



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

The 30th Legislature
Second Session

Standing Committee
on
Families and Communities

Office of the Advocate for Persons with Disabilities
Evaluation Summary Report Review

Monday, December 7, 2020
11:01 a.m.

Transcript No. 30-2-6

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta
The 30th Legislature
Second Session**

Standing Committee on Families and Communities

Goodridge, Laila, Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche (UCP), Chair
Sigurdson, Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (NDP), Deputy Chair

Amery, Mickey K., Calgary-Cross (UCP)
Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-West Henday (NDP)
Glasgo, Michaela L., Brooks-Medicine Hat (UCP)
Guthrie, Peter F., Airdrie-Cochrane (UCP)
Neudorf, Nathan T., Lethbridge-East (UCP)
Nixon, Jeremy P., Calgary-Klein (UCP)
Pancholi, Rakhi, Edmonton-Whitemud (NDP)
Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (NDP)*
Rutherford, Brad, Leduc-Beaumont (UCP)
Sabir, Irfan, Calgary-McCall (NDP)
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)

* substitution for Jonathon Carson

Support Staff

Shannon Dean, QC	Clerk
Stephanie LeBlanc	Clerk Assistant and Senior Parliamentary Counsel
Teri Cherkewich	Law Clerk
Trafton Koenig	Senior Parliamentary Counsel
Philip Massolin	Clerk of Committees and Research Services
Sarah Amato	Research Officer
Nancy Robert	Research Officer
Jody Rempel	Committee Clerk
Aaron Roth	Committee Clerk
Rhonda Sorensen	Manager of Corporate Communications
Jeanette Dotimas	Communications Consultant
Tracey Sales	Communications Consultant
Janet Schwegel	Director of Parliamentary Programs
Amanda LeBlanc	Deputy Editor of <i>Alberta Hansard</i>

11:01 a.m.

Monday, December 7, 2020

[Ms Goodridge in the chair]

The Chair: Hello, everybody. I would like to call this meeting to order. Welcome to the members and staff in attendance for this meeting of the Standing Committee on Families and Communities.

My name is Laila Goodridge. I'm the MLA for Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche and the chair of this committee. I'd ask that members and those joining the committee at the table introduce themselves for the record, followed by those who have joined remotely, starting to my right.

Mr. Neudorf: Good morning. Nathan Neudorf, MLA for Lethbridge-East.

Ms LeBlanc: Good morning. Stephanie LeBlanc, Clerk Assistant and Senior Parliamentary Counsel.

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

Ms Rempel: Good morning. Jody Rempel, committee clerk.

The Chair: Fantastic.

Then we will start with those on the telephone by alphabetical order of your last name.

Mr. Amery: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'll assume that I'll start, then. Mickey Amery, MLA, Calgary-Cross.

Ms Glasgo: Michaela Glasgo, MLA, Brooks-Medicine Hat.

Mr. Guthrie: MLA Pete Guthrie.

Mr. Rutherford: Brad Rutherford, Leduc-Beaumont.

Mr. Jeremy Nixon: Jeremy Nixon, Calgary-Klein.

Mr. Sabir: Irfan Sabir, MLA, Calgary-McCall.

The Chair: Fantastic.

Oh, any others?

Ms Sigurdson: Yeah. I think people are before me alphabetically, but Lori Sigurdson, Edmonton-Riverview.

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

Ms Renaud: Marie Renaud, St. Albert.

Mr. Yao: Tany Yao, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

The Chair: Fantastic. I believe that is everybody.

I'd just like to note for the record that we have an official substitution that came in. We have MLA Marie Renaud substituting for MLA Jon Carson.

A few housekeeping items to address before we turn to the business at hand. Pursuant to the November 16, 2020, memo from the hon. Speaker Cooper I would like to remind everybody of the updated committee room protocols, which require that, outside of individuals with an exemption, those attending a meeting in person must wear a mask at all times unless they are speaking. Based on the recommendations from the chief medical officer of health regarding physical distancing, attendees at today's meeting are reminded to leave the appropriate distance between themselves and other meeting participants.

Please note that the microphones are operated by *Hansard*, so members do not need to turn them on and off. Committee proceedings are being live streamed on the Internet and broadcast through Alberta Assembly TV. I would ask that everyone please set your cellphones and any other device to silent for the duration of this meeting.

Participation in committee meetings via teleconference and video conference. Section 6 of the Legislative Assembly Act permits participation in a committee "by means of telephone or other communication facilities that permit . . . Members participating in the meeting to hear each other if all the members of the committee consent." As members are aware, the committee rooms are equipped to facilitate meeting participation via teleconference and are also now equipped to use video conference technology as well.

Although the committee has passed a motion to allow teleconference participation by members, the committee must either pass a motion unanimously to allow for video conferencing today, or members may instead pass a motion to approve meeting attendance by video conference for the balance of the Legislature. This would not preclude the committee from determining that members' attendance in person at specific meetings is required. Does anyone have a question?

I was wondering if a member would like to move that for the duration of the 30th Legislature the Standing Committee on Families and Communities permit committee members to participate via video conference subject to the provision that the committee may require members' attendance in person at a particular meeting upon passage at a previous meeting of a motion to that effect.

Mr. Neudorf: So moved, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Fantastic. That has been moved by MLA Nathan Neudorf.

I will ask just one question. Is anyone opposed to this motion? Hearing nothing,
that motion passes unanimously.

The next item of business is to approve an agenda for today's meeting. Are there any changes to the agenda, and if not, would somebody like to make a motion to approve the draft agenda?

Mr. Neudorf: So moved.

The Chair: Fantastic. Moved by MLA Nathan Neudorf that the agenda for the December 7, 2020, meeting of the Standing Committee on Families and Communities be adopted as distributed. All in favour? Anyone opposed? That motion is carried.

We have the minutes from the June 24, 2019, meeting of the committee. Are there any errors or omissions to note? If not, I would ask that a member move that the minutes . . .

Mr. Neudorf: So moved, Chair.

The Chair: Moved by MLA Nathan Neudorf that the minutes of the June 24, 2019, meeting of the Standing Committee on Families and Communities be adopted as circulated. All those in favour of this motion? Is anyone opposed? That motion is carried.

Review of the Office of the Advocate for Persons with Disabilities Evaluation Summary Report, October 2020: (a) mandate, Government Motion 46. Hon. members, on November 25, 2020, the Legislative Assembly passed Government Motion 46 referring the evaluation summary report October 2020, prepared by the office of the Advocate for Persons with Disabilities, to the Standing Committee on Families and Communities. The committee is required to complete its review of this report within 90 days of the report being referred, which is February 23, 2021, if the

Assembly is then sitting or within 15 days after the commencement of the next sitting.

As this is the first review undertaken by this committee in the 30th Legislature, I would like to take a few minutes to provide an overview of how committees have undertaken similar reviews. It is often the case that reviews of this nature include technical briefings from those responsible for preparing the report being reviewed as well as any additional ministry responsible for administering the legislation under which the report is developed. Once the committee has gathered information that is deemed sufficient, the committee prepares a report to the Legislative Assembly, which may include any recommendations that the committee may wish to make pertaining to matters contained in the report. Are there any questions regarding the mandate of the committee as to how it pertains to this review? Wonderful.

Hon. members, the first step in most reviews of this nature is for the committee to decide whether it wishes to receive a technical briefing in relation to the report. As members are aware, the report was prepared by the office of the Advocate for Persons with Disabilities, and the government ministry responsible for administering the Advocate for Persons with Disabilities Act is the Ministry of Community and Social Services. I would now like to open a discussion in relation to whether the committee would like to invite technical briefings in relation to this report. Mr. Neudorf.

Mr. Neudorf: Yes. So moved.

Ms Renaud: Could I get on a speakers list?

11:10

The Chair: Okay. Mr. Neudorf has moved a motion that the Standing Committee on Families and Communities invite the Advocate for Persons with Disabilities and officials from the Ministry of Community and Social Services to provide the committee with a technical briefing in relation to the Office of the Advocate for Persons with Disabilities Evaluation Summary Report, October 2020 at the next meeting of the committee.

We have started a speakers list. On this motion or on this item in general, Ms Renaud?

Ms Renaud: This item in general. I mean, if we're just going to talk about the disability advocate presenting, then I don't need to add anything to it, but if we're going to open it up, then I'd like to.

The Chair: The discussion right now is on the motion that's currently on the floor, that was moved by Mr. Neudorf.

Ms Renaud: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: Any further discussion on this item?

Ms Pancholi: Yes. I'd like to say something if I can.

The Chair: Most definitely.

Ms Pancholi: Just for clarification, the motion is to have the ministry and the office of the Advocate for Persons with Disabilities, and these are for technical briefings only. Are we going to have a discussion about the nature of those briefings as well, like, sort of the length and the format for that as well as discussion of general other stakeholders to include as well? Would that be under (c) if we're going to have a discussion about other stakeholders?

The Chair: That is at the will of the committee.

Ms Pancholi: Well, I'd certainly just like to put on the record right now with respect to technical briefings, for those two that we've

already identified in the motion, that I would just like to ensure that we have a substantive amount of time to hear appropriate technical briefings. I have been a member of other committees where sometimes technical briefings are quite brief, and it doesn't really allow for a substantial discussion. If there's an opportunity right now, I'd just like to have a discussion around how long those briefings would be. I would say: a minimum of 20 minutes for each presentation, with the opportunity for questions and answers as deemed appropriate by the committee for each of those briefings.

The Chair: I see MLA Neudorf.

Mr. Neudorf: Thank you, Madam Chair. I agree with MLA Pancholi. I think it would be helpful if Parliamentary Counsel could at this point provide some direction as to how committees have undertaken having these stakeholders present in the past. I think this would be beneficial before we got into too much debate, but, again, these are the two predominant organizations or groups that we would like to hear from. To provide some context with time and time frames would be helpful at the outset.

The Chair: Dr. Massolin.

Dr. Massolin: Thank you, Madam Chair. I can speak to that. I can tell you that, just at the outset, this is the first time a committee has considered this report, I think as committee members are aware, because of the office being new and that this is a mandate under the act itself and this is a, you know, first time sort of situation. In similar reviews committees in the past have received technical briefings from, in this case, an advocate as well as a ministry but then subsequently have decided on whether or not the committee wants to receive presentations from stakeholders, whether that's in written form or orally, you know, participating in the committee meeting itself, or not to. That's entirely up to the committee. And then after that the committee considers the information, possibly, you know, could request further research from research services, who are supporting the review as well, and then after which the committee can make recommendations in its report to the Assembly or observations as the case may be.

Thank you.

The Chair: Fantastic.

Are there any further questions?

Ms Renaud: Yes. I have a question if I may.

The Chair: Yeah.

Ms Renaud: Just a question for clarification. I'm sorry; this is my first time on this committee. You are saying that, number one, there will be an opportunity during this meeting to bring up other stakeholders that may potentially be [inaudible]? That was my first question. My second is that if we have another organization that we think could provide a technical briefing, would now be the time to bring that organization up?

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms Renaud. We are currently discussing the motion that's on the floor from Mr. Neudorf that specifically deals with inviting the Advocate for Persons with Disabilities as well as the Ministry of Community and Social Services to make technical briefings.

Ms Renaud: Just to clarify, that does not preclude other organizations from bringing technical briefings as well?

The Chair: Correct.

Ms Renaud: Thank you.

The Chair: Any further discussion? Yes, Mr. Neudorf.

Ms Pancholi: Certainly . . .

The Chair: No. Sorry. Mr. Neudorf has the floor.

Mr. Neudorf: Thank you. I, again, would like to go back to what Member Pancholi had brought forward in terms of a time frame. I think it would be reasonable. Many other committees I've sat on have provided 20 minutes for an organization to present, followed by 20 minutes of question and answer. I would like to put that forward as an option to be considered at this point in time, subject to the will of the committee.

The Chair: Clerk, would we need a motion to clarify that?

Ms Rempel: I think that that's something that could be done with the agreement of the committee. It doesn't require a formal motion.

The Chair: Fantastic.

Any further discussion on this motion?

Ms Renaud: Yeah. Sorry. One more point of clarification. If we wanted to open it up for additional organizations to bring technical briefings, like the Ministry of CSS and the disability advocate's office, should we be amending this motion now to include those organizations, or will there be in this meeting opportunity to bring up other organizations like, let's say, the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities? Will there be an opportunity to talk about other organizations able to bring technical briefings?

The Chair: Fantastic.

I'll cede the floor to Dr. Massolin.

Dr. Massolin: Thank you, Madam Chair. Maybe just to clarify for the committee about the technical briefings as this is the motion that the committee has before it, as you know, versus sort of a stakeholder presentation. I'm sure the committee members know the difference, but just to clarify, this motion itself deals with technical briefings, which would, you know – for instance, the advocate would talk about his evaluation summary report and also about the act in a more sort of technical way, meaning just giving the facts and the activities and summarizing the aspects of that report. Likewise, the ministry would do a similar sort of thing in talking about the act whereas stakeholders, which is probably a related but different aspect of the review: the committee would ask for different sort of viewpoints on the operation of the statute or the advocate's office or so forth. I would assume that the committee would want to do that under a different motion as it's a bit of a different type of feedback that the committee is asking for.

Thank you.

The Chair: Fantastic.

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Madam Chair. Could I clarify very quickly?

The Chair: Most definitely.

Ms Renaud: Thank you. Dr. Massolin, if you're saying that – so an organization like the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities, which is in the Ministry of Community and Social

Services and does have a link to the advocate's office, would be a stakeholder and not a presenter or a technical briefer? Is that correct?

The Chair: Dr. Massolin.

Dr. Massolin: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. If I may, I think that, as with other committee reviews, the advocate and in some cases an officer of the Legislature could serve, like, a dual role in the sense that they're technical experts in terms of the operations of their offices and also have some insight, obviously, in terms of the act that they administer. They have that technical role, and they could present in that way to the committee. But, you know, as you suggest, through you, Madam Chair, to Ms Renaud, these individuals can also serve as a stakeholder to the committee. In other words, they may have certain recommendations that they may want to put forth in terms of the act or whatnot.

Thank you.

11:20

Ms Renaud: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Fantastic.

Any further conversation on this?

All right, then. Moved by MLA Nathan Neudorf that the Standing Committee on Families and Communities invite the Advocate for Persons with Disabilities and officials from the Ministry of Community and Social Services to provide the committee with a technical briefing in relation to the Office of the Advocate for Persons with Disabilities Evaluation Summary Report, October 2020 at the next meeting of the committee.

All those in favour? Anyone opposed?

That motion is carried unanimously.

Next, on to item 4(c), organization of the review. At this time, having identified the first steps of our review, I would really like to encourage committee members to begin considering how the committee may wish to organize its review of the evaluation summary report, October 2020, so that we are prepared to make a decision at our next meeting.

I would just like to note that this committee has already formed a subcommittee on committee business, which has been struck, that can assist with organizing the review should the committee wish to task the subcommittee to do so.

Mr. Neudorf.

Mr. Neudorf: Thank you, Madam Chair. At this time I think it would be beneficial, particularly as we're coming up to a break in the legislative session, and I suggest that we have both of these offices present directly to the committee as opposed to tasking the subcommittee with that. I think, unless I'm mistaken, that there is also somewhat of a time limit on when this report needs to be provided to the Legislature. Again, if maybe Parliamentary Counsel could provide a little bit of scope and parameters on what that time frame might need to be, given the holiday coming up that might have a bearing significantly on how many steps we take to hear these technical briefings.

The Chair: Clerk.

Ms Rempel: Thank you, Madam Chair. As you did note at the beginning of the meeting, this committee should plan to have their report ready in 90 days to ensure that you meet the legislated requirements, so that would put the reporting date at February 23, 2021.

The Chair: Mr. Neudorf.

Mr. Neudorf: Thank you, Madam Chair. Again, just to go back to that. Because of that time frame I would suggest to the committee that these presenters present just to the main committee, not the subcommittee, and basically with the understanding of 20 minutes presentation and 20 minutes question-and-answer time for each group, at the will of the committee.

The Chair: Wonderful. Thank you, Mr. Neudorf.
Any further . . .

Ms Pancholi: It's MLA Pancholi, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Yes, Ms Pancholi.

Ms Pancholi: Yeah. I just wanted to indicate that I agree with MLA Neudorf's suggestion that the technical briefings be provided directly to the committee and with the time frames that he has suggested of 20 minutes for presentation with 20 minutes of question and answer for each technical briefing.

The Chair: Wonderful. Much appreciated.

Any other conversation on this item?

I do not believe that this is an item that requires a motion, but I believe that research services is aware that this is the will of the committee.

With that, we will move on to other business. Are there any other issues for discussion before we wrap up today's meeting?

Ms Pancholi: MLA Pancholi again.

The Chair: Yes.

Ms Pancholi: Can I confirm as to when we will make a decision about stakeholder submissions further to the technical briefings? Will that be part of this meeting or a follow-up meeting?

The Chair: It would be likely at a follow-up meeting.

Ms Pancholi: Thank you.

The Chair: Any other business?

Just so that everyone is aware, the next meeting will be at the call of the chair.

If there is nothing else for the committee's consideration, I would like to call for a motion to adjourn.

Mr. Neudorf: So moved.

The Chair: Mr. Neudorf has moved that the meeting be adjourned. All in favour? Anyone opposed? That motion is carried. Thank you so much. This meeting is now adjourned.

[The committee adjourned at 11:25 a.m.]

