

Title: Wednesday, July 4, 2007 Community Services Committee

Date: 07/07/04

Time: 9:31 a.m.

[Mr. Marz in the chair]

The Chair: Well, good morning, everyone. I'd like to call the meeting to order and welcome everyone. My name is Richard Marz. I'm the chair of the committee. I'd like to advise that I was substituted as chair of the committee under the provisions of temporary Standing Order 56(2.1) to (2.3) until November 8, 2007, and I would also at this time like to table a copy of a letter from the former chair to Dr. McNeil indicating that.

I'll also ask the members of the committee and the LAO staff to introduce themselves at this time for the record. I'll ask to start on my right with Weslyn.

[The following committee members introduced themselves: Rev. Abbott, Mr. Backs, Mr. Flaherty, Mr. Johnston, Mr. Lougheed, Mrs. Mather, and Dr. Pannu]

Ms Rempel: Jody Rempel, committee clerk.

Dr. Massolin: Philip Massolin, committee research co-ordinator.

Ms Sorensen: Rhonda Sorensen, manager of communications with the Clerk's office.

Ms Sales: Tracey Sales, communications consultant.

Ms Dean: Shannon Dean, Parliamentary Counsel.

Mrs. Dacyshyn: Corinne Dacyshyn, committee clerk.

The Chair: Well, welcome, everyone. I'd like to note that the members' meeting materials have been available online for printing and viewing since Friday, June 29, and that members are welcome to bring their LAO laptops to meetings in the future to access the documents electronically during the proceedings. During early discussions this morning it was pointed out that being a new committee, we're trail-blazing, so I guess that kind of indicates that we may be a bit in the wilderness until we get our feet wet in this new committee.

I've noticed that two other members have joined us. Would you like to introduce yourselves?

Mr. Johnson: LeRoy Johnson. I'm the MLA for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

Mr. Lukaszuk: Good morning, Mr. Chairman. Thomas Lukaszuk, Edmonton-Castle Downs.

The Chair: Welcome.

The agenda has been in your binders. Could we have a motion to approve the agenda for the July 4 meeting?

Rev. Abbott: So moved.

The Chair: All those in favour? Opposed? That's carried.

I'd like to remind the committee that we must report to the Assembly during the first week of November. In order to do that, the committee needs to make several decisions today. There's a sample timeline in your meeting materials. I believe it's tab 3. This sample shows an example of how we might consider conducting our work. It's up to our committee to decide its own schedule for procedures.

We will discuss and decide on these issues in detail under item 6, but I will outline them briefly right here. Does the committee wish to receive written submissions? Does the committee wish to hold public hearings? How does the committee wish to advertise public input for written submissions: news releases or advertisements? If the committee wishes to place paid advertisements, where does it wish to advertise: province-wide, urban, rural? What would the content of the ads be? Key points for review? Advertise bills together or individually? Deadline for written submissions? Does the committee wish to advertise public hearings? Does the committee wish to invite government officials for an overview on bills? If so, when?

We'll get to those things later under item 6, but right now we'll have an orientation by Senior Parliamentary Counsel. I'll turn it over to Shannon Dean to do that for us.

Ms Dean: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As committee members are aware, this committee and the other three policy field committees are one of the democratic reform initiatives arising from the March 7 House leaders' agreement, which was implemented through the temporary Standing Orders that were approved by the Assembly this April. These changes will allow for broader committee activity. So it's an exciting time, particularly today, because this is this committee's inaugural meeting, and it's only the second meeting of a policy field committee. Although these committees are new to Alberta, they're commonly found in other Canadian jurisdictions, most notably Saskatchewan and Ontario, and there are similar types of committees that perform legislative review functions at the federal level.

Now, under the Standing Orders this committee has a broad mandate and wide-ranging powers. Specifically, under temporary Standing Order 52.01(1) this committee has a mandate relating to the areas of health, education, children's services, seniors, supports for the disabled, tourism, parks, recreation, and culture.

The powers of the committee include the following. It can review any bill, regulation, or subject matter referred to it by the Assembly. The ministers of the various portfolios within the committee's mandate may also request that the committee conduct an inquiry into a particular subject matter. The various annual reports of the departments and government agencies also stand referred to this committee. Lastly, the committee may on its own initiative conduct inquiries on subject matters within its mandate.

Now, although this committee has wide-ranging functions, it's important to highlight Standing Order 52.04 as this states clearly that where the Assembly has referred a bill, regulation, or other matter, then it is that matter or that bill that is the priority of the committee.

Before discussing the scope of review in connection with the two bills that have been referred to this committee, I'm going to touch briefly on items 4(b) and (c) in your agenda. Again, we thought it would be useful to highlight a few of the characteristics of committees of the Assembly. As you know, they're not committees of government. They are all-party in their membership. They report to the Assembly. Their meetings are public and recorded in *Hansard* unless the committee decides to go in camera. These committees are cloaked with the same powers, privileges, and immunities that the Assembly has. In other words, this committee is cloaked with parliamentary privilege.

To refresh everybody's memory, parliamentary privilege is basically what enables you and the Assembly to conduct your work free of interference. The most commonly known privilege is freedom of speech. This enables you to speak freely in the Assembly or in a committee of the Assembly without fear of being sued for your comments. Now, this all stems from article 9 of the English

Bill of Rights, which goes back to 1689, and codification of this principle appears in the Legislative Assembly Act, specifically section 13. I have copies of that, which I'll ask to be distributed.

Just to move ahead, section 13 states:

A Member is not liable to any civil action or prosecution, arrest, imprisonment or damages by reason of any matter or thing brought by the Member before the Assembly or any committee of the Assembly by petition, Bill, resolution, motion or otherwise or by reason of anything said by the Member in the Assembly or any committee of the Assembly.

Now, this privilege also applies to witnesses that appear before the committee. This principle of parliamentary privilege extending to witnesses has been recognized in our courts as recently as May of this year, and that had connection with the parliamentary hearings involving the RCMP, where they held that the testimony of the RCMP official could not be used in a code of conduct inquiry on the basis of parliamentary privilege.

Now, one of the most important powers that this committee has, as compared to a government committee, is the power to compel the attendance of witnesses in connection with matters that are before them. Of course, I think your first line of action would be to extend an invitation, but if that is not sufficient impetus for somebody to appear, then the committee could make a decision to summon the witness through the issuance of a warrant from the Speaker. This is a long-standing power of committees; however, to our collective knowledge we are unaware of it being utilized in Alberta. This power is also codified in section 14 of the Legislative Assembly Act, which is on that handout that was just distributed.

9:40

Now I'd like to touch upon the immediate task at hand, which is the committee's role in reviewing the bills that have been referred to it, namely Bills 31 and 41. There is a difference in terms of the committee's scope of review with respect to a bill that's been referred after first reading as compared to when a bill has been referred after second reading. As you know, Bill 31, Mental Health Amendment Act, 2007, was referred to this committee by Government Motion 24, which was approved by the Assembly on May 31. At the time of referral this bill had received second reading, which means, as you know, that the Assembly has agreed to the principle of the bill. So in terms of your scope of review, you're looking at the content of the bill. It's not a wide-ranging, exploratory review. You're focused on what's in the bill and what amendments could improve this bill that are consistent with the principle that has been approved at second reading.

By comparison, Bill 41, the Health Professions Statutes Amendment Act, 2007, was referred to this committee immediately following first reading. The House hasn't approved it in principle, so your scope of review is broader in the sense that you can look at the subject matter. You can touch upon things that are not necessarily identified in the bill itself.

Now, unless the committee members have any questions, I think that about wraps up the scope of review comments. I am going to move along to the review process just briefly, Mr. Chairman, if that's all right.

The Chair: Okay. Please proceed. If anyone has any questions, just indicate to the chair, and I'll make a list.

Ms Dean: Before the committee entertains some of the issues that the chair identified at the outset of the meeting, I want to emphasize that the committee is the master of its procedures and processes. It's up to the committee which approach it's going to take in terms of its review with respect to these two bills. For instance, you may decide

to undergo public consultation, whether that be written submissions or public hearings. You may decide to follow a different course with one bill as compared to another bill. You may want to go through paid advertising to advise for public submissions, but you don't have to. Finally, you may wish to invite government officials to attend one of your meetings to provide a technical briefing. Again, these are issues for you to determine because you are the masters of your own procedure.

The Chair: Okay. Questions? I have Reverend Abbott.

Rev. Abbott: Thank you very much, Chair, and thanks, Shannon, for that review. I have two questions. First of all, I'm just wondering: as the sponsor of Bill 31 in the Legislature, would I be in conflict of interest of any kind debating that bill in this committee? That's my first question.

Then my second question is with regard to private members' bills. Is there any provision that says that they either can or cannot be referred to this committee, or is that a moot point?

Ms Dean: I'll answer the second question. The temporary Standing Orders do allow for private members' bills as well as government bills to be referred to policy field committees. It precludes private bills and appropriation bills from being referred to policy field committees.

In response to your first question, although you are the sponsor of this particular bill, you certainly are an active member of this committee and can carry on that role here. For instance, with respect to the other policy field committee that's active right now, there is a similar situation with Dr. Brown and Bill 2, I believe.

Rev. Abbott: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: Any other questions?

Then we will proceed. We will go through a bit of a committee orientation at this point in time. Our committee is supported by Corinne Dacyshyn. She is the clerk assigned to this committee, and she provides administrative, procedural, and general assistance as required.

She will also work with Philip Massolin. Philip introduced himself earlier. He's the committee research co-ordinator, to co-ordinate the research and information needs directed by the committee. On that, I would ask that any requests by any committee members for specified research be directed through the chair, not to Philip specifically. We want to make sure that any requests for research are compatible with what the committee wants, not just what individuals on the committee would request, so it has to go through the chair.

Rhonda Sorensen – give us a wave, Rhonda – is the manager of communications services, and Tracey Sales is a communications consultant. They'll work with the committee to ensure that the committee's decisions about communication needs are met.

Of course, we've heard from Shannon Dean, our Senior Parliamentary Counsel, who also will be available to provide assistance to the committee as required. Corinne will now inform us on new administrative procedures, which have been adopted for all legislative committees. Corinne.

Mrs. Dacyshyn: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The Clerk and Clerk Assistant advised during a recent meeting with the chairs and deputy chairs of the new policy field committees that Alberta officials had met with their counterparts in other Legislatures about modern procedures for all-party legislative committees. Alberta will now be building on common practices in other jurisdictions.

One of the most innovative changes is the internal website allowing members to control how they wish to receive information. On Friday you and your staff received an e-mail with a link to an internal website exclusively for this committee. Similar websites for each of our committees will be developed, and access will be given to members and their immediate staff who will be supporting them confidentially with their committee work. You all received a personalized binder for your use, with copies of the bills at the back. You may choose to have your staff print your meeting material from the internal website and file it in the binder before a meeting, or you're welcome to bring your LAO laptop to meetings and read the material online when it works – right, Art? – or you can do both. You can do a combination.

Each table does have a port for Internet access. As well, the material can be viewed with the LAO laptop wherever there's access to Our House, the intranet site. Websites, as they get developed, will have links to the bills being examined, briefing material for upcoming meetings, past meeting material, and transcripts. Committee clerks and staff from information technology services are always, of course, available to answer questions and assist in the transition.

If you or your staff have questions about how the new process is to work or you need help with anything, please do give us a call.

The Chair: Thanks, Corinne. I just want to touch briefly on our budget for 2007-2008. A copy of the approved committee budget for '07-08 in the amount of \$59,000 was available on the committee's internal website. The \$59,000 covers pay to members, travel expenses for meetings and public hearings, and hosting during meetings. Although not specifically outlined in the budget document, there's also \$80,000 budgeted for all four policy field committees for advertising. If this amount does not fully cover advertising expenses, funds will be found in the overall committee envelope. As these budgets have already been approved by a Special Standing Committee on Members' Services, this item is for information only, and no motion is required.

So now we'll get into item 6. We have to make some decisions. We have several decisions we've got to make today regarding the public input process. How does the committee wish to communicate with the public about this review? Does the committee wish to invite written submissions? If so, on which bill: Bill 31, Bill 41, or both? Does the committee wish to hold public hearings? If so, on both bills or on one or the other, and where would they be? Would the committee prefer to invite stakeholders to travel to Edmonton or some other location? If there are any suggestions or those that want to participate in discussion on that matter right now, I'll make a speakers list. Does the committee wish to invite written submissions or anything like that? Dr. Pannu?

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. These committees, as we all recognize and have been told, are a new experiment in expanding the democratic process to encourage access of citizens to the decisions that we make and to welcome input from concerned citizens, be they stakeholders or general people with broader interest in matters of decision-making in the Assembly. This being a new experiment, I think what we need to do is to make sure that we encourage to the utmost our fellow citizens to know what we are doing.

To that effect, then, the questions of communication – you know, how do we communicate that message? – is an important one. I would suggest, therefore, that we, looking at this list, try to look at what barriers might remain even if we were to begin all of these suggested procedures and try to remove those. In other words, I think every effort should be made to make the decision-making processes and the discussions in the committee accessible, transpar-

ent, and should be done in a way in which people feel that they're welcome to come and both witness what's happening and participate if they so desire.

9:50

The Chair: Tony Abbott.

Rev. Abbott: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I was going to say pretty much the same thing. I agree that we should attempt to do all of the above. I know that we do have some specific timelines that we need to meet, but I'm certainly in favour of opening it up to both written submissions, public hearings, and pretty much any other way we can get the message out and get people involved.

I know, again, as the sponsor of Bill 31 I've certainly had a lot of written submissions already come to me about the bill, some very supportive, some with some pretty interesting concerns that probably should be looked at. So I think we should open it up to all aspects, and I also agree that we should be doing some form of advertising to let people know that this is available and when we're meeting, et cetera.

Mr. Lougheed: The bill I'd be most interested in is the one that Tony just spoke about, his sponsoring of the mental health act. As chair of the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities one of our areas of focus lately is mental health. Because of that there have been quite a few connections with individuals, so I guess I'm a little curious about what kind of mechanism – there are several people, a half-dozen or so, that I would really like to see appear before the committee. One of them I spoke with just last week, and he was asking about this process, or how this would work out.

So I guess I'm curious. I don't believe the committee – we don't know, as we just said. Raj, I think, said that we don't know how much interest there is out there. How will we manage if there are more people that want to appear than we can hear? How will we deal with all of that? But I agree that there should be all sorts of different mechanisms for that input. If these people that I'm thinking of, who have spoken to me, are not invited, I suppose they will respond on their own if they understand the mechanism. So I'm just curious how we'll decide, how we'll make that decision.

I would like to invite them or have you invite them as the chair. I'd like to see that invitation extended to them. They might be some of these half-dozen people that I'm thinking of, but other people, I suppose, have probably thought of them as well.

The Chair: Mr. Shiraz Shariff.

Mr. Shariff: Thank you, Chairman. In principle I support the concept of written submissions as well as public hearings, but as I look at these two bills, one has already passed second reading, so the principle has already been approved. I'm wondering whether any input has been received by the department that could be of help to us in deciding how much further consultation we do. On that particular Mental Health Amendment Act I believe there is value to having written submissions, but I'm not sure about the public hearings, and I would like to base that decision on whether the department has had any public hearings on this matter or not.

On the Health Professions Statutes Amendment Act, where we can have significant impact on how this bill proceeds in the Assembly, I would support both submissions as well as hearings.

Thank you.

The Chair: I have Mr. Thomas Lukaszuk.

Mr. Lukaszuk: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Perhaps to segue from what Mr. Lougheed has indicated, indeed these committees are a monumental change to the way the Legislative Assembly conducts itself in the province of Alberta. Having said that, we want to ascertain that these committees don't become victims of their own success and become bogged down with massive lists of those who wish to present to the committee, particularly now as the concept of this committee is rather novel.

I think we ought to apply some criteria relevant to (a) whether the bill is passed to this committee after first or second reading. If the bill is passed after first reading, it hasn't received significant debate time in the House. The bill is open to very wide, unfettered interpretation. Perhaps at that point the committee may want to entertain having a wide list of potential presenters in person who want to vet their opinions through the committee. However, if you have the bill already referred to this committee after second reading, I imagine that the type of debate that will take place at this table will be more technical: relevant to specific amendments, to specific subsections of the bill. At that point I question how productive it would be for this committee to have a long list of potential stakeholders.

Without prejudicing the outcome of what the decision may be, I imagine Bill 31 would be one that could garner a great deal of interest in the public. There are many Albertans affected with mental illness. There are many caregivers, family members who are affected in one way or another. There are many, many professionals throughout the province who have strong opinions from one end of the spectrum to the other on what ought to be done relevant to mental illness. I would not be surprised if you would receive a list of thousands of individuals who would want to appear before this committee and share their opinions because this is the only opportunity that an average Albertan will have to appear before a number of legislators and make a meaningful input.

Based on my experience from various other committees, what usually happens – not always but usually – is that those who come before a committee to present end up reading their own written submissions. It's always nice to have the personal contact – I'm sure there is something that's added to it – but reading their submission in itself would not deter from the message that's being conveyed. So I'd be cautious because I want this committee and I'm sure everyone around this table wants this committee to be successful and last in perpetuity, but if we find that we expose ourselves to lists of thousands and have this committee put in a position where we have to reject individuals, it perhaps may alter the public's opinion of this committee.

I would suggest that our preference should always be a written submission, and in cases where it's not practicable for various circumstances or where we find that someone is a significant stakeholder who, perhaps, we would like to cross-examine as they are submitting to us, those individuals should definitely be invited to appear in person. But other than that, for most stakeholders I think it would suffice if we obtain a written submission and give it due diligence, obviously, take it into consideration as if they were here in person.

The Chair: Mr. Art Johnston, followed by Mr. LeRoy Johnson.

Mr. Johnston: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just on the latter part of Thomas's comments I think the submissions should be written submissions, but application would be made through the chair, and therefore the chair controls who may appear before this committee. That's all I have.

The Chair: Mr. LeRoy Johnson.

Mr. Johnson: Thank you. It's been pointed out already that this is a new venture for us – and we all understand that – so we are of course finding our way here. I pretty much concur with much of what has been said so far in terms of written submissions and also hearings if necessary. What I'm wondering is: since this has been tried in other provinces, do we have any information as to their experiences in terms of, particularly, written submissions and hearings? What kind of response have they had? What was their approach? Is that information available to us?

The Chair: Shannon, do you have any information on that?

10:00

Ms Dean: I was fortunate with the other table officers to visit a few jurisdictions for a very small period of time, so I'll just relay some observations. I went to Ontario, and they have a very well-established practice of public hearings on bills. They often advertise under very strict timelines. For example, when I was there, they were advertising for the next day for hearings the following week. Again, what they have are stakeholder lists, where particular groups will be solicited for input, but this is accompanied by a public advertisement.

With respect to the public hearings there is a very tightly controlled timetable. I think that it's quite common for them to provide a very brief overview of the written submission, not reading out the written submission but just a very brief overview. I mean, off the top of my head I think it was a 15-minute window per stakeholder for the presentation and questions and comments from the committee members, and that was it.

The Chair: Were you done, LeRoy?

Mr. Johnson: Yes.

The Chair: Mr. Dan Backs.

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The committees here are very new. There are four of them, and there will be probably a number of messages out to the public which will, you know, garner some great interest. The timelines on these bills are important.

What I think is one of the most important things that people are looking for is an extension of democracy, and I think it's important that we be seen to be as open to the public as possible. I understand some of the constraints of first and second reading and some of the differences that we will see in how we look at these bills, but I think it is very important to ensure that there is seen to be as much access to the public as can humanly be possible. I think that that has to be kept in mind in terms of ensuring that there are some public hearings on both first and second reading, or public meetings at least, in the north and the south and the centre and that that access is seen to be there for the public. I think that is the most important thing.

Thank you.

Dr. Pannu: Mr. Chairman, I've got three observations to make. I think this discussion is very helpful in bringing out certain questions that we have to address. The first one is the very question of what stage would be most desirable for bills to be referred to a committee such as this one, first reading or after the second reading. It seems to me that that's an issue that the committee should deliberate on, in my view, to be most effective. I would like to see bills that are seemed important enough to be referred to a committee such as this one come before it before they go through the second reading because that's where the principles, the primary issues, come up. I

think the advice of citizens to the Legislature or committee would be very, very helpful. So that's one issue that I think we need to decide.

Already, I think, Shiraz has drawn attention to some of the conundrums that we're dealing with. A bill has come to us, Bill 31, you know, after it's gone through the second reading, so the question has been raised as to whether there will be an opportunity – and it'd be helpful – to have the public come before us to engage us through public hearings on further debate on the bill.

I would hope that in making this decision with respect to at what stage of debate on the bill it should be referred to the committee, we take into account the fact that the ability of the public to come before us is not restricted by the decision that we make. In this case since it's the first exercise, I think, with respect to Bill 31, I'd like to urge that the committee remain open to public hearings although the bill has gone through second reading.

The second question that I want to raise is the question of experience of other jurisdictions that have had this practice in place for some time. Shannon Dean has shared her observations, which seem to have not given us a thorough account of it, of how Ontario deals with this. I think we need to perhaps look at the practices that have evolved from those committees having to deliberate on the kind of issues that we are starting to deliberate on, you know, what procedures we need, what rules have to be in place. How do we control the number of people who want to come in and participate? Are there grounds to have rules which will deny access, or do we limit the time that the people have? Do we prefer oral presentations as opposed to written submissions? Should people be able to read all their written submission or just give us a summary of it?

These are issues that I'm sure other committees have already addressed and dealt with. There's no use reinventing the wheel if those procedures are there and available to us and on study we find them worth trying here. We would need a report, I think, from the Senior Parliamentary Counsel on those procedures and some recommendations with respect to how to deal with the information that we receive. That's the second question.

The third one. Very briefly, Mr. Chairman, the question came to mind. You know, if we do invite people and encourage them to come here and appear before us, then the question is: does the committee travel to where people are, or do the people travel to where the committee is? It'll be easy for people from Edmonton, if we were meeting here, to come to us. There are no travel expenses involved. They can come from Camrose, from Wetaskiwin; they can come from Red Deer. But if some were to come from Fort McMurray or Medicine Hat to appear before the committee, the question of travel expenses becomes important. It may discourage people who genuinely have interest in coming before us and making a presentation if they think that travel expenses are involved. So the question of how we deal with travel expense issues for people who may be travelling long distances, may even be missing a day at work, you know, to come before us: what's the committee's position on that?

I'm raising these as open questions at this stage, not making any motions on this, just so that we have some opportunity for debate.

The Chair: Just before I recognize the next speaker, I don't believe the committee has the authority to decide at what stage a bill comes before it. That would have to take place back at the Legislative Assembly level. Perhaps Shannon would comment on that.

Ms Dean: In terms of when a bill gets referred to a policy field committee, again, that's up to the discretion of the House. It's a decision of the House. But, certainly, these are all temporary standing orders, and if you have particular views with respect to

these referrals to policy field committees, you could voice those to members on the standing committee on privileges and elections and standing orders, which has a mandate to look at these temporary standing orders with the goal of making improvements to them over the course of the next number of months.

The Chair: Corinne has some comments as to the other issue that was brought up regarding payment for people's travelling expenses as far as past practices go.

Mrs. Dacyshyn: For the select special committees that have met in the past, when they have held meetings here in Edmonton and invited people to come and speak or people have asked to come and speak, it's been at their own expense. That's been the past practice.

The Chair: Mr. Backs, are you on this point?

Mr. Backs: It's a related point.

The Chair: I had someone else on this point.

Mr. Backs: Okay. Sure.

Mr. Shariff: Mr. Chairman, just on this very point on the subject matter raised by Dr. Pannu with regard to the extent of our role in various bills. Bill 31, though it has come to us on second reading, we have as a priority subject matter that we would have to deal with. My understanding is that this committee also has the mandate or the authority to bring forward issues that it feels need to be reviewed. So we are not just limited to dealing with Bill 31. We can deal with that matter, submit it to the Assembly, but independently we could raise the subject matter of mental health in Alberta and consider it as part of the committee's workings that we would like to bring forward. I think we do have that scope or mandate available to us.

10:10

Mr. Backs: As Dr. Pannu raised, there are some issues as to experience in Ontario and in other jurisdictions. Some of these questions will be common, I think, to all of the four committees. Will there be, Mr. Chair, co-ordination between the chairs so there is not a duplication of effort on these common questions?

The Chair: Shannon, do you want to comment on that?

Ms Dean: Just in terms of Dr. Pannu's request for a report and your request I think what I would suggest that the committee members do is take a look at the sample timeline that has been provided. That's a reflection of the options that are available to you, and the options that are available to you are based on these practices that have taken place for many years in other jurisdictions.

Again, committees are the masters of their own procedures, so there is no set of specific rules with respect to every bill that goes before a committee. They may decide to have a select group of stakeholders provide input. They may invite only a few stakeholders to appear before them, or they may advertise for public submissions and public hearings. Again, it's really the decision of the committee.

The Chair: And that's under tab 3, that sample timeline. I suggested before that we have a look at that. It may help us. Rather than reinvent what's been done before, we can alter it to suit us, but it is, I think, a fairly good template to look at, to get us going. Bearing in mind that for July 2007 the next meeting is July 16. We

would be looking at the deadlines and the public input and the advertising, all those issues, at that meeting.

Are there any others that wish to enter into the discussion at this point? I have some suggestions as to how to proceed. Weslyn, you have a comment?

Mrs. Mather: I just want to really emphasize, I think, the original intent of our committees, and that is to welcome and encourage input from the public. I don't think we should lose sight of that, because to me that's really important, that we be seen to be open and democratic. I realize that we have to be realistic in terms of how much we can do, but to me our primary intent is to have as much public input as possible so that we make informed decisions that seem to represent the public out there because I think that's what they want.

Mr. Flaherty: Could I just comment on that, Mr. Chair? I think Weslyn brings up an excellent point. I think when you have any type of public meeting, there's an expectation created on the part of the public of what they're going to do: they're going to bring forth suggestions and so forth. I guess I'll speak for myself as part of the public. I'm not clear – and maybe it's that I haven't done my reading homework yet – what the expectation is relative to what we get from the public. What do we do with it? I think there's nothing more insulting to a public group than when they come in and spend hours in preparation and do the job and travel great distances and appear to be listened to and never hear a word back as to what happens. It's buried or not reported how things went relative to what they said. I'm not clear on how we're going to handle that. We have experience that we've talked about in Ontario. That's encouraging, but I think it's important also to know for myself, to sit here and have an idea of what is going to happen with the results of these hearings.

Again, I worry about the timelines that we've set. Sometimes I get the feeling that although this is new, we're going to push it in the gun and shoot it off as fast as we can with no thought about some of these things. So I hope there's some process of deliberation and thinking about it even if we have to go to an ad hoc committee process to think back and report how we're going to do some things.

Those are some of my concerns, and I just thought I'd express that. Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you.

What I'm proposing to do to proceed here is to ask specific questions regarding written submissions or public hearings on each of the bills, and I'll go through one bill at a time. We may end up with the same answers for both bills, but until we do that, we won't know for sure.

On Bill 31, Mental Health Amendment Act, 2007, which has passed second reading, does the committee wish to invite written submissions? Can I just have a show of hands. Okay. That's agreed upon. Does the committee wish to also hold public hearings on Bill 31? A show of hands in favour of that? Opposed? It looks like that's also agreeable for public hearings.

On Bill 41, Health Professions Statutes Amendment Act, 2007, which has passed first reading stage, does the committee wish to have written submissions on that bill? A show of hands? That looks agreeable. Public hearings on that bill as well? Opposed? It looks like the same for that. So we're agreed that we'll have written and public hearings on both bills.

The next question is: where would you like to have these public hearings held? Any discussion on that?

Rev. Abbott: In light of the importance of *Hansard* and having those public hearings on record, I think we should have them right here.

Mr. Lukaszuk: I would by and large concur with Reverend Abbott with the exception that if in the future there is a piece of legislation that is put before this committee that's very geographically specific to one part of Alberta, that perhaps affects only one corner of Alberta and would be of little, if any, relevance to any other jurisdictions, perhaps then it would make sense for the committee to hold its hearing in that particular area. Aside from that exception, I think having it held here in the capital city makes all the sense in the world.

The Chair: Before I proceed any further, could I get a motion to have written submissions and public hearings on both Bill 31 and Bill 41?

Rev. Abbott: So moved.

The Chair: Reverend Abbott moved that

we have written submissions as well as public hearings on both bills.

Those in favour? Opposed? That motion is carried.

Okay. Back to the location of public hearings.

Mr. Shariff: Mr. Chairman, I was just wondering: given that we do have technology that could be applied to people making a submission through a telephone system, do we have the capability that we as members would meet here, but if somebody is in a small town in Alberta or other than in Edmonton and wishes to make a submission, we could apply some technology whereby we could use the telephone system or an Internet telephone?

The Chair: Corinne could comment on that.

Mrs. Dacyshyn: First of all, just so you know, we do have the capability to take *Hansard* on the road at any time, so if we were holding a meeting in another place, *Hansard* would come, and we would have verbatim transcripts of those hearings always.

As far as what Mr. Shariff just said, yes, we do have the ability here in this room to have video conferencing, teleconferencing, so we do have the ability to hear from one person in a small town or a few if we wanted to do it that way as long as there was a place in that town. There has to be a system. But it could be worked out.

Mr. Shariff: Well, then, Mr. Chairman, I would suggest that if there is cost-effectiveness to it, that service be made available, and the committee could meet in Edmonton.

Mr. Lougheed: In my own mind I'm a little unclear about how public hearings would be defined. I'm speaking with respect to those who we would choose to invite to present and come and answer some questions as opposed to people who by their own initiative ask to come and present. Is there any differentiation there, or are they all the same?

10:20

Ms Dean: Well, I think a public hearing invites any member of the public to come and appear before the committee. Of course, advance notification would have to be provided through the committee clerk, et cetera, et cetera. But that doesn't preclude the committee from requesting that certain groups or officials appear before the committee either at that time or at a different time.

Mr. Lougheed: The question then, I guess, is: if Mr. X is asked to appear here, is that considered a public hearing or something different?

Ms Dean: No. I would say that that's an invitation to a particular individual. That's not a public hearing. A public hearing to me is something that the committee would go out and advertise and say that the members of the public are invited to appear before this policy field committee on such and such a date. Notification through the committee clerk would be required for obvious security reasons, to get into the building.

Mr. Lougheed: So we've passed a motion asking for written submissions and public hearings. Where do people that we invite fall in that motion?

The Chair: We didn't cover that in a motion.

Ms Dean: If I can make a suggestion for the committee's consideration. One of the items further down the agenda is possible research that the committee may like in preparation for the next meeting. One thing that other jurisdictions do is ask the researcher assigned to the committee to prepare a list of stakeholders. Now, that list can include people that are identified by particular members of the committee to go on the list. At that time you can look at the list and decide whether or not you want to have those individuals appear at the public hearings or at a different time.

The Chair: Actually, we're getting a little bit ahead of ourselves because that's the next item on the agenda to discuss.

Mr. Shariff: But it's important to clarify this matter, Mr. Chairman. I think that when I voted on individual submissions, I considered them as public input. So in my understanding if an individual is making a presentation, that is public input. It could be a stakeholder association or an individual person. I don't think that we need to have a separate motion or a separate category to that effect.

Mr. Lougheed: We should read the motion again to hear what was said.

Mrs. Dacyshyn: Moved by Reverend Abbott that the committee invite written submissions and hold public hearings on bills 31 and 41.

Mr. Lougheed: It doesn't sound like my question has been answered yet to my satisfaction.

The Chair: Well, whoever makes a presentation would be recorded by *Hansard* is my understanding. So there'd be no private presentations that would not be subject to the public hearing them or the public accessing them.

Mr. Lougheed: If the committee invites somebody to appear, does that fall in the public hearing category?

The Chair: Well, as I said, the next item on the agenda is suggestions about identifying stakeholders or interested parties and who should be specifically advised and invited.

Rob, do you have any comments on this?

Mr. Reynolds: Mr. Chair, I'm Rob Reynolds, Senior Parliamentary Counsel and Acting Clerk for the moment this week.

I was wondering, you know, just listening to this debate, if perhaps members might be getting a bit ahead of themselves here. I mean, what I observed in Ontario, that I think Shannon was talking about, was that there's a request for written submissions or people who want to appear. After you look at the written submissions and review them, you may have a better idea as to who you want to hear from or whether these people want to make this public presentation. I mean, just as a matter of looking ahead, you may not know till the deadline as to how extensive your public hearings are going to be. You could make a request at the time, however you choose to advertise for these submissions. You could then advertise for written submissions, ask if anyone wants to make an oral submission, and then take it from there once you've got that information at your deadline, which I imagine would be sometime in August.

That's one way that you could proceed with that because it's hard to know what is going to be forthcoming, obviously. You may have, as Mr. Lukaszuk said, thousands of people writing in, or you may have very few. You may decide when you get the written submissions that there are certain stakeholder groups or interest groups that you would like to hear from that haven't written in, and at that time you could request that they appear before a public hearing.

Anyway, it's just a suggestion with respect to how you may want to proceed on that. Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Backs, do you have any comments on that?

Mr. Backs: We were on the question of where, whether just to have them here in Edmonton or to expand beyond. Having grown up for the first part of my life near Calgary, there's a sense in other parts of Alberta that decisions emanate from Edmonton. I'm very proud to be in our capital and to be a representative for our capital, but I think it's important that the decisions of a new democratic group, a new democratic committee, a new opening to greater democracy in our province be seen to be accessible to other individuals from other parts of the province.

Now, Bill 31 specifically might see some individuals that would have difficulty in travelling here. Sure, they could have a telephone hookup, and sure, they could be able to access here electronically. But I think it is important that at least there be some ability to make contact, if there is public interest in sitting down with us, to have at least another meeting in Calgary.

Thank you.

The Chair: Are there others?

Dr. Pannu: Mr. Chairman, one issue that I think a question was raised by one of the members just a few minutes ago has to do with the status of people that the committee decides to invite to come before it to give advice, whether it's an expert in an area or an interest group, and whether or not their appearance before the committee would constitute a public hearing. I would hope so. I mean, this is a public record. Unless we explicitly as a committee decide to go in camera on a specific issue, a presentation before the committee invited by the committee or initiated by the committee should be considered part of public hearings. Very simple. I think we just need to be absolutely clear about what we mean by a public hearing. I think an invitation, say, by this committee to a researcher at the University of Calgary to come before us and give advice on mental health would constitute, I guess, part of the public hearing process that this committee has committed to undertaking.

The Chair: Okay. We need to continue on with some of our decisions here. We've decided that we're going to have written and

public hearings on both bills. The discussions centred around Edmonton as a location, and Calgary also was suggested.

Mr. Johnson, do you have a comment on that?

Mr. Johnson: I've had some experience lately with video conferencing, and I'm amazed at the success of it. It's just like having people that may be in a totally different city sitting in the room. It works very, very effectively. I would be in favour of having the meetings here in Edmonton and making video conferencing available to people certainly in Calgary and in other cities as well. I'm not so sure that we can do that for every centre in Alberta, though.

The Chair: We would probably have to publicize the locations that would be available, I would imagine, if we're going to do the teleconferencing so that people would know where to access that service, what towns they'd have to go to.

Do we require a motion for the location?

Ms Dean: We may just want to leave some of these decisions for later. I think that the communications staff may want to prepare a plan for you based on the discussion that's occurred here today. Then you can come back on the 16th. I just offer that as a suggestion.

10:30

The Chair: Okay. Did everybody hear that?

Mr. Shariff: I think it's important that when the advertisements go out, that information be part of the advertising so people who want to make a submission know whether they would have to travel or whether they could do it from their home communities. You know, some people cannot afford to spend six hours on the road to come to you here in Edmonton to make a 10-minute presentation or a 15-minute presentation, so I think that information needs to be in the public arena up front.

The Chair: Yeah. Rhonda, did you want to speak to that?

Ms Sorensen: Yes, Mr. Chair. Thank you. We'll be getting quickly to a sample communications plan in your package which outlines some options that are available to you.

Based on what Mr. Reynolds was saying a little bit earlier, I'd like to draft a more strategic plan that addresses some of the issues that you've been discussing here. I don't want to get into too many specifics without having time to reflect on it, but I would think that you might want to start with advertising for public submissions, see where that goes, leave the door open for public hearings based on what those submissions are, and then go from there. Take it one step at a time as opposed to trying to bring all the people in for written and public. I think you just need to go with the written submissions first, see where that takes you, and then do the public submissions, the oral submissions. Then at that point you can decide: is there a need to travel, or is it something that we can do here?

Now, a specific strategy would address all of those issues. That could be presented at the next meeting.

The Chair: Yes. It's my understanding that the advertising is not going to be going out until after the next meeting.

Mr. Shariff: Oh. Okay.

The Chair: So we wouldn't have to worry about that until after that point in time.

Ms Sorensen: The only other thing I wanted to just touch on, just based on the discussion about whether or not/when you invite stakeholders: to a communications way of thinking, those are public submissions, and they would be included on the public website for people to review. They would be included in the transcripts. They would be available to anybody who wanted to see them unless, as Dr. Pannu had pointed out, you for some reason decide to go in camera.

The Chair: Do we need to make any other decisions other than the written and public hearings at this point in time?

Ms Dean: Can I just comment? I think the committee in principle has approved the idea of public hearings, but advertising and the details associated with respect to locations perhaps can be sorted out at a later date.

The Chair: Okay.

Ms Dean: And if I could just touch upon what Rhonda was mentioning with respect to the submissions that you receive, I think in principle that those are meant to be public, but certainly I would suggest that, because you're dealing with sensitive health issues here and there may be circumstances where somebody submits something and they don't want it to be released to the public, I mean, the committee has that option not to make everything available to the public.

The Chair: Okay. What other decisions do we need at this particular time? Rhonda.

Ms Sorensen: Yeah. Just one decision that I would like to see made is a deadline for the written submissions so that we can compile a sample ad for the next meeting that includes the deadlines and everything that we're going to put out before the public.

The Chair: And that was the next issue I was going to bring up. Keeping in mind that we do have to report by November, the chair would be suggesting Friday, August 24, as the deadline for written submissions. Is the committee in agreement with that?

Mr. Shariff: Just to get a sense of timelines, the next meeting will not happen until the middle of July.

The Chair: Right. July 16.

Mr. Shariff: July 16. Therefore, you will have an ad sometime the following week or that same week, that would then give it about a five-week timeline for a submission. Is that a reasonable timeline?

Ms Sorensen: Absolutely.

Mr. Shariff: Fair enough.

The Chair: Again, referring you back to tab 3, if you look at that template and just pencil in in the first box July 16 and in the third box August 24, receipt of written submissions. Is that something the committee would agree with?

Dr. Pannu: Mr. Chairman, with respect to the deadline Rhonda mentioned as being ample and adequate time, the only concern I have with respect to that deadline is the context of the summer holidays. Lots of people probably won't have the opportunity to see

the ad because they are away: they are at a lake; they are at a cottage; they are with their family somewhere. People pay less attention to public matters during the summer, somewhat less attention I guess, than is the case at other times, so I am concerned that the deadline might be a bit too tight given that context. That's something that comes to mind.

The Chair: I've got Reverend Abbott and then Mrs. Mather.

Rev. Abbott: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would agree with Dr. Pannu that in summer it's very difficult to get people out to meetings. I would much rather set aside two or three days in a row in September, maybe the first two or three days in a row in September, to hear these submissions and do it all in sort of a concentrated timeline rather than spread it out, you know, one meeting every second week or whatever. That's quite cumbersome with our schedules.

Mr. Shariff: Tony, regardless of the timeline the ads will go out in July.

Mrs. Mather: Well, I appreciate what Dr. Pannu is saying in terms of the summer holidays, but I'm also very aware of our timeline. So I think that it's important that we get these written submissions as soon as reasonably possible because then we've got to look at them all before we start those meetings. I agree with what Reverend Abbott is saying about the meetings, that we can't be spreading them all out either, so I'd like to leave the submission deadline as August 24 so that we have some time before September to look at them.

Rev. Abbott: Can I clarify?

The Chair: On this point?

Rev. Abbott: Just to clarify on this point, yeah. I don't have a problem with receiving the written submissions; we all have time to look at those. But I guess I was talking about bringing in witnesses and the public hearings and that kind of stuff, or even us getting together to discuss those written submissions. I would much rather that we had two or three full-day meetings rather than drive all the way into the city for a two-hour meeting. That seems like not a very good use of time.

The Chair: Thomas Lukaszuk.

Mr. Lukaszuk: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm a little concerned with the conversation that's going around the table. This is a very functional committee that's indispensable now to the legislative process and for passage of important bills in the House, and I'm sensing that members around this table would like this committee to meet everywhere, hear from everyone, and at a time that is convenient to everyone everywhere. You know, it would be great if the world was rainbows and lollipops, but that's just not the case. The fact is that we need to produce input back to the House in a timely manner for those bills to pass in the first place because this is an ideal recipe to kill a bill by simply delaying it over here.

I don't mean to sound – and I probably do sound – insensitive to individual needs, but the fact is that the show must go on, and we need to produce tangible input to the House at a time when it is required. So, you know, summertime is inconvenient because people are on holidays. In wintertime half of our rural colleagues are in Arizona. Farmers, you know. You pick a time period, and there's a cohort of Albertans that is busy doing something, so technically we would never be able to hold the hearings.

The fact is: let's stick to deadlines. For those to whom input is important, I'm sure they'll find time or means by which to report to us, be it then in writing, and we must produce. Otherwise, we will bog this down in minutiae that I think are of little relevance to Albertans out there.

The Chair: Weslyn, on this point.

Mrs. Mather: So I'm assuming that – and a lot of us, I believe, have received submissions of sorts already – our process would include going back to those individuals and telling them the deadlines for their written submissions. Is that correct? We don't want to leave out these people that have already indicated that they're interested.

10:40

Mrs. Dacyshyn: If members do have that kind of correspondence with people, maybe where they've given you a call and said, you know, "I'd like to present" or "I'd like to know what the process is for this committee," please do pass them on to me. We already have a few of those that were passed on to me by Mrs. Ady. We've entered those names in the database, and we will send them whatever information the communications staff come up with with respect to our process. They will be invited to participate in the same way.

The Chair: The suggested timeline for public hearings is sometime in September. That's the month school is getting back, and children are getting back into school. As was pointed out by the previous speaker, that'll be another time that's perceived as being very busy. So I think that's a valid argument: there's never a perfect time, and we have to proceed. We do have a mandate to report back by November.

We need to get on with picking some dates. We're getting quite hung up on the difference between probably a week or two. We need to get onto this. The suggestion for public hearings and those invitational submissions as well is not till September. Our next meeting, July 16, will probably be the last meeting until sometime in September. We really need to make some of these decisions today, here, as to the direction we're going so the staff can get on with it. I'm going to ask for, probably, a motion as to the date for written submissions. The suggestion was August 24. Reverend Abbott?

Rev. Abbott: Moved.

The Chair: Mr. Abbott moves that

August 24 be the last date for written submissions.

Any discussion on the motion? Mr. Lukaszuk had something to say?

Mr. Lukaszuk: No, no. I was just supporting it.

The Chair: Those in favour? Opposed? That's carried.

Right now I'll do an overview on the presentation of bills by the government officials. The committee should consider whether or not it's interested in hearing presentations from government officials during the consideration of Bill 31 and Bill 41. These presentations can be co-ordinated by the committee clerk at the direction of the committee. They could be as early as our next meeting, July 16. Would the committee like to hear from government officials on these bills? It would give us a good background of the details of the bills, so when we're approached publicly on this, especially after the next meeting – the advertising will go out; I'm sure we'll be approached by many members of the public – a briefing like that

will bring us up to date, so we will be able to probably answer most of their questions.

Mr. Backs: I think it's self-evident that we need that. I'll make a motion to that effect, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Okay. Mr. Backs moved that we invite government officials to the July 16 meeting to give us a briefing on Bill 31 and make a presentation on Bill 31 and Bill 41. Any discussion? Those in favour? Opposed? The motion is carried.

Mrs. Mather: I think it would be useful for us in terms of our communication strategy and so on if we could today decide when those public hearings might be in September. If we could choose some days now, it certainly would help me with my scheduling. I'm sure you're all the same. If we could look at some dates, my preference would be early in September, maybe the second week.

The Chair: Corinne has some suggested dates, if everybody can get their calendars out. September 10, I believe, was the first available date.

Mr. Shariff: I thought we had earlier on kind of commented on waiting for the submissions and then having a sense of the extent of submissions we'll have and also deciding on where the submissions will be held, whether it will be Calgary and Edmonton or Calgary only or Edmonton only. What we can do is maybe set a few dates aside but not commit to them.

The Chair: That's exactly what we're attempting to do here. Our calendars are extremely busy this time of year, and to get a meeting on short notice is very difficult, so what we want to do is set some times aside now so you don't book them for other things. You know, if it turns out there's an extra day that hasn't been booked, I'm sure you'll find a way to use it on short notice. I believe the 10th, 11th, and 12th are possible dates.

Dr. Pannu: Three consecutive days or one of these three?

The Chair: One of those days, preferably the 10th.

Mrs. Mather: I'll make a motion that it be the 10th.

Mr. Shariff: Well, we can't just give one date. What if we decide to go to Calgary?

Mrs. Mather: We're going to pick how many dates right now? How many can we do?

The Chair: Well, if we could set aside a couple of days, I think it would be good because it's going to be very difficult to set dates in September when we get another month down the road. Judging by the way our schedules are, I think we should probably set aside two or possibly three days in September right now. The 10th, 11th, and 12th or a date the following week might even be better to give the staff some time to react from one to the other.

Ms Dean: In terms of the sequence of events I would think that the committee would want to meet as a committee to review the written submissions in early September and then allow for a period of time to pass before public hearings are held. I just offer that advice at this time.

Mrs. Mather: We'll have the submissions by August 24, right?

The Chair: So September 10 would probably be that first meeting date and then the following week. I think that would be enough time for staff, would it? Ten days?

Ms Dean: I think you're looking at possibly advertising and sending out invitations to stakeholders. A week might be a tight time frame.

Dr. Pannu: Shannon, are you suggesting that we pick some dates during the week of the 17th in September rather than the week of the 10th?

Ms Dean: Perhaps I'll let the committee clerk handle those questions because she's familiar with the administrative burdens.

Mrs. Dacyshyn: Listening to all of what you're saying, I think the best thing to do at this point would be to allow the chair and deputy chair and me to come up with some dates once we've had a moment to think about this, the first one being either September 10, 11, or 12. Then we would come up with some other dates, and I'll send you all more e-mails, and we can try and pick some common dates for public hearings.

Mr. Shariff: Let me just have this clear. There will be an opportunity for this committee to meet once the submissions have been made. This committee at that point in time will decide, based on the submissions, the number of hearings they want to have for each bill. Then the chair and deputy chair and clerk will decide on the dates that meet the logistics of when the public hearings will happen.

The Chair: That's my understanding.

Mr. Shariff: Fair enough.

Mr. Backs: Just a clarification: understanding that the written submissions would have a deadline of August 24 and that there may be a possibility of public hearings afterwards, would those that would be present at the public hearings afterwards be able to present new written submissions? You know, if they're coming in with something, some people, as Mr. Lukaszuk said, will read a submission, and that will in effect be a written submission again. How do we deal with that?

10:50

Mrs. Dacyshyn: The committee can decide how they choose to deal with that. Going back a little ways – I've been here a while – to the Electoral Boundaries Commission in '95-96, when we held public hearings – and they were quite extensive – people made appointments to be heard, but they often came with written submissions that became part of the committee record, written submissions that we had not previously seen. That's a process that we have done in the past.

Rev. Abbott: Well, I was just going to say that it's pretty normal to have a written submission with a presentation, so I think we should accept those.

The Chair: Okay. So we're going to have August 24 as a deadline for written submissions. September 10 will be the meeting when we will review those.

Mrs. Mather: Is it possible to meet before September 10?

The Chair: Philip, do you want to speak about the process?

Dr. Massolin: Sure. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just specifically to that point about written submissions, one of the services and products that I can offer as a researcher for this committee is to summarize the submissions. Depending on the number, this could be quite an onerous task for the committee members. Of course, that would require that I have a little bit of time to do that work, but I think it would be a valuable thing. I think, you know, the start of the second week of September is probably fairly reasonable for that.

The Chair: Corinne.

Mrs. Dacyshyn: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The other comment I'll make is our experience with these committees where we accept written submissions, that with this being a five-week or so timeline, we will likely receive most of the submissions at the very end of the deadline period. That always happens, just to put that out there.

The Chair: So September 10 is the date we'll be reviewing that and then the chair and deputy chair and Corinne will be looking at other possible dates as soon as possible through your department staff to see what's available. Is that agreeable? Okay.

Rhonda, did you want to speak to one other point?

Ms Sorensen: Oh, yes, I did, actually. The one thing that I was hoping to gain some direction on is: when advertising for submissions, do you want to advertise both bills in the same ad, or do you want to do separate advertisements?

Ms Dean: The question was whether there should be two ads or one ad, and perhaps, Rhonda, for the committee members' benefit you could comment on cost implications.

Ms Sorensen: Yes. It would definitely be cheaper to put both bills in one ad. Even though the deadlines for submissions are the same, you may want to hold public hearings for the separate bills on separate days, but that can be decided later. I would recommend that you advertise for both. Now, in the future, when other bills may be referred, you may not have the choice of advertising more than one, but when you are able to, I would recommend you do that.

The Chair: Is the committee in agreement to advertise both bills at the same time?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed?

Mrs. Dacyshyn: We didn't actually have a motion.

The Chair: No. I'm just looking for consensus there.

Dr. Pannu: Mr. Chairman, now that we've made that decision, I just seek some clarification on the need to advertise for public hearings separately later on when we decide. So there'll be another set of ads, then, inviting people to come and make presentations before the committee?

The Chair: And we would likely decide that at the September 10 meeting.

Dr. Pannu: Right.

Mr. Shariff: Mr. Chairman, I'm just suggesting that the ads that will go out should include a statement that indicates that there will be an

opportunity for public hearings should a person or an association wish to make a submission to a public hearing and that that information will be advertised at a later date so that people are aware that this is part of the process that will occur.

The Chair: Good point. I have to remind everybody that we're going to end up with a fairly tight time frame in the fall to get the advertising out, probably a week's advertising prior to the public hearings.

Rhonda, did you have something, briefly, on that?

Ms Sorensen: Yeah. We may want to hold off on making a specific decision on that only because if we are advertising in rural areas, which are generally weekly publications, you're going to need more than a week in order to assure that those advertisements are in the paper and read.

The Chair: Yeah. Like I said, we'll be discussing that at the next meeting.

Okay. The next issue is background/research materials requested through the committee research co-ordinator. I'll turn this over to Phil Massolin now to review some of the research options that may be pursued at the direction of the committee.

Dr. Massolin: Great. Thanks again, Mr. Chair. As you said, I'm committee research co-ordinator. My role is to provide nonpartisan research for this committee as a whole, not to individual members, as was stated earlier, and the way to do that, I think, is to direct these research requests through the chair.

The other thing I should say is that I'm here to support the committee through all stages of its proceedings. I'll talk about the general types of things – products and services – that I can provide, and then I'll sort of hone in on a few of the specific things that I think we're headed towards as it relates to the discussion to this point.

First of all, research can provide research papers: issue-oriented papers, background papers, cross-jurisdictional analyses. We can also accommodate specific research requests themselves. In terms of the submissions and public hearings that we were just talking about, I'm able to prepare in concert with the committee members a list of stakeholders, and if I'm instructed to do so, I can get working on that right away for the next meeting. As was mentioned before, I can put together a compilation and analysis of the evidence heard through the written submissions and present that to the committee for early September. Finally, I can help in drafting the committee report as it reports to the Assembly in November.

Specifically, I think a couple of research items that would be useful for the next meeting might be a press package or a package of press clippings for each of these bills so that you get a little bit of background in terms of what the media has reported on each of the bills. Second of all, it might be useful for the committee to have a cross-jurisdictional analysis of the bills as well.

Again, I await the committee's instructions as to how to proceed on my next research assignment. Maybe if we could ask along those lines.

The Chair: Okay. We would need a motion that the standing committee direct the research co-ordinator to compile a background briefing and a draft stakeholder list for the next meeting.

Reverend Abbott, do you want to move that?

Rev. Abbott: So moved.

Dr. Massolin: Mr. Chair, may I just clarify what is meant by that background briefing. Is it along the lines that I suggested: press clippings as well as the cross-jurisdictional analysis for both bills?

The Chair: Right.

Dr. Massolin: Okay.

The Chair: Any other discussion? Those in favour? That's carried.
Is there any other business that the committee or staff want to bring up at this time?

Mrs. Mather: How do we get the minutes? Will they be online too?

Mrs. Dacyshyn: The transcripts will be available in probably a day

or two. They will be on your internal website link, and you can look at them when they're there. I would expect them to be there probably the day after tomorrow.

The Chair: The date of the next meeting is July 16, 2007, and members will be advised as soon as the briefing materials for this meeting are available.

That is the end of the agenda. If someone wishes to move adjournment.

Mr. Johnson: So moved, that we adjourn.

The Chair: Those in favour? Opposed? That's carried.

[The committee adjourned at 11 a.m.]