



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Second Session

Select Special
Ethics and Accountability
Committee

Tuesday, May 10, 2016
7 p.m.

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Second Session**

Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee

Littlewood, Jessica, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (ND), Chair
Miller, Barb, Red Deer-South (ND), Deputy Chair

Aheer, Leela Sharon, Chestermere-Rocky View (W)*
Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (W)
Clark, Greg, Calgary-Elbow (AP)
Connolly, Michael R.D., Calgary-Hawkwood (ND)
Cortes-Vargas, Estefania, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (ND)
Cyr, Scott J., Bonnyville-Cold Lake (W)
Drever, Deborah, Calgary-Bow (ND)
Jansen, Sandra, Calgary-North West (PC)
Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (ND)
Malkinson, Brian, Calgary-Currie (ND)**
Nielsen, Christian E., Edmonton-Decore (ND)
Nixon, Jason, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre (W)
Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (ND)
Starke, Dr. Richard, Vermilion-Lloydminster (PC)
Sucha, Graham, Calgary-Shaw (ND)
Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)
van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (W)

* substitution for Glenn van Dijken

** substitution for Michael Connolly

Support Staff

Robert H. Reynolds, QC	Clerk
Shannon Dean	Senior Parliamentary Counsel/ Director of House Services
Philip Massolin	Manager of Research Services
Stephanie LeBlanc	Legal Research Officer
Sarah Amato	Research Officer
Nancy Robert	Research Officer
Corinne Dacyshyn	Committee Clerk
Jody Rempel	Committee Clerk
Aaron Roth	Committee Clerk
Karen Sawchuk	Committee Clerk
Rhonda Sorensen	Manager of Corporate Communications and Broadcast Services
Jeanette Dotimas	Communications Consultant
Tracey Sales	Communications Consultant
Janet Schwegel	Managing Editor of <i>Alberta Hansard</i>

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[Mrs. Littlewood in the chair]

The Chair: Thank you, everyone. Seeing as the clock is 7 o'clock, I will go ahead and start. I'd like to call the meeting of the Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee to order.

To begin with, I'd like to welcome members and staff in attendance and thank everyone for your patience and understanding regarding the need to reschedule this meeting. I appreciate everyone working together with respect and understanding that we do have members that needed to be, you know, given consideration for their circumstances. I appreciate everyone working together to get this rescheduled, so thank you.

As we begin, I'm going to ask members and those joining the committee at the table to introduce themselves for the record, and then we will go to those joining us on the phone. I'll begin to my right.

Ms Miller: Barb Miller, MLA, Red Deer-South.

Mr. Nielsen: Chris Nielsen, MLA, Edmonton-Decore.

Cortes-Vargas: Estefania Cortes-Vargas, MLA for Strathcona-Sherwood Park.

Ms Drever: Deborah Drever, MLA for Calgary-Bow.

Loyola: Rod Loyola, MLA for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Mr. Sucha: Graham Sucha, MLA for Calgary-Shaw.

Mr. Cyr: Scott Cyr, MLA, Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mr. W. Anderson: Wayne Anderson, Highwood.

Mr. Nixon: Jason Nixon, MLA for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Mrs. Aheer: Leela Sharon Aheer, Chestermere-Rocky View.

Mr. Malkinson: Brian Malkinson, MLA for Calgary-Currie.

Mr. Clark: Good evening. Greg Clark, MLA, Calgary-Elbow.

Dr. Swann: Good evening. David Swann, Calgary-Mountain View.

Ms Jansen: Sandra Jansen, Calgary-North West.

Dr. Starke: Richard Starke, MLA, Vermilion-Lloydminster.

Dr. Amato: Sarah Amato, research officer.

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

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

Ms Dean: Shannon Dean, Senior Parliamentary Counsel and director of House services.

Ms Rempel: Jody Rempel, committee clerk.

The Chair: I'll note for the record that Mr. Malkinson is an official substitute for Mr. Connolly, and Mrs. Aheer is a substitute officially for Mr. van Dijken.

Oh, and Ms Renaud is on the phone. Sorry. Ms Renaud, would you like to introduce yourself?

Ms Renaud: Sure. Marie Renaud, MLA for St. Albert.

The Chair: Thank you very much. I would just like to say that I appreciate everyone being able to come down. It's the most faces that I've seen around the table, so thank you.

Just a few housekeeping items to address before we turn to the business at hand. A reminder again that the microphone consoles are operated by the *Hansard* staff, so there's no need for members to touch them. Please keep cellphones, iPhones, and BlackBerrys off the table as these may interfere with the audiofeed. Audio of committee proceedings is streamed live on the Internet and recorded by *Hansard*. Audio access and meeting transcripts are obtained via the Legislative Assembly website.

Up next is the approval of the agenda. Does anyone have any changes to be made? If not, would a member please move a motion to approve the agenda.

Loyola: So moved.

The Chair: Okay. Moved by Member Loyola that the agenda for the May 10, 2016, meeting of the Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee be adopted as distributed. All in favour? Any opposed? Carried.

Next are the minutes from the last meeting. Are there any errors or omissions to note with the draft minutes? If not, would a member move adoption of the minutes, please.

Mr. Nielsen: So moved.

The Chair: Moved by MLA Nielsen that the minutes of the April 15, 2016, meeting of the Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee be adopted as circulated. All in favour of the meeting minutes? Any opposed? Carried. Thank you.

There was a written submission numbered miscellaneous 012 that was recently distributed to the committee members. The submission was sent in February but was originally delivered to the wrong office, and therefore it was only recently received by the committees branch. Having had the opportunity to review the submission and consider its content, I would ask the committee to determine whether or not it wishes to accept the submission as part of the review process. If accepted, it would be posted on our website and included in future research documents. However, if the committee considers the content of the submission to be outside our mandate, it would be excluded from the review process. I'll open it to the floor for discussion. Does anyone have any comments or questions?

Would someone want to move either to include or exclude it, then, as a written submission? Mr. Cyr.

Mr. Cyr: I'd like to create a motion to exclude this.

The Chair: Okay. Moved by MLA Cyr that the Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee exclude the written submission miscellaneous 012 from the review process.

All in favour? Any opposed? Carried.

Before we move on to item 5(a), I would like to quickly note for the record that Alberta Justice and Solicitor General has provided a written response to questions raised at our February 11, 2016, meeting.

Item (a) for the invited submission. In response to a motion passed at our last meeting, an anonymous whistle-blower has come forward and provided a written submission related to the Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) Act. This committee has committed to maintaining the confidentiality of both

the submission and the identity of the author. With this in mind I would suggest that we move in camera and invite Senior Parliamentary Counsel and director of House services and the manager of research services to join us as we consider this submission. Is there someone willing to move that we go in camera? Mr. Malkinson.

Moved by MLA Malkinson that the Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee move in camera. All in favour? Any opposed? So carried.

[The committee met in camera from 7:07 p.m. to 7:12 p.m.]

The Chair: Thank you, everyone. We are now back on the record.

Is there anyone who wishes to move a motion at this time? Mrs. Aheer. Moved by Member Aheer that

the Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee invite the self-identified stakeholder to make an oral presentation to the committee regarding the Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) Act during an in-camera session.

Is that what you would like to move?

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you. Yes.

The Chair: All in favour? Any opposed? So moved. Carried.

Moving on to the election legislation, item (a) committee research, (i) research documents. Dr. Massolin, I believe your staff have been working on some interesting resource documents for the committee. Would you like to take a moment to address these points?

Dr. Massolin: Yes, and thank you for characterizing them as interesting. I am pleased to inform the committee that we've been busy and produced a few things for you. Ms Robert and Dr. Amato will be presenting under the next item on the agenda, the submission summaries, and that will spur another discussion. But for right now I'll tell you that in addition to those submission summaries for the election legislation and the Conflicts of Interest Act, the cross-jurisdictional and jurisdictional comparison for Conflicts of Interest Act plus the election legislation have also been posted. I would suggest, Madam Chair, that at a future meeting where that's relevant to the committee's discussion, we'd be able to present orally on that as well and take questions.

Another research item that we can't take credit for but that's posted is called a compendium. It's election legislation across the country, produced by Elections Canada. That's posted to the internal website under recent documents.

The final document, which is near and dear to my heart, I guess – no, not really – is the document that discusses proportional representation in Alberta historically.

So there you have it. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I'll throw it to the floor for questions. Member Drever.

Ms Drever: I was wondering, are there any specific recurrent themes that emerged in the submissions from stakeholder groups and public consultations? Did you notice any differences between the public/private citizens' submissions and the stakeholders' submissions in terms of these themes?

Dr. Massolin: Madam Chair, I think we're not quite there yet on the submission summaries. I think that's the next item, but I'd be happy to answer any questions with respect to that other research that I mentioned.

The Chair: Okay. Moving on to the summary of written submissions, the first of three written submission summaries that we'll be addressing today pertains to the Election Act.

Dr. Amato, would you please give us an overview of the document?

Dr. Amato: Sure. I'll first address the Election Act, as requested. Hopefully, you have the submission summary. It looks like this. The document summarizes issues identified in 62 written submissions received both from invited stakeholders and members of the public. Normally, as you know, we try to summarize the most salient issues in an executive summary, but because in this case all of the submissions were for the most part highly technical and addressed in some cases very specific provisions in the act, I think the most useful summary is actually the table of contents, which goes through the act and identifies the very specific, in some cases, section that the submitter or the member of the public was addressing. You'll see in most cases, as you flip through the document, that the submissions are grouped for the most part one or two addressed to each of these issues. That's basically how the document is laid out.

That's a summary of that.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.

Are there any questions about that?

Ms Drever: I do have a question. Were there any submissions from stakeholders and private citizens that wanted the Election Act to be amended to make voting more accessible to Albertans and the process more practical?

Dr. Amato: More accessible and more practical? I'm not sure that practicality, specifically, was addressed, but I think that you'll find that there are issues of accessibility of various sorts addressed throughout the document. A couple of things come to mind. There's accessibility in terms of age. There are accessibility issues in terms of mobility. There are accessibility issues in terms of age in two ways. I was just thinking in terms of seniors' issues and then also questions of the age of voting. I think, depending on how you're defining accessibility – I don't know if you wanted to elaborate on the question. I hope that answers what you were asking.

Ms Drever: That's okay. Thank you.

Dr. Massolin: If I can just supplement.

The Chair: Dr. Massolin.

Dr. Massolin: Yes. Thank you, Madam Chair. I think that on page 10 of the submissions summary there's a section called Accessible Voting as well, so there's some information there.

Thank you.

Dr. Amato: For other issues – and it's also identified in the table of contents – you'll find a whole bunch of issues that were raised under General Comments, and some of those, in fact, deal with what I think that you're getting at in terms of accessibility, which, again, has to do with physical ability.

Ms Drever: Thank you.

Mr. Nixon: Are these summaries going to serve, like, for the basis of upcoming issue documents on these pieces of legislation?

The Chair: Dr. Massolin.

Dr. Massolin: Yes. Thank you, Madam Chair. Definitely. I think that typically what has happened – and you’ll see that first with the PIDA statute – is that the submission summaries are basically the information base for the subsequent issue identification document in addition to some of the oral feedback that the committee receives as well. So the issues will be highlighted, and possible proposals and recommendations will also be put in an issues document for the committee to go through systematically if they wish or piecemeal or as they desire.

Thank you.

7:20

The Chair: Are there any more questions?

Okay. Moving on to the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act, we also have a summary document for the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act.

Dr. Amato, would you please give us a quick walk-through of this document.

Dr. Amato: Again, I’m hoping that you have the submissions summary. It looks like this. This document summarizes 345 submissions, so that’s substantially more. These were received from both invited stakeholders and members of the public. I should add that 309 of those submissions appear to be – appear to be – replies to a form letter sent by the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, and that form letter is actually appended on the last page of the document. In addition to these 309 submissions the document summarizes issues identified in 36 submissions that were not replies to the form letter but also, as I said, includes a sampling of issues raised in response to the form letter.

The summary is organized by issue and, where useful, prefaced by background information. Perhaps I can draw attention to four issues that were identified by eight or more stakeholders or members of the public. I’m going to identify four issues that several submissions – that is, eight or more – spoke to.

Several submissions invited further limiting contributions made to candidates and political parties. You’ll notice in that section, which is fairly long, that there isn’t a lot of – I’m just anticipating a question – agreement necessarily on what those contributions should be, but there is a call for further limits on contributions.

The second point is that several submissions approve of only permitting individuals resident in Alberta to make contributions.

Thirdly, several submissions advocate spending limits on campaigns by candidates and political parties, and then two additional submissions speak to advocating spending limits for third-party groups.

Fourthly, 309 submissions, approximately, speak to opposition to public funding of political parties.

So that’s the summary of that document.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.

I will open it up to questions. MLA Cortes-Vargas.

Cortes-Vargas: Thank you. First of all, thank you so much for compiling that. It was definitely longer than the first one, so I appreciate it.

You kind of pre-empted my question, which was on the emerging themes. But I’m wondering if there’s a difference between public citizens and private citizens in the stakeholder submissions in regard to those themes that you kind of exemplified. Was there more of one theme than another?

Dr. Amato: Not noticeably.

Cortes-Vargas: Not noticeably? Okay. Thank you so much.

Dr. Amato: You’re welcome.

The Chair: Other questions?

Dr. Swann: Was there any support for public financing of elections?

Dr. Amato: Yes, there certainly was.

Dr. Swann: Okay. Tell me how that broke down, because I haven’t had a chance to go through this.

Dr. Amato: I think it was about four.

Dr. Swann: Thank you. Of 309 individuals, was it?

Dr. Amato: Yes, it was 309 individual letters.

Dr. Swann: That’s a pretty strong poll.

The Chair: Member Aheer.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you. I was just curious if tonight we’ll be discussing any of the crossjurisdictional information for the reviews of this legislation.

Dr. Massolin: It’s up to the committee, Madam Chair.

The Chair: So that would be something that would be going towards the issues documents.

Dr. Massolin: Madam Chair, may I?

The Chair: Go ahead, please.

Dr. Massolin: I think the crossjurisdictionals are there for the background information. I don’t think they’re necessarily appropriate for this meeting. You know, it’s up to the committee, of course, but I think it’s appropriate for after the committee has gone out and gathered all its information on the election legislation and conflicts of interest, which is after the meeting with, you know, the stakeholders. After that, we can go through those documents, but they’re there for your reading pleasure.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you.

Dr. Massolin: You’re welcome.

The Chair: Any other questions?

Mr. Cyr: These documents we’re getting now: can we call back and ask questions about these later, in later committee meetings, or is this our only chance to ask questions on these specific documents?

The Chair: Dr. Massolin.

Dr. Massolin: Thank you, Madam Chair. I think that just maybe I’m not being clear. I think that these documents were requested quite a while ago, a few months ago. They take a while to prepare, so we’ve got them ready, and I think that they’ll be most useful after the committee has finished off the consultation part of the process. Part of that is the written submissions, which we just heard summaries of.

The next part of the process is the oral presentations, which I think the committee will next decide upon. Once those meetings have taken place, if the committee goes that route, I think that in subsequent meetings, where we have the crossjurisdictional discussion in terms of presentation – of course, the written material

is there – at that point, I believe, Madam Chair, and if the committee agrees, we're certainly open to answering questions on that.

I think that sets up the deliberation part of the committee meeting in terms of where the committee wants to go in its issue identification, in terms of discussing those issues. You know, in getting information from other jurisdictions on how their election legislation, how their election financing legislation and so forth rolls out, I think that at that point it's probably the most appropriate, but, I mean, we can go with what the committee wants.

Thank you.

Mr. Cyr: We have a lot of information that hit us in this one meeting. Are we going forward with all four pieces all at the same time? It would be nice to clarify on the process. Is it just this one, that we're kind of touching on it and then we're going back to the whistle-blower legislation and finishing that one off?

The Chair: There is a document that's been posted, as far as I know, and it's like a draft timeline. There was a timeline that was put up on the internal committee website. It is a one-page document, and it's a timeline looking at how it maps out. It speaks to inviting stakeholders that have submitted submissions to be able to ask them further questions as well as to requesting issues documents to start to be drafted by the research staff and then also about deliberation meetings to actually talk about everything that has come forward between the crossjurisdictionals, the summaries, what you glean from inviting stakeholders to come and ask questions of them. That would then all come together and inform those things going forward.

On the timeline you'll see that we look at trying to go to deliberations for PIDA at the end of May and then on the Conflicts of Interest Act, the Election Act, and the election finance act into June or July, the deliberations, but looking at that as a timeline.

Mr. Cyr: Is that sufficient time, Madam Chair? We've been deliberating the whistle-blower act for eight months, and we're going to wrap up all of the rest of it in, like, four months? I'm asking because I'm not understanding how all of this . . .

The Chair: Right now this meeting was to do the next steps for the Election Act, the election finance act, and the Conflicts of Interest Act, the next steps of inviting stakeholders to be able to ask them questions. Of course, we know that the committee has a mandate of having this done within a year and also that the most comprehensive part of it is doing the PIDA Act. Then the three other acts really focused on taking the direction from Albertans, which is why we put that out to the public, to invite submissions. This meeting is to inform how we move forward with those three other acts into the summer.

7:30

Mr. Cyr: Madam Chair, when we get into the oral presentation part of this, are we going to be scheduling, like, two and a half hours for each one of these acts that we're reviewing right now? Does that mean we're going to end up with three or four meetings a week until the end of September here? It seems to be a lot packed into this last . . .

The Chair: Yeah. That's a good question. Right now the next step on our agenda would be to invite the members of the committee to invite stakeholder presentations. We can hand out the tentative timeline.

Mr. Cyr: You know what? That would be a huge help. I'm sure there is probably other business, that I'm taking time away from

your thing here, so I can probably wait with my questions until the very end. I apologize for tying up the committee here.

The Chair: Oh, no, not at all.

I will hand it over to Ms Rempel to make a few comments on the timeline.

Ms Rempel: I realize that in the tentative timeline, which, of course, is completely open to what the committee determines, we are making a few assumptions about what the committee may or may not decide it will do today. I think that as far as using the term "deliberations," we're really just beginning that process with all of the acts now. We've really been in an information-collecting stage, and we've been doing that for all of the acts. You may recall that we advertised for the written submissions for all the acts at the same time.

We did get a few steps ahead with the PIDA legislation because we knew that that had to be a comprehensive review, but the deliberations, I would think, are likely to start now with PIDA, now that the committee has presumably collected most of the information that it needs. I think that the decisions tonight will largely identify the information needs on the other three acts, and it will give us the direction that we need behind the scenes to continue setting things up for the committee.

Mr. Cyr: Okay. One last quick question. I've never been a part of a special ethics committee before. Is it typical that they run four acts through one committee in a year?

Ms Dean: It's unprecedented for four statutes to be reviewed in this way by one committee. We were unable to find an example in another jurisdiction where that's happened.

The Chair: Mr. Cyr, go ahead.

Mr. Cyr: What are the most acts that have been put through in a one-year special ethics committee? One or two?

Mr. Nixon: Any special committee, really.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you.

The Chair: Dr. Massolin.

Dr. Massolin: Thank you, Madam Chair. First of all, there has never been this committee before. I mean, this is a one-off, right?

A second point, I guess: usually the select special committees are struck for the purposes of review of one statute.

Mr. Cyr: Okay. You've answered them very well.

The Chair: Member Clark.

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Just continuing on in the same vein here as my hon. colleague, I have a real concern that given the substantial amount of information we need to evaluate and assess and consider – you know, the research staff has done a tremendous amount of work in a short period of time, still has work to do, and we all have work to do to really digest this – I personally would support a request from this committee to the Assembly to extend our timeline on at least three of the acts. I know there's a statutory requirement, if I'm not mistaken, to review the Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) Act in a certain time period, I believe, this year. I think that's a reasonable thing for us to accomplish here by September.

Perhaps if we were to extend this through the end of this year or maybe even into 2017 – I'm open for discussion on the specifics.

The Election Act, the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act, and the Conflicts of Interest Act are all in themselves substantive pieces of legislation with many different considerations. That's my perspective, and I would be interested to hear the perspective of others on the committee on that. Again, I'm not totally clear on process for us to make a formal request to the Legislature from this committee either via motion or perhaps even more informally. But that's something I'd like to put out there as a point of discussion because I do think that it's important that we take the time to get this right. This is important stuff.

Thank you.

Loyola: From my perspective, I believe that the committee was doing its work. We had a timeline. We wanted to request submissions from the public. I felt like we were all on track. Then, of course, you know, the new year came and went, and yes, we are delayed a little bit, but I believe that the suggested timeline that we have before us will allow us to meet the mandate that we were given. Albertans want to know the outcome of the work of this committee. It may mean having to meet a little bit more than we perhaps intended to. But what I see here in front of us in terms of a timeline I think is substantially realistic. We can meet it, and we should carry forward.

The Chair: Ms Renaud on the phone.

Ms Renaud: Hello. Thank you, Madam Chair. You know, I just wanted to say that it does sound like a difficult timeline to meet, but I think this is very important work that we were tasked to do. We've been at it now for months. We put out a call for submissions. We received them in good faith. We've had people come speak to us, and I think we're prepared to do that again. So before sort of throwing in the towel and asking for more time, I think we need to put our heads down and get through this. I'm sure we can.

That's all I wanted to add.

Mr. Nixon: First of all, Madam Chair, with due respect, this is not online, so for most members this is the first time we're seeing this timeline. That may be part of the issue.

In addition to that, many members of this committee have been raising concerns in regard to the timeline for a little while. I do recognize that you're new to the chair for this committee, so you may not be aware of that, but this has been raised for a while. Most members around this table don't have control over when you call these meetings. I think that if you check the record, this committee has barely been called to work, which, I would submit, is extremely unfortunate. On the idea that we would then try to race through three of the pieces of legislation we're responsible for in half the time that we have taken to do one piece of legislation, that is not done, what we're hearing from Parliamentary Counsel and others is that nobody has tried to undertake this in the past. I suspect there's a reason for that. While I do agree that we should work hard, I would suggest that you call the committee a little more so we could do that.

I also disagree that we rush through this process. I think Albertans expect us not only to work hard, but they expect us to produce a final product and to take this seriously. The idea that we race through that I think is against that. So I completely support my colleague from Calgary-Elbow, Mr. Clark, in that venture to make sure that we can do Albertans justice as we go through these four important pieces of legislation.

The Chair: Of course, the deadline for the public submissions to come in was February 26. I appreciate all of the work that our research staff has undertaken to allow us to be able to digest all of

the information that has come forward. Then, of course, you know, there are some challenges. Being part of the Legislative Assembly and having other things on our agenda such as budget, you know, does not make timelines maybe as easy as one would like. However, I think that we can keep working together on this.

Member Clark.

7:40

Mr. Clark: Thank you. Madam Chair, I will make a motion at this moment if I may. I would move that the Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee request that the Legislative Assembly extend the timeline for consideration of the Election Act, the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act, and the Conflicts of Interest Act to December 31, 2016. Should we go another quarter, to March 31, 2017?

Mr. Nixon: It's your motion, but I think maybe we should.

Mr. Clark: I'll amend my motion as I continue to speak and still make the motion. I'll amend that motion to an end date of March 31, 2017.

Ms Jansen: I would just like to say, in support of Member Clark's motion, that certainly, as someone reiterated on the phone, this is very important work, and I would say that one of the reasons we should not rush this is for that very reason. This is very important work, and to rush through this and not have the time to fully discuss it I think would be a huge mistake. We have the ability here to gather around the table and to have a fulsome discussion about how we move forward on issues. To be honest, the entire province is watching and waiting to see where we go on these issues. To rush this through on a timeline that seems impractical I think would be a big mistake. So I certainly support Member Clark's motion, and I would urge everyone around this table to do so as well.

Mr. Nixon: I'd just add one thing to further my comments in support of Mr. Clark's motion. This legislation goes to our democracy. I mean, literally, I don't think we could understate the importance of what these pieces of legislation are for our democracy and for Albertans.

An Hon. Member: You mean overstate.

Mr. Nixon: Or overstate. Sorry. I don't think we could understate it either. Well, maybe you can.

The idea that, "Oh, well, we can just put our heads down and push our way through this," while it may be true in and of itself, means that you're suggesting that we rush through this work. That's essentially what you've done, and I think that for my constituents they'd be very disappointed to hear that. I don't see why we would not entertain the idea of adding a few more months to make sure this job is done right while adding in that opposition members of this committee can't call this committee. We would have been more than happy to come a lot more. In fact, we've been raising for a long time with the previous chair why she was not calling meetings.

Ms Renaud: Madam Chair, can I speak also?

The Chair: Yeah. I will put you on the list right after Member Cortes-Vargas.

Ms Renaud: Thank you.

Cortes-Vargas: Yeah. Absolutely. Having kind of heard some of the reasoning, I mean, we went into this Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee knowing that we had a one-year

mandate. With that knowledge, you know, speaking for myself even, I prepared for what was going to be coming forward, which was reviewing all of the acts prior to, knowing that we were going to be deliberating over the next year on all of those things, and having reviewed, like, the four acts, knowing that the comprehensive review of the PIDA was coming and all of these things.

What we did in the beginning months was build a foundation for what is to come next. I feel that this committee has put those steps forward of being able to listen to Albertans by creating the foundation of getting the submissions in line, getting all those submissions organized. In fact, we knew going in what expectations, so I kind of aligned my work to do just that. We have been reviewing everything as we go along. In fact, for some of the consultations there have been times where other members aren't asking questions. I mean, there are moments where we're moving forward and the opportunities have arisen, and not all of those opportunities have been taken. So I'm actually going to vote against this motion.

The Chair: Ms Renaud.

Ms Renaud: Thank you. With all due respect to the speaker previous, you know, sometimes putting your head down and getting it done doesn't mean charging through it. It means getting it done. But what I would like to say is that we're not at the discussion stage about what we would or would not like to present as recommendations as a whole. We're collecting information, and that means we've read the acts, we've read the submissions, and we are listening to stakeholders as they present to us. I think, you know, it's a little presumptuous to assume that we'll need more time when we haven't even begun to talk about the recommendations, so making some assumptions that we won't all be going in the same direction.

Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Clark.

Mr. Clark: Thank you. I just want to pick up on exactly Ms Renaud's comments here. This committee was struck in June. We first met in mid-September, which started the clock running on a 12-month review cycle. It's now mid-May, so that means there are nine months gone. We have three months left.

I think Ms Renaud hit it on the head: we have yet to deliberate. We have yet to actually have any substantive conversation on the merits of any one of the four pieces of legislation under consideration by this committee in terms of what we like, what we don't like, what we'd like to see changed, what we'd like to see retained. We've received a tremendous – tremendous – amount of information, very well researched, very thoughtful submissions from the public and from important stakeholders, but none of us has had an opportunity to pass a single opinion about any aspect of any act, and I think that's troubling.

But more than that, let's just recount the timeline of what we've had to go through as part of this committee. We're all new, most of us anyway, as MLAs. That certainly presents its own challenges. But beyond that, we've had a new chair, so that delayed things. We've been delayed by two budgets, which is unprecedented or at least unusual. That really restricted our ability to meet. I don't think that anyone is to blame for that. There's no blame – it's no one's fault – but that just is a simple fact.

We're now about to finish off session and head out into our constituencies for the summer. That's an important time for each of us as MLAs to spend time with our constituents. We've spent a lot

of time here in the Legislative Assembly doing that important work. We have work that's equally or, some would argue, more important, being out with our constituents around the province, which will make it very difficult for us to have meaningful deliberations on all four acts, especially because those conversations really are best done in person. Occasionally it can be done on the phone.

At the risk of taking it down a somewhat political path, there is at least a risk, which I think the government members of the committee should be aware of, that if this committee is seen to be pushing through using the government majority, it will be seen by Albertans to be a sham. There's a risk of that, and I just want to raise that risk. If we rush through this – and there's no way that we can do anything other than rush through this if we're to consider these four acts in three months – there's a risk that it appears that the government is using their majority to rush through this and that it really is a sham process.

I think that it's very important. Obviously, I have made the motion and, of course, will vote in favour of it, and I would really urge the government to really consider that. If you perhaps choose to adjourn the motion so that you can consider it further, I think that might not be a bad idea, but to give it some thought would really be what I'd say.

Thank you.

Mr. Nixon: I'd just also like to point out my quick check. I could be off by a meeting or two; nevertheless, I think it's pretty telling. From what I can tell, this committee has been called together seven times in nine months. So I would like to hear before we vote, Madam Chair, what you expect or think we're going to need to do in the next three months to be able to do this work the justice it deserves for Albertans and at least a little bit of an explanation as to why we've only met seven times in nine months and how we could have some assurances that it's going to be different.

The Chair: We do have a new timeline that has been put up on the internal committee website, so I believe we will be able to address that at a later meeting. Right now I will call the question.

Ms Rempel, could you read it out, and we'll see if it needs to be adjusted.

Ms Rempel: Yes. Now, I've paraphrased slightly, so please correct me if I haven't captured the motion. Moved by Mr. Clark that the Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee request that the Legislative Assembly extend the deadline for the completion of the review of the Election Act, the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act, and the Conflicts of Interest Act to March 31, 2017.

The Chair: Is that the motion?

Mr. Clark: That's the motion. Yes, ma'am.

7:50

The Chair: All those in favour? All those opposed?

Mr. Cyr: Can we do a roll call, please?

The Chair: Yeah. I think we're going to have to do a call. I will start to my right.

Ms Miller: No.

Mr. Nielsen: No.

Cortes-Vargas: No.

Ms Drever: No.

Loyola: No.

Mr. Sucha: No.

Mr. Cyr: Yes.

Mr. W. Anderson: Yes.

Mr. Nixon: Yes.

Mrs. Aheer: Yes.

Mr. Malkinson: No.

Mr. Clark: Yes.

Dr. Swann: Yes.

Ms Jansen: Yes.

Dr. Starke: Yes.

The Chair: Ms Renaud on the phone?

Ms Renaud: No.

The Chair: Currently the vote is tied, eight yes and eight no. So I will cast my vote: no.

That motion is defeated.

Moving on to a decision on additional presentations, with regard to our review of the Election Act and the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act this committee has already received written submissions from both identified stakeholders and the public, and we have received a briefing from the Chief Electoral Officer. Does the committee wish to pursue any further stakeholders being invited at this time?

Mr. Cyr: Can we take a quick recess?

The Chair: Yeah. We can take five minutes.

[The committee adjourned from 7:54 p.m. to 8 p.m.]

The Chair: I'll call this committee back to order.

I will just re-ask the question. Would people now like to submit their stakeholder submissions that they would like to invite questions from? Mr. Nielsen.

Mr. Nielsen: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'd like to make three suggestions for submissions to the committee: Parkland Institute, and I think their submission number was EAC-365; Public Interest Alberta, their democratic task force, submission EAC-060; and Ian Urquhart from the University of Alberta, department of political science, and I believe the submission number was EAC-367.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Other stakeholders that people want called?

Dr. Swann: I think we've already identified Fair Vote Canada. Is that correct? Maybe I'm wrong.

The Chair: You also need to add it to the list here at this point.

Dr. Swann: Officially?

The Chair: Yeah.

Dr. Swann: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: What we'll do at this time is keep the list open.
Dr. Massolin.

Dr. Massolin: Sorry to interrupt, Madam Chair. I just have a question about Fair Vote. There's a Fair Vote Calgary and a Fair Vote Canada, Edmonton chapter. Which one, I guess, is the one?

Dr. Swann: The Edmonton chapter makes sense to me.

Dr. Massolin: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: Is that good?

Dr. Swann: Thank you.

The Chair: I'll ask for the motion.

Mr. Nielsen: So moved.

The Chair: Okay. Moved by Mr. Nielsen that the Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee invite the following individuals and organizations to make an oral presentation to the committee as part of the review of the Election Act and the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act: Would you mind reading them out, Ms Rempel?

Ms Rempel: They are the Parkland Institute; Public Interest Alberta; Ian Urquhart; and Fair Vote Canada, Edmonton chapter.

The Chair: All in favour? Opposed? Carried.

We'll move on right now to the discussion of other business. Is there any other business right now that anyone wants to raise?

Ms Miller, would you like to make a motion?

Ms Miller: I'd like to make a motion to adjourn.

The Chair: Thank you.

All in favour? All opposed? Carried.

[The committee adjourned at 8:05 p.m.]

