

The final section deals with the Ethics Commissioner’s ability to initiate investigations. As I understand it, the Ethics Commissioner does not have that ability in Alberta, so this section discusses whether that is available to ethics commissioners in other jurisdictions.

That is the end of the report. I know it’s huge, and I’ve gone over it fairly quickly. If you have any questions, I’d be happy to try and answer them.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms Robert. I guess, first of all, I’d like to acknowledge the significant amount of work that went into preparing this document, and on behalf of the committee I thank you for that. It’s very thorough.

For the committee’s sake we will be having an opportunity to go through this document in greater detail at future meetings if necessary, but for those of you who had a chance to read it, are there any specific questions right now? Ms Notley.

Ms Notley: Yeah. As you note in the report on page 12, we had inquired about how the term “improperly” was interpreted either in other jurisdictions or in other settings or whether or not it had been deliberated upon, you know, either by conflict of interest commissioners or judicially. The report does mention where it exists, but it doesn’t really give us a lot of guidance in terms of whether there’s been any consideration of how the term is to be applied in any other jurisdictions. I’m just wondering if we can expect to get some information on that or whether none existed or what the deal is with that.

Ms Robert: My understanding from the Department of Justice is that it didn’t come up in case law. I think that’s correct. Joan, I thought that came up at another meeting.

Ms Neatby: I don’t think we found any case law. I’m just checking with my colleague.

Ms Robert: That’s my recollection. That question was asked in terms of case law, and nothing had come up.

Ms Notley: What about whether it had been considered by the commissioners in those jurisdictions? Would that be included in the case law search?

Ms Robert: I’m not sure because I didn’t do the case law search.

Ms Neatby: I know that we spoke to the committee on this earlier. Somebody did; I actually can’t remember if it was myself. I don’t remember anything coming up from other offices similar to the Ethics Commissioner’s office on this point.

Ms Notley: Is it, then, the conclusion that this concept, this word “improper” has never been considered either in a practice guide or by decision of a commissioner or in any other setting? Is that what we’re hearing?

Ms Robert: I can certainly survey the ethics commissioners in the other jurisdictions to find out if it’s something that’s been questioned. I mean, it’s not defined anywhere. It’s not defined in any legislation. I can certainly ask the other ethics commissioners. You’re wondering if anyone has ever questioned its interpretation?

Ms Notley: Right. Well, it’s kind of a fundamental piece to the prohibition, so we really need to have some sense of what it means if that’s at all possible. Otherwise, we should be taking it out if we don’t know what it means.

The Chair: In the interest of time, for tonight perhaps I could suggest, if Ms Notley would accept this, that we could ask Ms Robert to send us an answer via e-mail through the committee clerk prior to our next meeting, and it would give you a little bit of basis for when we have this deliberation at the next meeting.

Ms Robert: Sure. No problem.

Ms Notley: Okay.

The Chair: Thank you.
Next question. Ms Johnson.

Ms L. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's quite the document. I think it's one of those documents where you read it, you ponder, and then you come back and read it again. A quick question from page 34 about the public disclosure statements. The Standing Committee on Legislative Offices discussed about putting the public disclosure statements online, and I just want to clarify "refer the matter to the next review committee established." Is that this review committee or the one five years out?

Ms Robert: It's this committee.

Ms L. Johnson: Okay. I just wanted to confirm that it is now part of our mandate.

The Chair: It is.

Ms L. Johnson: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.
Mr. Saskiw.

Mr. Saskiw: Yeah. My first question is just with respect to page 32, table 9. This is a table listing the statutory exemptions for the cooling-off periods in other jurisdictions. It's my understanding – and I could be corrected if I'm wrong – that currently in our legislation the Ethics Commissioner has an overarching discretion to essentially or in effect waive the cooling-off period. The exemptions that are listed in the other jurisdictions refer to certain instances where the cooling-off period doesn't apply. My question is: was it looked at in the other jurisdictions whether or not ethics commissioners from those other jurisdictions also have that same overarching discretion that we do here in Alberta?

Ms Robert: No, that wasn't. I certainly can do that if you need that information.

Mr. Saskiw: Yeah. I'd appreciate that.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.
Ms Blakeman.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you. I've raised the issue of a code of conduct. This act primarily deals with financial conflict of interest but actually doesn't deal with ethics or integrity. One of the problems for all of us is that we have no code of conduct by which we can describe our job to constituents or anyone else. I'm wondering if Ms Robert came across codes of conduct that were worked into legislation like this or that referenced it.

Ms Robert: Just off the top of my head, I'm fairly certain that one of the federal pieces had a bit of a preamble that members will conduct themselves in this manner and this manner and this manner, positive sorts of statements. I believe one of the federal codes did, and I believe Quebec did.

Ms Blakeman: Quebec does for sure.

Ms Robert: Quebec does. It's sort of a statement at the beginning, yes. So certainly there are a couple. I don't recall if – possibly Nova Scotia. I just, off the top of my head, can't recall.

6:35

Ms Blakeman: I think it's an omission in our act, and I'd like it added to the list of what we could consider as part of our work here.

The Chair: I think that's certainly what we're going to go through in our detailed deliberations of recommendations.

Ms Blakeman: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.
Mr. Saskiw has one more question.

Mr. Saskiw: Just one other question. With respect to page 8, table 1, it lists the different definitions under Influencing Decisions. It's just quite interesting to see that other jurisdictions have the term "friend" or "friends," particularly the House of Commons. I'm guessing it wouldn't be too difficult to determine whether or not those statutes actually have a statutory definition of what friend means.

Ms Robert: Yeah. They don't. In fact, I'm pretty sure the federal legislation is the only one that uses the term "friend," and I think it might even only be one of the three pieces. No, they don't.

Mr. Saskiw: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: Good. Thank you.
Okay. Then we're going to move on to item (b) here, which is a summary of our written submissions. A great deal of work went into compiling this also. I'll ask Ms Zhang to give us a short overview of the document. That should move us nicely into our discussion on the oral presentations.

Ms Zhang: Thank you, Mr. Chair. As the committee knows, stakeholders and members of the public were invited to make written submissions to the committee regarding the review of the Conflicts of Interest Act. The committee received 10 written submissions from various stakeholders, among them the Integrity Commissioner of Nunavut, the Sheldon Chumir Foundation for Ethics in Leadership, the Canadian Civil Liberties Association, just to name a few. Some of the written submissions drew on the discussion guide, and others were more general in nature. This summary of written submissions is organized by provisions in the act to facilitate comparison of recommendations and discussion.

Some of the common recommendations included the need to clarify legal language and definition of terms, expanding the list of items on members' public disclosure statements, re-examining or removing exceptions to provisions regarding disclosure and cooling-off periods, whether the Ethics Commissioner should have the power to initiate investigations, re-examining employment restrictions and cooling-off periods for former ministers and former political staff members, and increasing transparency of the reporting of the Ethics Commissioner's activities.

I'll just direct committee members to the last page of the submission summary. There's a list of the submissions that we received. Noted down at the bottom are the two offers for oral presentations that we received, from Alastair Lucas of the Sheldon Chumir Foundation and Mr. Arthur Schafer, director of the Centre for Professional and Applied Ethics at the University of Manitoba.

I believe that your next agenda item is to discuss oral presentations. If the committee has any questions about the submissions summary, I'd be happy to answer them.

The Chair: Indeed. Thank you very much. Again, it's great for a committee such as ours to have everything put into a nice, neat little summary like this. The way it's organized will be very helpful in our deliberations, so thank you, Ms Zhang.

Were there any immediate questions for clarification on this submission? Then hearing none right now . . .

Ms L. Johnson: I did have a housekeeping one.

The Chair: Okay. Ms Johnson.

Ms L. Johnson: Yeah. The list of all these initials, SCF, ICN: if that could be typed up in one list – I started to handwrite it out – just as a quick reference guide, that would be really helpful. There are so many letters in our world right now that I have to make sure I have the right definition for the meeting I'm attending.

The Chair: You mean as opposed to what's on the last page? The acronyms are there. The abbreviations are at the beginning of each one. That's on page 18.

Ms L. Johnson: Oh, there on the left. I did the same thing this morning. It's been a long day. Sorry.

The Chair: Is that sufficient, then?

Ms L. Johnson: Yeah. That's good. I did the same thing this morning with a document.

The Chair: Great. Thank you, then.

Well, it's a great overview for tonight. We'll keep that last page, of course, handy for our discussions as we move into the next discussion here, on oral presentations. Thanks very much.

Agenda item 5 of tonight's meeting is to discuss oral presentations. You may recall that shortly after the committee was struck, we put out the call for written submissions both to identified stakeholders and through the website to the general public. We received quite a number of submissions, I think a great deal more than what was received in the last committee review of this act. Of course, as was just identified by Ms Zhang, two of them expressed an interest and a willingness to meet with the committee for an oral presentation. I guess what we need to do as a committee now is review further the benefit of having oral presentations. Would the committee like to see that happen? I'll just open that up to the floor.

Yes. One from our deputy chair. I'm sorry that I forgot to acknowledge when you came in.

Mr. Luan: No, no. You did. Thank you. I just want to say that I remember that right after the start of the committee the Ethics Commissioner did sort of an oral presentation. I found that it was very helpful to me. I'm recommending that if we have the time, if in our process so far we're okay with the time to accommodate oral presentations, I would like to urge our committee members to consider having that. I find it's very informative.

The Chair: Mr. Wilson.

Mr. Wilson: Thank you. I am intrigued by Mr. Arthur Schafer's offer and the way in which this paragraph is written. I think that it would be of value to our deliberation and discussion if we were to have the opportunity to hear what he has to say in person and be

able to question him on some of the apparent conflicts of interest versus actual conflicts, differing from corruption, and why people misunderstand the nature and importance of conflict of interest. I think it would be of high value for us.

The Chair: Any other comments?

Mr. Saskiw: Just briefly, I think I'd just echo the comments from Mr. Wilson, especially in particular his explanation of the difference between apparent and actual conflicts. During one of our last presentations there was a suggestion that the British Columbia ethics commissioner had in fact stated that he was not in favour of a change in legislation to include apparent conflicts. That has subsequently been demonstrated or shown not to be the case. I think it's important that we really get to the bottom of that, and this presenter would probably help us with it.

The Chair: Okay. Anybody else? I'm seeing some head-nodding.

This is rather informal, but I'll just remind the committee of our draft timeline. What we had suggested was that if we were going to do oral presentations, we would do that in early June. I'm going to suggest we would want to do that after session is completed. In June and July we'll be needing to meet in order to further discuss our recommendations on the act to provide directions for the draft report and then in early September meet to review a draft report. So we do have time allotted for that in our timeline if the committee so wishes to invite oral submissions.

I think the second thing, then, would be: do we wish to just invite those that have requested an opportunity to make an oral presentation, or would we want to request any authors of the written submissions to also give oral presentations?

Mr. Dorward: Can you refresh my memory, Chair, on whether we alluded to this in the information we sent out? Did we allude to the fact that they could give an oral presentation, or did these oral presentations come out of the blue?

The Chair: It was in our original document that went out that oral submissions may be requested, I believe.

Rhonda, you could correct me if I'm wrong.

Mr. Dorward: That's what I wanted to know, how strong that was, so that we can get a sense of it.

Ms Sorensen: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, we typically do put a statement like that in the advertising, but if you recall, we chose not to advertise, so that statement did not exist in any of the communication material that went out.

Dr. Massolin: But, Mr. Chair, it did appear in the letters we sent out to stakeholders, right?

Ms Sorensen: I believe so.

Dr. Massolin: The majority of these submissions came from that stakeholder list.

6:45

The Chair: I think there was some verbal communication throughout the process as well where we said that the committee will determine if we want to do oral presentations or not.

I'll get Jody, our committee clerk, to read the line.

Ms Rempel: Just for those who've received the stakeholder letter, it included the line that all parties wishing to be considered for the

opportunity to make an oral presentation to the committee should indicate so in their written submissions.

Mr. Dorward: That's what I thought, and in that sense I don't know that we need to reach out again, but I certainly would like to hear from these two. I had a question relative to budget. I assume these individuals are willing to come here on their own dime rather than our dime. I don't know.

The Chair: I don't believe we have allotted that in our committee budget.

Ms Rempel: This, you know, is always open for the committee to consider, but these rooms are actually set up to receive presentations by teleconference or video conference, so it's really not necessary for presenters to travel if that poses a concern.

Mr. Dorward: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Okay. So I'm getting kind of a general consensus. I don't think we need to call an official vote, do we? No. I'm feeling a general consensus to ask for the oral presentations and specifically for the two that have requested an opportunity to meet with the committee. I'm going to suggest, then, that we request Alastair Lucas, the interim president of the Sheldon Chumir Foundation for Ethics in Leadership; and Arthur Schafer, the director of the Centre for Professional and Applied Ethics at the University of Manitoba, to appear before the committee if they're available at the time we're selecting. Good. Okay. That was easy.

A presentation format suggestion was that perhaps we could ask them for a 10-minute presentation followed by 20 minutes of questions. Okay. Then we're probably going to be looking at a meeting that would span over an hour and a half to two hours for oral.

Ms Blakeman: I would have said a minimum of an hour each. I mean, 10 minutes for a presentation when we're trying to dig down on something like the use of "improper" and where it's used and where it's not and what the arguments are about plus our questions back to the individuals? I'm always concerned that the committee does not limit itself in its exploration of the issues by some preset timeline. Not that I'm suggesting that we all be here till Christmas – I'm not – but I think we really get into trouble if we say that we're going to spend 15 minutes on questions, and that's it. We have to be prepared that it's going to take us a while. So I would have said at least an hour per presenter.

Mr. Dorward: I'd say two and a half hours and take a 15-minute break between the two.

Ms Blakeman: Yeah. That's probably fine.

Mr. Dorward: I agree. Let's suggest two and half hours and maybe take a 15-minute break between the two, and let's go at it and see what happens.

The Chair: Okay. I think the original recommendation that we were contemplating was based on the potential that we might have more than two presentations as well. Two presenters is certainly manageable over that time. We can accommodate that.

We'll start with that, and I think the worst-case scenario is that it doesn't take an hour per presentation. We may make it through them quicker than that, and then we get to go home early. We'll set it to that as well so that we'll probably look at a suggested 20-minute presentation and 40 minutes of questions and answers. Okay.

Both myself and my deputy chair, Mr. Luan, will work together to select a few potential meeting dates, and the committee clerk will then poll all the committee members for their availability. As well, we'll confirm that we can get them at times that would be available to the presenters. Those meeting dates will be scheduled after session, then. We'll have time for the presentations and then time to get into the actual deliberations at our following meeting. Great.

Next is our communications update. Ms Sorensen, could you give us a quick update on our communications plan?

Ms Sorensen: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just thought it might be of interest to the committee to know that based on our decision to disseminate most of the information about the work of the committee through social media and the website, we did receive 980 visits to the website; 301 went to the discussion guide in particular. Facebook was seen by 139 people, and Twitter was seen by 328 followers plus retweeted, so then it reached 1,750 in addition to the 328, bringing it to a total of 2,078.

Based on the discussion that was held previously on the oral presentations, I would recommend that a media advisory be sent out alerting the public to the fact that the oral presentations will take place and, of course, posting this updated information on the website and social media sites as well.

Ms Blakeman: I'm wondering: what's the comparison? Because I'm sort of lost on the context of this. You said 900 people went on the site. How does that compare to any of the other sort of special select act reviews that we've done?

Ms Sorensen: I could certainly get you some information on how it compares. We'd have to run reports on each individual site, so that's why I don't have it right in front of me. The visits show how many people actually went to that website, and in terms of the discussion guide that shows how many people went directly to the guide to read it or to download it.

Ms Blakeman: I'm sorry. What was the first statistic that you gave?

Ms Sorensen: The 980 visits to the conflicts of interest website.

Ms Blakeman: Is that the first thing that you said?

Ms Sorensen: Yeah, I believe so. I'll have to check *Hansard* in the morning.

Ms Blakeman: Okay. Sorry. I thought there was another number in there.

Because we didn't advertise, I'm trying to see if we can at least get a football-field-sized guesstimate of whether this was more effective, less effective, or more or less the same, just for our interest but also for future committees that are considering doing this.

Ms Sorensen: Certainly. If I may, Mr. Chair, just a follow-up question on that. Were you looking specifically at select special or all of the legislative committees, like the legislative policy committees?

Ms Blakeman: No. I think it's really the act reviews. You know, there's a previous one here, but it really has to be within about the last five years because the nature of social media has just changed so much that we're kind of comparing Slinky toys and Transformers.

Ms Sorensen: Absolutely. I agree. I can get that for you no problem.

Ms Blakeman: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: That's very true. Social media is changing very quickly. I heard a statistic the other day that the average age on Facebook now is in the 30s, and our youngsters are moving to different social media formats already. That should be an interesting challenge for you.

Ms Sorensen: Yes, it sure is.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms Sorensen.

Moving on to our next one, other business. Now, we had a late submission. You may recall that we set a date of March 1, 2013, as our deadline for submissions regarding the Conflicts of Interest Act review. We did, however, receive one submission afterwards, several days after, from Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development. A copy of that submission is online for committee members on our internal website, but because of our previous motion, we need to just have a quick discussion as to whether or not the committee would like to have this late submission included with the others as part of our review of the Conflicts of Interest Act.

Mr. Dorward: Just a point of clarification on page 18. CCLA was March 4. Was that late, too?

The Chair: That was listed on here. I just saw that as well, the summary of written submissions.

Mr. Dorward: I guess let's cut to the chase. In my opinion, we should just accept it, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: I really wasn't anticipating any negative comments about it. If someone took the time to write a submission, I think this committee is looking pretty favourable.

Mr. McDonald, you had a comment as well?

Mr. McDonald: Agreed.

The Chair: Agreed. Then I'll need someone to move that the written submission received by the Select Special Conflicts of Interest Act Review Committee from Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development be included in the review of the Conflicts of Interest Act.

Mr. McDonald is moving that. All in favour? That is carried unanimously.

All right. Is there any other business that committee members wanted to raise tonight?

6:55

Ms Blakeman: Shall we set a date right after June 6?

The Chair: We hadn't actually contemplated any dates yet, but why don't I ask? Our preference right now would be for our committee clerk to contact the presenters, check their availability, and then shortly after, we can poll the committee.

Ms Blakeman: Okay.

The Chair: We would probably want to stay with a similar time. I've heard loud and clear that some committee members do not like the mornings when we're in session, but that may work outside of session for some. We'll check availability with our presenters first. There's no sense calling a meeting if they're both unavailable. We can get sort of a sense of some dates that they may be available, and then we'll poll the committee shortly after that. Okay? Great.

Could I have a motion to adjourn, then? Mr. Luan. All in favour? Carried.

Thank you.

[The committee adjourned at 6:56 p.m.]

