



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
First Session

Standing Committee
on
Families and Communities

Mental Health Amendment Act, 2007, Review

Wednesday, December 16, 2015
9:30 a.m.

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First Session**

Standing Committee on Families and Communities

Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (ND), Chair
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (W), Deputy Chair

Babcock, Erin D., Stony Plain (ND)*
Hinkley, Bruce, Wetaskiwin-Camrose (ND)
Jansen, Sandra, Calgary-North West (PC)
Littlewood, Jessica, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (ND)
Luff, Robyn, Calgary-East (ND)
McPherson, Karen M., Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill (ND)
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Payne, Brandy, Calgary-Acadia (ND)
Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie (W)
Rodney, Dave, Calgary-Lougheed (PC)
Shepherd, David, Edmonton-Centre (ND)
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9:30 a.m.

Wednesday, December 16, 2015

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

The Chair: Good morning, everybody. It is now 9:30, so I'd like to call the meeting to order.

Welcome to members, staff, and guests in attendance for this meeting of the Standing Committee on Families and Communities. My name is Heather Sweet, and I'm the MLA for Edmonton-Manning and the chair of this committee.

I'd ask that members and those joining the committee introduce themselves for the record, and then I will call on members on the phone lines to introduce themselves.

Mr. Smith: Mark Smith, Drayton Valley-Devon.

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

Ms Robert: Good morning. Nancy Robert, research services.

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

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

Mr. Orr: Ron Orr, Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mrs. Littlewood: Jessica Littlewood, MLA, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

Ms Babcock: Erin Babcock, Stony Plain.

Mr. Shepherd: David Shepherd, Edmonton-Centre.

Mrs. Sawchuk: Karen Sawchuk, committee clerk.

Ms Luff: Robyn Luff, Calgary-East.

Mr. Rodney: Good morning. Dave Rodney, Calgary-Lougheed.

Mr. Westhead: Good morning. Cameron Westhead, Banff-Cochrane.

Mrs. Pitt: Angela Pitt, Airdrie.

Ms McPherson: Karen McPherson, Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

Dr. Swann: Hi. David Swann in Calgary-Mountain View.

Mr. Hinkley: Bruce Hinkley, Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

The Chair: Did I miss anybody on the phone? No. Okay.

I'd also like to note for the record that Ms Babcock is substituting for Ms Payne today.

A few housekeeping items to address before we turn to the business at hand. Just a reminder 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 they 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.

Now we'll just move on to the agenda, the approval of the agenda. Everybody has a copy? Would a member like to move a motion to approve the agenda?

Mr. Smith: So moved.

The Chair: Mr. Smith moves that the agenda for the December 16, 2015, meeting of the Standing Committee on Families and Communities be adopted as circulated. All in favour of the motion? Any opposed? On the phones? Thank you. The motion is carried.

Next on the agenda is the minutes from our last meeting prior to the main estimates. Are there any errors or omissions to be noted? Any members on the phone?

If not, would a member move adoption of the minutes, please.

Mr. Shepherd: So moved.

The Chair: Mr. Shepherd moves that the minutes for the October 5, 2015, meeting of the Standing Committee on Families and Communities be adopted as circulated. All in favour of the motion? On the phones? Any opposed? Thank you. The motion is carried.

Now moving on to the review of the Mental Health Amendment Act, 2007, I would like to ask and turn it over to, I guess, Ms Robert to address the submissions summary document.

Ms Robert: Thank you, Madam Chair. Okay. As all of you will have seen, a summary of the written submissions received with respect to the changes made by the Mental Health Amendment Act, 2007, was posted to the internal committees website for your use last week. There were 15 submissions in total from a variety of stakeholders, and there's a list of the submitters on the last page of the submissions summary if you want to look at it.

The summary is organized by issue. There's, you know, a section on issues raised with respect to the changes made to involuntary admission criteria. If you'll recall, prior to 2007 the criteria was: "likely to present a danger to [themselves] or others." It's been changed to: "likely to cause harm to [themselves] or others or to suffer . . . mental or physical deterioration or serious physical impairment." And then, of course, there's the introduction of the use of community treatment orders, or CTOs.

There was general agreement from the stakeholders that made submissions with respect to the positive effect of both changes on the act. The main issues raised with respect to the changes in the criteria for involuntary admission related to sort of communication issues, notification to caregivers and sharing of medical information with caregivers in the community. The other comments were mainly with respect to the need for treatment supports in the community in order to make involuntary admission, like, the whole process, more successful.

With respect to the introduction of CTOs there were a few different issues raised. One had to do with consent, either competence to consent, withdrawing of consent, or what to do when consent is not given but a lot of the other criteria for issuing a CTO are met.

There were administrative issues raised: you know, the duration of CTOs; the involvement of a review panel, like, at the six-month or one-year period; renewal of CTOs, how frequently they should be renewed, whether that should be changed; communication with law enforcement personnel and health care workers with respect to people who are on CTOs.

There were also issues raised with respect to apprehension and detention for noncompliance with CTOs. There were conveyance and detention issues raised by law enforcement because of the time it takes to go through that process and when the handover takes place. There were issues raised with respect to the validity of a CTO if you've been apprehended and issues also related to what happens if the CTO expires while you're in the hospital, that sort of thing.

There also were a couple of comments raised with respect to the appeal process in the act. There's an appeal process for decisions of the review panel.

Then there's another section sort of at the end that gathers up issues that were raised with respect to the act in general, involuntary admissions, CTOs that wouldn't really lead to, maybe, recommendations for amendments to the act but were concerns that might be of note. For instance, one submitter raised the need for ethical education and training for health care professionals to deal with patients that are subject to involuntary admission or CTOs.

That's basically the executive summary of the document.

In terms of what happens to the information that's extracted from the submission summaries, the issues and recommendations raised in the submissions will eventually, at the will of the committee, of course, be used to create an issues and recommendations document that the committee can use in its deliberations.

That's everything that I have to say unless anybody has any questions.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Are there any questions in regard to the report? Anyone on the phone have any questions? No. Okay.

If not, there is an issue that I wish to bring to the committee's attention for discussion before we proceed further in this respect. As noted in the submissions summary document, three of the written submissions were received after the November 16 closing date, and I'd like the committee's direction in this respect. As background, the committee clerk advised the chair that there were three submissions that were going to be received after the closing date, two on the 17th and one on the 19th. I directed that these submissions be posted for the members' information. It should also be noted that the three submitters contacted the committee office in advance to advise that their submissions would be late and to inquire if they would be accepted. They were directed to make their submissions as soon as possible and were advised that the committee would decide at its next meeting if the late submissions could be accepted. Are members prepared to accept the submissions that were received shortly after the November 16 deadline?

9:40

Mr. Rodney: Just a quick question, Chair, if I may. Can you tell us the names of the organizations in each of the three cases, please?

The Chair: Sure. On the back of the written submissions document, on your last page, you'll see that there was one from Alberta Health Services on November 17, one from the Alberta Civil Liberties Research Centre on November 17, and one from the north mental health review panel on November 19. The one from the Salvation Army that came in, that's dated the 17th, was actually a bounce back on the e-mail. It was initially sent on the 16th and then had to be re-sent on the 17th.

Mr. Rodney: Okay. Thank you for the clarification. I would vote yes in each case.

Thanks.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Orr: My only comment would be that I realize that there does need to be some kind of a cut-off, but those people who advised us prior to the deadline or attempted prior to the deadline I would be prepared to accept. Anybody that comes in now, after that, I wouldn't.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you very much.

Any other comments?

Mr. Rodney: I would agree.

The Chair: Thank you.

Any other questions or concerns?

Okay. Would a member make the following motion in this respect, that

the Standing Committee on Families and Communities accept written submissions received up to and including November 19, 2015, respecting the committee's review of the Mental Health Amendment Act, 2007.

Can I have a mover, please? Mr. Orr has moved the motion. All in favour of the motion? On the phones? Any opposed? Thank you. The motion is carried.

Next on the agenda is (b) decision on oral presentations for stakeholders and (c) decision on public submissions, so we'll be dealing with both of these at the same time. The timeline document approved at our October 5 meeting referenced future discussions representing oral presentations from stakeholders and submissions from the public. Before we discuss the possible oral presentations, I suggest that the committee consider the issue of inviting public participants in for the review. In general practice if a committee decides to open up a review to public participation, it is to advertise the review and invite written submissions. Does the committee wish to invite written submissions from the public, or does the committee believe that the written submissions for stakeholders provide sufficient information to complete our review?

Mr. Smith: Are we talking about (b) or (c)?

The Chair: First off, when the initial request went out, it only went out to our community stakeholders, so agencies. Historically, when the first review occurred on this amendment, there was actually a public consultation that occurred, so individuals could write in their personal experiences . . .

Good morning, Mr. Yao. Would you like to introduce yourself for the record, please.

Mr. Yao: Hi. Tany Yao, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo. My apologies for being late on this call.

The Chair: Thank you so much.

Just going back to that, there is now an opportunity for the committee to consider putting out a public request so individuals that have experiences dealing with CTOs or have family members can bring forward their concerns in a written submission. That would require advertising in some form.

Ms Sorenson, maybe you could give us some more information about how that process of advertising works.

Ms Sorenson: Certainly, Madam Chair. I guess what I'm here today for is to see if the committee wishes to go forward with that sort of public consultation. If so, we can put together a number of strategies that will help you get that public for written submissions. The first thing we would typically recommend would be a province-wide advertising campaign that would saturate Alberta both in the weeklies and the dailies. The weekly newspapers typically cost about \$35,000 or a little less. We tend to budget a little high just in case the rate changes. That includes probably about 120 newspapers within the Alberta Weekly Newspapers Association and then another \$8,000 to hit the nine daily publications in the cities within Alberta.

Beyond that, we also supplement that with some free communications strategies such as social media, website information, media relations in the form of news releases, or we can draft articles for community newsletters, that members can put into

their community newsletters. Another thing that we do is provide an e-card, which is essentially the same as the ad, that members can then forward on to their constituents or any interested parties that they think might be wanting to participate in the review. So those are some of the things.

I know that there's quite a large cost with the advertising, so I did want to point out that we do all the design and the booking in-house, so there are no additional fees on top of that. It's strictly the cost to run the advertisements.

The Chair: Thank you so much. Do you know what the total cost would be, or is it just an estimate at this point?

Ms Sorensen: It's just an estimate at this point. It really depends on what the committee chooses to do, and the size of the ads for each publication varies depending on how much information we put into the ad. However, we've done it for a lot of different committees, so the costs that I'm putting forward are based on about a four and a half inch by five and a half inch ad, and that directs most people back to the website, too, to provide their input.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.
Any further questions?

Mr. Orr: Is there a legal requirement to do the newspaper piece, which is an expensive piece, or could we just do government websites and social media stuff? I realize that we may miss some individuals that way, but we would at least allow the opportunity for some people that see it and hear it. I recognize the tension with the very large cost, but I also feel like it is important to allow the opportunity at least for a few families and clients, versus the professionals on the complete other side of the system, to have a voice. I don't know. I mean, in a world of social media I don't know if that's adequate, but that's my question.

Ms Sorensen: There is absolutely no legal requirement. It really is up to the committee on what they want to do. Paid advertising guarantees that the message gets out there. The advertising, the social media, everything comes back to the committee website. We can definitely and we would put out social media advertising or simply posts. I can't guarantee that that's going to get you the saturation of the province that you're looking for.

Mr. Orr: I realize that. Yeah.

Ms McPherson: I have a question. With the approach of using newspaper advertising, how many people are we likely to reach with the information compared to not using newspaper advertising?

Ms Sorensen: I don't have those numbers in front of me, but I can certainly provide them. Definitely with the weeklies, like I said, there are 120 newspapers saturating all of the, I guess, smaller communities within Alberta. Then the dailies, all of their circulations: there are nine of them in Alberta.

Ms McPherson: Okay. Thank you very much.

In your experience what is the most cost-effective way to advertise in other consultations such as this one?

Ms Sorensen: If I may, Madam Chair, the recommendations we're putting forward are the most cost-effective that we've experienced when we do traditional advertising in terms of getting the best return for your investment, that being that you're trying to reach as many Albertans as possible through community newspapers.

Ms McPherson: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Shepherd.

Mr. Shepherd: Yes. I think it's very important that we get as broad a circulation on this as possible. These are issues of very fundamental human rights. As Mr. Orr noted, I think it's very important, therefore, that we get the views of the people who are experiencing the effects of these policies on the front line. That being the case, I think it's really important that we cast as wide a net as possible even if it does incur a bit of a greater cost. I think it's really important that we do a fulsome consultation and not only just do but also be seen to do as wide a consultation, as wide an advertisement on this as possible to ensure that people feel assured that we've listened to the voice of all Albertans.

9:50

Mr. Smith: Could we have some feedback on the effectiveness of print media versus radio?

Ms Sorensen: I mean, we could definitely get that for you. We don't have it prepared today. Are you looking for specific stats on other reviews that we've done?

Mr. Smith: Well, yeah. I guess I'm wondering, you know – I don't know how many people that would be directly affected by what we're talking about today may pick up a daily newspaper versus listening to a radio. I guess I was just looking at the costs between the two. I realize that we probably want to make the decision today, but I just wondered if you had any background on that.

Ms Sorensen: We certainly have done radio campaigns before, but like I said, we haven't actually brought that forward for this committee. With the weekly newspapers I just want to point out that they do have a shelf life that extends beyond that one day, which is why they tend to be very effective in smaller communities. They sit on the kitchen table all week long, and people look at them. The dailies – you're right – have a broader reach, and that's where we try and supplement it with the free supplemental social media and e-cards and things like that. We can come back with some radio advertising and/or television if that's what the committee wants to do as well.

Mr. Smith: It was just a thought.

Ms Sorensen: Yeah. It's a good thought.

Mr. Smith: I think I would probably recommend – I mean, we do have to be cost-effective in this as well. I'm thinking probably either/or. I don't know if there's any background on which is more effective, the print versus – I guess it's depending on whether you're talking to the radio station or the *Journal*.

Ms Sorensen: Yeah, it does depend. You're probably going to get, I guess, a broader reach with the newspaper as opposed to the radio, just depending on the number of radio stations throughout Alberta that broadcast at the time we need them to, but I can definitely come back with some numbers on that if the committee wishes.

Mr. Smith: It was just a question. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mrs. Littlewood: Could I just ask for clarification on what the past practice is in terms of public consultation by the committee when reviewing the Mental Health Act?

Ms Sorensen: With this particular committee I believe that last time they did do a province-wide ad campaign. I can't recall – maybe Phil does – the number of submissions.

Dr. Massolin: Yes, Madam Chair, I can report on that. In 2007 the Standing Committee on Community Services reviewed Bill 31, Mental Health Amendment Act, 2007. This review was in bill form, and there was a total of – an advertising campaign, the likes of which Rhonda just explained, was undertaken by that committee in 2007. There were 49 written submissions total – that's stakeholders plus private citizens – and 23 of those were from private citizens.

Ms Sorensen: If I can just supplement that, Madam Chair. At that time there was not the social media complement, nor was there the e-card or any of those other strategies that drive everybody else to the website as well.

The Chair: Okay.
Mr. Hinkley.

Mr. Hinkley: Yeah. Without trying to micromanage, though, does the size of the ad matter? I guess I'm trying to get at: if we get down to cutting that in half . . .

Ms Sorensen: It cuts the cost down.

Mr. Hinkley: Would it cut the cost in half and allow the radio, television ads?

Ms Sorensen: Yeah. Typically we do come forward with it as high as we think it could go, just so that there are no surprises. It will come in lower; we tend to get breaks on the ad rates. It also depends on how much information you put into that ad. So if the committee chooses to go that way, we can actually put together the actual ad, get the concrete numbers in place, and forward that. Typically they are going to come in a few thousand dollars . . .

Mr. Hinkley: Well, I guess the second part of that is: is a smaller ad just as effective as that larger ad?

Ms Sorensen: It can be. I mean, you don't want to go so small that it gets lost in the paper, but as long as you have the information that you're trying to put out there in an effective way, then it can certainly be cut.

Mr. Hinkley: I think we all want to be thrifty as well as transparent and outreaching to as many people as possible.

Ms Sorensen: Absolutely. Yeah. I think that if we were to come back with the number of people that you can reach versus the cost – I know it looks like a big sum right now, but if you're reaching millions of people, the cost per person, really, you may decide is worth it.

Mr. Hinkley: Okay.

The Chair: Thank you.
Is there anybody on the phones that would like to make a comment?

Ms McPherson: Yeah.

The Chair: Who is that?

Ms McPherson: Sorry. It's Karen McPherson.

The Chair: Okay. Member McPherson, please go ahead.

Ms McPherson: I'm surprised you can't recognize me.

In doing research for today's meeting – this is my first actual meeting of the committee, so I'm really happy to be here. I understand that we really need to strike a balance between being cost-effective, being efficient with the money that we do have and doing a thorough job. One of the numbers that I remember coming across was an estimate of \$30,000 for the advertising portion. I'm wondering: does that number ring a bell with you? Is it from years past, or is it because other committees used smaller advertising? I just want some clarification if possible.

Ms Sorensen: Member McPherson, Madam Chair, if I may, I think I'm understanding your question correctly. With other committees do you think the cost has come in at \$30,000?

Ms McPherson: Yeah. I can't remember exactly what it was that I was taking a look at, but the amount was \$30,000.

Ms Sorensen: Okay. The cost that we're putting forward today is \$35,000, but like I was mentioning earlier, we typically budget a little high because ad rates can change, so we don't want there to be surprises for the committee. Typically we will come in quite a bit lower than that. So that's probably where the \$30,000 number is that you're hearing.

Ms McPherson: Okay. That makes a lot of sense. Thank you very much.

Ms Sorensen: You're welcome.

Mr. Shepherd: I was just wondering. In this would there be some opportunity, then, to perhaps do some outreach through some of the stakeholder organizations? Like, I know that in Edmonton we've got folks like the Boyle Street Community Services, those who are offering the services on the front lines. I'm sure there's the same in all the other jurisdictions, Calgary and other places. These are the folks who are dealing with a lot of the individuals that would fall under these provisions. They might be our best source to provide outreach to get people to offer their voice from that experience. Is there some aspect of this that we could direct that way?

Ms Sorensen: If I may, Madam Chair. Yes. If any organizations weren't already covered under the stakeholder list – typically what we do when we do an advertising campaign now is that we also produce an e-card, which is the ad. We send it to members, and they can send it as wide as they want within their constituencies, to their mailing lists that they might know of. That will usually hit the people within your own area that you're aware of that would have a vested interest in it.

Mr. Shepherd: Okay. So these front-line organizations, then, would receive the ad, and then they would have the ability to print it, put it up around, and share that with the people they're working with.

Ms Sorensen: Or, for example, if I were to give you the e-card and you have contacts because – is that in your constituency?

Mr. Shepherd: Yes, it is.

Ms Sorensen: Yeah. Then you could forward the e-card on.

Mr. Shepherd: Okay. I could just forward that.

Ms Sorensen: Absolutely.

Mr. Shepherd: Do the outreach that way.

Ms Sorensen: Yeah.

Mr. Shepherd: Sure. Thank you.

The Chair: Any further comments or questions?

Ms Luff: If I may.

The Chair: Ms Luff.

Ms Luff: Yeah. I was just wondering if you've ever tried, like, paid targeted advertising on social media instead of just free advertising on social media. That might have a wider reach and be more cost-effective.

Ms Sorensen: If I may, Madam Chair. Yes, we definitely have done paid advertising on social media. We weren't finding a great success with it because a lot of people tend to block the ads on their social media, so we weren't getting the same response. However, if that's the route that the committee wishes us to look at, we can certainly come back with some numbers on that as well.

Ms Luff: Okay. Thank you.

Ms Sorensen: You're welcome.

The Chair: Any other comments from the phones?

Mr. Rodney: Can you hear me okay?

The Chair: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Rodney.

Mr. Rodney: Okay. Real good comments about balancing the fact that we need to reach as many people as possible for their input while keeping in mind the cost for Albertans. We all know the economic situation right now. I wonder. Again, this is a question – I'd be interested in David Swann's opinion on this. Let's face it. We always want to get the major stakeholders' input, and we've done that, and they elicit all sorts of input from people that they work with and people they serve in the process. This was open, as was noted, to the public already. Are we doing anything more than what is already done, or is it simply a repetition? Could it be argued that that \$35,000 could be spent better in some other way?

The Chair: Mr. Rodney, you're referring to the mental health review consultations?

Mr. Rodney: Yes. You had mentioned that this had been open for public consultation not just from the stakeholders but from individuals as well in the past, so I was wondering if this is more of a repetition of anything there or whether, indeed, it's necessary . . . [inaudible]

10:00

The Chair: Mr. Rodney, you're cutting out a little bit on the phone, so we missed the last part of your comments.

Mr. Rodney: Okay. I'll take it off speakerphone. Can you hear me okay now?

The Chair: Yeah. Thank you.

Mr. Rodney: Okay. So I guess it's a question for the staff as well as for members of the committee. I'm just wondering if this indeed is a repetition of what's already been done. It has been open for public consultation not just with the major stakeholders but individuals as well. Or is this something quite different and therefore quite necessary? That's my question.

The Chair: Okay. Yeah. I think we're actually talking about two separate things, so I'll just refer it. The piece around the consultation before was around when the initial amendment happened, and then I think the mental health review has also happened. I'll just – go ahead.

Dr. Massolin: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just to clarify, the historical 2007 review there: that was Bill 31, and it was in bill form. Now we're talking about the statute and the statutory review that's required and a review of the amendment. So it is a different review.

Mr. Rodney: Right. And that's all fair. What I'm wondering is: can we continue to be creative in terms of not just social media? I know it's there. I know we want to embrace it. We can't ignore it. But even when it comes to the newspapers, for instance, I hardly ever pick up a paper, and I know that there are a lot of people like me that look at it online every day. We've all seen, for instance, calgaryherald.com. You pop that up and there's a banner at the top that absolutely everyone who tunes in that way sees. Could we consider doing some of that at a reduced rate instead of putting it in a paper that people often don't pick up and/or would simply miss if it's flashing right in front of your eyes on the computer? Is that perhaps a good use of money, a smaller amount with a bigger effect?

Ms Sorensen: Mr. Rodney, I can address that. Typically when we do book advertising with the printed publication, that includes the online form. So it's kind of like a 2 for 1 if you will. When we do the booking, they will always ask: do you want that included on the online? And it does not increase the cost.

Mr. Rodney: I get that, except when they say, "included on the online," does that mean a banner that's flashing at the top of the page? It's one thing to find it if you look for it, but when it's flashing right in front of you, a hundred per cent of the readers who tune in: even if they just take a look at the front page, it's right there.

Ms Sorensen: Yeah. If you're looking at banner advertising outside of what's actually in the publication, that is extra, and we can certainly come back with costs on that as well. Again, we found that, similar to social media, people tend to block those, but I can't say that all people block them.

Mr. Rodney: You can't block them. No. You can't block them. They're there whether you want them or not.

Ms Sorensen: Okay. So maybe we're talking about two different things, but if that's what the committee wants me to look at, I certainly can.

Mr. Rodney: Yeah. They're the ones, for instance – again, you go to calgaryherald.com, and there will be a banner just above the page. You cannot – there's no way to block it. It's right there for you. I'm just saying. It's one hundred per cent calgaryherald.com. [inaudible]

The Chair: Mr. Rodney, we're losing you again. We missed the last part.

Mr. Rodney: Well, I hope I've got my point across. Thank you.

The Chair: No. We still can't hear you.

Ms McPherson: I could hear him okay, and he said that he hoped that he got his point across to the committee.

The Chair: Thank you, Member McPherson.
Any other comments or questions? Mr. Orr.

Mr. Orr: Yeah. I'd just comment. I kind of like Member Shepherd's idea of running through the stakeholders and asking them specifically to contact their people. It's a far more targeted approach. I guess I struggle a little bit with the comment a few minutes ago that there were only 23 private submissions in 2007; 23 private submissions at 30-plus thousand dollars is like \$1,200 per response. I totally think we need to somehow open this up and hear from the clients, but I don't know how to do it, and I'm not sure that's a cost-efficient way for 23 responses.

The Chair: Thank you very much.
Member McPherson, were you going to make a comment?

Ms McPherson: Yeah. I just wanted to refer to what Mr. Rodney was speaking about with ad blocking. It is actually possible to block those banner ads, so I don't know that we can totally put our faith in the ability to reach everybody. I don't know the numbers of how many people actually block those, but I do know that it is possible.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you very much for the comment.

Mr. Rodney: The only thing I'd say about that is that we're talking about two different things.
I don't want to micromanage, but I'm like Mr. Orr. We really have to be careful when we're spending thousands of dollars per submission. [inaudible]

The Chair: Mr. Rodney, I can't hear you. Mr. Rodney.

Mr. Rodney: Yes.

The Chair: Can you hear me?

Mr. Rodney: I can hear you loud and clear.

The Chair: Okay. We can't hear anything that you're saying.

Mr. Rodney: I wonder if there's something wrong with the central system. Can you hear me now?

The Chair: I can hear you now very clearly.

Mr. Rodney: Okay. Well, I don't know what the difference was.
In any case, I just want to say that as Mr. Orr has mentioned, in the past, if you've spent a thousand dollars or more per submission, that's quite a lot. Everybody would say that every submission is very important, but there is a line, and we all know the economic times that we're in right now. As Mr. Shepherd had suggested – and if he hadn't said it, I certainly would have – we need to reach out through the major stakeholders and ask them to encourage everyone that they know to submit.

But there is the question: how about those who do not have those affiliations [inaudible] with these major organizations? I'd say that we need to reach out in every way that we can, but we need to keep a handle on those costs, so I think it's very important that we reach out either through print or through radio. We've got to reach out through social media as well. We're just living in an age where a lot of people will miss it no matter where you put it, so I'd say to cast out some nets, but let's watch the costs in the meantime.

Hopefully, you heard everything I said there.

The Chair: Thank you so much.
I'm hearing a consensus that there are some questions around different ways to advertise and the costs associated with it, so I'd

like to look at putting a motion on the floor that maybe we refer this back to Ms Sorensen to do some investigation into the different options that have come forward, whether it be radio, different options around media, and we can table this for the next meeting with some more concrete numbers for further consultation and conversation. Then we should be able to, I hope, at that point answer these questions and provide more clear direction that we can actually feel comfortable voting on.

Is that with agreement of the committee? Okay. I would put a motion on the floor that the Standing Committee on Families and Communities defer the – how would we like to word this? Hold on. We're coming up with a motion.

I'll get a member to put a motion on the floor that the Standing Committee on Families and Communities direct communications services to draft a communication strategy plan with cost analysis for the next meeting.

Does that sound sufficient? Could I have a member please support the motion? Ms Babcock has moved the motion for the deferral of the communications strategy. Can I ask all members to vote in favour?

Dr. Massolin: No.

10:10

The Chair: Sorry, I'm tired.

Anybody in favour? Anybody opposed? Thank you. The motion has been carried.

That will take us to the conversation around oral presentations for stakeholders. Due to the fact that we haven't made the decision around public consultation, I would also like to look at deferring oral presentations from stakeholders. The reason for this would be that if we do plan to have a meeting where we're going to invite an actual face-to-face consultation or presentation from stakeholders, we may also want to look at inviting any public to come to that meeting as well. I'm just at this point wanting to put out that maybe we should also defer this until we've decided what we want to do around the actual public consultation component. With concurrence of the committee we could do that.

Any discussion or questions around that piece?

Mr. Shepherd: The purpose of oral presentations from the stakeholders: that would be to get further details or clarification on the reports they've presented?

The Chair: Yes, and that would be, I mean, with the stakeholders as well as any public if there are questions that have come forward that we need further clarity on.

Dr. Massolin: Madam Chair, I would say that the committee is not restricted just to inviting those who made a written presentation. You can always, you know, invite people or organizations that you would want to hear from who haven't made a written submission.

The Chair: Thank you for that. Yes. That's also part of the conversation.

Any questions or concerns?

Mr. Orr: Just in the interests of sort of expediting the process – meetings take time, and time keeps slipping away on us – is it possible to resolve or at least receive the issue on how we advertise for public submissions without necessarily having to have a full meeting back here? Can we do that via e-mail and e-mail vote, that kind of thing, and then be set up to move ahead for the next meeting?

Ms Dean: That can certainly be arranged. I would suggest that in terms of a way forward perhaps Ms Sorensen can circulate some

advertising options to the committee, and through the committee clerk and the chair you can do a poll with respect to which options are favourable to the committee and move forward on that basis. I would suggest, though, that the committee give some guidance to the staff at this meeting in terms of what you're looking for. You know, it's really the means of advertising that you're wanting to postpone your decision on. But in terms of the process are you looking for an ad to go out sometime in January with a return date of late February? That's what we would suggest.

The Chair: Thank you for that.

Are there any questions or comments around potentially doing a poll with the information come January?

Dr. Swann: I'm not sure what you mean by a poll.

Ms Sorensen: Dr. Swann, if I may, I think what was asked at the table here was if, instead of coming back to have a meeting to discuss further the advertising options, I could send them out to the committee via the internal website and then the committee clerk, through the chair, can gain a consensus from the committee that way on what options they want to pursue.

Dr. Swann: Very good. Yes. Agreed.

The Chair: With consensus of the committee would we be okay with doing a poll? Any comments?

Dr. Swann: I think it would certainly facilitate the decision and prevent us from organizing yet another meeting just for that purpose, so, yeah, I certainly support it.

The Chair: Sorry, committee. I'm just trying to get some clarity around whether we need to actually formalize that into a motion.

Mrs. Sawchuk: Madam Chair, if I may.

The Chair: Yes. Please go ahead.

Mrs. Sawchuk: I would suggest that the committee could look at – they've already passed the motion with respect to the communications strategy being circulated to members for comment, and once all of those comments have been received, the chair and the deputy chair could be authorized to sign off, to provide the final approval of that plan on behalf of the committee. Would that work? Is that clear?

The Chair: Yeah. That makes sense. What we will need a motion for, then, is not the polling, but we would need a motion to approve that the chair and deputy chair have the authority to approve the plan, which would be the polling response and consensus. As well, we would need to be able to have approval for how that media communication would go out and then the collection date for when submissions have to be returned to the Legislature.

Any discussion or questions around that piece of it? Mr. Orr.

Mr. Orr: Yeah. I think you should also include in that that the chair and the deputy chair would also have the authority to make the decision with regard to the final cost.

The Chair: I think that's a fair comment.

Ms Sorensen, please correct me if I'm wrong, but when the poll goes out, I would assume that that cost would be attached to the polling. Then the committee would know with agreement that this is what we would move forward. It would be just more of a confirmation between the chair and the deputy chair that we've accepted the recommendation from the committee.

Ms Sorensen: Yes. Just further to that, to delve a little deeper, I think that if we're trying to avoid a lot of meetings due to the timelines, we would also be seeking approval from the chair and deputy chair on the actual substance of whatever method is chosen, if it's a newspaper ad, if it's a radio ad, the actual approval of that text, and being able to get that out as soon as possible.

Mr. Smith: What timelines would we be looking at?

Ms Sorensen: I think what Ms Dean was just alluding to is that we're looking to gain that consensus from the committee. Whether or not you're looking for the submissions to come back to you at the end of February, I think, is what I heard around the table a little bit. Then we would build the strategies based on that direction.

Dr. Massolin: Madam Chair, I would add to that. Typically we give about five or six weeks between the advertising and the submission deadline date to give people ample time to respond.

Mr. Smith: So if you're looking at the end of February for having that all ...

Dr. Massolin: Well, it's the committee's ...

Mr. Smith: Yeah. But if that's the tentative timeline that we're looking at, then we have to have the polling and the submission from you, you know, probably by the beginning of January, okay? I guess just from the perspective of – I know from a previous conversation we had, before the meeting began, that the chair is going away on holidays, and I'll be going on January 3, so we may need to exchange information so that we can be in contact with each other.

The Chair: I think that if we look back at the draft timeline that we initially approved on October 5, we had an estimate that in December we would meet, which is what we are currently doing, to review written submissions and discuss our plan to move forward around oral presentations. In January, early February the committee would then meet again to look at oral presentations, and then potentially we might be moving into main estimates again for our upcoming 2016-2017 budget at some point in March or April, based on the old calendar system. Because of that, I would just like to remind the committee that we will have quite a few meetings around the estimates period.

So if we would be looking at this, we would need to have the approval and the advertisement out by early January, the first few weeks of January, with a submission end date by, I would estimate, the beginning of February, that first week. Does that seem like a sufficient amount of time? I don't know.

Ms Sorensen: It really depends on what the committee wants to do and the strategies that are chosen because newsprint is going to take a little bit longer to turn around; radio might take a little less because of the booking procedures. But if the committee is looking to have the feedback by the end of February, then we would get the plan to you and need decisions by the first week of January.

The Chair: Does that seem like a realistic plan, though? I mean, I'm okay with direction from the staff.

Ms Sorensen: We'll make it work if that's what the committee wants us to do.

10:20

The Chair: Okay. Any comments from the committee around a potential plan?

Mr. Rodney: Chair, I've got one.

The Chair: Sure.

Mr. Rodney: I think it's fabulous that people are eager. I can tell you, based on past experience – because there are many moving parts here. If it was just us, then we could just trudge ahead, but as we've heard, there are many components to take into account here at a not-good time of the year. I'm not talking about personal inconvenience at all because that's not an issue. We're not just talking about the conclusion of the fall session and Christmas and New Year's coming up. I also know that traditionally if a person doesn't take a week or two in the beginning of January, they will have missed their chance. We were often told: if you missed your chance, you missed your chance, and too bad for you. I know that many people are going to be unavailable either for the first or second week in January; therefore, I think it's overly optimistic to think that this can be done at the beginning of the year.

I know that every day is precious – I know that as much as anyone – but I would venture to say that we would have a much higher success rate, in every sense of the word, from reaching the right audiences for a better amount of money to getting better responses as well, if we stretch this out just a little bit, by perhaps a couple of weeks. So I'd say: don't rush; let's do this right, and let's just adjust the timelines by, you know, a few weeks if necessary.

That's what I'd have to say.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Rodney.

Any comments around that from the committee?

If we were looking into consideration of Mr. Rodney's comments, putting the submission out by January 11, which would be mid-month, that would be a week after Christmas break. Would that give enough time for everybody to get – is that not enough time?

Ms Sorensen: It really is up to the committee, Madam Chair. We'll make whatever deadlines you want. We'll make it work.

Dr. Swann: I don't see any reason to withhold it. I think the sooner it gets out, the sooner people will start to respond, and we can get on with making the decision from those who identify it as a priority and respond.

The Chair: Okay. If we look at having the responses in to the deputy chair and the chair by January 15, which is the Friday, that would mean that the media plan would be out to the committee, the responses and everything would be received to be discussed between the chair and the deputy chair by the 15th of January so that the media plan could be then released to the community by the week of the 18th. Does that seem like that would be enough time for the committee to respond in regard to the poll as well as, then, to allow the staff time to get it out and the consultation to start?

Ms McPherson: Sounds reasonable.

Mr. Orr: I would respond that that's a full month from now, and even with the break and all the interruptions a month should be adequate to do that.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Orr.

Any other comments?

Okay. If that would be the case, then we could put a motion on the floor that the Standing Committee on Families and Communities authorize the chair and the deputy chair to approve a communications strategy, following input from the committee, by January 15, 2016. Would that be a consensus for the committee? Any comments or questions around that motion? Anyone on the phones?

Mr. Rodney: No. I can make that work. Thanks.

The Chair: Can I have a member please move the motion?

Mrs. Littlewood: I'll move it.

The Chair: Mrs. Littlewood has moved that

the Standing Committee on Families Communities authorize the chair and the deputy chair to approve a communications strategy, following input from the committee, by January 15, 2016.

All in favour? On the phones? Any opposed? The motion is carried.

Now that we have a motion to approve the input from the committee and to have the communications plan out for January 15, we now need to come to agreement on when we would like the public submissions to be returned to committee for consolidation. If we approve it for the 15th, we would be looking at giving about a month for the public consultation to occur, which would put us at the end of February. February 29 would be the last Monday of February. Does that seem sufficient to the committee to allow enough public consultation to occur?

Dr. Swann: Yes.

The Chair: Thank you, Dr. Swann.

Any other comments?

What we would ask, then, Ms Sorensen, is if you could include that in the consultation plan, and then we can vote on that and include that.

Ms Sorensen: Yep. No problem.

The Chair: Thank you so much.

Any other questions or discussions before we move on?

Any other business that anybody wishes to discuss that we've missed? On the phones? No?

Okay. We did very well for the committee today. We have concluded all of our business for today, so if there are no other questions or concerns, our next meeting will be at the call of the chair, and members will be polled to determine their availability once a date is established.

I hope you all have a merry Christmas and a nice break.

If we could call for a motion to adjourn. Mr. Orr has moved the motion that the meeting be adjourned. All in favour of the motion? On the phones? Thank you. The motion has been carried.

[The committee adjourned at 10:28 a.m.]

