



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

The 30th Legislature
Second Session

Select Special
Democratic Accountability
Committee

Wednesday, September 9, 2020
12 p.m.

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Select Special Democratic Accountability Committee

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Horner, Nate S., Drumheller-Stettler (UCP), Deputy Chair

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Ceci, Joe, Calgary-Buffalo (NDP)
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South (NDP)
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Nixon, Jeremy P., Calgary-Klein (UCP)
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Rowswell, Garth, Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright (UCP)**
Rutherford, Brad, Leduc-Beaumont (UCP)
Sigurdson, R.J., Highwood (UCP)
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12 p.m.

Wednesday, September 9, 2020

[Mr. Schow in the chair]

The Chair: Okay. I'd like to call this meeting to order. Welcome to the members and staff in attendance for this meeting of the Select Special Democratic Accountability Committee.

My name is Joseph Schow, and I'm the MLA for Cardston-Siksika and the chair of this committee. I'm going to ask members and those joining the committee at the table to introduce themselves for the record, starting from my right. Once members at the table have introduced themselves, then we'll go to members that are calling on the phone or by Skype. Please, to my right.

Mr. Horner: Good afternoon, everyone. Nate Horner, MLA, Drumheller-Stettler.

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

Ms Fir: Tanya Fir, MLA for Calgary-Peigan.

Ms Sweet: Good afternoon. Heather Sweet, MLA, Edmonton-Manning.

Mr. Dang: Good afternoon. Thomas Dang, Edmonton-South.

Ms Laurie: Good afternoon. Janet Laurie, communications with the LAO.

Ms Cherkewich: Good afternoon. Teri Cherkewich, office of Parliamentary Counsel.

Dr. Massolin: Good afternoon. Philip Massolin, clerk of committees and research services.

Mr. Roth: Good afternoon. Aaron Roth, committee clerk.

The Chair: Thank you, everyone at the table.

On the phone? On the phone we have Mr. Garth Rowswell, who's substituting for Mr. Brad Rutherford. As noted at the table, Ms Fir is substituting for the hon. Mrs. Allard. We also have Mr. Joe Ceci. We have Mr. Jeremy Nixon, Mr. R.J. Sigurdson, and Ms Pancholi as well. There's also one person on the phone whose number is unidentified. If you haven't been identified, could you please let us know who you are? Okay.

I will also note the following for the record. Based on the recommendations of Dr. Deena Hinshaw regarding physical distancing, attendees at today's meeting are advised to leave the appropriate distance between themselves and other meeting participants. Please note that the microphones are operated by *Hansard*, so you don't have to operate them yourselves. Committee proceedings are being live video streamed and audiostreamed on the Internet and broadcast on Alberta Assembly TV. Please set your cellphones and other devices to silent for the duration of this meeting. Just as a note as well, for committee meetings seconders are not required for motions in this committee.

We'll now move on to item 2 of the agenda, which is approval of the agenda. Does anyone have any changes they'd like to make? Seeing none, I'd like to ask a member to please move a motion to approve our agenda. I see Ms Goodridge. Ms Goodridge has moved that the agenda for the September 9, 2020, meeting of the Select Special Democratic Accountability Committee be adopted as distributed. All those in favour, please say aye. Any opposed, please say no. On the phone? Not all at once. That motion is approved and passed.

Item 3, approval of minutes from the August 26, 2020, meeting. We have the draft minutes from our last meeting, which were posted to the committee's internal website for members to review. Are there any errors or omissions to note in the draft minutes? Seeing and hearing none, if not, would a member please move the adoption of the minutes? Sure, Ms Fir. Ms Fir has moved that the minutes for the August 26, 2020, meeting of the Select Special Democratic Accountability Committee be adopted as distributed. All those in favour, please say aye. Any opposed, please say no. On the phone, if you're in favour, please say aye. If you're opposed, please say no.

I'm wondering if we're having any technical issues. If we'd just give a quick moment to review this. Not hearing anyone on the phone, I'd suspect that we do have participation, just not audible.

Given our current technical difficulties I'm just going to call a quick recess until we can get this sorted out. We do apologize to members on the phone and anyone watching on live-stream television. We will recess and be back as soon as possible.

[The committee adjourned from 12:06 p.m. to 12:11 p.m.]

The Chair: Okay. We are back and excited about it. Given that we didn't have any votes from members on the phone or on Skype for items 2 and 3, I'll just go back to approval of agenda and ask if there's anyone on the phone who is opposed to the approval of the agenda as distributed. Hearing none, then that motion is passed.

Moving on to item 3 as well, we did have a vote, but we'll ask again. Anyone on the phone opposed to approving the minutes from August 26, 2020? Anyone opposed, please voice their opposition. Okay. Hearing none, then we are on back on schedule. Items 2 and 3: those motions have been passed.

We're now on to item 4, which is report of the subcommittee on committee business, and item 4(a), review of the subcommittee report. Hon. members, the subcommittee on committee business met on August 26, 2020, to make recommendations pertaining to stakeholders in the committee's review of citizens' initiatives, recall, the Election Act, and the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act. The report of the subcommittee was posted on the committee's internal website for the committee to review. The subcommittee's report made the recommendations to the committee proposing both oral presentations and written submissions from stakeholders.

I would like to open the floor to a discussion on these recommendations. I see Ms Goodridge.

Ms Goodridge: Thank you, Mr. Chair. In the interest of the technical issues that we're already having, is it the time to move a motion?

The Chair: That would be the time.

Ms Goodridge: Wonderful. Well, I would like to move a motion on behalf of my colleague Mr. Smith, the MLA for Drayton Valley-Devon, that

the Select Special Democratic Accountability Committee adopt recommendation 3.1 as set out in the subcommittee on committee business report dated August 27, 2020.

The Chair: Okay. We're just putting that motion up on the screen. Just give us a moment.

While that's happening, Ms Goodridge, did you want to expand upon that, or do you want to leave your comments as they are? Okay.

Mr. Dang, if you'd like to go ahead.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I mean, I'd like to thank the subcommittee for their work. I think that a lot of work went on in a

very short amount of time. I think that's something that's particularly important.

I think that perhaps in regard to this particular motion, that was moved by Ms Goodridge on behalf of Mr. Smith, I guess I have some concerns around the proposed stakeholders that the subcommittee is recommending in this place. I mean, if you look at section 3.1, there are three different criteria that people are being invited to make oral presentations on – right? – obviously, the citizens' initiatives, recall, the EFCDA, and the Election Act. I guess my question perhaps for the room would be: why do members feel it is necessary to have in this case, for example, the Canadian Taxpayers Federation present on all three aspects when they arguably have no stakes in recall, no stakes in the Election Act? Perhaps they do have some interest in citizens' initiatives. But I think it's interesting that they've been included in this case by the UCP in all three aspects, so I just want to know why we're trying to hear from them three times.

The Chair: Would anyone else like to add to that? Ms Goodridge.

Ms Goodridge: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just to respond quickly to Mr. Dang, the Canadian Taxpayers Federation has been an advocate for government accountability across the board. They have been a consistent voice in public opinion regarding recall, citizens' initiatives, and they have many recommendations when it comes to red tape reduction on the election finances piece, so I believe that they are a wonderful stakeholder that will add a piece to all three aspects.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms Goodridge.
Anyone else?

Member Ceci: At the appropriate time I'd like to make an amendment, Mr. Chair. I've submitted it. If this is the appropriate time, I'll make that amendment now.

The Chair: It would be the appropriate time, Mr. Ceci.

Member Ceci: Okay. Thank you very much, members of the committee and Mr. Chair and those who are watching. I don't know if the amendment has been put on the screen. I did send it to Mr. Roth in advance, following the rules with regard to amendments and main motions. This is an amendment. I move that the motion be amended by striking out "as set out in the subcommittee on committee business report dated August 27, 2020," and substituting the following:

in the subcommittee on committee business report dated August 27, 2020, with the following amendment: recommendation 3.1 is amended in item 3 by striking out "(2) Canadian Taxpayers Federation" and substituting "(2) Lorne Gibson, Election Management Consultant."

I'll just see if that's properly submitted and posted for people, and then I'll address it briefly if I can, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: We'll just take a quick moment while it gets put on the screen for everyone to see, and then you can proceed to addressing the amendment.

Member Ceci: Thank you very much.

The Chair: It is up. Please go ahead, Mr. Ceci.

Member Ceci: Thank you again, Mr. Chair, for the opportunity to address this briefly. I put this motion forward amending Mr. Smith's original motion, put by Ms Goodridge today. I put it because Mr. Gibson is a respected election management consultant

and has provided support and consultation for elections training and election laws across the country and to the federal government for literally decades. I encourage you all to – I checked his LinkedIn sheet just a little while ago, but I know there's also a website.

If you look at either of those, you'll see his vast experience in elections and being called to places in this country such as Saskatchewan, Nova Scotia, the Northwest Territories, the Yukon, Manitoba, and abroad in places such as Sri Lanka, Mexico, the Ukraine, Zimbabwe, Iraq, the Seychelles, Bolivia and as support for the Attorney General and Elections Canada. All of those places would indicate to me that Mr. Gibson has expertise that is uniquely suited to provide all of us the input that we need on the issue relative to the part in the minutes that I have recommended him for.

You know, I know there are several people put forward by the UCP members of this committee that are former staffers of the former Prime Minister Harper, and they were not independent, as this independent officer of the government in this province and previous provinces, if you look at his experience in Manitoba, would show us. He obviously would help us on multiple issues, but we've called him for the one to deal with I believe it's the Election Act and the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act.

12:20

Mr. Gibson has decades of experience, as I say. He is seen as a recognized expert and is invited to give his expertise to not only Canadian jurisdictions needing that but also internationally. He has approximately 12 and a half years of direct experience in elections, being a Deputy Chief Electoral Officer, a Chief Electoral Officer in this province, and an Election Commissioner in this province, and is suited to provide the information that we're looking for with regard to the reasons this select special committee was put together by the Legislature. I'd submit that we have in our midst, being in Canada, a person who likely has the most direct elections experience as an independent officer available to us to hear from, and the committee would be, I think, foolish not to take up the opportunity to hear from this individual.

That would be my motion, and I certainly hope that there's some debate on this. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Ceci.

We do have an amendment to the motion moved by Ms Goodridge on behalf of Mr. Smith. I believe that Mr. Nixon is next to speak on this amendment.

Mr. Nixon, go ahead.

Mr. Jeremy Nixon: Thank you, Chair. I'm going to have to speak against this amendment and vote no on this amendment for, I think, a couple of reasons; namely, we already have heard from the Chief Electoral Officer, who is currently the Election Commissioner, and we have him as a resource. He has given us a pretty extensive report and recommendations, so I see this as a bit redundant. I think that to also lose the Canadian Taxpayers Federation off our list of oral presentations would be a great loss. So I would be voting against this amendment for those reasons.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Nixon.

Is there anyone else who would like to add to this discussion? I see Mr. Dang.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think that perhaps we need to look at the different perspective that's going to be brought in by a former Election Commissioner and indeed an Election Commissioner who was in this province and conducted a number of high-profile investigations in this province. When we look at the type of work

that was done by Mr. Gibson here in Alberta during his time as both Election Commissioner and the CEO, the Chief Electoral Officer, as well, I think it's important that we remember that this diversity of opinions will allow us to make better recommendations – right? – to the Legislature and will allow us to have a better perspective.

I think that certainly when we're looking at the list of people who are coming to give oral presentations already, we know that the CTF is already coming to give an oral presentation. This amendment still allows them to make an oral presentation on citizens' initiatives, and they are welcome to make written submissions on any of the other areas as they would see fit.

We can see that when we look at things like the Election Act and the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act, perhaps somebody with more specialized knowledge, perhaps somebody with more direct experience in these fields is necessary to come and present and make an oral presentation, and this committee, I think, would greatly benefit from that. Perhaps the government members here could explain why they think that this perspective is not necessary or not important for this committee.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Dang.

Next up I have Mr. R.J. Sigurdson.

Mr. Sigurdson: Thank you, Chair. Yeah, I'd agree with Member Nixon as well on voting no towards this. On August 26 we heard from the Chief Electoral Officer, who is as well our Election Commissioner at this time. With that, I think it's important – like, when you consider the Canadian Taxpayers Federation as being an advocate for taxpayers, I just am wholeheartedly against taking away such a huge advocate for taxpayers, which is, you know, the 4.35 million people across the province, to be able to speak to each of these individual, very important reviews, whether it be on citizens' initiative or recall or on the Election Act and the election finances act. So I would be voting against this. We've heard the report already. I just can't see taking away an organization that represents so many people across this province and has done so for so long and replacing them with somebody that's going to speak to items that we've already heard about.

Thank you, Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Sigurdson.

Do we have anyone else? I see Ms Sweet. Please go ahead.

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think two things. The first thing I just want to highlight is that, again, this isn't about removing the Canadian Taxpayers Federation. They will still have an opportunity to present orally in other areas, so their voice will still be heard in regard to the issues in front of the committee.

I think the other argument that we're hearing from the government right now, about how the government feels that this is redundant, is a bit disingenuous in the sense that this whole committee is to discuss electoral reform and democracy. To say that one individual from Elections Alberta will present and that therefore that is the only direction we should be taking and the only advice to be given: I think that doesn't speak to the whole purpose of why we're here. We're asking for submissions and for oral presentations from a variety of different people to help us determine the direction that this committee will take in regard to election reform.

Again, Mr. Gibson has national as well as international experience in working in different areas, decades of experience. The argument itself, I would argue, is that if we look at the list of individuals that are being requested to come and provide oral presentations, two of them were chiefs of staff to the Hon. Prime Minister Harper, which, my argument would be, is also redundant given that they both had

the same role and that they both worked under the same Prime Minister.

Again, I think that when we say that there's redundancy in having an individual with extensive experience come to this committee to talk about the direction that we should be taking on behalf of Albertans, it doesn't make sense. Also, the Canadian Taxpayers Federation has the capacity to still present to the committee. In fact, they've been recommended to be in three different categories, which I think takes away a voice from other individuals who could then potentially speak to the committee and provide some insight.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms Sweet.

I have Ms Goodridge.

Ms Goodridge: Thank you, Mr. Chair. While I appreciate the comments that are being made, I believe we're starting to get into a bit of a circular argumentation here, and I would just ask that perhaps we could vote on this.

The Chair: I have Mr. Dang, who'd like to speak on that.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I mean, I'd like to echo some of the comments that my colleague Ms Sweet already made, but I think I have some additional concerns. She already spoke to how Mr. Sigurdson had concerns around redundancy in the presentations. I would argue that when we're looking at redundancy in presentations, Ms Sweet has already pointed out two former chiefs of staff to former Prime Minister Stephen Harper, but additionally there are actually two lawyers who were also former staffers of Prime Minister Stephen Harper that are being invited as well. I mean, when we're looking at this list of presentations, if we're trying to reduce redundancy, let's invite Lorne Gibson and maybe just invite Stephen Harper, and we'll save ourselves three presentations right there.

I think that, honestly, it's a bit ridiculous that the members of the government aren't interested in hearing from an expert in this country who has worked in this province in two very high-profile roles in elections and who has valuable opinions that we should be able to take. Having a diversity of opinions and a diversity of perspectives, not just from the current CEO, is important, and it is going to guide our work as we move forward.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Dang.

I can appreciate that this discussion is becoming a bit more lively than it was at the beginning, but I am hearing comments being echoed by other members, so unless I can hear some new arguments towards this amendment, I'd like to ask members if we could possibly vote. But I'd open the floor to more debate on this before I do that, new debate.

12:30

Okay. Hearing none, then I'm prepared to call the question on the amendment to the motion moved by Ms Goodridge on behalf of Mr. Smith. The amendment was moved by Mr. Ceci. The amendment is that the motion be amended by striking out "as set out in the subcommittee on the committee business' report dated August 27, 2020" and substituting the following: in the subcommittee on committee business' report, dated August 27, 2020, with the following amendment: recommendation 3.1 is amended in item 3 by striking out "(2) Canadian Taxpayers' Federation" and substituting "(2) Lorne Gibson, Election Management Consultant."

All those in favour of this amendment, please say aye. Thank you. All those opposed, please say no. On the phone? That amendment is defeated.

Mr. Dang: Recorded vote.

The Chair: Mr. Dang has requested a recorded vote. We'll start with all those in favour of the amendment, please put your hand up. I see Mr. Dang and Ms Sweet. On the phone, please state your name and your vote on this.

Ms Pancholi: Rakhi Pancholi, MLA Edmonton-Whitemud. Aye.

Member Ceci: Joe Ceci, MLA Calgary-Buffalo. Aye.

The Chair: Okay.

Anyone opposed to this motion, please raise your hand if you're here in person. I see Mr. Horner, Ms Goodridge, Ms Fir. On the phone, if you're opposed, please state your name and your opposition.

Mr. Jeremy Nixon: Jeremy Nixon. Opposed.

Mr. Rowswell: Garth Rowswell, Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright. Opposed.

Mr. Sigurdson: MLA Sigurdson. Opposed.

Mr. Smith: MLA Smith. Opposed.

Mr. Roth: Mr. Chair, total for the motion, four; total against, seven.

The Chair: Okay.

That amendment is defeated.

We are now back on the main motion as moved by Ms Goodridge on behalf of Mr. Smith. Is there anybody who'd like to make any comments or remarks regarding this motion?

Mr. Smith: Mr. Chair, I would like to make a statement.

The Chair: Yes. Go ahead, Mr. Smith.

Mr. Smith: Just a quick comment. You know, when I look at who we should be bringing in as stakeholders – and I speak to the original motion here – I'm looking for a balance, and I think I see it there. I'm very interested in Elections B.C. and their understanding of how it's worked in B.C. I think that's important. When I look at the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, they bring a point of view to the table. When I look at the National Conference of State Legislatures or the members of the UCL, they bring an international component to this, so I think we've got a good set of stakeholders here. I think that the citizens of Alberta will be well-served by this, so I suggest that we support this motion.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Smith.

Anyone else?

Member Ceci: Can I speak, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: Yes, Mr. Ceci. Please go ahead.

Member Ceci: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just want to get on the record that I disagree vehemently with what my colleague has just tried to put out as a narrative for this decision. I think it is weighted primarily to the supporters and views of people on the UCP side and is not trying to stretch at all, as is evidenced by the disagreement or the putting down of our motion on Lorne Gibson. I just don't agree with what the previous person just said, and I think it needs to be said that the power of this committee was used to bring in only voices that can further support the views of the current government.

That's what I think. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Ceci.

Seeing no one else who wants to join this conversation, I am prepared to call the question on the motion. The motion is moved by Ms Goodridge that

the Select Special Democratic Accountability Committee adopt recommendation 3.1 as set out in the subcommittee on the committee business' report dated August 27, 2020.

All those in favour of this motion, please say aye. All those opposed, please say no.

Member Ceci: Recorded vote.

The Chair: I'll get there, Mr. Ceci.

All those in favour on the phone, please say aye. Any on the phone opposed, please say no.

Now, Mr. Ceci, would you like a recorded vote?

Member Ceci: Please. Thank you.

The Chair: A recorded vote has been requested by Mr. Ceci. All those in favour in person, please raise your hand. Mr. Horner, Ms Goodridge, Ms Fir. On the phone, please state your name if you're in favour.

Mr. Rowswell: Garth Rowswell.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Jeremy Nixon.

Mr. Smith: MLA Smith.

Mr. Sigurdson: MLA Sigurdson.

The Chair: Okay.

Anyone opposed here in person, please raise your hand. Mr. Dang, Ms Sweet. And on the phone?

Member Ceci: Opposed. Joe Ceci.

Ms Pancholi: Rakhi Pancholi. Opposed.

The Chair: Thank you, members on the phone.

Mr. Roth: Mr. Chair, total for the motion, seven; total against, four.

The Chair: Thank you.

That motion is carried.

Is there any other discussion on recommendations regarding stakeholders? Ms Goodridge.

Ms Goodridge: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Again in the interest of technology I would like to move a motion on behalf of my colleague Mr. Smith that

the Select Special Democratic Accountability Committee adopt recommendation 3.2 as set out in the subcommittee on the committee business' report dated August 27, 2020.

The Chair: That motion is being put on the screen. Just give us a moment, please.

While that motion is being put up, Ms Goodridge, do you have any further comments?

Ms Goodridge: Yeah. I just wanted to add in that I, for one, am very interested to hear from the CFOs of the riding associations. I know that I've been blessed to have an amazing volunteer, Mr. Willie Hoflin, as my CFO for my last two elections, and he's got a lot of experience, as do the CFOs for all of our riding associations. I think that is just one of the names that I think will really add a lot of value to this as well as hearing from the AUMA, the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association, and the RMA, the Rural

Municipalities Association, as they represent a lot of locally elected officials.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms Goodridge.

Is there any further discussion on this motion moved by Ms Goodridge?

Ms Pancholi: Mr. Chair, if I may, I just have a question.

The Chair: Yes, Ms Pancholi. Please go ahead.

Ms Pancholi: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just have a question. I can see that on the list of possible stakeholders who can submit written submissions under 3.2 of the subcommittee report, 10 includes third-party advertisers registered in Alberta. I just want to clarify, given our previous conversation and debate with respect to the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, would that capture as well the Canadian Taxpayers Federation in their ability to make a written submission? Just asking for clarification from government members.

The Chair: That's an excellent question. It's my understanding that if they are a registered third-party advertiser, they would be getting an invitation.

Ms Pancholi: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: You're welcome.

Any further discussion on this motion?

Ms Goodridge: I am kind of limited in my research capacity on this piece, but I do not believe that they are actually a registered third party. I could be wrong.

The Chair: I guess we'll leave that to the determination of the – we'll have to look into that. Sounds good to me.

I'm not hearing any other discussion on this. I'll give a moment for technology to kick in in case there is. Hearing none, I am prepared to call the question on this motion. Moved by Ms Goodridge that the Select Special Democratic Accountability Committee adopt recommendation 3.2 as set out in the subcommittee on the committee business' report dated August 27, 2020.

All those in favour of this motion, please say aye. Any opposed, please say no. Those on the phone, if you're in favour, please say aye. On the phone, if you're opposed, please say no.

That motion is carried.

12:40

Is there any further discussion on item 4(b), recommendations regarding stakeholders? Seeing none, as the committee has now made its decision regarding inviting written submissions for stakeholders, the committee should establish a date by which they wish to receive them. I would now like to open the floor to a discussion on this matter.

I'm not hearing anything. I'm prepared to make a recommendation or a potential motion that the Select Special Democratic Accountability Committee accept written submissions from identified stakeholders on or before October 9 of this year, 2020. Would anybody like to move that motion? Sure. I see Ms Goodridge to move that motion.

Is there any discussion or questions or comments on that?

Ms Sweet: Just a point of clarity, Mr. Chair. So you're putting a motion forward for written submissions. Will we also be talking about virtual public meetings?

The Chair: That's a different discussion further down the road in this committee meeting. We will have that conversation.

Ms Sweet: We are going to have that conversation? Okay.

The Chair: Yeah. We will have that conversation, but not at the moment.

Ms Sweet: I thought we were on item 5. Sorry.

The Chair: Okay. Again, so there's a motion on the – oh, there is no motion on the screen. We're just going to put it up here. Just give us a moment, everyone. Appreciate your patience.

Ms Pancholi: Mr. Chair, is there a way to put that motion in the chat for those of us on the phones as we can't see it up there, and it's not one of the motions that was submitted ahead of time?

The Chair: Yeah. We're getting there, Ms Pancholi.

Okay. We do have the draft motion on the screen, and it's on the chat now as well, so members on the phone, who are not here in person, can have a look at that. I'll give you a moment to look at that, and then I'll see if anyone has any questions or comments on that.

I believe everyone has had a chance to look at it. Does anyone want to add to this discussion? If not, I'm prepared to call the question. Hearing none, Ms Goodridge has moved that the Select Special Democratic Accountability Committee accept written submissions from identified stakeholders on or before October 9, 2020.

All those in favour of this motion, please say aye. Any opposed, please say no. On the phone, if you're in favour, please say aye. If you're opposed, please say no.

That motion is carried.

We're now moving on to agenda item 5, other public input, and 5(a), virtual public meeting. At the August 26, 2020, meeting the committee approved the recommendations of the subcommittee on committee business to hold a virtual public meeting as part of our review of citizens' initiatives, recall, the Election Act, and the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act.

I would now like to call upon Ms Janet Laurie with the Legislative Assembly Office communications to discuss possible options for the committee in terms of holding a virtual public town hall meeting.

Ms Laurie, the time is now yours.

Ms Laurie: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Essentially, this isn't something that we've done before with the Legislative Assembly Office; however, we are happy to work with the committee depending on whatever directions you want to proceed for the meeting format.

The research that we've done with the external supplier, who would help us facilitate this, indicates that, essentially, it's a cost per line per minute. As a group if we can get some direction from the committee with regard to what sort of format you envision the committee meeting taking place in. For example, you could do something that would be sort of similar to what we've done for the heritage meeting in past years. Of course, we've never done it telephone moderated in this style before, but we're all in a different place now.

If we were to have a certain number of lines that anyone in the province could call in to, say, over the course of a two-hour meeting, we would have to sort of do our best to estimate how many lines were required, and that would be the cost for that. Or if we had people actually identify that they wanted to ask a question or participate in the meeting, if we were to have people register in advance and we actually knew how many presenters we would have for how long, that would greatly impact the cost to the committee in terms of facilitating something like that.

I think that that's probably – we can accommodate whatever the will of the committee happens to be, but it would basically come down to the format, the number of presenters. Then we'd be able to provide you with a good estimate as to the cost to the committee, and we'd be able to organize that on your behalf.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you, Ms Laurie. I appreciate that input.

I do want to turn the microphone over to Mr. Roth for a moment as he has something to add as well.

Mr. Roth: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just for a little bit of historical context for the committee, as Ms Laurie had mentioned, a virtual meeting of this type has never been done before. Committees in the past have done public meetings, not during this Legislature but probably most recently in the previous Legislature on Bill 203, the daylight saving time bill. I mean, again, it's entirely up to the decision of the committee how to proceed, but in that particular case what worked well and how that one was organized was that registrations were taken in advance, as Ms Laurie had mentioned. It helped to organize the process a little bit as well.

I guess maybe just sort of from the technical – actually, you know, I'll leave it there, Mr. Chair. Thanks very much.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Roth.

Having heard from Ms Laurie and Mr. Roth, any other input?

Mr. Dang: Maybe to just ask for some clarity, Mr. Chair, I'm wondering: in terms of the technical process, is it a teleconference or is it a video conference, I guess, as the option that we're looking at?

Ms Laurie: I think the way that it would work would be a teleconference whereby people were able to call in. The meeting would still be broadcast, so it'd still be on Assembly Online, Assembly TV, as well as our social media channel so that Albertans could access it whatever way was most convenient for them; however, we wouldn't have a video link for whoever was asking the question. We'd sort something out with broadcast in terms of what we would display, and if we had people register in advance, possibly we'd be able to display the individual who's asking the question, their name. But, again, we haven't worked out all of those details yet, and I wouldn't want to commit to anything in advance.

Mr. Dang: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: I'll turn the microphone to Mr. Roth again.

Mr. Roth: Thanks, Mr. Chair. Just to supplement, I sort of looked at this in advance, knowing that the committee was looking to do virtual public meetings. There are some technical difficulties, as we understand it, with the video piece in terms of being able to broadcast and that sort of thing, so that was one of the reasons we were looking at the teleconference piece.

Thanks.

The Chair: I believe Ms Goodridge has something she'd like to add.

Ms Goodridge: Yeah. Thank you. Just to kind of build upon what Mr. Roth has said on the video side, it tends to disadvantage a lot of rural participation, where broadband perhaps is not to the quality it is in some of our urban centres, so I would be more interested in recommending to the committee to not include video options so as to be able to include all Albertans.

The Chair: Okay.

Any further discussion on this?

Ms Pancholi: Can I ask a question, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: Sure, Ms Pancholi. Go ahead.

12:50

Ms Pancholi: I just wanted to clarify. Having not been part of the previous Legislature and part of these kinds of teleconferences before, would it be presenters and then depending on who phones in, of course, we would accept questions and discussion? Is that sort of correct as to how the format would go?

The Chair: The format would really be decided by the committee here, is my understanding. We would effectively direct communications on the format that we'd like to do, and they would carry it out. That's how we would do it.

Ms Pancholi: We're not deciding that today, then, so that'll be a discussion closer to?

The Chair: Yeah. I believe there'll be some conversations between the chair, myself, and members of the committee.

Yeah. Mr. Horner, you have a . . .

Mr. Horner: Yes. If this is the appropriate time, Mr. Chair, I'd like to move a motion that was presubmitted to the clerk by MLA Rutherford. I believe you have that, but I'll read it aloud. To move that

- (a) the Select Special Democratic Accountability Committee hold two virtual public meetings as follows:
 - (i) a virtual public meeting on recall and citizens initiatives; and
 - (ii) a virtual public town hall meeting on the Election Act and the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act, and
- (b) after consulting with committee members, the chair set the date for each virtual town hall meeting on dates that occur after the committee has heard oral presentations from stakeholders.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Horner. Just give us a moment while we get the motion up on the screen and in the chat.

Okay. The motion moved by Mr. Horner is now in the chat and on the screen. Everyone has had a chance to look at that, review it. I'd like to open the floor up to discussion now. Mr. Dang.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think that if we're going to have maybe a subcommittee or some other forum to discuss the logistical format, that's fine, I think, generally. I don't see large problems with that in terms of if there is going to be question and answer or just presentations, whatever. I think that's generally fine. I don't see any huge issues with this. I guess for clarity's sake, are we going to talk about how we're going to get engagement, so how we're going to advertise or whatever these meetings? Does that come after this motion?

The Chair: One moment, Mr. Dang. Yeah. That would be decided by the committee if this is passed.

Mr. Dang: So an additional?

The Chair: Yes.

Mr. Dang: Okay. Yeah. I mean, generally, yeah, I think I'm open to having public meetings. I think it's important that we allow engagement. I note that in this motion we don't set a length of those meetings. Would that be decided by the chair in consultation with the members . . .

The Chair: Also decided by the chair, yes.

Mr. Dang: Thank you.

The Chair: Yes. I think it deliberately leaves it – you know, I couldn't speak on behalf of the mover, but it is more broad so that we as a committee along with consultation with the chair can have a conversation about the format and length, et cetera.

Any further comments on this motion?

Hearing none, I'm prepared to call the question.

Ms Pancholi: Sorry, Mr. Chair. I just have a question on this motion.

The Chair: Yes, Ms Pancholi. Please go ahead.

Ms Pancholi: Just in terms of how would we be advertising these virtual town halls, or I guess how would we ensure that we are taking all the steps we can to get, you know, a high level of engagement from the public? I'm just wondering if somebody from communications can walk us through sort of how we would make sure the public was aware of these town halls, what steps we're taking to make sure that we engage as many people as possible.

The Chair: If I'm not mistaken, again, that would be a discussion that we would have as committee members and then give direction to communications, but communications can certainly – I can turn to Ms Laurie. She can maybe help us understand the process once we've given that direction or maybe what direction you would need from us.

Ms Laurie: Certainly. You know, like we've done for the call for submissions that's out now, there was a motion filed at the committee that we could go forward and use any of the no-cost or low-cost communications options that we'd put forward. We would certainly engage in something similar to make sure that we were effectively reaching all Albertans and making sure that people who wanted to participate in the process were certainly able to. We would be able to look at any of those strategies at our disposal.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms Laurie.

Okay. Any further questions or comments on this motion moved by Mr. Horner?

Hearing none, I'm prepared to call the question. All those in favour of the motion, please say aye. Any opposed, please say no. On the phone, if you're in favour, please say aye. If you're opposed, please say no.

That motion is carried.

Is there any further discussion on virtual public meetings? Sorry. Just a moment here as I consult.

Further to the discussion that we just had about options and presentations, I have a bit of a draft motion from the clerk that says: the Select Special Democratic Accountability Committee direct communication services of the Legislative Assembly Office to advertise the virtual public meetings agreed to by the committee through the no-cost and low-cost options presented by communication services.

If I could actually get that draft motion on the screen, Mr. Roth.

Okay. The draft motion is on the screen, and we're putting it in the chat as we speak. I would need a mover for that motion, but I'll just give a moment for everyone on the chat to see it as well before I get a mover. All right. So the motion is on the chat.

Here we go. Do I have someone who wants to move that motion? Ms Fir has moved that motion, that

the Select Special Democratic Accountability Committee direct communication services of the Legislative Assembly Office to advertise the virtual public meetings agreed to by the committee through the no-cost and low-cost options presented by communication services.

Is there anyone who would like to add to that discussion? Mr. Dang.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just have a couple of questions perhaps to communication services on this. Now that we've already, I guess, used some of these options to do engagement on some of the other aspects that this committee has done and perhaps other committees as well, maybe if you could give a bit of background on how many people do we typically engage using the no-cost and low-cost options. How many Albertans are reached? I think all those tools provide that type of information. Then, also, on top of that, are there any geographic areas of Alberta that we're not reaching necessarily because we're using only these tools? I mean, I'm concerned perhaps with some of these tools in areas where there isn't good Internet, that we're not going to be reaching as many people as well.

Ms Laurie: Definitely, with the low-cost and the no-cost options, they focus more on social media in terms of – so your point is well taken. In terms of actual numbers for engagement and in terms of what we reach typically, it's difficult for me to answer that with any precision because every committee is different and every sort of issue would be different. We would certainly be able to follow up with you. I know with a couple of the recent committees, you know, we have a call for submissions out now. We've been doing something similar with the Public Health Act Review Committee. Maybe it would be best for me to follow up with the committee with a more detailed response with regard to that, but typically via our website, via social media we are able to reach out, and Albertans who are interested in engaging with the process are able to do so. It's not just that you would need to have – there are always other options and means for people to submit questions and participate in the process if they so desire.

1:00

The Chair: Mr. Horner, please.

Mr. Horner: Yeah. I was just going to comment. If I recall, I think once you get past the no-cost and low-cost options and you get into the medium- to high-cost options, you're getting more into larger, syndicated newspapers and the like, which I think would be even more regional and maybe looking to certain regions of the province. I think the low-cost option will serve us the best for reaching every corner, in my view, and I'm from one of the corners.

Ms Laurie: You're certainly right. As we get into higher cost, you're typically looking at traditional, paid advertising, which means that you can place an ad in any . . .

Member Ceci: Media.

Ms Laurie: Sorry?

The Chair: Sorry. Mr. Ceci, did you have any comments that you'd like to add for Ms Laurie?

Ms Laurie: Okay.

. . . publications that do cover more of the province, if you look at it from that respect. However, there is a much greater cost to that, and then you're looking at different demographics for each different communications tool. That's where you sort of can mix with that.

Member Ceci: Sorry for interrupting.

Ms Laurie: It's okay.

The Chair: Mr. Dang.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I certainly appreciate the comments that have been brought forward so far. Perhaps as we move forward with this process and perhaps from other committees as well, we should look at – it doesn't have to be, like, tabled or anything – just a report on how we did with the advertising in terms of how many people we reached, what the demographics of the people we reached were. As we move forward and do perhaps more consultations, I think it'd be useful for all members of the Legislature to have that knowledge.

The Chair: Okay. Hearing no further discussion on this, I am prepared to call the question. I've already read the motion I think several times, so we'll just go ahead to the vote. All those in favour of the motion moved by Ms Fir, please say aye. All those opposed, please say no. On the phone, if you're in favour, please say aye. On the phone, if you're opposed, please say no.

That motion is carried.

Is there any other discussion on item 5, public input? Okay.

Seeing none, we'll go to other business. Is there any other business that members would like to bring forward at this time?

Hearing none, as the chair I have the opportunity to take certain liberties, and I'd like to thank those who work from the staff perspective with the Clerk's office and *Hansard*. It is rare that you get the chance to wish them congratulations on important or momentous events in their own life. I'd like to take this moment to congratulate Mr. Aaron Roth on his recent wedding. Congratulations, Mr. Roth.

Hearing no other business, the date of the next meeting will be done at the call of the chair, and we will now move to adjourn. Can I have a member move a motion to adjourn this meeting? Ms Fir has moved to adjourn the meeting. All those in favour, please say aye. Any opposed, please say no. On the phone, please say aye. Any opposed? That motion is carried. This meeting is adjourned.

[The committee adjourned at 1:03 p.m.]

