



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

The 28th Legislature
First Session

Standing Committee
on
Alberta's Economic Future

High-speed Rail

Thursday, December 12, 2013
10 a.m.

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Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

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10 a.m. Thursday, December 12, 2013

[Mr. Amery in the chair]

The Chair: Well, good morning, ladies and gentlemen. I would like to call this meeting to order and welcome all the members and staff in attendance today at the meeting of the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future.

First of all, I would like to go around the table and ask the members to be recognized, and I will start with myself. However, we have a few members joining us by phone: Mr. Cao, Mr. Donovan, Mr. Luan, Mr. Strankman, Ms Pastoor, and Mr. Webber, substituting for Mr. McDonald. I am Moe Amery, MLA for Calgary-East and chair of this committee.

Mr. Fox: Rod Fox, MLA for Lacombe-Ponoka, vice-chair of this committee.

Mr. Quadri: Sohail Quadri, Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Mr. Bhardwaj: Naresh Bhardwaj, Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Mr. Rogers: George Rogers, Leduc-Beaumont.

Mr. Dorward: David Dorward, MLA for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. Rowe: Bruce Rowe, MLA for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Mrs. Sarich: Good morning. Janice Sarich, MLA, Edmonton-Decore.

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

Ms Robert: Good morning. Nancy Robert, research officer with the Legislative Assembly Office.

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

Mrs. Dacyshyn: Corinne Dacyshyn, committee clerk.

The Chair: Thank you.

Welcome, Corinne. She's substituting for Karen Sawchuk for this meeting. Thank you very much.

Ladies and gentlemen, as you all know, the meeting materials were posted to the internal committee website yesterday.

But before we start with the business at hand, there are a few housekeeping items. The microphones are operated by *Hansard* staff. Please keep cellphones, iPhones, 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.

Okay. Well, now I would like the people who are joining us by phone to introduce themselves so we can get you on the record, please.

Mr. Webber: Hi there. It's Len Webber, MLA, Calgary-Foothills, replacing Everett for this morning. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

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

The Chair: Thank you, Jason.

Mr. Luan: You're welcome.

Ms Pastoor: Hi. Bridget Pastoor, MLA, Lethbridge-East.

The Chair: Thank you, Bridget.

Okay. We have been joined by Mr. David Xiao. Thanks, David.

Mr. Xiao: Edmonton-McClung.

The Chair: MLA, Edmonton-McClung. Thank you.

I would like for a member to move a motion for the approval of the agenda. Mr. Naresh Bhardwaj. All in favour? Opposed? Carried. Thank you.

The third item on the agenda is the proposed review process, the review of high-speed rail transit within Alberta. Ladies and gentlemen, the working group met on Tuesday to review the draft list of stakeholder panels and the draft list of prospective stakeholders and also to consider a suggested method for restructuring our review using each of these lists.

The working group considered a number of methods for requesting input from stakeholder panels and prospective stakeholders; i.e., inviting written presentations from prospective stakeholders, inviting oral presentations at the outset of the review and from panels within each of the groupings set out in the document, and/or advertising the committee's review of proposed high-speed rail transit within Alberta and conducting public meetings.

The working group is suggesting the following process, that letters be sent to all stakeholders on the prospective stakeholder list inviting their written input by the end of January 2014, that stakeholder panels be invited to make oral presentations during the last week of January and the first week of February 2014, that scheduling of public meetings in Edmonton, Calgary, and Red Deer be postponed until the oral presentations and written presentations have been received, to continue committee meetings to review the information received through written or oral presentations, and to direct the drafting of the report and the review and approve the committee draft report by mid-May in order to meet the May 25 deadline.

Any discussion or suggestions on these?

Mr. Dorward: Well, I'm concerned about the volume of work. That's an enormous list of individuals that are interested. Are you saying, Chair, that the recommendation thus far is that we talk to every single one of them and have them give us an oral presentation?

The Chair: Well, that was the recommendation made by the working group.

I will let Dr. Philip Massolin speak on this.

Dr. Massolin: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Having attended the working group meeting, I think the working group decided just to solicit written submissions from that large draft stakeholder list, and then the oral presentations would only come from those on the more restrictive list of panelists. You saw the five panels that were structured.

Thank you.

Mr. Dorward: The restrictive list, then, is already defined, or will that come out from our feelings relative to the presentations that we get? Like, I have in front of me a draft list of prospective stakeholders. It's a fairly exhaustive list.

The Chair: Yes, a very comprehensive list.

Mr. Dorward: My understanding is that we're going to ask all of these people to do the written if they would like.

The Chair: You don't have the other list?

Mr. Dorward: I just got it handed to me. Okay. The other one I have is the draft list of stakeholder panels broken down by the six. I'm counting; there are probably 40 on this list. Is this contemplated to be the list of 40 people who would present to us, or would the panel meet with each one of these?

The Chair: The panels will be asked.

Mr. Dorward: So the panels are a subset of the committee. The panel will meet with all of these.

The Chair: That's right.

Mr. Dorward: So in railway infrastructure and engineering there are 15, including alternates. That's 15 times – I imagine they're going to be 30 minutes minimum, so that's eight hours of consultation that has to take place. I'm just thinking from last year that if this panel is charged with also looking at budget estimates, that's going to come up, and this is coming up. We have some significant time considerations here. I just want to make sure we know where we're headed.

The Chair: Well, Mr. Dorward, I think that just because we're inviting them, we don't expect all of them to show up, okay? Last time, with the BRIK discussions, we invited about 30 stakeholders, and only about seven of them showed up. It doesn't mean that because we're inviting all of these, all of them will show up and make presentations.

Mr. Dorward: All right. I respect that. I think it would be important for us, when we communicate with them in the written and the verbal – we need to go through the written as committee members and read that information. I really think it's important to try to have everybody talk in their presentations about the very succinct mandate that we have. In other words, I would be concerned about getting a lot of information, potentially, about other mandates and big amounts of information and marketing materials and volumes and volumes and volumes of information. I'd be very concerned about receiving all that. I just think we should communicate to these folks: we do want you to keep your comments down to the potential for what we're about, which is high-speed rail in Alberta.

10:10

The Chair: That's what we have done in the past, and that would be what we'll be doing in the future.

Ms Dean: Just a suggestion, Mr. Chair. When we communicate with the stakeholders, we could limit any materials they're providing to the committee to a certain page length.

Mr. Dorward: That would be, I think, a great way to do it. Thank you, Mr. Chair. That's my thought.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Bhardwaj: Mr. Chairman, at the appropriate time there is one other stakeholder I would like to suggest. Should I do it now?

The Chair: I think so. Go ahead.

Mr. Bhardwaj: Okay. It's New Magellan Ventures. It's based out of the U.S., a high-speed rail company, who has been here last year, it's my understanding, and talked to the mayors and, in fact, talked to some other folks here in Alberta. So I'm just

recommending or suggesting that they could also be put on the stakeholder list.

Thank you.

The Chair: Okay. Mrs. Sarich.

Mrs. Sarich: Yes. Just a couple of things. If I'm understanding you correctly, we're having a look at the stakeholders listed in five panels, potentially six panels, the sixth panel being aboriginal and environmental issues, for which there are only two stakeholders there. On a point of clarification, in panel 5 we have some italicized alternates; for example, Central Japan Railway Company, Deutsche Bahn International GmbH, SNCF, Renfe Operadora, and Nuovo Trasporto Viaggiatori. [interjection] Thank you very much. My Italian isn't that bad.

Are they to be included, or is this a subset of something for extra consideration by the committee?

Plus, my second question would be on panel 6, aboriginal and environmental issues. What I believe is very important, when you look at – it doesn't matter where a potential line would be. The aboriginal groups and environmental stakeholders that would have something to say to our committee about that seem a bit thin, and I think we need to take a little bit more time and identify who those stakeholders would be.

The Chair: Okay. I'd like to ask Dr. Phil to clarify.

Dr. Massolin: Yes, certainly. I mean, that list, I think, is obviously for the committee to decide whether or not a panel 6 is what the committee wants to hear from. Second of all, if the committee opts to have another panel, panel 6, I think the intention is that the working group could identify the aboriginal groups, or the committee could as well. I mean, the intention was as well those aboriginal groups that would be located close to the proposed line – that's the Calgary-Edmonton, Edmonton-Calgary corridor but also potentially to Fort McMurray and to Lethbridge – those groups, you know, reasonably close to a proposed line along that corridor.

Thank you.

Mrs. Sarich: Okay. That makes sense to me, that the working group could take a look at panel 6, you know, at your next meeting of the working group and propose some stakeholders back to give us a broader section. I would encourage the standing committee to give consideration to panel 6.

I have heard what one of our committee members, Mr. Dorward, had said about some limitations here. If the scope is very wide, we're going to receive an abundance of information. That was leading into my third area. I don't see in the materials a proposal from the working group as to what would be the subset areas where we would like to have these stakeholders from five or six panel groups write in to our committee. What exactly are the parameters? What are we looking for so that there's some continuity in terms of reporting back information to the standing committee? To the chair: I was wondering if you could help the standing committee members here understand what some of those areas would be.

The Chair: Do you want to address that?

Dr. Massolin: Certainly. I suppose that the working group could also prepare a stakeholder letter, a letter that goes out to the prospective stakeholders soliciting their written comments. It could sort of circumscribe what those comments would be, including, as Ms Dean mentioned, a page limit but also the

parameters: you know, this is Alberta, and these are the sorts of considerations the committee wants to know about.

Mrs. Sarich: Well, I appreciate that, but, for example, is there going to be a cost-benefit analysis? Is there going to be an area that addresses the technology or a description of that? For example, some of the stakeholders would be talking about the technology that they could offer in terms of this particular issue: what the ramifications could be, the cost-benefit analysis as to ridership, you know, and other areas. Is the working committee going to propose something back to the standing committee as to what those parameters would be so that we have a comprehensive overview? Certainly, if you're going to ask 50, 60 groups to write in to a standing committee, we need to know what those areas are going to be so that we would be able to compare, where comparisons could take place, that information.

Mr. Cao: Mr. Chairman, if you have some more time, then can I just interject? I'm in Quebec City.

The Chair: Okay. Go ahead, Wayne.

Mr. Cao: Thank you very much. Just a quick thought here. I know that in California they're talking about high-speed rail, and they are probably talking about even where the lines are and construction and so on. They have been through this kind of, I guess, study or review. I would suggest that Dr. Philip may connect with the Californian commission on high-speed rail and then have some information or ideas. That's kind of my input.

The Chair: Thank you, Wayne.

Did you hear that, Dr. Phil, that you connect with California's commission because they are doing something similar to what we are doing right now?

Dr. Massolin: Yeah.

Mr. Cao: Yeah. Since I have to get to the airport and get back to Calgary, I have to excuse myself here. Okay?

The Chair: All right. Safe travel.

Mr. Cao: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.

Okay. Mrs. Sarich, your points are well taken. We will meet with the working group and discuss exactly what you have suggested.

Mrs. Sarich: Okay. That will come back to the next meeting, or is it something that could be circulated to the standing committee members for feedback for a quicker turnaround?

The Chair: That could be circulated. It could be circulated to the committee members.

Mrs. Sarich: Yeah, so that at least we could have a look at the structure. I understand and support the direction of the chair and the working committee in trying to put something comprehensive to these stakeholders in a written format so that from the information received, where possible, we could do some comparisons. Also, you know, if there's other information that they would like to bring to our attention that wasn't covered in some subset information areas, then at least they would have that.

One other suggestion that I would have for the committee in this regard is that, at least based on my experience on other standing

committees, not all groups would like to make a presentation, but certainly if they are interested in offering a presentation to the committee, you know, then I'm wondering if that would be something that would be put into that letter as well.

The Chair: Okay. Well, I would ask Dr. Phil to answer any questions about the alternates.

Dr. Massolin: Oh, yes. That was raised about panel 5, what the alternates in the italics mean. Basically, for that panel you have some international stakeholders who may or may not be, you know, willing to present to the committee necessarily, so you have some alternates from which to choose. That's the intention there.

Thank you.

10:20

Mrs. Sarich: Just as a follow-up – and thank you for that information – if this is in a draft form and if we approve these panels with other amendments coming in the future, I'm wondering if in that panel 5 you can identify that they are, in fact, international stakeholders so that it is clear.

The Chair: Okay. Ms Dean? You're okay? Good.

Mr. Xiao.

Mr. Xiao: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'd like to approach this issue from probably a different angle. I'm not quite sure about the role of our committee in this matter. You know, when you go through the list of stakeholders, it seems to me that if we are going to draft a feasibility study report – I'm not sure if this should be the role of this committee. When you are doing a business project, a business study, at the end of the day you have to come up with a report. We call it a feasibility study. Based on that feasibility study, we can recommend that the government or the decision-makers decide whether this project is a project that should be pursued. That's how I feel. This is not a small project we're talking about. I'm not even sure we have the resources to pursue this kind of a study. I think and personally believe it should be the responsibility of the Transportation ministry to take on this project. Then, based on that feasibility study, they can go to the cabinet, the cabinet can approve it, and then the cabinet will come to the Legislature to get the Legislature's support for the budget.

Also, I'm not even sure – and this is the budget – the government would be the sole investor. You know, there are a lot of businesses, stakeholders, who probably want to be part of this, okay? Also, when we're talking about feasibility studies, it includes technological feasibility – I'm sure they are available now – and also the feasibility of making a viable business case that there's a need for this, right? Also, do we have the land available now? I don't think this committee can deal with that. How is this project going to be financed? Should it be the government's job to come up with a plan and say: "Okay. We are not going to put money into this, but we probably are going to acquire the land. Then the actual construction is going to be paid for based on kind of a consortium of private investors"?

You know, the question I have to ask is: at the end of the day, what do we want to accomplish? What is the goal of this committee? After we spend hundreds of hours and then we just draft a report and give it to the government – and it's up to the government whether they're going to accept it or not – I bet you that the government will do its own studies again. Right? The reason I'm trying to raise these questions is that I just want to say that before we go any further, we have to decide how far we want to go and how far we can go based on the availability of the

resources we have for this committee. If we just want to establish a framework for the government, I have no issue with that. Okay?

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Well, thank you for your comments. Are you saying that this committee should not be going forward with this project at the present time? You said that it should be something that the Transportation department and the government fund.

Mr. Xiao: As you know, I've been here for the last five years. Even before 2008 we already – you see, I'm a businessman. From a business point of view, I think it is ridiculous for us to study a report which is from close to seven, eight, or nine years ago. Right? The world has changed, ladies and gentlemen. The technology has advanced significantly in the last five, seven, eight, nine years. It's just ridiculous, to me, to make us work with that report, which was done seven or eight years ago, right? So that's my point.

Another point is that the government has done the feasibility study. Based on that report, although it's about seven or eight years old, it is feasible. Already the conclusions are there. Do we need to spend our limited resources, our limited time on this issue? I think we're legislators. I think we should focus on legislation. You know, we've got a lot of dated legislation that needs to be modernized, to be updated. That's my personal view. Now we are trying to take on this kind of business study. I don't think it should be the role of a legislative committee. It should be the role of the government. That's my personal view.

The Chair: Okay. Well, thank you for your input.

Mrs. Sarich.

Mrs. Sarich: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Maybe it would be helpful – and I did ask the question earlier about something that would be taken back to the working group. I appreciate that our colleague has mentioned: what is the end result that we're trying to achieve? That is a very valuable question. That's why it will be very helpful to have that framework as to: what are the pieces of information that we would be requesting from the stakeholders? When you step back to have a look at what that framework is, with what we are trying to achieve as a committee with all of that information, then that will help set the direction. That's why I appreciate the information that has been put together thus far from the working committee.

But what is missing is that framework piece, and I think you need to spend some time. I believe that there has been an expression of viewpoints and various helpful information pieces that would help the working committee to structure that framework so that we could take a look at it and then evaluate it against the question: what is it we're trying to achieve with this? In all honesty, I appreciate that the last report that was done was, I believe, in 2006.

The Chair: I think it was in 2008.

Mr. Xiao: In 2008 it was submitted.

Mrs. Sarich: Thank you very much for that correction. That was a body of work done by the department, so I wouldn't want to jump to any conclusions or pre-empt anything that would be provided back from the working committee in terms of a framework. I think that that framework would help our standing committee understand the direction that we're trying to achieve here.

10:30

The Chair: Thank you. We will consider that.

However, I would like to say, as I have been saying in the past, that we are not going into this with any predetermined outcome. I think the report is going to reflect what we hear throughout these meetings and these consultations.

Mrs. Sarich: I appreciate that, but for the purposes of a letter that we would be sending to the stakeholders, we have to be very clear on what levels and types of information we would be requesting from them. That, to me, is the framework: what are the pieces of information that we'd be requesting from the stakeholders? Then it would help us formulate more directions.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Rogers.

Mr. Rogers: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I don't necessarily want to argue with my colleague from Edmonton-McClung, but I'd like to offer a little bit of a different perspective on what I think we're trying to achieve here.

First of all, we're not just legislators slogging through pieces of legislation. We're leaders. We're leaders sent here by various parts of the province to not only do the business of today, but we should also anticipate and plan for the future, and that's how I look at this body of work that we're attempting to do here. It's very important that we hear from stakeholders, ordinary Albertans, and proponents, people who may be interested in or may have the abilities to build this type of infrastructure for the future. I see this as a high-level review. Sure, we will discuss some aspects of detail, but I think it's important to get a framework, a sense of the opportunity for the future. At some point after we've handed our work to the Legislature, then the opportunity would be there for the government of the day, whether it's this government or some future government, depending on timing, to look at moving forward with this.

This is not something we're talking about for tomorrow or five years or 10 years. This is being forward-thinking, recognizing that if we don't make some accommodation, the likelihood of this opportunity for Albertans may never happen. If we did nothing and said, "Well, let's leave it to government," at some point in the milieu of the basket of things that they have to do, clearing snow on a great day like this and many others in Alberta, who knows how much effort might be put into looking at this?

We all know and anybody that has travelled in Europe knows – and I had the privilege of being in Europe recently and seeing the value of this type of infrastructure. Mind you, those are much more mature societies than we are here, but the reality is that if you do nothing and allow the rights-of-way to be paved over and built over, if we're scared – and I hear some reports out in the press as well that other agencies and maybe even some of our municipal governments are a little concerned that we may be off track to try to talk about this today. This isn't for today. This is planning so that we will have the opportunity to have this service at some point in the future for maybe our children or grandchildren or even that next generation. But if we do nothing today, I think we will squander that opportunity.

I'm quite comfortable with the work that we're trying to do here. Yes, we'll have to be cognizant of the time, the resources, and so on that we use to achieve it, but I think we should proceed on the path that we are going. I'm quite willing to support that.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Rogers.

I think we have no choice but to proceed because at the last meeting we passed a motion. The motion reads that

given the rapid and continual growth in the population of Alberta, in the interest of maximizing the economic impact of that population growth, the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future undertake a study of the feasibility of establishing a high-speed rail transit system to be built for Alberta in phases.

The motion, I believe, passed unanimously, so I think it's too late to go back.

You know, we are a growing province. We have already cracked 4 million, and we're expecting about a hundred thousand people every year. In the next 10 years we will be over 5 million people. I remember when they were talking about this particular issue 25 or 30 years ago. I mean, the experts were saying that we have to have about 2 million people on each side of the tracks to make it economically viable. As Mr. Rogers said, I think that this is a project not for today and not for next year. It is for the future.

We're not going to get into a debate on this.

Mr. Xiao: No, I'm not. You know, I'm just trying to make my point clear. I'm not saying that we shouldn't do any study on this. What I'm saying is: the length, the depth that we want to go as a committee. That's my point that I just wanted to make. In terms of the growth, personally, I believe that we should have already built that high-speed rail today. I wish we could have started it in 2008.

The Chair: It's never too late, Mr. Xiao.

Mr. Xiao: I think my point is not to stop doing any study on this. You know, I'm trying to say: how far do we want to go? How many aspects do we want included in our committee study? That's why I'm talking about the framework.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.
Mr. Rowe.

Mr. Rowe: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm not sure where to start with this. I have a whole bunch of questions. I would agree with Mr. Dorward, if I can use the name in here, that this is a pretty lengthy list of stakeholders and that to hear from all of them, I think, is going to take some time, for sure. I guess I go back to: what kind of a budget are we looking at for this committee to work on? If we have to pay these people to come from Lord knows where, are we footing the bill for that, or are they footing the bill for that? That's a big question mark.

I'm also concerned with the report that we got from our transportation people here at the last meeting, that the chance of this proceeding totally with private enterprise is zero. We are going to have to put a significant provincial dollar amount into this project. We all know what the state of the finances are in the province today. I don't want to put a negative light on this, but I don't see any light at the end of the tunnel in the near future even. We're going to be seriously in debt by 2016 or so. I'm very concerned about those, and I just want to put those on the table.

Panel 5 here deals with a whole number of things, and I'm not sure that any one of those particular people could address the whole package. I would like to suggest that panel 5 be broken down into some subpanels. We're going to be dealing with, number one, land acquisition, and I think that's about the only thing that I can see the province starting in the near future. I don't think the province needs to buy it. I think we just need to somehow satisfy landowners that they're getting fair value for their land and start that process. So that's a concern.

The other things that we're going to have to deal with – and I don't know that any one company can supply all of this – are the track and the signals, the rolling stock, who's going to operate it,

and then all the safety issues. I'm not sure, as I say, that one company or even one consortium of companies could come in and address all of those issues. If we could break those down into separate categories, I think it would be helpful to understand the full picture.

10:40

The Chair: Okay. In terms of your first question about the budget of the committee, I'm not sure. The budget of the committee is about \$150,000 a year per budget year, and I don't know whether we have paid for the people who – I'll ask Shannon Dean to address this concern.

Ms Dean: This committee has never reimbursed presenters for their expenses. We have had one occasion – and I have been here 17 years – in 17 years where we've reimbursed expenses. It's really at the request of who's been invited, if they're seeking reimbursement. Typically these people are pleased to attend, and they do so at their own cost.

Mr. Rowe: Okay. That's somewhat comforting, I guess.

If I could, Mr. Chairman, the fourth company in panel 5: I think that's spelled wrong. I think the proper spelling is C-O-L-A-S unless it's a totally different company.

Ms Robert: No. It's spelled correctly.

Mr. Rowe: Oh, is it? Okay. Thank you.

That's it for me. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: Thank you.
Mr. Eggen.

Mr. Eggen: Yes. Thank you. I certainly appreciate the opportunity to speak on this. I'm certainly a firm advocate for rail travel. Certainly, we have to take the long view of these things, so I think that we can use this as an opportunity to educate not only ourselves but the general population here in Alberta on, you know, what our transportation system will look like for the next several generations. Certainly, I'm acutely aware of the problem of losing rights-of-way, so as much as we can gain rights-of-way here in the province of Alberta, I think we should be cognizant of that, too. Of course, we do have established potential networks that, in fact, are being erased every day and year here in this province.

Yeah, I mean, this is an interesting process to go through, and I look forward to it.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.

Those members who are joining us by phone, do you have any comments, any questions? Jason.

Mr. Luan: Yeah. I just want to say that I concur with some of my colleagues' conversations. On one hand, I do think that we need to stay a little bit focused in terms of: clearly, what's the objective?

The other part is that I really like Mr. Rogers' view that as leaders in the community, as legislators we can initiate those notional items that we need the Assembly to take notice of. In my view, the Assembly has the final power. If it's a motion that's being supported by all, we can direct the department to follow up. The department, to me, is the implementer of the decisions of the Assembly. That's where I'm standing.

The subject the committee chose: I really love it, and I think it's a great thing that has already stirred up great interest in my community with folks I am associated with. I think that it would pick up something that is meeting the needs of Albertans. We are the best people to pick up the grassroots', the people's voice, and

we can push our government to prioritize and make it an item that is needed.

That's where I'm standing. I'm for it. I do appreciate that we need to be clear on the objective.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Luan.

Ms Pastoor.

Ms Pastoor: Yes. I think you all know where I stand on this. I am listening attentively to the conversation. Like other people have said, I really believe that this is a very important issue and that if we don't do the proper homework now and really understand – the philosophical question is: what is the responsibility of a government to its citizens in terms of providing public transport?

Other than that I don't have any comments, but I am listening attentively.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Webber: Mr. Chair, if I may, I have been listening attentively as well. I am here just as, I guess, a guest, replacing Everett McDonald for the morning. I do find this topic very, very interesting, and the comments that have been made today also are very good comments. I've been around also for quite some time, since 2004, though not quite as long as you, Mr. Chair, but maybe one day I'll aspire to be here as long as you. In any event, in those 10 years that I've been around, this issue has come up numerous times.

I know that the Department of Transportation has done a lot of work up till now with regard to research and reports and studies, and I would imagine that our researchers and then Dr. Phil have looked into what the Department of Transportation has done up till now. Hopefully, there won't have to be any duplication of work, just by consulting the Department of Transportation. I would hope that that would have been done, and I'm sure it has been. But, you know, this is a huge, huge project, and I think it is, as Mr. Xiao has suggested, quite beyond the scope of a committee such as this to get into the fine details of what is required to put a report together.

There have been feasibility studies, as Mr. Xiao has said as well. He mentioned the fact that technology does change, and it does, and I know that for us to look into the technology of the different types of tracks and trains out there, again, is extensive work. To bring in stakeholders to report on their different technologies, their different trains and such, you know, is all fine and dandy, but until the government makes a decision that they are going to go ahead with this train, I think there will be a lot of time wasted listening to the different stakeholders and what they have to offer.

So those are some of my comments with respect to where I think I stand. Where I stand is that I think it's important that our government acquire the land that is necessary, determine what route this bullet train would take, what land it would take up, and do the consultation, as Mrs. Sarich suggested, with respect to all the stakeholders involved, including the aboriginal community and landowners in the area, things like that. That would be something that I think would be great for this committee to look at, to talk to stakeholders with regard to that. But to get into the fine details of technologies of the different types of rail transit, I think I would leave that up to the Department of Transportation to have a report put together and a study done there.

Anyway, those are some of my comments, just to share with you. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Well, thank you, Mr. Webber.

In regard to the concern or the question that you asked – you suggested that Dr. Phil contact the Department of Transportation – we have already done that. As a matter of fact, at the last meeting, on December 3, the deputy minister was here at the committee and made a presentation. So we have been talking to them.

Mr. Webber: Okay. Thank you. I did not know that. Again, I'm a guest. Maybe I should just keep quiet. All right. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

10:50

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Webber.

Any other questions or suggestions or comments?

Then we need a motion. We need somebody to move that the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future approve the draft list of prospective stakeholders of high-speed rail in Alberta, with the addition of Magellan Ventures.

Moved by Mr. Quadri. All in favour? Opposed? On the phone? Carried. Thank you.

Now we have to move another motion, that

the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future approve the adopted list of stakeholder panels, with the inclusion of panel 6 groups, as identified by the working group and the identification of international stakeholders.

Mr. Dorward: So moved.

Mrs. Sarich: Mr. Chair, I appreciate that it's moved, but there has to be consideration because the identification of stakeholders on panel 6 is very thin. You need to build into that motion the flexibility to add stakeholders.

The Chair: That's in the next motion. There's a third motion.

Mrs. Sarich: Then it would have been very helpful to hear from the chair exactly what our direction is on all of these motions before we even put them to the table. Then I wouldn't have to ask any further questions.

Mr. Dorward: Can you just voice the third motion?

The Chair: Okay. I will read the third motion: that the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future authorize the chair to write a letter to be sent out to stakeholders after the committee's review and to organize the panel presentations, using the approved draft list of stakeholder panels, for the last week of January and the first week of February 2014 and that the chair work in consultation with the working group should there be a need to make any changes to dates or presenters.

Does that cover it? I think that would cover it, Mrs. Sarich.

Mrs. Sarich: Right. It provides the standing committee membership the opportunity to put ideas or extra information forward to the chair.

The Chair: Yes. Absolutely.

Mrs. Sarich: Thank you.

The Chair: Now we have to vote on the second motion that Mr. Dorward moved. All in favour? Opposed? Carried.

Now we have to move the third motion.

Mr. Rogers: I'll move that, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Now, do you want me to read it again? I will read it for the record:

the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future authorize the chair to write a letter to be sent out to stakeholders after the committee's review and to organize the panel presentations, using the approved draft list of stakeholder panels, for the last week of January and the first week of February 2014 and that the chair work in consultation with the working group should there be a need to make any changes to dates or presenters.

All in favour? On the phone? Opposed? Carried. Thank you.

Now we move to item 4 on the agenda. Are there any research requirements for the LAO research team besides items already requested at the last meeting?

Okay. Item 5. Are there any other business items for discussion?

Seeing none, I will move on to the date of the next meeting. As discussed, the committee will be advised of future meeting dates once committee staff have scheduled presentations. We will also have a working group meeting to review letters to stakeholders and presenters. Any questions, suggestions?

Mr. Eggen: When are we having the meeting? We'll canvass the groups, I presume.

The Chair: I think that's what we have been doing in the past, and that's what we will do in the future.

Mr. Eggen: Okay. Sounds good.

The Chair: This is proposed for the end of January and the first week of February 2014.

Mr. Eggen: Yeah. I know. The sooner we can pin down those dates, the better. Everybody is busy, I guess, obviously.

The Chair: Any other questions or comments?

Seeing none, I need a motion to adjourn. Mr. Xiao moved. All in favour? Opposed? On the phone? Thank you very much. This meeting is adjourned.

I'd like to wish each and every one of you a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

[The committee adjourned at 10:56 a.m.]

