



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

Friday, January 15, 2021
9 a.m.

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**Legislative Assembly of Alberta
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Second Session**

Standing Committee on Families and Communities

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Standing Committee on Families and Communities

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Ministry of Community and Social Services

Clay Buchanan, Assistant Deputy Minister, Disability Services

Tony Flores, Advocate for Persons with Disabilities

9 a.m.

Friday, January 15, 2021

[Ms Goodridge in the chair]

The Chair: All right. Good morning, everyone. I would like to call this meeting to order. Welcome to all members and staff in attendance for the 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 would ask that members joining the committee at the table introduce themselves for the record, followed by those who have joined us remotely, starting to my right.

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

Ms Renaud: Marie Renaud, St Albert.

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

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

The Chair: Now we'll move to online, starting with Mrs. Pitt.

Mrs. Pitt: Angela Pitt, MLA, Airdrie. I'm subbing in for MLA Jeremy Nixon.

Mr. Rutherford: MLA Brad Rutherford from Leduc-Beaumont.

Ms Lovely: Jackie Lovely, Camrose constituency MLA.

Mr. Guthrie: MLA Peter Guthrie, Airdrie-Cochrane.

The Chair: MLA Sigurdson.
All right. MLA Amery.

Mr. Amery: Good morning, Madam Chair. MLA Amery from Calgary-Cross.

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

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

The Chair: One last call for MLA Sigurdson.

Ms Sigurdson: Good morning. Sorry. I think I was on mute. Yes, Lori Sigurdson from Edmonton-Riverview.

The Chair: Fantastic. Thank you so much.

Just for the record we have the following substitutions this morning. We have Ms Lovely for Mr. Yao, Mrs. Pitt for Mr. Nixon, Ms Renaud for Mr. 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 remind everyone of the updated committee room protocols, which require that outside of individuals with an exemption those attending a committee meeting in person must wear a mask at all times unless they are speaking, and based on the recommendations from the chief medical officer of health regarding physical distancing, attendees at today's meeting are required to leave the appropriate distance between themselves and other meeting participants.

Please note that the microphones are operated by *Hansard*, so members do not have to turn them on and off, and committee

proceedings are being live-streamed on the Internet and broadcast on Alberta Assembly TV. Those participating by video conference are asked to turn on your cameras when speaking. Please set your cellphones and all other devices to silent for the duration of the meeting.

I understand that MLA Glasgo is having a hard time signing in, so I was wondering if we could . . .

Ms Rempel: I believe she may be connected.

The Chair: Do we have MLA Glasgo? We'll just wait one quick second for this technical difficulty to resolve.

I would just ask that anyone that is participating remotely ensure that they're on mute if they are not speaking so that there isn't any interference with the committee proceedings.

Ms Glasgo, in doing some technical checks, it shows that you are connected but that you are muted, so could you possibly try unmuting on your end?

Ms Glasgo: Hi. Can you hear me, Laila?

The Chair: Yes. Wonderful.

Ms Glasgo: Cool. Sorry. I was having some problems getting signed in, but I appreciate your patience.

The Chair: No, thank you. Technology is fantastic when it works, and that is not always the case.

With that said, I will move on to the approval of the agenda. The next item of business is to approve an agenda for today's meeting. Wondering if there are any changes to the agenda.

If not, I would like someone to make a motion to approve the draft agenda. I see Mr. Neudorf. Moved by Mr. Neudorf that the agenda for the January 15, 2021, meeting of the Standing Committee on Families and Communities be adopted as distributed. All in favour?

Ms Sigurdson: Sorry. Madam Chair?

The Chair: Yes.

Ms Sigurdson: I just want, I guess, a point of clarification regarding exactly what's happening in terms of the questioning for the review of the presentations. They were collapsed into one, and we had presubmitted a motion regarding the same. I don't know if this is the time to talk about that.

The Chair: No. That would be later on. We will be getting to that later on in the agenda.

Ms Sigurdson: Okay. Thank you. Just wanted to make sure. Thank you.

The Chair: All those in favour? On the phones and online? Is there anyone opposed? The motion is carried.

Next on the agenda we have the approval of minutes from the previous meeting. We have the minutes from the December 7, 2020, meeting of the committee. Are there any errors or omissions to note?

If not, I would ask that a member move the minutes.

Mr. Neudorf: So moved, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Moved by Mr. Neudorf that the minutes of the December 7, 2020, meeting of the Standing Committee on Families and Communities be adopted as circulated. All in favour? Any opposed? This motion is carried.

Next we move on to the review of the evaluation summary report of the office of the Advocate for Persons with Disabilities, October 2020, the technical briefing on the report, the office of the Advocate for Persons with Disabilities and the Ministry of Community and Social Services. By moving on to the committee's review of the evaluation summary report of the office of the Advocate for Persons with Disabilities, members will recall that at our last meeting the committee agreed to invite the Advocate for Persons with Disabilities and officials from the Ministry of Community and Social Services to provide a technical briefing on the report. There was a general agreement that we would put aside 20 minutes for each presentation, followed by 20 minutes for questions from the committee members. Our guests this morning have asked to give a joint presentation, which is anticipated to be around 20 minutes. However, in the spirit of our original agreement I plan to be somewhat flexible on the timing and permit 40 minutes for questions if needed. Does anyone have any questions or concerns with this approach? All right.

Ms Sigurdson, now would be the time if you were to want to bring forward that motion.

Ms Sigurdson: Well, Madam Chair, if the committee is following your recommendations, then, as far as I can see, it's not needed unless Parliamentary Counsel says otherwise.

The Chair: Nope. Fantastic.

In addition, I thought we could default to the questioning blocks that are used by the Standing Committee on Public Accounts during the later portion of the meetings. We will begin with five-minute time allotments, starting with the ND caucus and then five minutes to the government caucus. After that we will move to three-minute allotments, which will alternate back and forth between the caucuses. This should give each caucus roughly six opportunities for questions and answers for a total of approximately 20 minutes per caucus. I hope that this will encourage everyone to keep both their questions and answers succinct. Are there any questions or concerns with this proposed format? Well, fantastic.

With that settled, I would like to welcome the Advocate for Persons with Disabilities, Mr. Tony Flores, as well as the assistant deputy minister, Mr. Clay Buchanan, who will be providing the joint presentation to the committee. Thank you both for joining us today, and please proceed when you're ready.

Mr. Flores: Hello. Thank you for having us. Good morning.

Mr. Buchanan: I'm just going to test as well. Can I be heard?

The Chair: Yes. We can hear both of you.

Mr. Buchanan: Great. Good morning. We're pleased to be here this morning to provide a briefing on the office of the Advocate for Persons with Disabilities evaluation report. Thank you, Madam Chair and committee members, for the opportunity to be here this morning.

9:10

The Chair: A quick second. We've got some technical challenges right now, and we're just making sure that we can get the presentation up on the screen. We'll just give it a few seconds until it appears. Just hold on one quick second. We've got some more technical challenges in the room.

I'll just use this moment to remind anyone that's participating remotely that in the committees portal you can access the technical presentation as it was submitted in advance. So you can follow along at your leisure on the PowerPoint that was provided.

Fantastic. We are good to go, I've been told, so I will ask you guys to resume.

Mr. Buchanan: Thank you, Madam Chair. Again, good morning. It is a pleasure to be here this morning to provide a briefing on the office of the Advocate for Persons with Disabilities evaluation report.

The Chair: One quick second. We've got some challenges. Someone isn't on mute. We've muted Mr. Flores from our end, so it should not have that same feedback issue.

Mr. Buchanan: Thank you very much. The second slide provides the agenda for the presentation this morning. As indicated by Madam Chair, this will be a joint presentation to the committee by myself, Clay Buchanan, assistant deputy minister for disability services, and Mr. Tony Flores, Advocate for Persons with Disabilities.

I will start with a brief background of the act in the office. The role of the disability advocate grew out of a recommendation with the developmental disabilities safety standards consultation in 2016. More than 1,300 Albertans with disabilities, their families, service providers, and support organizations helped shape the advocate's role for providing input during a public engagement process in March 2018. The Advocate for Persons with Disabilities Act was proclaimed into force on October 30, 2018, and the legislation requires an evaluation of the act within two years of the advocate's appointment.

The work of the advocate is grounded in the United Nations convention on the rights of persons with disabilities. The convention promotes the inclusion, human rights, and fundamental freedoms of persons with disabilities. The advocate provides advice in alignment with the principles of this UN declaration. The advocate works to inform and educate Albertans about their rights through relationship building with community organizations and groups and social media. The advocate is mandated under the Advocate for Persons with Disabilities Act.

Mr. Tony Flores was selected as Alberta's first Advocate for Persons with Disabilities. The advocate is accountable to the Minister of Community and Social Services and functionally reports to myself, the AD for disability services. The office is currently staffed with five full-time equivalents and the advocate. The advocate is appointed by the Minister of Community and Social Services under the act. In summary, the advocate performs three primary functions: concern resolution, education and information sharing, and informing systemic change.

I will now turn the presentation over to Mr. Flores.

Mr. Flores: Thank you. I'm on slide 6. Under current studies of our office as of August 2020 we helped over 1,400 requests from Albertans, with over 1,700 cases related to concern resolution, education, and systemic issues. These requests are ongoing on a weekly basis.

We promote self-advocacy, and there are multiple ways how we help individuals that contact our office. One is through navigation. We help individuals guide and understand the complex processes of our programs and services. The second way we help individuals is by providing pertinent and current information so that they can carry about in solving their concerns and issues. The third way we help is by facilitation, bridging them to other programs and services or connecting them with caseworkers. The fourth way we help individuals is referral to other organizations, for instance through Alberta Supports. I'm proud to report that about 90 per cent of our cases have been resolved.

Many Albertans reach out with individual concerns relating to broader issues of accessibility. These broader issues can be broken down into five dimensions such as built environment, transportation, employment, information and communication, and person-centred services. I'll give an example of what this looks like for built environment, for instance. Condominiums and apartments: sometimes their main entrances are manually operated and they're not automatic doors. People with limited function of their hands, for instance, don't have the ability to manage the door, so we support these individuals by writing to condo boards or we refer them to the office of the Human Rights Commission.

The second example is in regard to lack of access to transportation. This is big in small communities, rural communities, particularly when the Greyhound services have ended. You know, people with disabilities feel isolated in their own communities, particularly when people need medical treatment and to go to a bigger city, so this is a challenge. How we help individuals is really to facilitate regional services like regional family and community support services and other volunteer organizations in that community so that they can have transportation services to get some medical treatment.

Employment challenges, lack of employment opportunities is another example. We had a case where this individual has multiple disabilities – blind, deaf, and paraplegic – and was trying to find some kind of employment and training opportunities, and this individual was referred to many, many supports in the community but without success. We were able to break that cycle down. We were able to connect to the ministry's programs and services and employment agencies in the community, and we were able to help this individual.

An example of information and communication. For instance, when the pandemic started, you know, the daily announcement by Dr. Hinshaw did not have an ASL interpreter. We facilitated that to ensure that, you know, people that are deaf and hard of hearing are able to understand daily communications by Dr. Hinshaw.

The fifth example is person-centred services, ensuring that people feel valued when they access services. What we are hearing is that, for instance, caseworkers who do not have a clear understanding or awareness of people's circumstances are rather unempathetic to the circumstances, so people feel undervalued.

9:20

What we do is that we try to facilitate that conversation and also try to understand the perspective from the caseworker, try to facilitate that conversation so a resolution can be found. Those are the examples of how we help individuals.

Before I provide an overview of the evaluation findings, I will ask Mr. Buchanan to describe the approach that the evaluation took.

Mr. Buchanan: Just for reference we're on slide 8 of the PowerPoint presentation. As indicated previously, the Advocate for Persons with Disabilities Act stipulates that the advocate shall prepare an evaluation of the effectiveness of the act within two years of the advocate's appointment. The completion of this evaluation report is intended to fulfill this requirement.

Evaluating the effectiveness of the act involved a stakeholder survey with 21 disability organizations in Alberta, interviews with 20 government of Alberta staff within and outside the Ministry of Community and Social Services, and a review of administrative data and documents contained within the advocate's office. This evaluation was supported by the office of the advocate working group and oversight committee chaired by the advocate and included ministry staff and external stakeholders, representatives from the disability community.

Direct input from Albertans with disabilities was not collected and was out of scope due to the limited resources and tight time frames for the evaluation. Shifting focuses and resources to the pandemic response as a result caused timing issues, and to survey Albertans was not optimal.

Selection of government of Alberta staff for interviews was based on recommendations from a working group and the advocate. Staff were selected from multiple ministries, including the Ministry of Community and Social Services, and other offices who had any interaction with the advocate since 2018. A total of 20 government of Alberta staff were interviewed.

A list of stakeholders and organizations were recommended by the working group and the advocate. A sample approach was used to send an online survey to organizations that represent the disability community in Alberta. A total of 21 organizations were invited to complete the survey, and 44 responses were received.

Mr. Flores will now share an overview of the findings of the evaluation.

Mr. Flores: On slide 10 are the key findings on the effectiveness of the act. The majority of the surveyed organizations, 79 per cent, and some GOA staff supported improving the act to improve my office's ability to effect change on behalf of the disability community; 33 per cent of the surveyed organizations agreed that the act is effective as it is. Some GOA staff thought the act was effective and provided flexibility to my role.

On slide 11 are the key findings on the role and functions of the office. My office has developed a robust information collection system that has been used for analysis purposes. The findings of this component were mainly based on OAPD administrative data and document review. Administrative data was collected for the time frame of September 2018, when the office became operational, to June 2020, when the evaluation process began. The findings found that we fulfilled our role and most of our functions.

Slide 12, please: key findings on the role and functions, continued. The findings also highlight collaborative work that my office has done with the Ministry of Community and Social Services, municipalities, government offices, and engagement with disability organizations and advocacy groups in the province. Areas of improvement focus on increasing awareness of my office. Overall, the OAPD, the office of the Advocate for Persons with Disabilities, has fulfilled its roles and delivered most of the mandate functions to support individuals with disabilities in Alberta.

On slide 13, please: key findings on outcomes. The key outcomes in scope of this assessment were: first, providing support to individuals with disabilities; second, collaborating with the community; third, support from GOA leadership; and, fourth, using data to improve the work of the office. Outcomes that required extensive data collection with persons with disabilities were not assessed for completion, and long-term outcomes that require additional time to complete were also out of scope for this evaluation.

Slide 14, please: the key findings on outcome achievement. Community organizations were generally satisfied, 53 per cent, with the work of my office in supporting them and their clients. Seventy per cent of the surveyed organizations responded that we "collaborated with the disability community." Some disability organizations and GOA staff thought that I could benefit with more GOA leadership support to collaborate with other ministries that interact with people with disabilities such as Alberta Health Services, the Ministry of Education, Justice and Solicitor General, knowing that the act goes beyond the Ministry of Community and Social Services.

Slide 15, please: on key findings on improvement needs. Generally the results suggest increasing my office's ability to influence

change in policy decisions affecting the disability community. Both the survey and staff interviewed suggested improving staffing resources. Generally it was perceived by the organizations and GOA staff that the office may require additional resources to better fulfill its mandate. Raising awareness of the office and using online platforms to connect with the community and improve access to the office was also suggested.

Next slide, please, 16: addressing gaps and issues. After further thought and some discussion with the ministry about the available options, we agreed that it would be premature to include formal recommendations in the report. We need to consider that the office of the Advocate for Persons with Disabilities is still relatively new, that it took some time to set up and establish the office, and that we are still exploring the roles and responsibilities of the office and how we can best meet the needs of our stakeholders within the act as it is written. We also need to consider that the evaluation represents a single measurement point and does not reflect a set of trends that we have observed over a period of time. That said, the evaluation does provide a helpful baseline and some valuable insight into the areas where we are doing well and areas where there are some opportunities for improvement.

Going forward, I think we can effect more immediate and visible changes by improving, for example, our evolving relationship with our community and stakeholders, including their awareness of my office and the roles that we perform. We can also use the report as the basis for establishing metrics that we can use to monitor and improve our performance over time. Instead of going down the road of formal recommendation, following a more agile and flexible improvement approach may be the best approach. Hence, I would prefer to use the report as a basis for some specific improvements and then consider another evaluation in the future that follows up on what we have learned this time.

This is an opportunity for question and answer.

9:30

The Chair: All right. I take that your presentation has completed?

Mr. Flores: Yes. Correct.

The Chair: Wonderful. I want to really thank you.

I will now open up the opportunity for questions from members, and we will be starting with the ND caucus. Should I assume that you will be starting, Ms Renaud?

Ms Renaud: Sure. Thank you very much. Thank you to Mr. Buchanan and Mr. Flores for their information. I guess my first question is to Mr. Buchanan. I noted that you commented that taking the time to speak to self-advocates, people with disabilities that have perhaps accessed the office of the Alberta Advocate for Persons with Disabilities, was out of scope for this particular evaluation. Now, before that you prefaced some of your comments with the alignment with the United Nations declaration on the rights of people with disabilities as it relates to inclusion and all of that, and then I later heard the disability advocate – well, actually, I'm going to stop there. I'll turn it over to you, Mr. Buchanan. If you could comment on that and maybe expand a little bit as to where those comments are coming from. It seems to me that an Advocate for Persons with Disabilities – in order to get an evaluation that truly reflects the work and the needs for change going forward, this office or this procedure would include Albertans with disabilities themselves. So I'm wondering if you could explain the decision that was made and then how that aligns with the United Nations declaration.

Thank you.

Mr. Buchanan: Thank you for the question.

Once again thank you for the question. The main rationale for not including individuals in the evaluation was only one of time frame. I think, as the advocate indicated, this is a point in time, and we need to look at this as an ongoing improvement exercise or continuous improvement exercise. In discussions with the advocate and going forward with a new evaluation and using this as baseline data, I certainly agree with that, and I'm hopeful that . . .

Ms Renaud: Sorry, Mr. Buchanan. I'm sorry to interrupt. I don't have much time. Maybe I wasn't clear with my question. I did have a bit of a preamble at the beginning, so let me reframe that for you. You noted in your statement that you believed that taking the time to consult with Albertans with disabilities was out of scope for the evaluation of the office of the Advocate for Persons with Disabilities. I'm wondering if you could explain that decision and how that aligns with the UN declaration.

Thank you.

Mr. Buchanan: I think the only thing I can say to that question – and thank you for the question clarification – is the fact that the oversight committee that did the evaluation thought there just wasn't enough time to involve external interviews. However, I mean, the organizations that went through the surveys do represent the views of those individuals. I think we have captured it in that manner.

Ms Renaud: Thank you for that answer. I understand that organizations often make claims that they act and speak for people, but we do know that there often is a disconnect between what people think and feel and their experience and organizations that represent them, so I just wanted to note that.

But let's talk about the oversight committee because it sounds like they had a big role in making this decision that it was out of scope to collect feedback from people with disabilities. Could you tell me who sits on that oversight committee, please, and how you selected the external stakeholders to be on that committee?

Thank you.

Mr. Buchanan: Once again thank you for the question. I've been with the organization for about four months now, so personally I did not actually take part in the evaluation. Mr. Flores did participate as the advocate in that evaluation. Perhaps the advocate could provide some insight to that question.

Ms Renaud: Okay.

Mr. Flores: Thank you, Mr. Buchanan. The composition of the oversight committee is generally executive staff of Community and Social Services – I was the chair of that committee – and two representatives from the Premier's council, the chair and another member of the Premier's council, and the chair of FSCD, PPAC. So that is the composition. There are 20 members in total.

The Chair: Wonderful. That first time block has elapsed.

With that, we will move on to Ms Lovely.

Ms Lovely: Can you hear me?

The Chair: Yes, we can. Please begin.

Ms Lovely: Perfect. Do you want my screen on as well, my video?

The Chair: Yes, please.

Ms Lovely: Perfect. Okay. I do have one question and a supplemental as well. My first question is that in your letter to the Speaker you mentioned that it took some time to set up and establish the office. How long would you say that it took to get your office operations up and running?

The Chair: Mr. Flores, you're muted.

Mr. Flores: My apologies. Really, prior to my appointment, about a year prior, my office was built from ground zero. That means developing the IT system, establishing the office, hiring the staff. But when I was appointed, that's when we started, really, operational. That's when we started receiving calls from Albertans with disabilities and providing services to Albertans with disabilities.

When I say that it took a while to establish the office, because – given that it's new legislation, it's a new role, I'm the first Advocate for Persons with Disabilities in Alberta that was appointed, it required time to establish and build a relationship with the disability community. Early on, prior to the pandemic I travelled across the province to introduce myself as the first Advocate for Persons with Disabilities, from Fort McMurray, Grande Prairie, all the way down to Lethbridge and Drumheller and Medicine Hat and Siksika First Nation. Over that period of time there was some interruption because, first of all, there was a change of government.

When the writ was dropped, sometime in February 2019, my ability to build relationships with the disability community was limited or really halted until the following fall, so it took some time. Of course, in the fall of 2019 I received direction from the new minister, Minister Sawhney, to proceed with my work, and then, of course, I accelerated my work on travelling again, from the central region to the north-central region of the province and then going down all the way to Lethbridge.

But when I returned from that travel, the pandemic started in March, so there was some interruption. When the pandemic started, our focus was really to respond to the pandemic, making sure that Albertans are supported, the first phase of the pandemic.

I hope that answered your question.

The Chair: Ms Lovely, you indicated that you had a follow-up. We have a minute left in this block.

Ms Lovely: I do have a follow-up question here. How would you utilize more time to engage persons with disabilities?

Mr. Flores: Moving forward, given one of the findings of this report is that it is important that there's still more work to do on building working relationships with the disability community. There's more work to do on that. Keep in mind that disability is not defined in the legislation, so the scope is quite broad; that is, pandisabilities, so all types of disabilities, all ages, children, youth, adults, and seniors. Also, I need to build working relationships with other government ministries that have interactions with the disability community such as the Ministry of Education, Alberta Health Services, JSG, Justice and Solicitor General, Seniors and Housing. There is still more work on building a relationship with those ministries.

9:40

The Chair: Fantastic. With that, we'll move back to the ND caucus and back to Ms Renaud.

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Madam Chair. This question is, I guess, for the advocate, really just a yes or no question. Before I stopped asking questions, I asked about the makeup of the oversight committee. You noted that there were members from the Premier's council, status of people with disabilities, government of Alberta

staff, and members of PPAC, which are also under the umbrella of government. Can you tell me: is there any participation in this oversight of the evaluation process that is in any way independent from government? Yes or no?

Mr. Flores: No.

Ms Renaud: Okay. Thank you.

My next question is that the ADM noted that there was not capacity, really, to take the time to consult with Albertans with disabilities; it therefore became out of scope. Can you tell me: over the last year, I guess, that we're really talking about the evaluation, has your office lost any capacity in terms of a reduction of FTEs? Just yes or no is good.

Mr. Flores: I'm sorry. Yes or no?

Ms Renaud: Just yes or no is good.

The Chair: I would just ask . . .

Mr. Flores: Yes.

Ms Renaud: Thank you.

The Chair: Ms Renaud, I just want to use a moment to remind everyone to make sure that the questions are coming through the chair.

Ms Renaud: I will do that, Madam Chair. I apologize.

Okay. To the advocate through the chair, I understand that through the legislation – again, it's just noting that it's very new. These are new processes. One of the primary functions of this office is to make recommendations and give advice to government, yet I don't see in the annual report – I mean, there's a little bit, but in this evaluation that is really guiding next steps, I don't see concrete recommendations or advice. Therefore, I'm puzzled as to how people are expected to monitor any progress and to evaluate that if there is no transparency in terms of: this was the work; here was the advice, recommendations; here's how far we've gotten with that. I wonder if you could speak to that. There seems to be no independence and no ability for any outside sets of eyes to monitor this. I wonder if you can explain how Albertans should have some faith that the information that we're getting is actually comprehensive and somewhat independent.

Thank you.

Mr. Flores: Thank you for that question. As Mr. Buchanan has indicated, the three main roles, three main functions of the office are, first, individual resolution. The second piece is education, you know, community engagement, understanding the issues. When I went travelling, that role was really education, introducing myself, and also understanding the issues unique to their communities.

Ms Renaud: Mr. Flores, I'm sorry. I think I may have confused you again with my preamble, so let me just clarify. There is no clarity in terms of what the recommendations are.

The Chair: Fantastic. With that, we move on to our next block, and I believe it's MLA Guthrie.

Mr. Guthrie: Yes. Thank you. You were talking about the challenges that you're facing. You named off a number of them. There was COVID, of course, the election, relationship building, IT systems. Are there hurdles that are still standing in your way from moving forward or that are holding you back?

Mr. Flores: The ministry now has supported rehiring some staff in my office to really address the backlog on the cases that we have.

In addition to individual resolution, really, we need some work on addressing – our priority now is really addressing what’s been identified, gaps, in the report. Those are the priorities that we need to do now. It requires commitment from the ministry for me to be able to address those gaps, and the ministry has already committed to providing resources in order for me to start working on addressing the gaps identified in the report.

Mr. Buchanan: Madam Chair, if I could augment that answer.

The Chair: Yes. Most definitely.

Mr. Buchanan: Great. I think, as indicated by the advocate, there are, you know, currently five positions that report directly to him. The regional staffing model that was supported by the advocate involved more of a staffing model where staffing was combined with another branch. Really, recently we changed that model, and five staff directly are dedicated to the advocate for the work that he has indicated needs to be done.

Additionally, just to provide a bit of clarity, the working group that did the evaluation did review the working of client files that was in the advocate’s office, so that client review and those files reviewed did feed into the evaluation.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Buchanan.

Mr. Guthrie, did you have a follow-up?

Mr. Guthrie: Yeah. I guess that as far as that ministry work is concerned and what you’re doing with their staff, can you just elaborate a little bit more as to what that collaborative work entails?

The Chair: I believe – well, someone was muted, and we’ve now elapsed our time.

The next person on the speaking list is Ms Pancholi.

Ms Pancholi: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to Mr. Buchanan and Mr. Flores for being here today. I want to go back to the wording of the act, which is the reason we’re here today, which is to talk about that there is the requirement in section 6(1) of the act that the advocate “prepare a report evaluating the effectiveness of this Act,” and that report would include “any amendments and recommendations relating to persons with disabilities that the Advocate considers appropriate.”

I think what I’m hearing today are a couple of things. First, we heard that due to the time constraints and the time it took to set up your office – we already have heard that there was not the ability to survey persons with disabilities. I am reminded of the statement that persons with disabilities often say, which is: Nothing about Us without Us. We’re already hearing that due to the time constraints there wasn’t the ability to consult.

We’re also hearing in your presentation that there are no specific recommendations in your report because, again, of time constraints although I’ll allow you to clarify if that’s the case. But I am conscious that the act does require that there be recommendations and proposed amendments if considered appropriate to the act, so I’m wondering if you can clarify. We, this committee, require to hear some specific recommendations. Already time seems to be an issue, so I’m wondering, for example: would one of those recommendations be – and I don’t want to put words in your mouth – to conduct another review of the act?

Sorry. Go ahead, Mr. Flores.

Mr. Flores: Yes. In my letter to the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly the last sentence in that letter is that my recommendation is to evaluate this legislation, do a comprehensive evaluation of this legislation two years from the date I submitted the report to the Legislative Assembly.

Ms Pancholi: Thank you, Mr. Flores.

Madam Chair, another question. Also, I’m conscious of one of the statements in your report as well as in your presentation, that overall you found that there is a need to increase the advocate’s ability to effect change. What specific recommendations do you think would be considered to improve your ability to effect change? Again, I’m going to throw out some options in terms of things such as requiring that when the ministry is making changes to programs and supports for persons with disabilities, you be consulted as part of that process.

Go ahead.

9:50

Mr. Flores: Thank you for the question. I am included in that process now. Minister Sawhney, for instance, had hosted the Disability Advisory Forum. I’m included in that consultation process. You know, there are program reviews now that exist, and I’m part of that consultation process. There are different ways that I have the ability to inform change; for instance, through my quarterly report to the minister, through the annual report. I’ve done a formal report on the AISH program, for instance, and I also do a weekly report to the assistant deputy minister.

The Chair: Mr. Flores, I’m sorry. Your time has elapsed.

With that, we’ll move back to Mr. Guthrie for a follow-up question.

Mr. Guthrie: Yeah. Just a final question here. Mr. Flores, you were just about to elaborate on the specifics of the work that you’re doing with the ministry staff. I’ll just maybe let you continue on with that.

Mr. Flores: Yes. There are different ways of communicating the issues that are presented to us by the disability community to the ministry. I think, moving forward, what’s important right now, given that there’s really no formal recommendation from this evaluation but that, rather, the focus is on continuous improvement, is to develop a framework or a process as to how that would look when, for instance, submitting a report. What does that process look like, and how would the ministry or the government respond to those reports? I think it would be good to develop a framework in that regard.

I hope that answers the question.

The Chair: With that, I believe we’ll move on to Mr. Neudorf.

Mr. Neudorf: Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you, both, for joining us today. Your evaluation summary states that you engage with organizations and advocacy groups. In Lethbridge there is a great organization called Inclusion Lethbridge, which is primarily run by volunteers and parents of those persons with disabilities. How have you been working with smaller organizations like these ones, and how can they access supports through your office, especially considering that many of these smaller organizations, run with the use of volunteers, have very little access to extended staff, resources, and that kind of thing? If you don’t mind explaining that relationship and how they could access your office, that would be great.

Thank you.

Mr. Flores: Thank you for that question. In fact, I visited Inclusion Lethbridge when I was in Lethbridge in February last year. I met about 22 families in the evening, at 6 o'clock, you know, in a small office. They were packed in and interested in understanding what I do and what I can offer them. When I visited them, I first introduced myself and explained to them what my roles and functions are and, really, the opportunities to learn and understand those issues, first understanding the systemic challenges that they face so that I can bring those forward to the government and also offering that their community can contact my office and that we can assist them on an individual basis in finding some kind of resolution for the challenges they face on a daily basis.

Again, I would like to emphasize . . .

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Flores.

With that, we're moving back to Ms Renaud.

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just a note that I wanted to make, just a clarification for Mr. Buchanan. You noted a little earlier that the oversight committee or part of the evaluation process was reviewing client files. I would like to suggest that that is not in any way, shape, or form the same as talking with Albertans with disabilities.

Going back to the role of the advocate, you gave some examples earlier; that was great. I'd like to ask you a question using an example. There was a huge policy change made by this government, one that deindexed AISH benefits and income support benefits. Now, I'm wondering: with the work that you do, were you consulted on this policy change prior to implementation? Yes or no?

Mr. Flores: I'm sorry. Is that question for me?

Ms Renaud: Were you consulted prior to the AISH deindexing? Yes or no?

Mr. Flores: No.

Ms Renaud: Okay. Thank you.

One of the other things that happened was a payment date change. Now, were you consulted before that? Yes or no?

Mr. Flores: No.

Ms Renaud: Were you asked to collect information following the change? Yes or no?

Mr. Flores: No.

Ms Renaud: Okay. Thank you.

One of the things that my colleague noted is that the most important piece, obviously, is the recommendations. With all of the really important work that's going on generating recommendations, would you agree that it's important that that information be made public so that bodies such as this, Members of the Legislative Assembly, and the public can monitor the progress and the work coming out of that office? Even though it's not an independent office, would you agree that that is something that is important and valuable?

Mr. Flores: I agree.

Ms Renaud: Okay. Thank you.

I'm wondering if you could talk a little bit about what you would like to see in terms of changes to the independence of your office. What do you think would be helpful to advance your work?

Mr. Flores: At this point under the legislation, section 1(b), the minister is responsible for this legislation, and I am accountable to the minister. I appreciate the fact that the ministry, you know, really helped support me to build this office early on, but I think that in time, in order for us to be – the reality is and the truth is that as long as I am embedded with the ministry or any other ministry, there will be some measurable influence. That's just the reality. In time I think it would be ideal that the office should be independent.

Ms Renaud: Thank you very much.

One other question. I noticed there's a lack of information in terms of: where were the referrals coming from?

The Chair: All right. With that, that block is done.

Before we move on to the next block, I just want to remind all members of the committee and our two presenters that we cannot dictate or limit answers. As much as we might like to have a yes or no answer, to the presenters: you are not in any way required to provide a yes or no answer. I just wanted to put that out here and remind all members to please put all questions through the chair and be respectful and understand that we cannot dictate or limit the answers.

With that, we are going to go back to Mr. Neudorf.

Ms Pancholi: Madam Chair, sorry. My apologies. If I could just make a quick comment, just following up on your comment there.

The Chair: Sure.

Ms Pancholi: Thank you. I'm noting, from the number of other committees where I've sat where we do have presenters coming from outside stakeholders or ministries, that generally – I know we're using a time-block format here, but usually I've noted that chairs have allowed that if the individuals who have been invited are in the middle of speaking when the timer goes off, they're usually given a moment or two to complete their thoughts. I'm wondering, Madam Chair, in the instance where the timer goes off when somebody is presenting, if you could give them a moment to wrap up their thoughts.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms Pancholi. What you haven't been seeing is that we have been actually doing that from this chair position. We've given quite a bit of latitude. In fact, there have been times where it's been as much as 30 seconds to 45 seconds to allow for the wrap-up of the answers. So thank you for that.

Ms Pancholi: You're right. I haven't seen that, Madam Chair. Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Neudorf.

Mr. Neudorf: Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate that. Again, thank you, Mr. Flores. I really appreciate you taking the time to visit Lethbridge and spend time with such an important organization as Inclusion Lethbridge. They do tremendous work, and time spent with them I think is valuable for all of us.

My follow-up question is this. As you continuously seek to improve and spend time with stakeholders over time, obviously, do you feel that the OAPD will become more effective in its functioning under the act as well as develop clearer understandings of how to make the service better for persons with disabilities and that time and relationship building is the most effective tool that you have at your disposal to increase your effectiveness and role?

Thank you.

10:00

Mr. Flores: Thank you for that question. Mr. Buchanan's background information on how the office was established is really from the survey of 1,300 that was done. Three things that came out of that are, first, the disability community said that it is important for the advocate to work with the disability community to understand what they face on a daily basis. The second thing that came out of that survey is to make the disability community aware of the supports and services available to them. Then the third piece is to work with the government to make necessary changes. Thus, the three main functions of the office now are: individual resolution, education, and systemic change. This really aligned through that survey. That's why I think it's important that I continue to do that work. I hope that will give you a clear response.

Mr. Neudorf: Yes, it does. Thank you very much. I appreciate your time and your service.

The Chair: With that, we will go on to Ms Glasgo.

Ms Glasgo: Sorry, Chair. My technical difficulties are only continuing. Thank you so much to the presenters for being here today and for giving us an opportunity to ask you these questions. Madam Chair, can I just have a time check, please?

The Chair: One minute.

Ms Glasgo: Thank you. I'll probably have to ask this in a follow-up as well, but I know for myself, being from southern Alberta, there are a lot of amazing organizations down here that aim to enhance existing and create new supports for people with disabilities, including the South Alberta FASD Network. What other advocates and networks such as this one are out there, and what sort of value do they bring to your operations?

Mr. Flores: In south region I really appreciate Inclusion Lethbridge. They're pretty solid, a pretty solid group, really passionate families and volunteers. Also SRSAN, the network of self-advocates there, because they feel – you know, one of the cries when I visited there is saying that they feel isolated in the south. They feel that Calgary is south. What they've done – actually, you're right – to strengthen that support network there, they actually created their own network within the south. I have a very good relationship with SRSAN and actually further down to Medicine Hat. That relationship there was also built when I visited.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Flores.

With that, we will move on to Ms Sigurdson.

Ms Sigurdson: Well, good morning. Thank you so much for your presentation. I'm looking at slide 10 of the presentation, and it talks about, it says, "33 % of [the] survey respondents agreed the Act is effective the way it is currently written." If 33 per cent think it's effective, then, I guess, 67 per cent think it's ineffective, which is kind of more what we're concerned about, and of course we want to make sure that the act is the act that we need for Albertans. Of course, we know that this data doesn't even include self-advocates, which is, you know, a major weakness of this evaluation. Certainly, I'm sure both presenters know about the Nothing about Us without Us. It's very fundamental to any kind of good legislation, so, I mean, that is a deep concern, and of course my colleagues have already spoken about it.

I guess one of my first questions is: even in this number of people surveyed, we know that from your annual report there were probably about 106 stakeholders that you were in contact with, but it was just

such a small, little group here. It was like 20 or something, and I'm just wondering how they were selected. Why were only 20 chosen? Maybe you could answer that, Mr. Flores or also Mr. Buchanan.

Mr. Flores: Again, the limited time frame of doing this evaluation was one challenge. It was done during the pandemic. The reason: we did not have the resources to focus on this evaluation, and I apologize for that. Our priority really was to focus on the pandemic response and therefore, regardless – anyway, this two years does not have enough solid evidence to prove the effectiveness of this legislation. I think it would be wise to, as for my recommendation in my letter to the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, really evaluate this two years from now to have a more comprehensive evaluation. I believe that having the legislation is one thing; robust legislation is another.

Ms Sigurdson: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Flores. I mean, I think that, you know, okay, the thing about – I think, certainly as a long-time social worker, you're always working with incomplete knowledge. It's not a science that's black and white. It is always sort of that you're pulling together as much as you can of what is available. [A timer sounded] I think that was the bell.

The Chair: Mr. Flores, if you'd like to answer that quickly. I don't know if there was a question at that point.

Mr. Flores: I appreciate the sentiment. What I'm saying is that I think it's important to have legislation that is based on solid evidence. Unfortunately, at this time we don't have the solid evidence to have – I think we just have to be patient, and we'll have more robust legislation ahead of us.

The Chair: Wonderful. Thank you, Mr. Flores.
With that, we will go back to Ms Glasgo.

Ms Glasgo: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just a quick follow-up. You mentioned that you noticed that people were feeling isolated in the south, and for sure as a rural south MLA I definitely hear that a lot. We often feel like we're, you know, isolated and that we're left out of many decisions as they're usually made in bigger centres, and most of the supports are there. How do you think your office can help to increase supports for those living in rural Alberta, and what do you think the steps forward are to making sure that these families feel supported around the province?

Mr. Flores: Thank you for that question. I think, again, based on the research, that survey of 1,300 people that responded to the survey, the disability community has said that the disability advocate must build a relationship with the disability community to understand the issues they face on a daily basis unique to their communities. I think I have a lot of work to do in doing that, building relationships with small communities and also First Nations. There's still plenty of work ahead of me on that. Really, partnership is key for us because through partnership, really, it strengthens and expands our ability to serve the disability communities.

Mr. Buchanan: Madam Chair, if I could support that question.

The Chair: Yes.

Mr. Buchanan: I just would like to remind the committee members as well that when you look at the legislation under 3(2), roles and functions of the advocate, it is very broad and very flexible and enabling. I would draw your attention to that as well and remind the members that they should go through that. It is a very enabling piece of legislation. It deals with everything from having the ability to

identify and study issues; review programs and policies; participate in consultations; promote the rights, interests, and well-being of persons with disabilities; provide information and advice, as indicated in the presentation from the advocate; and provide education that's needed to ensure individuals having difficulty accessing services and programs. Again, roles and functions as identified under the act are very broad and enabling.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Buchanan.

With that, we will move to Mrs. Pitt for the remaining 10 seconds.

Mrs. Pitt: Well, Mr. Advocate, I'd like to take this opportunity to thank you for the work that you're doing in starting up an office in such a difficult time. I look forward to a follow-up question later on.

Mr. Flores: Thank you so much.

The Chair: Fantastic.

With that, we are back to the ND caucus for the final round. Is that to Ms Renaud? Please begin.

10:10

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just to quickly summarize what we've heard. What I heard this morning is that having the resources and time to speak with Albertans with disabilities was out of scope for this particular evaluation for a number of reasons, that there is a lack of independence in terms of the internal government oversight as well as the act of making the recommendations public so that Albertans can monitor that progress. I've also heard that there are not enough resources that would have been required to do an in-depth evaluation. Now, I would suggest, obviously, that the pandemic has played a huge role in everything, but I would also suggest, to my earlier question, that a loss of FTEs in this office has contributed as well.

My question to the advocate is that in a perfect world – I guess I read this through your report. It really focuses on influencing government for change because that's the whole point. You work with people, you work with organizations, you make recommendations, and you improve. I'm wondering if you can tell us: what would be, in your opinion, the way for us to go forward to ensure that recommendations and this work is transparent for Albertans?

Thank you.

Mr. Flores: In my opinion, I think it would be good to develop a framework as to how that reporting process is defined to understand what that process looks like.

Ms Renaud: Okay. Thank you. When you say "framework process," you mean, let's say, that your office would formally put out recommendations, government would then have to respond, and then there would be oversight, very much like ministries do with Public Accounts. Is that what you're suggesting, Mr. Flores?

Mr. Flores: Correct.

Ms Renaud: Okay. Thank you very much.

Now, I'm wondering if you could speak to – obviously, COVID has impacted lives all over Alberta. People with disabilities certainly have been impacted. I know that my office is inundated. I'm wondering if you can speak to the escalating casework, let's say, over the last six, eight months.

Mr. Flores: We definitely get a lot of phone calls in regard to the pandemic. You know, earlier on it started with access to PPE and then the visitation to group homes and things like that and flexibility

to contracts, to which the government has already responded. Then that evolved into the increasing costs of living; for instance, extra costs related to the pandemic, now the rollout of the vaccine. It's really evolving. It's also important to consider now how people with disabilities live in the midst of a pandemic so that, despite the pandemic, they can still live an inclusive life.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Flores.

With that, we will move on to our final block for today. With that, we will go back to Mrs. Pitt.

Mrs. Pitt: Wonderful. Thank you very much. In the letter to the Speaker you mentioned that there's work that needs to be done on building relationships within government, and you talk about that not just with the Ministry of Community and Social Services but with others like Health and that type of thing. You also talk about work that's needed to be done with external groups. I know that I've heard from a number of disability advocacy groups that I frequently talk to myself who speak very highly of you in that regard, and I'm sure there are others that I haven't had that conversation with. Given that you've mentioned that in the report and throughout this conversation, I'm just wondering: what additional steps can you take and will you take, given the restraint of COVID that we find ourselves in, to further develop these relationships?

Mr. Flores: Plenty. You know, despite that we're in the midst of a pandemic, I've changed my approach. Well, everybody has changed their approach. Now it's virtual. That relationship building with the disability community continues.

Also, the senior leadership of the ministry has introduced me to the senior leadership with other ministries such as Justice and Solicitor General, Seniors and Housing, Children's Services, and Alberta Health Services. You know, that engagement is starting to build up now. Since we've completed this report in late summer, early fall, that engagement with the other ministries is already evolving. In fact, I was consulted in regard to the housing review by Seniors and Housing, and I have an appointment next week with another consultation process when it comes to facility-based continuing care, for instance, standardizing the policy in regard to continuing care. That consultation process is already evolving.

When it comes to building relationships with the disability community, again, that continues. You know, it's not just disabilities; it's actually even building relationships with universities. For instance, I'm scheduled to speak about accessibility with the University of Alberta. I've also built relationships with other colleges like NorQuest College, Bow Valley College, speaking about the importance of advocacy for this new generation. That piece is the education piece, promoting the importance of the rights of persons with disabilities.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Flores.

That concludes our time allotted for questions and answers today. I want to thank everyone for participating and particularly Mr. Flores and Mr. Buchanan for joining us today. We really appreciate your time and the preparation you clearly put in to both this report and to presenting to this committee today. With that, I thank you. I believe that if you would like, you can stay on the line for the rest of the committee, but you are welcome to leave if you so choose.

Mr. Flores: Thank you so much for this opportunity.

Mr. Buchanan: Thank you.

An Hon. Member: Thank you very much.

The Chair: All right. Now that we have heard from both the advocate and ministry officials, we are in a position to determine what our next steps should be in review of the evaluation summary of the office of the Advocate for Persons with Disabilities. As a reminder for members, the committee is required to complete its review and report back to the Assembly by February 23, 2021. At the previous meeting members were asked to consider how the committee may wish to organize this review. Does anyone have any ideas on how they would like to proceed? Mr. Neudorf.

Mr. Neudorf: Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate the presentation and the additional time for questions that we had today. I think it was abundantly clear that they're just beginning to develop momentum, build relationships, and receive the important feedback from persons with disabilities. It takes time to do that, so I appreciate all the work that they've done to this point. It took some time, particularly with COVID, for them to get up and running. I think it'd be prudent at this time to receive their report as presented and conclude the review for this year without any recommendations and give them the opportunity to continue their work through 2021 for next year's annual report.

Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Neudorf, do I understand that you are wanting to make a motion?

Mr. Neudorf: I would like to make that motion.

The Chair: And this would be a substantive motion from the floor. Is that correct?

Mr. Neudorf: That's correct.

The Chair: All right. With that, we will need to seek permission from the committee in order to

receive a substantive motion from the floor.

I would like to remind that we are not going to be debating the merits of the motion but, rather, whether we will be accepting the motion from the floor.

Ms Pancholi: Madam Chair, can I just ask: if this is a substantive motion – and I understand – does it require consensus of the committee, or does it require just a majority vote?

The Chair: It requires a majority vote.

Ms Renaud: Can I have a clarification?

The Chair: Yes.

Ms Renaud: I'm sorry. I'm just a sub on this committee, so I'm not familiar with the work that you do. If I'm understanding this correctly, this motion that was just put forward, that the report go forward without alterations or without other stakeholders: we cannot debate this motion here now. Is that correct?

10:20

The Chair: No. Currently the motion on the floor is whether we will accept a substantive motion. Then, whether we accept the substantive motion – if it is accepted, we will be able to debate the merits of the motion because it will be on the floor, and then we can make those decisions. It's a bit of a process.

With that said, do we have any comments on this?

Dr. Massolin: You conduct a vote, right?

The Chair: All right. Fantastic. Then I will ask if we have anyone . . .

Mr. Sabir: Madam Chair, just for clarification, you're looking for comments on the motion?

The Chair: We are looking for a vote from the committee to decide whether we will accept a substantive motion.

With that, I will ask: all those in favour of accepting a substantive motion? All right. Just to clarify this one, I believe that that passes.

Ms Pancholi: Recorded vote, please, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Fantastic. In order to probably best facilitate this, considering that we're online, I will just ask one more time if we can have those that have voted in favour say so so that we can record, hopefully, the names, and then we will ask for those opposed. We will start with those in the room.

Mr. Neudorf: In favour.

Ms Renaud: No. Not in favour.

The Chair: Fantastic.

Those on the phone?

Mrs. Pitt: Agreed.

Ms Glasgo: Agreed.

Ms Lovely: Agreed.

Mr. Rutherford: Agreed.

Mr. Amery: Agreed.

The Chair: I believe I heard Mr. Amery and Mr. Rutherford there.

Mr. Rutherford: Sorry. Yes.

Mr. Sabir: No.

Ms Pancholi: No.

Ms Sigurdson: No.

The Chair: Are there any other votes? All right.

This is approved with a vote of six to four.

Now I will ask Mr. Neudorf to provide the formal wording of his motion.

Mr. Neudorf: Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: We will get that up on the screen.

Mr. Neudorf: Member Neudorf to move that the Standing Committee on Families and Communities conclude its review of the OAPD evaluation summary report October 2020 without making any recommendations.

The Chair: Mr. Neudorf, are you asking us to also have the committee draft the report as well?

Mr. Neudorf: Yes. If that's the appropriate time to do that.

The Chair: Yes.

We will have this up on the screen for all of those participating remotely and in the room very shortly.

All right. Mr. Neudorf, can you confirm that that is your motion that is on the screen?

Mr. Neudorf: Yes. So moved.

The Chair: With that, the wording of the motion is that the Standing Committee on Families and Communities (a) conclude its review on the OAPD evaluation summary report October 2020 without making any recommendations and (b) direct research services to prepare a draft report on the committee's review of the OAPD evaluation summary report October 2020 and authorize the chair to approve the report after making it available for committee members to review.

Mr. Neudorf, would you like to give any rationale for your motion?

Mr. Neudorf: Sure. Thank you, Madam Chair, again. I believe we heard from the advocate and the two gentlemen who presented that they need time to develop solid evidence to make recommendations. They indicated the importance of our persons with disabilities having time to be part of their continuous improvement, time to review their programs and develop these relationships. They spoke a number of times to the roles and functions of the advocate being broad and enabling, and they need time to grow and fulfill this role and fully understand it.

There is time within the act or there's the ability within the act – in fact, there's the mandate within the act – to report annually, and I don't feel that we need to confuse 2021's annual report with 2020's report. We understand the limitations of 2020 being the time to set up the office, set up a new team to do this work, and we do understand the limitations, COVID and other things that they mentioned in their report, inhibiting them in the ability to do that job. So I would like to make sure that they fully have time to engage stakeholders in other ministries that they spoke about, other institutions, and continue to develop those relationships, to seek the information that they need to make solid recommendations in the years ahead. They also concluded with the fact that they are gaining momentum and developing those relationships, and I think that we should give them the time to do that fully for next year's report.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Neudorf.
I have on the speaking list Ms Pancholi.

Ms Pancholi: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'd like to seek clarification from the mover of the motion as to whether or not by moving this report forward without any recommendations, MLA Neudorf is saying that this committee is accepting the recommendation from the advocate that the act be amended to allow for further time for the evaluation, to indicate that there will be, through an amendment to the act, of course, if the Assembly agrees, to extend or to allow for an additional evaluation within a set period of time – I want to be clear that this motion is not simply saying that we're accepting the report and the recommendations as provided and that we just hope that they'll have more time to do this but that we're actually looking at supporting the recommendation from the advocate that there be a legislative change to allow for a process, just as we've just gone through, where the advocate will conduct another evaluation summary, provide recommendations, and include amendments to the act in a set period of time. Can I just clarify that from the mover of the motion, please?

The Chair: Mr. Neudorf, if you'd like to respond.

Mr. Neudorf: Thank you, Madam Chair. I feel that the motion is clear in its intent. I'm not seeking any legislative change at this point in time. I'm just trying to give the advocate time to do the job that they are directed to do. I believe that they have an annual report and option each year to share their evaluations and their thoughts and processes, so I'm not seeking any changes. The only thing I'm putting forward is the motion as presented.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Neudorf.
With that, I have Ms Renaud.

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Madam Chair. It is my pleasure to speak to this motion. I just want to clarify a few things in the comments that MLA Neudorf made. This office isn't new. It's been around for a couple of years. It was before the election. It was set up; they were working. This is not new at all. They're not in the beginning phases. We're at the two-year point, where we evaluate two years' worth of work. I would note that in the report it says that the OAPD assisted 959 individuals during that time. That tells me that there's a broad scope of information that is available to this office. So I think that to allow them more time to get to a place so that they make a recommendation doesn't really fit with the information that we see in the report.

The other thing that I would note is that there's a discrepancy between the evaluation number of stakeholders – I think there were, like, 20. There were over 106, I believe, in the year-end report that the advocate had contact with. Again I am putting out there that I don't think we see a very thorough stakeholder input list, if you will.

We have a number of questions about the independence and the oversight, which tells me that this isn't finished and shouldn't be handed off. Instead, this committee should make thoughtful moves to actually allow Albertans to know that we've done our job, and that means getting the appropriate information in an evaluation so that we can inform the Legislative Assembly, going forward, about the changes that we would like to see in the legislation. I think that in two years we have a fair amount of information to use to be able to do that work.

Thank you.

10:30

The Chair: Thank you, Ms Renaud.
Mr. Neudorf.

Mr. Neudorf: Nothing further at this time.

The Chair: Thank you.
Ms Pancholi.

Ms Pancholi: Thank you, Madam Chair. I have to say that I am completely confounded as to how the members of the government caucus could have heard the same presentation that we just heard from the advocate and from the government representative, from the ADM, that clearly outlined that there was not enough time to complete a fulsome evaluation, that they did not consult during the evaluation on this with persons with disabilities, directly with self-advocates, the people who are most affected by all the things we're talking about today. To have heard that, to have heard some clear recommendations that came out of the presentation around potential changes to allow for the advocate to make recommendations to ministries and to report back on that, and to have concluded, based on that, that there's nothing more to do here, I simply must ask the question: if the members of the government caucus, after hearing that presentation, feel that there is enough here, then they must be listening to a different meeting than the rest of us.

I think we heard a very clear indication that an evaluation is necessary. We have stats that say that over 50 per cent, even in this limited survey, found that there were changes that were needed, that there was more work that should be done to allow for the advocate to more effectively advocate for change. Yet the members of the government caucus seem to be satisfied that there are no other recommendations. I think this is an incredible disservice not only to the work that the advocate has already done to set up the office

and to manage the pandemic, but more profoundly it is an incredible disservice to the Albertans that we are all elected here to represent, those with disabilities, those who have historically had their voices silenced, who have had challenges in being able to effectively make change, to seek the supports and services they need to effectively participate in our society. Yet this government caucus is choosing to silence them once again.

Now, Madam Chair, we have a process in this committee which was brought forward by the government and imposed by a standing order that requires that motions be introduced maybe not on the floor of the committee but be put forward by committee members prior to hearing from the presenters and the stakeholders who come to speak at this committee. We saw that the government members had planned – I understand that they did not introduce a motion on the committee floor today – to actually hear from stakeholders, and that's by the process established by this government for this committee, that they had to provide notice of that ahead of time. They provided that notice, that they would want to hear from stakeholders.

The Chair: Ms Pancholi, I'm just going to ask you to focus on the motion that's currently on the floor and not refer to motions that have been put out there and are not necessarily on the floor.

Ms Pancholi: Thank you, Madam Chair. Again, I go back to that this is the process of this committee established by this government. They introduced a standing order to require members of this committee to give notice of motions that they would seek to introduce. In prior committee meetings that was fully on the table, and we discussed those issues. I will discuss the fact that we know that this government gave notice that they would want to hear from stakeholders ...

The Chair: Ms Pancholi ...

Ms Pancholi: ... after hearing from the presenters today. Yet we see a motion that has been brought forward today that actually ...

The Chair: Ms Pancholi ...

Ms Pancholi: I'm speaking to the motion right now, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Ms Pancholi ...

Ms Pancholi: The motion that has been brought forward today indicates that there is no need for stakeholders ...

The Chair: Ms Pancholi, I'm asking you to please stop. As the chair of this committee I'm asking you to please stop. I have been very clear. We are to be speaking to the motion that is currently on the table and not to be referring to potential motions that were disposed of in advance. We are currently speaking to the motion that is on the floor.

Ms Pancholi: Thank you, Madam Chair. I sat in a number of committees where this process has been discussed on the floor. Today I will speak to the motion which was brought forward by MLA Neudorf, which was introduced on the floor, which clearly states that he believes that there is no further engagement required by stakeholders, by individuals and persons with disabilities, who are directly affected and need the support of this advocate's office not only for assistance on their individual files and matters but also in advocating for change within the system to be more fair. MLA Neudorf brought forward a motion, introduced a motion right now, which says that even after hearing clearly from the advocate that they did not have the opportunity to fulsomely engage with those

most affected by this legislation, the member believes that there is no further engagement required.

This is the sole opportunity within the legislation for the advocate to clearly bring forward recommendations for amendments. Annual reports do not allow for the advocate to bring forward amendments. They do not allow for that. Certainly, the legislation as it's drafted now does not allow for annual reports to even be brought forward to a committee; all it does is allow for annual reports to be tabled in the Legislature. This is the sole opportunity for the advocate to bring forward changes, actual amendments, to this act to make sure that his role is effective. I believe that it is ineffective to say, after what we've heard today, that there is no more work that needs to be done. It is clear that more work needs to be done to do a proper evaluation summary to fulfill the obligations and requirements under section 6(1) of the act. We heard that.

I think it is an absolutely appalling lack of public trust. This government continues to break public trust over and over again, and now they're doing it with persons with disabilities, Madam Chair. This is our work. Our work is to make this legislation better, and even after hearing that there's need for change, this government is saying that they don't want to do that work.

The Chair: Ms Pancholi ...

Ms Pancholi: Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Ms Pancholi ...

Ms Pancholi: Yeah. I've got it. I'm off.

The Chair: With that, I believe we'll go to Mrs. Pitt.

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Madam Chair. I would just like to express some significant concern that ND members of this committee appear to not have been paying attention to the presentation and the discussion that was at hand. There has very clearly been some work done by the advocate, as noted by members of the NDP caucus, and there's very clearly more work to be done, as noted by the advocate and as presented in today's presentation. We are simply accepting the report here, moving on, and allowing the advocate to continue down this path and the work that he's been tasked to do via legislation, I might add, created by the NDP. Perhaps if members of the ND caucus have recommendations, they could submit a report to this committee. But for now I think we deal with the motion at hand, and I ask that we now vote.

The Chair: I believe the next person on our speaking list is Mr. Sabir.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Madam Chair. I think that if I understand it correctly, the motion says that the Standing Committee on Families and Communities conclude its review of the OAPD evaluation summary report 2020 without making any recommendations and direct research services to prepare a draft report on the committee's review of the evaluation summary report and authorize the chair to approve the report after making it available to committee members to review.

I'm a little bit confused. The committee is concluding its review of the summary report, but there was a legislative requirement that says:

6(1) Within 2 years of the Advocate's appointment under section 2(1), the Advocate shall prepare a report evaluating the effectiveness of this Act that includes any amendments and recommendations relating to persons with disabilities that the Advocate considers appropriate.

We are already at this two-year mark. The report the advocate submitted was a summary report, and throughout their presentation

they said that because of the pandemic, they were not able to include anyone from the disability community. The consultation committee was consisting of department staff, the advocate's office, PPAC, and some other organizations within the structure of the Ministry of Community and Social Services.

10:40

Basically, the advocate has not fulfilled that legislative requirement that's within the legislation. If the motion is seeking to override the legislative requirement that's within this legislation, I don't think the motion will be able to override this legislative requirement.

That brings me back to what my colleague from Edmonton-Whitemud said earlier, that if we want to extend some timeline for the advocate to complete that legislative requirement, I think we need to have some kind of understanding that we will bring forward a legislative change extending this requirement, giving the advocate the needed and necessary time to complete that work. I'm seeking clarification both from you as chair and from my colleague, the mover of the motion, MLA Neudorf.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Sabir.

With that, I would like to move to Mr. Neudorf. Sorry. To Mrs. Pitt. Apologies.

Mr. Sabir: I sought clarification, Madam Chair.

Mrs. Pitt: Madam Chair, do I have the floor?

The Chair: Yes, you have the floor, Mrs. Pitt.

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I would just like to clarify, in response to Mr. Sabir's comments, that there are no recommendations in the report that was presented to us. The act does not require that the advocate just make something up, which is what he has not done and thankfully so. But he has, rather, committed a significant amount of time and effort into getting this right. What we're doing here today, as there are no recommendations in the report by the advocate, is to simply accept the report that is given, which has been moved on the floor, and I would support that.

The Chair: Thank you, Mrs. Pitt.

With that, I will go to Ms Renaud.

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm looking at this motion, and essentially what it is doing is saying – and please tell me if I'm incorrect. You're basically saying: "It's all good. Everything that we see here is all good. Let's just stamp it and move it on."

I want to remind members and perhaps people that are listening along that what we heard in the presentation, Madam Chair, from the advocate and from the ADM was very clear, that there was essentially zero consultation with Albertans with disabilities. There was an internal group made entirely of members of government or government bodies. There was a tiny group of stakeholders and some government staff that were consulted. Other than that, that was it. But we know, based on the report, that there is a huge body of work that has been done, and we don't see recommendations and advice, so it is impossible to measure any kind of progress and evaluate where we're going. But it seems that these government members just want to shut it down.

Ms Glasgo: Point of order, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Yes, Mrs. Pitt.

Ms Glasgo: This is Ms Glasgo.

The Chair: Sorry, Ms Glasgo. Apologies.

Ms Glasgo: Although I am flattered, no, this is Ms Glasgo.

Under 23(c), repetition, I feel like we're talking in circles now. The ND caucus has every right to bring up their concerns and speak to the motion. However, you had asked us to speak to the motion at hand, and this is getting very repetitive.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms Glasgo.

Is there anyone from the ND caucus that would like to speak to this point of order?

Mr. Sabir: I don't think it's a point of order. There was no repetition. We are just trying to clarify what this motion seeks to do, and we are pointing out the fact that no one from disability communities was consulted on it. These are all part of the debate and legitimate questions. It's not a point of order at all.

The Chair: Thank you for that, Mr. Sabir. I will agree with you, Mr. Sabir, that this is not a point of order, but I will take this opportunity. I am starting to hear a lot of repetition from the argumentation on this, and I would ask all members of this committee to ensure that we are focusing on the motion that is currently on the floor and not about, potentially, other motions and that we are really focused on the motion that we are currently debating.

With that, I will move to our next speaker, Ms Pancholi.

Ms Renaud: I didn't get to finish. There was a point of order.

The Chair: Sorry, Ms Renaud. Apologies.

Ms Renaud: Thank you very much. So going back to my point – and I apologize to members if they're having to hear the same themes a few times, but I think that it is vitally important to this motion when we're debating this motion. Essentially, this motion is asking us to vote . . .

Mrs. Pitt: Point of order, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Yes. Is that Mrs. Pitt?

Mrs. Pitt: Yes. Point of order, Madam Chair. The member herself just pointed out the repetitiveness of the remarks here in the room. If the speaker herself pointed out the repetitiveness, then surely this is a point of order, and we need to move on with the vote, that they are very clearly delaying.

Ms Pancholi: Madam Chair, if I may speak to that?

The Chair: Ms Pancholi, yes.

Ms Pancholi: Each individual member has a privilege and a right to speak. Just because two members of one caucus make the same point, that's not repetition. Each individual member has a right, has the privilege to speak. MLA Renaud can make her statements even if they are in line with somebody else from our caucus's statements. She has the privilege to speak, and she can state that she agrees. This is not repetition within one speaker; it's across speakers. Just because the government caucus doesn't want to hear the same points made by each individual member, we have the right and privilege to speak.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms Pancholi.

While I do appreciate the point of order being brought forward and I do believe that we are starting to get very repetitive in our argumentation and I would ask all members for the second time in

very short order to please focus on (a) the motion at hand and (b) to use new arguments, I will agree that this is not currently a point of order, but please be very cautious.

Ms Renaud: Okay. Thank you, Madam Chair. Here's the point that I am making and why I cannot support this motion and why I will not support this motion. Essentially, government members are asking for this to be shut down without making any recommendations. How this government caucus or how these members sort of defend that two years of work with the advocate's office – and we've heard about that this morning, the enormity of the scope of the work, even. There will be no recommendations presented, followed, evaluated. I'm sorry, but part of our responsibility is to understand how we keep moving forward. Shutting this down without doing due diligence, as is laid out in the legislation and supported in the report, I think, is incredibly disappointing and incredibly disappointing to Albertans with disabilities that rely on offices such as this.

I will not support this motion. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms Renaud.

With that, we will move to Ms Pancholi.

Again, just a quick reminder to all to please avoid repetition. Thank you.

Ms Pancholi: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want to respond to the comments from MLA Pitt regarding her position that the evaluation summary report that we received from the advocate's office does not contain any recommendations. In fact, as pointed out by Mr. Flores himself, in his letter to the Speaker, which is part of the evaluation summary, he clearly states in that last sentence of that letter, "I would recommend a more comprehensive evaluation of this Act two years from now."

If the position of the motion is that we are going to, as a committee, put forward this report without recommendations, that is deemed to be an acceptance of this recommendation from the advocate that there is a comprehensive review of this act in two years from now. If, as put forward when MLA Neudorf spoke to the motion – he indicated that he didn't believe that is necessary – it's sufficient to just have the annual reports that are tabled in the Legislature once a year, then that's actually making a recommendation not to follow the recommendation that came from the advocate's report.

I just want to be very clear on the record that if we are saying that this committee is accepting the advocate's report, it does include a recommendation that this act be reviewed two years from now and that there be another evaluation. So if the intent of the mover of the motion and this committee in supporting this motion is to make no recommendations, then it is going to accept this. If the intent of the mover is to say that we do not need a comprehensive review of this act two years from now, then I believe that MLA Neudorf needs to amend his motion.

10:50

The Chair: Thank you, Ms Pancholi.

With that, I believe we had that Mr. Sabir wants to move an amendment.

Mrs. Pitt: Madam Chair, can I go on the speakers list?

The Chair: Yes. We will add you.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Chair. If anybody wants to speak before me, they can. I'm writing the text of the amendment in the chat box.

The Chair: All right. Mrs. Pitt, by all means.

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you. I wanted to speak before you move a subamendment here. Madam Chair, I am very concerned that members of the ND, Ms Renaud in particular, are interested in making stuff up . . .

Mr. Sabir: Point of order.

Mrs. Pitt: . . . are actually suggesting that we make up recommendations that don't exist in the report. It's very concerning. They're undermining the authority of the advocate here.

The Chair: Sorry, Mrs. Pitt. Hold on one second. Mr. Sabir has called a point of order.

Mr. Sabir: Standing Order 23(h), (i), and (j). MLA Pitt is clearly imputing false motives that MLA Renaud is making stuff up. It's out of order, and I think that MLA Pitt knows better than this.

The Chair: Anyone from the UCP caucus? Mr. Neudorf.

Mr. Neudorf: Thank you, Madam Chair. I don't believe this is a point of order. I think it's just a matter of debate. There's lots of expressing of opinions, obviously, at this point in time, and I think Mrs. Pitt should be able to finish her comments. You've allowed latitude to the ND caucus, and I think you should allow counter-arguments in matter of debate.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Neudorf.

I have a tendency of agreeing with the UCP caucus on this one, that this is not a point of order. However, I will remind all members of the committee to please direct all comments through the chair and not to one another as this can help prevent disagreements on these kinds of matters and to please have everyone keep their comments respectful.

With that, I will return to Mrs. Pitt.

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Madam Chair. Further, really, I'm just expressing concern that perhaps there are members of this committee that are looking to make up their own recommendations. I keep hearing that they're not happy with the report that was presented by the advocate yet really putting no other motions forward but, further to that, actually undermining the authority of the advocate in the first place. You know, this is an advocate that is put in there with a significant number of changes and then restraints, thanks to the COVID situation, who has been undertaking this significant amount of work and consultation.

You know, the NDs are using this as some sort of partisan political process to use against the government in the future, which doesn't make any sense. This is an office that was created by and under the NDP government, and now they appear to be undermining this very office, that is doing and trying to do great work for people with disabilities in our community. This is becoming a bit of a grandstanding situation that is serving no one in the community of people with disabilities. Perhaps we could move on and carry on with the work that this committee is tasked to do and allow the advocate to continue on with the work that he is so gracefully doing for our province.

The Chair: Thank you, Mrs. Pitt.

With that, Mr. Sabir, have you concluded?

Mr. Sabir: Yeah. Thank you, Madam Chair. The advocate's office was established under us, and it was given a broad latitude to look at issues concerning persons with disabilities. I think that nothing

can be further from the truth, that we would undermine the same advocate. I don't want to go into that.

Under this UCP government the advocate was not even consulted when they made changes to the AISH program, changing the date, when they deindexed the AISH program, when they cut other programs. So what we are trying to do here: we want to offer the advocate the opportunity to do the work that he was mandated to do under this legislation. This motion seeks to undermine that work, seeks to take that opportunity away from the advocate to make those recommendations. Throughout the presentation the advocate mentioned that he needed that time. He mentioned that when he sent the letter to the Speaker of the House, he asked for time so that he can make further recommendations. It's clear that the advocate wants to make those recommendations. The advocate wants to review this legislation.

As committee members and as MLAs we represent people with disabilities. I think it will be appropriate – and I hope that MLA Neudorf will agree with it – that they will agree to this amendment and the text, which I will add, subsection (c), “that the advocate present to the committee on the status of the ongoing evaluation every six months” so we know what the work is that the advocate is undertaking. As the advocate has said, he needed almost two years . . .

The Chair: Mr. Sabir . . .

Mr. Sabir: . . . so six months is an . . .

The Chair: Hi, Mr. Sabir. Could you please move your amendment and read the text out loud so that we can have it on the record?

Mr. Sabir: I move adding subsection (c), which reads that the advocate present to the committee on the status of the ongoing evaluation every six months. And the reason?

The Chair: Yeah, please.

Mr. Sabir: The reason I am asking for that is that throughout the presentation the advocate indicated that there is work that needs to be done, and due to the pandemic they were not able to consult broadly with the disability community. In fact, they didn't include anybody. Also, in his letter to the Speaker of the House he indicated that it will be some time to review this legislation and come up with recommendations. Whether he comes up with recommendations, that's at his call. But he asked for more time, and all this amendment is asking is that we be updated on the status of that ongoing work every six months.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Sabir.

As is the process, we now have the motion up on the screen for all those to see, and the process will be that we are first voting as to whether we will accept this substantive amendment. So if there are any discussions as to whether we accept this, it is not to be on the merit of the amendment itself but, rather, as to whether it is accepted or not. Do I have anyone – can we move on to the vote on this one? All right. I will ask: all those in favour of accepting an amendment from the floor? All those opposed? I believe that that amendment is defeated.

Ms Pancholi: A recorded vote, please, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Fantastic. With the recorded vote, I will start with those in the room. Those in favour?

Ms Renaud: Yes.

The Chair: Those opposed in the room?

Mr. Neudorf: No.

The Chair: Those on the phone, those in favour, please say your name.

Mr. Sabir: Irfan Sabir. In favour.

Ms Pancholi: Rakhi Pancholi. Yes.

Ms Sigurdson: Lori Sigurdson. Yes.

The Chair: Those opposed on the phone, please say your name.

Ms Lovely: Jackie Lovely. No.

Ms Glasgo: Michaela Glasgo. No.

Mr. Rutherford: Brad Rutherford. No.

Mr. Guthrie: Peter Guthrie. No.

Mr. Amery: Mickey Amery. No.

The Chair: Any others opposed?

Mrs. Pitt: Angela Pitt. No.

The Chair: Thank you.

The total for is four, and the total against is seven.

This motion for the amendment is defeated.

With that, we are back on the main motion. Are there any new comments to be made?

Hearing none, I would suggest that we proceed to a vote. All those in favour, please indicate now. Fantastic. All those in favour on the phone? All those opposed? I believe that that is carried.

11:00

Ms Pancholi: A recorded vote, please, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Fantastic. We will start with those in the room that are in favour.

Mr. Neudorf: Nathan Neudorf.

The Chair: Those in the room that are opposed?

Ms Renaud: Marie Renaud. No.

The Chair: Thank you.

Those on the phone in favour, if you can please state your name.

Mrs. Pitt: Angela Pitt. In favour.

Ms Glasgo: Michaela Glasgo. In favour.

Ms Lovely: Jackie Lovely. In favour.

Mr. Rutherford: Brad Rutherford. Yes.

Mr. Guthrie: Peter Guthrie. Yes.

Mr. Amery: Mickey Amery. Yes.

The Chair: Those on the phone that are opposed?

Mr. Sabir: Irfan Sabir. No.

Ms Pancholi: Rakhi Pancholi. No.

Ms Sigurdson: Lori Sigurdson. No.

The Chair: That passes with a total of seven in favour and four against.

That motion is carried.

Are there any other issues for discussion before we wrap up today's meeting?

Ms Pancholi: Will there be an opportunity, Madam Chair, for a minority report?

The Chair: Yes, Ms Pancholi, I believe there will be.

Perhaps we can go to Dr. Massolin to provide a little bit of clarity on the minority report.

Dr. Massolin: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. What I would say is that the committee practice is typically that one week is

allowed for the minority report to be submitted after the draft final report of the committee is presented to the committee for review.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Dr. Massolin.

Any further questions? Fantastic.

Then the next meeting will be at the call of the chair.

If there is nothing else for the committee's consideration, I'll call for a motion to adjourn. Mr. Neudorf has moved that the January 15, 2021, meeting of the Standing Committee on Families and Communities be adjourned. All in favour? All those opposed? That motion is carried.

Thank you, everyone, and have a wonderful day.

[The committee adjourned at 11:03 a.m.]

