



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

The 27th Legislature
Fourth Session

Standing Committee
on
Legislative Offices

Thursday, May 26, 2011
10:02 a.m.

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Fourth Session**

Standing Committee on Legislative Offices

Mitzel, Len, Cypress-Medicine Hat (PC), Chair
Lund, Ty, Rocky Mountain House (PC), Deputy Chair

Bhullar, Manmeet Singh, Calgary-Montrose (PC)
Blakeman, Laurie, Edmonton-Centre (AL)
Campbell, Robin, West Yellowhead (PC)
Hinman, Paul, Calgary-Glenmore (W)
Jacobs, Broyce, Cardston-Taber-Warner (PC) *
Lindsay, Fred, Stony Plain (PC)
MacDonald, Hugh, Edmonton-Gold Bar (AL)
Marz, Richard, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (PC)
Notley, Rachel, Edmonton-Strathcona (ND)
Quest, Dave, Strathcona (PC)
Rogers, George, Leduc-Beaumont-Devon (PC)

* substitution for Robin Campbell

Legislative Officers

G.B. (Gord) Button	Ombudsman
Brian Fjeldheim	Chief Electoral Officer
Merwan Saher	Auditor General
Neil R. Wilkinson	Ethics Commissioner
Frank Work, QC	Information and Privacy Commissioner

Office of the Ethics Commissioner Participant

Brad Odsen, QC	Registrar, Lobbyists Act, and General Counsel
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Department of Justice and Attorney General Participant

Matthew Robertson	Policy Intern
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Shannon Dean	Senior Parliamentary Counsel/ Director of House Services
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Rachel Stein	Research Officer
Liz Sim	Managing Editor of <i>Alberta Hansard</i>

10:02 a.m.**Thursday, May 26, 2011**

[Mr. Mitzel in the chair]

The Chair: Well, good morning, everyone. I'd call the meeting to order. Welcome to this meeting of the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices.

I'd ask the members and those joining the committee at the table to introduce themselves for the record. Meeting materials were posted on the committee's internal website, but if anyone requires copies of these documents, please let our committee clerk know right now.

For introductions I'm Len Mitzel, the MLA for Cypress-Medicine Hat, and I chair this committee.

Mr. Lund: Ty Lund, MLA, Rocky Mountain House.

Mr. Lindsay: Fred Lindsay, MLA, Stony Plain.

Mr. Rogers: George Rogers, MLA, Leduc-Beaumont-Devon.

Mrs. Scarlett: Cheryl Scarlett, director of human resources, information technology, and broadcast services.

Mr. Reynolds: Rob Reynolds, Law Clerk and director of inter-parliamentary relations.

Mr. Hinman: Paul Hinman, MLA, Calgary-Glenmore.

Mr. Quest: Dave Quest, MLA, Strathcona.

Mrs. Sawchuk: Karen Sawchuk, committee clerk.

The Chair: I believe on the speaker phone we have Mr. Marz.

Mr. Marz: Good morning, everyone. Richard Marz, MLA, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

The Chair: Thank you.

Just for the record as well Ms Blakeman will be joining us shortly, and I believe Mr. Jacobs is going to be here as a replacement for Mr. Campbell.

Okay. Our meeting today will be in two parts. First, we'll deal with the leg. officers' annual salary review and other routine matters, and then we'll spend some time organizing our work on the review of the Lobbyists Act.

First off, the agenda. Would someone please move adoption of the agenda? Moved by Mr. Rogers. Any additions or deletions? Seeing none, all in favour? That is carried.

I need a motion as well to adopt the meeting minutes of the January 31 meeting. Moved by Mr. Lindsay. Any errors or omissions in those minutes? I believe they were circulated. Seeing none, all in favour? None opposed? That's carried.

This takes us to the officers of the Legislature, the 2011-12 annual salary review. We'll be discussing the individual salaries of the officers of the Legislature, so I would suggest that we move in camera. Would a person like to make this motion? Moved by Mr. Lund. All in favour? That is carried. We'll move in camera now.

[The committee met in camera from 10:04 a.m. to 10:16 a.m.]

The Chair: Okay. We're back on the record, and for the record Ms Notley and Mr. Bhullar and Mr. Jacobs are here.

Item 5, the 2011 conference attendance. We've got two conferences available for attendance by members of the committee. The first conference is the CCPAC, the Canadian Council of Public Accounts Committees, set from August 28 to 30 in Halifax. This

conference is attended by the chair and one other committee member. Is there anyone interested in attending this conference? If we have more than one member interested, we'll conduct a draw to determine the member attending with the chair as well as one alternate should the chair or member be unable to attend. Is anyone interested in attending this August 28 to 30 conference in Halifax?

Mr. Rogers: I'll go.

The Chair: Mr. Rogers has indicated and Mr. Hinman, so we'll have a draw. Anyone else? No. Okay. The clerk will do the draw. If I was unable to go as the chair or the member wasn't able to go or both, we would need another person as well. We'll wait and see what happens.

Mrs. Sawchuk: Mr. Chair, could I suggest that the first name drawn is the name of the attendee, and then the second name would be the alternate? Is that okay?

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Marz: If I may, Mr. Chair, if the chairman is unable to attend, wouldn't it then fall to the deputy chair?

The Chair: Yes. That's right. It could. We'll see how that works out. If the person that was drawn couldn't attend and the chair couldn't attend, then it would fall to Ty.

Mrs. Sawchuk: All right. We're ready to go. Mr. Chair, for the record the member listed as the attendee to the conference would be Mr. Rogers, and by default the alternate would be Mr. Hinman. We do require a motion, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Marz: I would move that, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Mr. Marz moved that

the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices approve the chair and Mr. Rogers as attendees and Mr. Hinman as an alternate to the 2011 Canadian Council of Public Accounts Committees conference in Halifax from August 28 to 30, 2011.

All in favour? That is carried.

We also have the COGEL conference, the Council on Governmental Ethics Laws conference, which is being held in Nashville. The committee budget covers the attendance by the chair, the committee clerk, and two members to this conference. As well, two members will be identified as alternates should someone be unable to attend. If necessary, we will again conduct a draw. This is from December 4 to 7.

Mr. Marz: I'd be interested in attending that, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Mr. Marz, Mr. Hinman, Mr. Lindsay, Mr. Bhullar. Okay. The clerk is busy doing her draw. Have you got a licence for this draw?

Mrs. Sawchuk: Yeah.

Mr. Chair, we have Mr. Hinman, Mr. Bhullar, Mr. Marz, and Mr. Lindsay.

The Chair: And Mr. Quest.

Mr. Quest: Maybe as an alternate.

Mrs. Sawchuk: Ms Blakeman did provide notice through the committee clerk that she would like her name included in the draw as well.

The Chair: Okay. We do have six, then. There should be six. All right.

Mrs. Sawchuk: Yeah. Here we go. There'll be no peeking.

Mr. Chair, if we could draw first for the two attendees, and then the second draw would be for the two alternates?

The Chair: Yes.

Mrs. Sawchuk: Okay. Mr. Chair, the two attendees drawn are Mr. Hinman and Ms Blakeman.

Mr. Marz: I want a recount.

Mr. Hinman: Just one recount?

Mrs. Sawchuk: Okay. And the two alternates are Mr. Lindsay and Mr. Bhullar.

We need a motion for that as well.

The Chair: All right.

Mr. Rogers: So moved, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: Mr. Rogers moved that the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices approve the chair, Mr. Hinman, Ms Blakeman, and the committee clerk as attendees and Mr. Bhullar and Mr. Lindsay as alternates to the 2011 COGEL, Council on Governmental Ethics Laws, conference in Nashville from December 4 to 7, 2011.

All in favour of that motion? That is carried. Thank you very much.

This takes us to the next item on the agenda, which is the report on the 2010-2011 audit exit meeting, office of the Auditor General. Duncan is passing around some information from the meeting this morning. We'll just wait a moment. Thank you very much, Duncan.

This morning myself and Mr. Lund met with Mr. John Pinsent, who is the auditor contracted by the committee to conduct an annual audit of the office of the Auditor General. For the committee's information the 2010-2011 audit was completed without any issues identified, and the final report of the auditor was distributed just now for your information. We had a very good meeting, and I think that both Mr. Lund and I were fairly satisfied that, first off, the firm that Mr. Pinsent belongs to does not do any work whatsoever with the government. At our subsequent in camera meeting with him as well he declared that he doesn't plan to do any work with the government at all. This is the only work he does; for this committee he does the audit exit for the Auditor General's office. So that was reassuring.

He's into year 3 of a five-year contract now, and indications at the moment are that this perhaps could be renewed if he wishes to request a renewal after the five years. We were quite impressed with the professionalism of the firm and the work that they're doing as well as the frankness and openness with the Auditor General's office with regard to this audit exit and the information that they supplied to the office.

10:25

It's been done quite a bit earlier this year than normal. It did sort of fall in the same time when they do a lot of their tax accounting work with the general public and with other firms and companies and stuff, so there was a little extra work. As Mr. Pinsent mentioned, he was quite impressed with the way that the work was laid out, the whole audit work, and the co-operation from the Auditor General's office in order to be able to conduct a thorough look at the operations of that office and how it's put

together there. They went through it very thoroughly, and he said it was all straightforward, and they were able to complete it much earlier than normal.

Mr. Lund, did you have any comments?

Mr. Lund: Well, thanks, Mr. Chairman. I think that it would be important for the committee to know that there is a change in the Auditor General's office. He's moving a lot of decision-making down. Of course, there is some angst among some people having that additional responsibility, but overall he believes that he can make it more satisfying for a number of individuals that are prepared to take on that responsibility.

I think we also should let the committee know that their turnover was at a bit of a record this year: some 18 per cent turnover. That does cause him some difficulty trying to bring in new people and train them and this sort of thing. But when we questioned auditor Pinsent about this situation, it was his impression that a lot of it has to do with the competition that is out there in the private sector today and the level at which our auditors are getting compensated.

Apparently, the market for that profession is hot. This is a great training ground, the provincial Auditor General's office, so once they've been there for a while and get trained, they can pretty much call their own shots. That is an issue that I think the committee needs to be aware of.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Lund.

Further to the point with regard to that the Auditor General's office does recognize that it is, in fact, sort of a training ground and people that have their degree coming straight out of university would probably get a job there relatively quickly. Of course, most of those as well are – as you mentioned, it is a training ground. That's just the nature of the office. They realize that. And quite a lot of them will be moving on.

One thing that the exit auditor mentioned as well is that this high competition is as a result of, as far as he's concerned, a certain change in an upturn in the economy. People are hiring accountants in these various firms, and things are moving up. So perhaps it is cyclical. It was down for a while, but certainly it has moved up now.

Any other comments with regard to this?

He had provided a survey to all the MLAs to try and get a satisfaction survey. He didn't have the results compiled yet as to how he felt that worked out, so his point and his comment was, "Not at this time; I don't have that," but that he would be providing information as soon as they had that tabulated.

Mr. Rogers.

Mr. Rogers: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I guess just a question maybe to you or through to Mr. Lund. You mentioned, Mr. Lund, that 18 per cent is a little bit out of the norm. What has the typical norm been for turnover in this office?

Mr. Lund: It's been below 15. As the chair indicated, the economy is heating up, and that seems to be the issue. This didn't come from the Auditor General himself. This came from . . .

Mr. Rogers: The auditor.

Mr. Lund: The outside auditor.

Mr. Rogers: Sure. I appreciate that. Thank you very much.

Mr. Lund: In the in camera session we questioned him about what they saw within the office.

Mr. Rogers: Thank you.

The Chair: I did not ask him – and I don't remember – the number of staff that is in the Auditor General's office. I failed to ask him if they had vacancies at the moment, but I think it's probably on an ongoing basis. I think the budget they had for training was up somewhat from last year, and that's reflected there.

Mr. Lund: I guess one other thing we should report back to you as a committee: they returned some \$590,000 to the treasury from their year's operation.

The Chair: Yeah, Mr. Lund. I guess if we go back through the years, that sort of is typical. It's not that their budget requests more than they can use. They do have a budget that they try to adhere to very closely. But if it's through getting the work done a lot more easily or not being able to do some of the work or maybe not having all of the staff required – there are various factors involved with this. They do normally return some to the LAO's office. The money they return is about 2 per cent, plus or minus. That's been the average.

Any other questions, then?

Okay. I think that's it for now. We do have a set schedule, so we have to adhere to that, which means that we'll be breaking now until 12 noon. There'll be a hot lunch in committee room C at 11:15. We've got 45 minutes there. We have to adhere to the 12 o'clock time frame – we wanted to give enough time, but we've moved through this morning rather quickly – because there are other outside staff and agencies that will be attending at noon for the Lobbyists Act review, and we can't move that up.

Mr. Rogers, you had a comment?

Mr. Rogers: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. Just a question: is there any requirement to receive this report for information since it was not in camera?

The Chair: No, it's not in camera.

Mr. Rogers: I realize that. That's why I wondered if we should be receiving it for information. Then it's on the record. I'd just like to say, first, from just a cursory look, that I'm quite impressed with the results. I'd certainly be willing to move that we receive it for information.

The Chair: Any other comments?

Seeing none, on the motion

to receive the report to the standing committee from the office of St. Arnaud Pinsent Steman, Chartered Accountants,

all in favour? Opposed? That is carried.

We'll be breaking now until noon. As I mentioned, there will be lunch at 11:15.

Thank you.

[The committee adjourned from 10:33 a.m. to 12 p.m.]

The Chair: Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. We'll be calling the meeting to order.

This afternoon we're going to be reviewing the Lobbyists Act. For the record I think we'll go around and do introductions, noting that a couple of people have indicated that they may be joining us in a few minutes.

I'm Len Mitzel, and I chair this committee.

Mr. Lund: Ty Lund, MLA, Rocky Mountain House.

Mr. Lindsay: Fred Lindsay, MLA, Stony Plain.

Mr. Rogers: George Rogers, MLA, Leduc-Beaumont-Devon.

Mr. Jacobs: Broyce Jacobs, Cardston-Taber-Warner, sitting in today for Robin Campbell.

Mr. Bhullar: Manmeet Bhullar, MLA for Calgary-Montrose.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you. I'd like to welcome each and every one of you to my fabulous and ever-blooming constituency of Edmonton-Centre, which is putting me in agony because I'm allergic to flowering trees.

Laurie Blakeman. Welcome, everyone.

Mr. Reynolds: Rob Reynolds, Law Clerk, director of interparliamentary relations.

Dr. Massolin: Good afternoon. Philip Massolin, committee research co-ordinator, Legislative Assembly Office.

Ms Friesacher: Good afternoon. Melanie Friesacher, communications consultant, Legislative Assembly Office.

Mr. Hinman: Good afternoon. Paul Hinman, MLA, Calgary-Glenmore.

Mrs. Sawchuk: Karen Sawchuk, committee clerk.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

At the direction of the Assembly the committee will be undertaking a comprehensive review of the Lobbyists Act. The act was proclaimed on September 28, 2009. The legislation requires that it be reviewed within two years of this date. Once we've completed our review, we'll be submitting our report to the Assembly for consideration.

We also will have committee support from the Legislative Assembly Office. Staff from the Legislative Assembly Office have been assigned to support the work of this committee. Karen Sawchuk and Jody Rempel will both provide support as committee clerks during the statute review, and Ms Friesacher will provide us with communication expertise.

We also have research support from the committees branch through Dr. Massolin and his staff, and if called upon Mr. Reynolds, Senior Parliamentary Counsel, will be available to advise the committee.

The committee may also wish to invite the input and the technical support of the office of the Ethics Commissioner. This act is administered through the registrar of the Lobbyists Act, and I believe his hands-on familiarity with the act could be very beneficial to us.

Are there any thoughts on this? Ms Blakeman.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you for that. Having done a couple of these act review committees, I really appreciate the in-depth knowledge and ability of this staff, who actually implement the act, to work their way through the legislation. It helps us do our job faster.

The Chair: Thank you.

With that, I think we need a motion. Moved by Mr. Rogers that the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices invite officials from the office of the Ethics Commissioner to attend committee meetings and participate when requested to provide technical expertise and request that these officials work in conjunction with the Legislative Assembly staff, if required, to support the committee during the review of the Lobbyists Act.

Any questions on this?

Mr. Rogers: Well said. Well said.

The Chair: All in favour of this motion? Opposed? That is carried. Thank you.

We also will have staff from Alberta Justice and Attorney General who are familiar with this act, and their support may be beneficial when it comes time to draft any potential amendments this committee wishes to recommend. Is the committee interested in inviting support from this department as well? Any other questions? No?

Moved by Mr. Lund that

the Standing Committee on Leg. Offices invite officials from Alberta Justice and Attorney General to attend committee meetings and participate when requested to provide technical expertise and request that department officials work in conjunction with the Legislative Assembly staff, if required, to support the committee during the review of the Lobbyists Act.

All in favour of this motion? Opposed? That is carried as well.

I think I would invite the staff from both Alberta Justice and Attorney General and from the office of the Ethics Commissioner to join us at the table if they wish.

If you wish, Mr. Odsen, to introduce yourself for the record.

Mr. Odsen: Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee. My name is Brad Odsen. I'm the general counsel to the Ethics Commissioner and the registrar for Alberta's lobbyists registry.

Mr. Robertson: I'm Matthew Robertson, policy intern with Alberta Justice and Attorney General.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I've also asked our LAO support staff to prepare a few documents for our review. These documents are for discussion purposes, to give us a starting point as we make some decisions on how we wish to handle this review. The first document is a draft communication and advertising plan. If this committee wishes to advertise, there may be some scheduling issues that we need to consider.

Ms Friesacher, could you please take us through this document?

Ms Friesacher: Yes, Mr. Chair. I'll highlight a few of the suggested strategies. First, news releases and media advisories can be distributed at critical points such as to invite public participation through submissions if the committee wishes.

Second, a website, that is already in existence for Legislative Offices, will highlight that the Lobbyists Act review falls under this committee, so people can refer to it.

Third, if the committee chooses to advertise to the public, I've outlined the cost for the ad to run in nine Alberta dailies and 110 weekly newspapers. That's about \$30,000. We do have a draft advertisement for consideration if the committee chooses to advertise to the public for submissions.

The Chair: Are there any questions?

For the record Mr. Quest has joined us as well.

Ms Blakeman: I'm referring to the document that says Communications Strategic Plan, Standing Committee on Legislative Offices, 2011: Lobbyists Act Review. At the bottom it talks about media relations. Is this document available to everyone?

Ms Friesacher: It was posted on the website.

Ms Blakeman: Okay. Good.

I just want to be clear that we wouldn't have a situation where the chairperson of the committee would be speaking to the media without the members of the committee having some idea of what

might be going on or being said because I think that puts us in kind of a bad position. I understand that timing is sometimes not our choice, but I do think it's important that we're all on the same page. Otherwise, individuals can get blindsided and be approached and not know what was said or why.

It's just that the way this is written, it doesn't reflect any consultation with the rest of the committee. It just says, "The chair of the committee or his/her designate will take on the role of media spokesperson for the committee." I understand what that's saying, but nowhere in here does it say that there should be some consultation or attempt at it or communication with the rest of the committee, and that's all I'm seeking here. Not that you'd go off, you know, making wild statements, but there needs to be some acknowledgement that the committee would be aware of what you'd be saying.

The Chair: Thank you very much for that. I agree with you, Ms Blakeman. I think that whether it's an understanding or that you want it written down, it would probably be that before anything is said, it's vetted through the committee so that they're aware before anything comes up.

Ms Blakeman: Yeah. I think we have to give you some flexibility in saying, you know, "wherever possible" or "in consideration of timing" or something like that because sometimes that's not possible, but I think that mostly we should be able to know, and I just want that included in the text.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Bhullar: Mr. Chair, having served on a few committees now where we have specifically sought public input, I have noticed that not too many members of the general public are motivated enough by reading a newspaper ad to want to write in a submission. Thus, the approximately \$30,000 that could be spent on advertising I don't think is needed. Rather, I think, in fact, that we can find more targeted ways to contact those that may actually choose to send in submissions.

12:10

For example, I think we've got a pretty exhaustive stakeholders list attached. A simple piece of mail to every one of these organizations I think would be a great start. I think the creation of perhaps posters that can be posted at the offices of such places would be worth while. I just think that the way that the Assembly and committees really conduct their public awareness needs to better reflect the world today and that advertising in dailies or weeklies, quite frankly, for this very issue is a waste of \$30,000.

I don't know if I need to put forward a separate motion, Mr. Chair. I'll look to your guidance on that. I don't know if I need to put forward a separate motion saying that we don't need to advertise in the dailies or the weeklies or that there can be a limited number of them if we really must. I think we can find more creative ways to reach out to people to seek their input on this.

The Chair: May I suggest that you hold your motion for a moment until we have a bit more discussion because I've got about five people on the list now who wish probably to speak to this point. Then we can narrow it down and see where it goes from there. Okay?

Mr. Bhullar: Sure.

The Chair: Mr. Rogers.

Mr. Rogers: Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman. I guess my comments are in two parts. First, I wanted to follow on Ms Blakeman's comments. I realize that the piece that Ms Blakeman referred to talked about you being the spokesperson for this committee, and of course you are by your role. But I think it also behooves the rest of us as committee members – I think the comment you made after Ms Blakeman spoke was that anything that we would speak to the public about would be vetted through this committee first in some fashion. I think it would be important that all of us as committee members caution ourselves that we would not add too much in a public fashion beyond the work that's being done collectively. I think that's really important. While I agree with the comments in Ms Blakeman's initial point, I think it's important that all committee members govern themselves accordingly as well, which, of course, includes myself.

Following Mr. Bhullar's comments, I do appreciate his point in terms of the reach of this type of advertising. Well, not so much the reach but the impact. I do know that in this type of work – and I would probably look for some comments from our legal types around the table – I believe that there is an expectation that we would as a committee make every effort that as wide of a reach to our public as possible is made, recognizing that the response tends to be small. We could be criticized if we didn't make some effort to disseminate as much as possible to the general public that this work is going on. So I'm looking as we go through the discussion for something that moderates maybe what is proposed here plus Mr. Bhullar's points.

The Chair: Thank you.
Mr. Hinman.

Mr. Hinman: Yes. My first question: for that \$30,000 is that running it once or twice?

Ms Friesacher: It runs once. It's one run.

Mr. Hinman: Okay. That's what I was wondering.

My second question, following the possible motion coming forward perhaps, is to Parliamentary Counsel. It just seems like part of our duty is to put things in the papers. There are lots of things, when we're changing things, that we put out. I'm just wondering. In your opinion is this something that we should be doing, or would you say that, no, it isn't? Again, democracy isn't always the most cost-effective or the most efficient, yet the importance of making the public aware – do you feel that it would be appropriate for this committee to eliminate that and say that it really isn't an effective way and doesn't need to be done and that we can reach people in other ways?

The Chair: Mr. Reynolds, if you wish to speak to it, but I just want to make a comment that we've got a couple of other points to make as well. I want to hear from everyone that has requested it because we also have the stakeholder engagement and the consultation point there. If, after we've discussed all this, we feel that there's a need to have a motion there, maybe we can still make this. Okay?

Mr. Reynolds.

Mr. Reynolds: I can go to the end of the list if you wish.

The Chair: If that's okay. Mr. Hinman, you'll remember your question.

Ms Blakeman: I agree that in this day and age creativity is to be encouraged, and I think, at the risk of getting e-mails, there are

certain age groupings that are more comfortable with certain types of media than others. So I'm sure that given they're communications professionals, they've already considered a Facebook, which speaks to a certain demographic, a Twitter, which speaks to a certain demographic, and both of those refer back to a website where people get the very concrete information. I think you still have to offer a public airing, a public opportunity to get information. I agree with you. I wish it could be more cost-effective, but it isn't. Sometimes democracy is inconvenient and time consuming and noisy and expensive, but we still have to offer that opportunity to people that may have something to say about this and are not keyed in to one of these stakeholder groups.

The second point is that we are developing that stakeholder list, and every time I go through it, I see more groups that are not on it. I even wonder if this is the same group that I looked at before, because it doesn't look the same, but it's by no means complete. For example, the list that we looked at doesn't have AUMA on it or AAMD and C, two groups that I'm sure that member believes should be notified when we're talking about the Lobbyists Act review. That is a work in progress, and we continue to ask.

At this point in time I'm not willing to let the only notification be that stakeholder list. Although we do know that most of our informative feedback tends to come from those stakeholder groups that are dealing with it on a regular basis, we still have to include the public. With respect, the member comes from a caucus that does a lot of committee work that is not in the public eye, and I think we would be rightly accused of doing too much behind closed doors and with insider groups if we didn't. I think we have to allow the public to know about this in a very public way, and that's still advertising in the newspapers.

The Chair: Mr. Quest.

Mr. Quest: Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's on the same point. In a previous life I was managing a very, very large advertising budget, and I agree with Ms Blakeman and everybody else. There does have to be a process of public notification. You're right. There's a percentage that still rely on the paper. But, you know, 110 weeklies and the dailies at the same time: the two majors reach most of the province. So I would respectfully disagree with Mr. Bhullar. I don't think we can drop the papers altogether, but \$30,500 is a lot of money for that small piece, reaching every Albertan, and it won't reach 900,000 Albertans or even close in the end. I would encourage us to take a look to see if that can be trimmed down just a bit. I know this is how we've always done things, but I really do think it needs a second look. It would be helpful for this committee today and for all of us in the future to take a look at that.

Ms Notley: Two comments. I apologize for coming in late. I think I missed part of the conversation around the media relations piece that preceded my arrival. I just caught the comments by Mr. Rogers, and I'm not sure how much of that was already discussed. I would say, certainly, that in terms of certain things coming from the committee, I don't necessarily have difficulty with the chair being a spokesperson, but obviously that doesn't presume consensus because often there isn't consensus. I'm certainly not prepared to suggest that we would engage in any kind of agreement that decisions of communications by the chair somehow would negate the ability to make public comment on a lack of consensus where appropriate. I'm not sure if that's what you were saying. Maybe that's not what you were saying, and if it wasn't, then that's fine. I just need to put that out there because I might have misinterpreted.

12:20

In terms of the advertising I guess I have to say that I find it a little bit ironic that we're talking about doing public hearings on a bill which is all about defining openness and transparency in relationship with the government, and the first thing the government members want to do is reduce the scope of notice to the public. I do find that very ironic. I do think that newspapers are a key mechanism of communication.

I was just having this conversation today, actually, with my partner, who is in communications. We were talking about the participation rates of Canadians in the electoral system globally, not only in terms of voting but also in terms of engaging with government. The fact of the matter is that as much as I wish we had a much higher participation rate of those 45 and under, we don't. The people that do participate tend to be in that older group, and those are the folks who are more inclined to rely on the more traditional forms of communication. So until such time as we're able to ensure that we're getting a broad scope of coverage, I really am quite surprised that we would suggest, particularly on a bill like this – given the subject matter of this bill I do find it quite strange that we would actually be talking about limiting the scope of public notice, about the ability of the public to engage in a conversation on this.

As well, my brief scan of the stakeholder list is that it is not complete. I suspect we can improve it, but I don't think you can ever make it perfect. To suggest that that's sort of the replacement mechanism for those people who are not otherwise connected to the online world isn't, I think, an effective or adequately covering strategy.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms Notley. To your first point, I think we discussed that just prior to you coming in with regard to the chair having the approval to make announcements and then a news release and everything else. It was suggested – and I suggested it – that before anything like that happened, it be vetted with the committee before. So I think that covers that point.

With regard to the other one you've pretty well got most of the gist of what most of the people are feeling here.

I do have a couple more speakers yet on the list.

Mr. Bhullar: Mr. Chair, would you want me to reply to individual members as they speak, or shall I hold?

The Chair: Yeah. I think just probably any comments you have. We're still in open discussion on this, I think.

Mr. Bhullar: Okay. First of all, Mr. Chair, I must say that if people had listened very closely to my comments, they would have heard the fact that I said that I don't think this is an effective means of getting the word out. I also said that that doesn't necessarily mean you need to eliminate it completely. All I'm saying is that you do the same thing every single time, and based on experience, my short experience of three years of being around these committees, it doesn't really get the sort of public input we need.

All I'm saying is: let's rethink how we do this. That's it. If you don't need 110 weeklies, don't do 110 weeklies. If you don't need nine dailies, don't do nine dailies. If you need that plus 5,000 new additions to the stakeholders list, do it. Let's just rethink how we do things. Especially coming from the folks that always stand up in the Assembly and say that we're doing things the same way and blah, blah, blah all the time: come on. Give me a break. All I'm saying is: rethink how we're doing things every single time. Because in some committee who knows how many years ago

somebody said, "We're going to put ads in every daily and every single weekly," that has to be the method every single time? I think not. I don't think that makes any sense. So all I'm saying is: let's really find the most effective ways to reach out to people. If the committee deems that to be the most effective way, go for it.

Further, Mr. Chair, you know what I really want to do? I'd like to put a motion forth to the office of Assembly communications that says: can we rethink this as a whole? Can we have some ideas come forth from these folks that discuss how we, in fact, engage the public in these sorts of public dialogues? Right? I mean, can we have a more comprehensive strategy on your part as opposed to just websites, stakeholders, and ads? How else can we engage the public in this? The point is to spread the word and get more people engaged in this. The point is not to have discussion behind closed doors by any stretch of the imagination.

Let me be incredibly clear. Mr. Chair, allow me to be very clear. The point is to make sure every single Albertan who is engaged and chooses to send in a submission has the ability to do so. The point is not to have any discussion behind closed doors. The point is just for us to rethink how we have those discussions. Again, the point is just to rethink how we engage with the public. It is not, it is absolutely not to have these discussions behind closed doors. Perhaps that's something we can ask folks in Assembly communications to do, to say: how can we as an Assembly reach out more to people in targeted ways, in ways where we actually solicit more feedback?

Based on my experience and my experience alone in these past three years on any committee I've been on where we have sought public feedback, quite frankly, it has only been stakeholders that are very affected by the issue that have chosen to write in. How can we broaden that? That's the gist of what I am seeking here, Mr. Chair. By no stretch am I saying that any stakeholders list is absolute and complete. That is not what I'm saying. Stakeholders lists should be ever-evolving.

Quite frankly, the Assembly office here should have a continuous mechanism by which any stakeholder, any Albertan can sign up to make sure that they are always made aware of any consultations that are taking place. That's all I'm seeking, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you. At the moment I don't think it needs a motion. I think we've got discussion. I think direction is what you're asking there. I don't think it requires a motion.

We've got a couple more people, actually, who want to speak yet on this. Mr. Lindsay and then Mr. Hinman.

Mr. Lindsay: Thank you, Chair. I just wanted to clarify comments by Ms Notley. First of all, when a government member brings forth an opinion on an item, it doesn't necessarily reflect the views of all of us. In this particular case it certainly doesn't reflect mine, so I just wanted to clarify that.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Hinman: I guess I have to start off with: my goodness; I thought that's what this was, an open discussion, but we seem to have hit a very sensitive point or one protest far too much for an innocent individual.

My question is that it's not about engaging. It's a comical reaction for me to hear: we need to engage; we need to engage; we need to engage. To me what this is about is proper notification. If someone dies, we have a process in Alberta that you can watch. When the wills are being probated, you know it's in the papers. To say, "Well, you know, it's not worth the advertisement; it's not doing this" concerns me greatly. That's what I really want to

know: what's the proper notification? I'm not going to go out there with a whip. I'm not going to go out there with a hundred dollar bill. We need to engage you? To me this is about proper notification.

To say, "Well, you know, if we hit this percentage of the population, let's see which weeklies we can cut off" – Alberta is big. It's wide. What are going to say as a committee? Are we going to say that if someone lives out in this part of the province, we're not going to worry about notifying them? I just want to make sure we do the proper notification, which is fair to all Albertans.

Again, do we want to as a committee discuss and say, "We're only going to put notifications out in daily papers," and then do that once through all of the weeklies, and that's the process going forward for the next 10 years or whatever? The process needs to be one where people know and are not thinking: "Oh, this year I was upset, and I wanted to talk on that. I never saw the notification because it has always been in the weeklies before." I just want the notification to be proper and fair to all Albertans. That's my concern.

The Chair: Well, thank you very much. You're right. We're in a discussion on this. I think the two points were rough estimates that were provided: here's what these two would cost. That's as far as we've gone with it so far. Certainly, direction can be to either define these a little bit more, add others as well.

12:30

Ms Notley: Well, I think it's important to sort of clarify to some extent whether or not we're talking about changing the way we notify in order to increase the impact of our notification or reducing the way we notify. I must say that when I came in, I happened to walk in at a point where people were talking about reducing one component of our notification process, hence my comments.

I agree that there's a lot to be done in terms of potentially changing and, I would suggest, supplementing the way we notify so that, in fact, we change in order to increase the way we notify. There are so many different mediums that people use now to communicate with each other, and that actually makes in some ways for a more expensive communications process. That's just sort of the way things are now, that we're in a bit of a communications transition period.

The thing about the weeklies, in my view – and, of course, there are rural MLAs who are here who can correct me if I'm wrong – from my experience when I lived in a small town, is that the dailies didn't get the kind of readership that the weeklies got. You know, when the weekly paper came out, everybody went through it from beginning to end, and not everybody in town went through the *Journal* or the *Sun*. As a result, the weeklies are really a more effective way of getting to people in rural Alberta. Again, rural Alberta also doesn't tend to have the same online capacity and online access. It's improving, but it's certainly not the same level of coverage that we have in urban centres. I see the daily advertising as being something that, yes, per person that we're reaching may be more expensive than the way we communicate with urban Albertans, but that's just the way things are right now.

In terms of the change piece of it it would be interesting to get some comment from the communications people around that. I certainly think that you can do online advertising, for instance, which is quite inexpensive relative to daily advertising. I'm not saying that it's a replacement for advertising in the dailies. There is a cost item to online advertising, but it also gets quite a bit of coverage. Then, of course, people have mentioned, you know,

Twitter and Facebook and things like that. Again, that tends to be staff costs more than advertising buy costs, but there are staff costs associated with that. Then even for Facebook and some online stuff there are some marginal advertising costs there as well.

I'd be interested in seeing what kind of stuff we could do there to increase coverage that way. If what we're really talking about is changing and potentially understanding that it might actually have to increase the budget, then I don't necessarily have a problem with that, but I wouldn't want to see us cut the dailies in lieu of sort of enhancing our communication with the urban young population and, unfortunately, reducing our communication with the rural, less online-savvy population or online-accessible population.

The Chair: Mr. Reynolds.

Mr. Reynolds: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm just responding to Mr. Hinman's question with respect to what would be the legal requirement with respect to advertising. The short answer is that there is no legal requirement. Basically, in this matter it's up to the committee to decide how you wish to advertise. All the act stipulates is that there be a comprehensive review of the act by the committee. How the committee chooses to communicate its work and ask for submissions is up to the committee.

There were some comments directed toward the communications staff, to Melanie. What I can say is that this is the first meeting of this committee. Obviously, there's been no direction to the communications staff before. Based on our experience with committees, it has been the experience of the LAO that committee members like to see something at the first meeting. They like to see some sort of communications strategy. There were some comments that it should be different, that it should be changed – perfectly valid comments – and as the LAO we're at your direction. We will certainly do that. But, certainly, what was prepared has been I wouldn't say necessarily a template, but it's been looked at by other committees that have had to conduct reviews, whether it's on an act, whether it's an inquiry.

Now, it's entirely up to the committee as to how you wish to tailor it, and one size does not necessarily fit all. It depends on the issue that you're addressing. You are in the position to decide, depending on the issue, what the best way to advise the public is, and that's a decision of the committee. All the LAO is doing is providing you with the information to make that decision, based on the view. So, yes, of course, the LAO could go back and come up with other options if you want. You can provide direction right now with respect to communications. Some committees want to initiate the communications process immediately after the first meeting; some don't. But we're just providing you with options at the earliest opportunity.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you. Before I ask Melanie for any comments she might have, thanks very much, Mr. Reynolds, on this.

I noticed some nodding from some of the rural people there when Ms Notley mentioned the fact that when the weeklies come out, they're read as soon as they get there. That's their point of information, really, for the week, and it's read cover to cover. Even all the ads are read, right through from one end to the other. So there is good uptake with regard to the weeklies on that. Duly noted, too, is that that's the most expensive part of it.

I think we started out in this conversation talking about expense, whether there was too much expense or not, and then we kind of moved from that point over to getting, actually, coverage to the

majority or to all of Albertans. I think we're at a point here where I'll ask Melanie to make a couple of comments because I get the sense that perhaps this rough estimate that came through and the suggestion that came through as a draft can maybe be supplemented, as Mr. Bhullar mentioned, with additional types of advertising, whether it's the Internet or any other type, social media.

Mr. Hinman before Melanie.

Mr. Hinman: Yeah. She might have this information, but I'm just wondering if you can tell us what the number of Albertans is that are reached with the dailies.

The Chair: The rest.

Mr. Hinman: Well, no, they don't all buy it.

Mr. Bhullar: Mr. Chair, further to that, what constitutes a daily? For example, does that include 24? Does that include *Metro*?

Ms Friesacher: No. That includes the *Edmonton Journal*, the *Calgary Herald*, the Lethbridge paper, just the standard dailies. It does include those.

Mr. Bhullar: That's another thing, then.

Ms Friesacher: Yeah. I mean, essentially we work with the Alberta Weekly Newspapers Association. We pick the highest-circulation newspaper in a community. If there are two or three, we'll pick the highest. That's that number. It's in the circulation list that we get the 900,000 Albertans.

Mr. Hinman: I was just wondering what the circulation list was on the dailies.

Ms Friesacher: I'm sorry. I don't have the daily one. I can bring that back for you.

Duly noted, though, that communications are changing. I mean, I can certainly go back and look at what the cost is for advertising on Facebook, you know, if we can do something with Twitter. I can come back and bring a couple of those suggestions. I guess I'm just looking for direction. As Mr. Reynolds stated: is this the way you want to go? Do you want to go with just dailies? Weeklies? None of this? I'm getting a sense of what you're looking at, and I can come back with something.

The Chair: Okay. Any other comments on this?

Ms Notley: Well, I was just going to say that if Melanie doesn't mind coming back with some ideas, there's nothing to stop us from going forward on sort of a mostly similar basis to how we have in the past but picking and choosing one or two as opposed to a whole raft of changes – right? – picking and choosing one or two and testing what kind of increase or decrease or whatever that produces and, you know, gradually keeping track of that as new committees take on the task. You know what I mean? The LAO can sort of test. "Well, this time we tried Facebook, and we increased our feedback this amount. That time we tried online advertising on YouTube, and we increased." It doesn't have to be everything all at once but some ideas with the costs, and then maybe we can do a transitional, investigatory sort of advertising process.

The Chair: Well, that's the point, whether we make the decision today on what we're going to do. There are a couple of points. Are we going to base our decision on dollars or on reachability or a

blend that reaches most? I think I heard both sides, and I heard the middle as well, so I think that's the decision we have to make.

12:40

Mr. Bhullar: Mr. Chair, I was just going to say that I don't see this as a reason to delay the committee's work. However, at the same time, similar to what Mr. Hinman is saying, there is no set process for notification. The point is to say: how is it that those Albertans that want to be notified of this sort of stuff on a regular and consistent basis can be kept in the loop? Right? That's the sort of approach I'm hoping we can find some ideas on. How can we ensure that for people who want to keep up to date on committees' work in the Assembly, they don't need to sit and read various newspapers and look for little ads every single day? How can we really strengthen that piece of communicating with people on a regular and consistent basis? These are just questions. I mean, they can work on these as the committee's work proceeds. Can the Assembly's website have a simple mechanism by which people can register and be kept up to date with regular newsletters from the Assembly or from committees that are working on specific matters? That's the sort of thing I'm looking at here.

I personally – this is my personal belief, sir – don't think that that \$30,000 is best spent. Perhaps the weeklies are read very well – I don't care to really discuss this point on and on and on – but my personal belief is, you know, that moving forth, we can find some better ways. Maybe this is just a point where we start looking for new ways in addition to what we already do. I don't think it's just as simple as Facebook and Twitter. I think it's really: how do we allow for regular and consistent dialogue between the Legislative Assembly of Alberta and Albertans choosing to be engaged?

The Chair: I think one of the big things there, Mr. Bhullar – and I'm speaking strictly to the Lobbyists Act review on this – is that the people who are really interested in this are certainly the stakeholders and people who wish to be stakeholders, and I think that's probably where the big focus should be. At the same time this is on *Hansard* now. This is live, this is also archived, and it's also available, you know, to be read by anyone who wishes. All the proceedings here on all of these will be done, so there's an opportunity for engagement by anybody who wishes to, and that just speaks to your point there.

I guess the advertising that we're talking about is not to let them know that there's a committee meeting going on but more that there's going to be a review and that if you wish to be a part of that review, either in speaking to it or whatever, we want to let you know that this review is being done so that you can come and actually give testimony or whatever, speak for it or against it or to wish for changes. I think there's where we're going with this.

Mr. Bhullar: From my perspective, Mr. Chair, the only piece that I would ask is that we perhaps come back with some new ideas while the committee's work proceeds because every time the committee does such consultations and reviews, we really set a precedent. All I'm saying is: let's not set the same precedent just because that was the precedent that was once set. Let's continuously look at our processes to make them better.

The Chair: Okay. I think that before we move on, then, rather than asking for a motion on this, I'm going to ask Dr. Massolin to talk about the stakeholder list because I did hear as well that perhaps this list is not complete. If it is not, if we feel it's not, then I certainly wouldn't ask for a motion to approve this as the list if we're going to be considering some additions to it.

Dr. Massolin: Okay. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I can speak to the stakeholder list. While I'm discussing the list that was posted up on the committee's internal website, I would ask that the supplementary list be handed out, please, and I'll get to that in a second.

The first point to be made about this list is that it's, as you can see, a draft list, and that means, of course, that it's not set. It's also the committee's list to approve, so there's the opportunity, of course, to accept it or amend it and then approve it, so to add and subtract as well.

The first item, as you can see on page 1, the table of contents, is the lobbyists themselves. Now, Duncan is passing out a list that corresponds with the registered lobbyists as well as those lobbyists who have terminated their registration as they appear on the Alberta lobbyist registry. As I said, I'll come back to that in a little while.

Number 2.0 is not registered potential lobbyists. What do I mean by that? Well, that's a list of individual organizations that may wish to lobby public office holders but which are not currently registered on the Alberta lobbyist registry.

After that we have other interested parties. These are organizations that are not lobbyists or potential lobbyists, so to say, but who nevertheless may have an interest in providing input to the committee during its comprehensive review of the Lobbyists Act. I'd like the committee to note, Mr. Chair, that although exempt under the Lobbyists Act, not-for-profits have been included here because they had a strong interest in the legislation when it was proposed as Bill 1 in 2007.

Of course, the fourth major category is Members of the Legislative Assembly. They're included because MLAs are considered public office holders as defined by the Lobbyists Act.

That's the main list. Now I'd like to turn to the list that was just handed out, which is the list of lobbyists. You can see that there are some approximately 300 lobbyists listed here. If you, again, turn to the table of contents for that list, you can see how these lobbyists are organized. They're organized according to three basic categories. The first two correspond to the definitions that are listed in the Lobbyists Act: consultant lobbyists and organization lobbyists. Now, these are lobbyists that are registered, again, in the Alberta lobbyist registry, which appears on the office of the Ethics Commissioner website, so they're taken directly from there.

Then the third category is – it shouldn't say "recently terminated"; it should just say lobbyist registrations that have been terminated. That goes back, actually, to January of 2010. The reason for including those, of course, is that even though the registrations are not active, these individuals or organizations may still have an interest in commenting on this act.

So there you've got a list 38 pages long of lobbyists who are actively registered or who have terminated their registrations. The other thing I would say is that this list tries to hit all marks, but of course there's a potential for the advertising campaign to supplement and get the notice out to other individuals who may not be included, obviously, on the stakeholders list per se and to Albertans generally.

With that, Mr. Chair, I've concluded my comments on the list, and I'm prepared to answer any questions.

The Chair: Ms Blakeman.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you. This is much more comprehensive, and I appreciate seeing that it's a living document. I apologize because some of the notes I sent over to you a few minutes ago I see are already included in here, so thank you for staying on top of that. I'm assuming that as you go through these different consultations, whatever you gained from, for example, the FOIP

Act review or the PIPA Act review, when you get stakeholders from that, you add it on to the total list and keep moving forward.

Dr. Massolin: Well, Mr. Chair, if that's appropriate to the statute under review or the inquiry, we certainly would do that but only if it's appropriate. Yes.

Ms Blakeman: Okay. Good. Thank you very much for your work.

The Chair: Any other questions?

Ms Notley: I'm wondering if I'm accidentally looking at the wrong list still. As an example, Ms Blakeman had mentioned AUMA. Are they now listed somewhere?

The Chair: The list says May 25. Is that the one you have?

Ms Notley: Okay. Well, I've got this one, which is the lobbyists, the list of actual lobbyists not the stakeholder list.

The Chair: Is it May 18 or May 25? Right by your thumb there.

Ms Notley: This one is May 25.

Ms Blakeman: It's the bigger one.

Ms Notley: Right. Oh. So they're already registered as a lobbyist. Page 12. Okay.

Ms Blakeman: Or they're somebody that's interested.

12:50

Dr. Massolin: Mr. Chair, I can comment on that. I think the point is accurate. The AUMA is not listed as an active lobbyist and therefore not included in that list. But, you know, if the committee wishes, we can certainly add them to the potential lobbyists list.

Ms Blakeman: But the AAMD and C is.

Dr. Massolin: Yeah. But that's their choice in terms of registering, right?

Ms Blakeman: Okay. Let's just keep going.

Ms Notley: Yeah. I think this expanded list that you referred to is the list of people who've voluntarily registered, which is great, obviously. That's what I had wanted to see before when I saw the first one because I knew there was a long list of people that were already registered. But having compared the two, I notice that just in one area, for instance with the labour movement, it's a little sporadic. There's the Alberta Federation of Labour selected and then a couple of other unions but not the whole list. Then the building trades: there are a few individual building trades unions selected but not the actual building trades council.

Ms Blakeman: Yeah. It's in there.

Ms Notley: Is the building trades council in there?

Ms Blakeman: Yup.

Ms Notley: Oh. Maybe I missed that. Sorry. I apologize. I thought I saw the employers association not the building trades council.

Ms Blakeman: No. I saw it.

Ms Notley: Anyway, just a few things like that. I can just send you a note. I haven't had a chance to go through it really thoroughly. As long as we can just do that, that's fine.

Dr. Massolin: Sure. Mr. Chair, as long as that's vetted through the committee, we'd be happy to add to the list.

Mr. Bhullar: Mr. Chair, I don't think we need the committee's approval to add every single person to a stakeholder list. Can we just have general consensus here that if somebody wants to add somebody to the list, send the information down? I think everybody here consents to that.

The Chair: Yeah. I see the nods around the table, and I think that's fine, then. I do have a motion here that the chair be authorized to approve the final list. The final list would be after everyone has sent in everyone they could possibly think of. This is not considered the final list.

Ms Notley: Well, that's not even the complete list.

The Chair: That's correct.

In order to be able to move forward on this, would the committee be willing to entertain a motion that the chair be authorized to approve the final list to be contacted regarding review of the Lobbyists Act? That's after everybody has provided all their information to Dr. Massolin so that we've got in the end a complete list that may be half again as big as what we already have now.

Discussion on this.

Mr. Bhullar: Sorry, Mr. Chair, just coming back to my original point, I understand the need to have names in so notification can go out. But I think it should be a continuous process so even after, quote, unquote, the final list is finalized, you know, if there are new people whose names need to be added to a stakeholders list, let's add them to the stakeholders list so that if maybe they're not consulted this time but they need to be consulted next time for some other committee work, they can be consulted.

The Chair: Mr. Odsen, I wanted to ask a question if I may with regard to some of the timing, and maybe I'm moving ahead a little bit. When we start doing consultation and we actually have people coming in who wish to or written submissions, is there a certain time when we actually then cut off the list? We're in the final stages, and someone is coming in at first base, and we're already rounding third and going to home: is there a cut-off period that we should probably consider when actually the list is sort of final in order to be able to get this report done? If not, we may be talking about adding people – and I'm being a little facetious here – all the way through into maybe next year because someone thought of somebody else that we didn't get to.

Ms Blakeman: I would just say that two things are now being discussed here. Let's just use common sense. One, there needs to be some certainty provided to the process here so that they can actually send the notification out. So, yes, there needs to be a final approval so that they can do their work. And, yes, they need to continue to add names as they go along. As Dr. Massolin has pointed out, he doesn't always have flexibility to do that according to what the act is allowing us to do, but I'm sure that somewhere he's keeping a humungous database of stakeholders that he can pull from. I think we do need to move forward on both things. Let's move forward.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Lindsay.

Mr. Lindsay: Yeah. Thanks, Chair. Similar comments to Ms Blakeman. I think, really, we're talking about two lists: one list

where we cut it off, and those are the people that we approach about their interest in coming to the committee, and obviously there is a living list that's going to be going on and on. At some point in time you have to cut it off and move forward. I think that's the point here. We do need two lists.

The Chair: Any other comments? Mr. Odsen.

Mr. Odsen: Thank you, Mr. Chair. For a point of information, I guess, in terms of this we've been averaging, I would say, probably two to three new organization registrations a week since the initial sort of six- to eight-month period after the act was first proclaimed. So within the context of the living list, let's put it that way, it's going to continue to grow always because every week there are going to be new registrations showing up on the registry. So, yeah, there's not going to be a point in time when you can say, "This is it, and there are no more lobbyists," I don't think. It's continually growing. That's my only point.

I think the point is good. Select a cut-off point, and that's it. Then next time around we'll have a bigger list.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Odsen. I guess that's the point. It's the list of stakeholders that will be contacted with regard to the review of this. We're trying to move forward, as Ms Blakeman says, with regard to the letters that will be sent to these stakeholders, the final list, in order to be able to move ahead with putting forth invitations to appear if they wish or to provide written submissions.

Would someone be prepared to move that

the chair be authorized to approve the final list to be contacted.

Mr. Quest to move this?

Mr. Quest: Yeah.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.

If there is any other question on this – no? I will call the question. All in favour? Opposed? That is carried.

Okay. I want to go back for just a moment because I think this was important. When we talked about advertising, the stakeholders kind of fit in there somehow. We're going to be contacting them. The discussion was with regard to advertising. Of course, we're going to make them aware and the general public. Are you prepared to entertain a motion regarding the advertising, or should this be left, to come back with some more ideas?

Ms Friesacher: I just want to answer Mr. Hinman's question. I've done a calculation of the circulation of the dailies. The average is 400,000. That's essentially the number of copies that are sold per publishing day. So those nine dailies would cover that.

The Chair: Okay. The reason I asked the question on the motion with regard to the advertising is that we do have to act on this because if we delay this, this also delays some of the timing with regard to advertising and this will also delay our report. I think that with the timeline, I believe – maybe you've got a copy of it; I'm not sure – we hope to have this done within the next six months, and any delays on any of these points actually delay the final report as well.

Ms Blakeman: According to the draft timeline that we have in front of us, there is an approval of ads. They run approximately two weeks after the ads are approved. It's the second dark bar or the third series down. If we have a second meeting, is that enough time? I'm directing this through the chair but to the communi-

cations people for them to come back to us with some idea of time. There has to be some certainty for them to actually run the ads, too. So can we make the decision on whether the money is appropriate when we make the decision on approving the ads? Is that possible, reasonable?

1:00

The Chair: Melanie, any comments?

Ms Friesacher: Yeah. Essentially, the two weeks is giving us the time to book it. So the dailies will run. That's a quick turnaround. It's the weeklies we usually book a week in advance because some of them only run once a week. So it's dependent on when you want the deadline submission, the end date.

Ms Blakeman: Oh, is that when you book it?

Ms Friesacher: Yes. Correct. That's what it would depend on, when your deadline is.

The Chair: Mr. Rogers, you had a comment.

Mr. Rogers: Well, Mr. Chairman, you know, I'm again looking at timing. I can't imagine that we would have a meeting where we would only be dealing with this one item. We have to give the staff some leeway. This proposal as we have it is within the budget that we have. I think there has been a lot of discussion. The staff has got a good sense of what some of the feelings of the members around the table are.

A couple of things have been made clear. We have a duty, not necessarily a requirement but a duty, to give the public as much of an opportunity as possible for awareness of this process. This ad is pretty clear. This rough ad that we've got here is pretty clear. We do realize that the bulk of our responses will come from the stakeholders. I think we've given a lot of direction to beefing up the stakeholders list.

I think we need to give the staff some direction to move on this, recognizing that some, I guess, retooling of the proposed list will be done where possible but certainly with an aim that we achieve maximum opportunity for notification to the public. I don't know how you'd lump all that into a motion, but I'm sure it's doable if we want to.

Thank you.

The Chair: An interesting point. We have a start date – that's May 26 – and I might just ask Mr. Robertson for the end date. I suggested it was around November. Is that correct?

Mr. Robertson: Yes, it is.

The Chair: That's the end date. I think, then, it's our duty to fill in all of those gaps in between, and that includes starting with the advertising and moving on, right?

Ms Notley: How did the end date get established?

The Chair: Well, I think it was suggested, hoping that we would have this thing done by November.

Ms Notley: By whom? Where was the suggestion?

The Chair: From Justice. That's correct. In my discussions with Justice they asked if there was any possibility that we could have this thing wound up by November, and when we looked at the timelines, looked at what's involved there, and given some of the previous types of reviews that were done, that wasn't out of the ordinary.

Ms Notley: I think that might be a bit . . .

The Chair: Ms Notley, are you suggesting that that's not . . .

Ms Notley: Well, I don't know that we should necessarily be bound by a sort of amorphous suggestion from a nameless official that we should kind of maybe have it done somewhere in November. I mean, I think we should work through the timelines and see where that puts us in terms of what allows us to do a good job and accommodates everyone's schedules. That's the way we should do it.

The Chair: I understand what you mean, but at the same time we should have a goal in mind.

Mr. Robertson, do you want to comment?

Mr. Robertson: Joan Neatby isn't here. She would be the person to actually ask about the specific time frame. I'm just a policy intern.

Ms Notley: I think the motion was that it had to be completed within a year after September 28, 2011. That was the motion we passed in the Legislature; hence, the introduction of the November date is something, I guess, I'd want a little bit more of an explanation on.

The Chair: It must submit its report to the Assembly within a year of commencing its review.

Ms Blakeman: Looking at the draft timeline that has been put before us to help focus our discussion, do I take it that each of these blocks is a meeting? The only thing I would suggest here – oh, I'm going to be corrected, I can see – from my experience is that when we get toward the end, under discussion and review of presentations and identifying issues, it always seems to come out that it takes us – we put in one meeting, and it usually takes us two meetings to actually solidify what the issues are and to agree upon what we're going to move forward on and then two meetings to actually make the decision on what recommendations we're going to put forward and work our way through on that. So there's always a bit more than we think. That would be the only thing that I would recommend that we schedule in according to what's being presented here. The rest of it looks as usual.

What we've found is that we'd approve a general agenda, and then as there were difficulties or exceptions that needed to be made, we made them. I think that happened in the FOIP review as well. We added on dates as we went because it became clear that we were going to need more time.

The Chair: That's a good point, Ms Blakeman.

Karen, there are a couple of points there, some timing gaps that have to be in effect in order to be able to move on to the next step if you want to share those.

Mrs. Sawchuk: Thank you, Mr. Chair. This document was put together by staff on the basis of the work that is generally required in the course of a statute review by a committee, which is why we didn't assign a date other than the start date. At some point, you know, we'll get to an end date. Generally speaking – and it is not all inclusive – these are the things that the committee will likely end up having to tackle, starting from today.

The crucial part at the very beginning always, besides this orientation meeting where the committee, in fact, adopts a lot of its documents and directs the staff to carry out their wishes, is that we need to get a clear indication from the committee on how they want to approach this. That's where I'm going to refer to

advertising because everything will flow from that: your closing date for submission, how you direct the submissions to come in, how we're contacting people. From that, there is a closing date. Then we have to receive submissions. If we get a hundred submissions, it will likely take us this amount of time. If we get 500 submissions, there is obviously going to be a longer processing period from a staff perspective. So that's all this document was intended to do, so that the committee was aware of the work that was generally expected to be completed.

Most of these do refer to where we need meetings. Then some of them are actually blank because it's work that's going to be done in the background, and it'll be done by staff at the direction of the committee.

The Chair: Mr. Jacobs.

Mr. Jacobs: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Not being a regular member of the committee, I've tried to be quiet and not have too many comments, but as I've listened to the discussion, I have a couple of observations to make.

No one has outlined to me what the budget for the process of advertising is. Perhaps you guys know what it is; maybe you don't. I don't know. But it seems to me that, you know, from a business point of view we do the best advertising we can given the constraints of a budget. I think that would be a consideration. If you have an unlimited budget, then okay.

Secondly, I don't see how the committee can really proceed with a lot of work until you have given those who may wish to give input to the review an opportunity to do so because it seems to me that you would want to know what stakeholders and interested people have to say before you as a committee actually sit down and deliberate.

I think the advertising part of the discussion is fairly relevant to this discussion. That's why I made my comments about the budget. It seems to me that if there is a restriction on the budget, then you have to consider that in the kind of advertising that you do.

1:10

I agree with a couple of points that were made. You know, from the rural perspective, I don't share some of the views that everybody reads rural newspapers. For one thing, I'm a rural person, and I never read the weekly paper, and I especially don't look at the advertising. I don't think I'm alone. But I think that Mr. Hinman's point about notification is valid. I would hate to think that there may be 1 per cent of rural Alberta who would have an interest in this if they knew about it but didn't get a chance to give input because they didn't know about it.

I think in all fairness to Albertans we have to do everything we can as a committee to make sure people in general and specifically are aware of this. Those who have a vested interest will find out, but there may be some people out there who'll call me or some of you later and say: "Why didn't you tell us about this, Broyce? We had a comment we wanted to make." So I think it's important that if we need to use weekly newspapers, we need to use them. We need to do something so that people have a chance to know that this review is taking place because it is an important review, and it will be important to some people.

I don't think we can kid ourselves into thinking that we'll reach everybody, but let's reach as many as possible. If Facebook or Twitter will do it, okay. Maybe the committee needs more information about that. But let's not restrict ourselves by limiting the ability of anyone to be aware of what's happening. You know,

there may be some rural people who are interested and would like to know, but they need a chance to find out.

I think budget and advertising are really important. As this committee wraps up today, we need to decide what the process is going to be because I don't see how you can proceed with your work until people have had a chance to respond to what you're doing.

The Chair: Karen, do you wish to speak to this?

Just prior to that, the comments you made with regard to Facebook and Twitter: about 10 seconds from any one of us on there, and that can be retweeted how many times? Anybody who is even on Twitter will know about it. And if there's a link, not now but even, say, down the road, it's already done. Is there a cost for about 10 seconds' worth of time?

Mrs. Sawchuk: Mr. Chair, this situation is kind of unique in that this is an existing committee. This committee was not struck for the purpose of the statute review. So the budget that we are working with is the existing approved 2011-12 budget for the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices. This committee, at least in the last 10 years, has never had a line item addressing advertising.

That said, there is our overall committee budget, and funds as required for things like advertising or a function that the committee has directed will be pulled and covered through that means. Like I said, our budget was approved last November, I believe, by the Members' Services Committee, and that's what's in place.

The advertising proposal that's put forward, I guess I should also add, is generally in keeping with the advertising campaigns that have been put forward for a number of bill reviews, statute reviews, that type of thing. It's kind of within the ballpark.

Mr. Jacobs: Thank you.

The Chair: Any other comments with regard to timelines?

Okay. We'll move forward, then, I think. Do we have enough information to actually approve the communications strategy, or do you want to come back with some more information? I think we've kind of covered the bases on this. I get the sense that we need to use the traditional methods, if you want to call it that, that we have used in order to reach them but at the same time supplement those with any other types of either social media or other types of communications that we can. I'm sorry; Mr. Lindsay.

Mr. Lindsay: I like the motion that you just recited.

The Chair: Okay. I have a motion written down for me here if you wish to use this motion: that the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices authorize the chair to approve advertisements, news releases, and other communications regarding the review of the Lobbyists Act. That leaves it fairly open. I did mention before that with regard to news releases or anything else those would certainly be vetted before I did anything on those.

I think that we have a copy of an ad, I believe, that was circulated here. That's the type of ad, Melanie, that we were going to put forward?

Ms Friesacher: Yes. This is a draft ad. I mean, we were keeping it fairly general. If you do have specific parameters, then we can put that in. It does refer to the website, which certainly we can supplement. As you mentioned, you know, if someone tweets to the site, they can have some more information on this.

The Chair: Is that satisfactory, everyone?

Ms Notley: Just so that we don't completely abandon the conversation that we had before, I am wondering if there is a desire on the part of this committee to potentially expand the scope of our advertising. Is it too complicated? If it is, then just tell me. That's fine. I'm not that wedded to this. Is it possible to approve sort of what's in front of us, with a slightly farther out deadline and action process, and then still give ourselves the opportunity to come back and consider a modest proposal that may have some relatively modest dollars attached to it around expanding the scope of advertising into the online sector; as I said, maybe a Facebook advertisement or YouTube advertising, that kind of stuff? I do know that relative to the budget items that we're talking about here, it would be relatively small.

The point is that if we had to come back and approve that, for it to be worth while, the deadline and everything would have to be pushed out a little bit farther ahead to still have the opportunity to push this in within that deadline. Maybe that's getting too complicated, but since we did have a reasonably robust conversation about the issue of how to reach out to people, I just wanted to see if there was a willingness to consider a way to get both processes started.

The Chair: A good point, Ms Notley. I noticed that communications were nodding as you were speaking there.

Melanie, did you have anything else to add on that?

Ms Friesacher: Certainly, I can come back. I can send an e-mail through you, sir, saying, "Here are some costs for a Facebook advertisement," or I can look at some options for social media to supplement this. Absolutely.

The Chair: I think we can do this two ways, then, really. We can send an e-mail, an electronic notice, to everyone as well with regard to the costs and get a response back. Everybody in favour of this? Okay. We can move on it. That won't actually, then, extend our timeline a whole lot, will it?

Ms Notley: Well, maybe a week or two longer. I don't know. I'm not the expert in how long it takes to acquire the cost assessments and then for us to all look at our e-mail and make a decision and then to actually make that advertising happen. So not a huge amount but maybe a little bit longer than we would normally expect, but I, again, defer completely to others.

The Chair: That's good.

Another point, then, too: I would be hesitant to call a meeting just to get approval for that point.

Ms Notley: No, but an e-mail.

The Chair: Yes. I wouldn't call a physical meeting just for that one point.

Mr. Rogers: I'll be quick, Mr. Chairman. I think it's important that the direction that we leave here is not that the electronic piece is sort of a possible add-on. I think that in today's world the general direction to our staff should be that an appropriate electronic piece be added to this by your investigations, et cetera. I don't think that in today's world the electronic piece should be a possible add-on. I think that's just an important way of communicating in today's world that we should acknowledge and give the staff some direction to move towards.

Mr. Quest: Just to clarify that, yeah, it should be an absolute, not an add-on, but within the same budget. Is that the understanding? Okay.

Ms Notley: But how do you do it within the same budget? That doesn't work. That means no budget.

Mr. Quest: Well, no, within the overall advertising budget.

The Chair: As I think Karen mentioned, we don't have a specific budget for this because it's part of Leg. Offices. There was a written amount, a rough estimate of what it would cost in order to be able to do the weeklies and the dailies, of \$30,500.

Mr. Quest: Just for clarity, within the estimate we discussed, then, if it's not a budget.

The Chair: Mr. Reynolds.

1:20

Mr. Reynolds: Yes. What happened was that there was a specific line item approved in the budget for the Lobbyists Act review. When the committee's budget was approved by Members' Services, one of the items was for a Lobbyists Act review because we knew of the statutes that require there to be a review of legislation. What has happened – and I think that's what Mrs. Sawchuk was referring to – is that there is not a stand-alone committee reviewing the act. It is the Leg. Offices Committee that's doing it. But the budget that would be available for the stand-alone committee is available for the Legislative Offices Committee.

I believe Melanie has, you know, a figure there.

Ms Friesacher: The budget line allocated is \$59,000. Now, we've obviously worked within those constraints given that you may want to do some further advertising, so this is the initial call out. Often committees will hold public hearings, so we'll do further advertising saying: you're invited to a public hearing. This is just a first draft, you know, again, to see where the committee wants to go with this.

The Chair: Mr. Bhullar, you had a comment?

Mr. Bhullar: No. Actually, the clarification with respect to that line item just sort of brought it into perspective.

But I think that, coming back to earlier dialogue, the committee's work should proceed now. Additional ways to reach out to folks should be added on as they come forth. That should happen within a given and a specific amount of dollars. It shouldn't just be open to continuously add on.

Mr. Chair, I would strongly urge as a member of this committee that we have folks in Legislative Assembly communications that, maybe not in time for this particular review, devote some serious attention to how the Assembly engages with citizens; namely, the recommendations with respect to folks being able to sign up on websites, being able to sign up in person, and that we send them a letter saying: here's something that's going forth. I still do not believe that this is the most effective way of moving forth. However, we do need to move forth, so I suggest we move forth.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.

Any other comments?

Mr. Lindsay, you had made this motion?

Mr. Lindsay: I did.

The Chair: Do you want me to read it again? I will read it. Mr. Lindsay moved that

the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices authorize the chair to approve advertising, news releases, and other communication regarding the review of the Lobbyists Act given that the discussion centres around moving forward and, as well, that communications also makes sure that the other methods of communication, whether it's the Internet, advertising, or whatever, are used as well.

Everyone comfortable with that? All in favour? That's carried. Thank you.

Melanie, yes.

Ms Friesacher: Just a question, then. On the advertisement we have a deadline for submissions. Has the committee considered what the deadline would be?

The Chair: That's correct. It's question marks on the sample ad there, the deadline for submissions. What would you suggest? I'm open.

Ms Notley: Well, I'm not going to suggest a particular time yet, but what I am going to say is that because we had this conversation about the stakeholder list and we talked about adding to the stakeholder list with a finite limit being set – we didn't actually set it but to do that at some point – we have to take into account, then, the amount of time it takes because we want the two processes to be parallel. There's no point in spending a month or three weeks adding to a stakeholder list and then getting stuff out the week later and then finding out that because we put in this ad that the deadline is a month and a half from now, for the people that we notify we're basically notifying them that they've got, you know, 24 hours or something like that.

We need to think about the process of how long we're going to give ourselves to improve or update the stakeholder list so that those people can get enough notice to be able to respond. Myself having once been in the business of writing submissions for organizations on these kinds of things, those things aren't exactly quickly done. If we're talking about written submissions, you typically want to give people about a month if they're going to do it intelligently and research and all that kind of stuff. You also need to account for the fact that, again, we're going into the vacation season.

Also, depending on where you go with the stakeholder list, on your stakeholder list you have a lot of organizations which are parent organizations, which would then be giving notice to their membership about whether they want to participate in it. Unless you expand your stakeholder list so that we're notifying the members of some of these parent organizations, you have to account for those organizations to have enough time to notify their members; for instance, if the AUMA wants to notify their municipalities and one of the municipalities wants to respond. You know what I mean?

These are things that I would suggest we consider in coming up with our deadline.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Along with that, then, Melanie, when would you suggest that the advertising could go out?

Ms Friesacher: Mr. Chair, as referenced, the advertising I can book immediately. Usually with the dailies we try and go with the weekends because that's the highest circulation, and then the weeklies will be within the next two weeks.

The Chair: So they would all be in all the respective papers within two weeks?

Ms Friesacher: Correct.

The Chair: Okay. Two weeks from today is mid-June, let's say June 12 or something like that. How long, then, Ms Notley, would you suggest should be required as a deadline for written submissions given that all the ads, whether it's to the stakeholders or in the papers, have gone out within the next two weeks?

Ms Notley: Then you're suggesting that we'd only have a very short period of time to add to the stakeholder list and that that notice would also go out very quickly.

The Chair: I'm asking.

Ms Notley: Well, I don't know. I mean, I've just sent a note to my staff to ask them to canvass our lists and compare the two. I would suggest that it would probably take us at least a week, and I don't know how long it would take you to get stuff out the door so that it actually lands in people's mailboxes.

The Chair: That's why I suggested perhaps two weeks.

Dr. Massolin, you've been working with the stakeholders. Do you have any comments?

Dr. Massolin: Yes. I just wanted to offer, Mr. Chair, that the stakeholder list as you see it here is pretty well close to being sent out in terms of e-mailing with the exception of finding some e-mails. We're still in the process of doing that. But we're pretty close to being ready to do that e-mail, you know, as of next week. The limiter here, of course, is receiving new stakeholders coming in from members of the committee.

The Chair: Okay. I'm trying to nail down some times here. Given what you've said, if we looked at perhaps June 15 as when all the advertising would be out, you would have probably opportunity to come back to the committee or to Dr. Massolin with additional organizations or stakeholders within the next two weeks, and those could be gone. Do they need a month, then, to respond? I'm trying to find a deadline for submissions – that is what I'm working on – and I'm suggesting July 15.

Ms Notley: I think, again depending on the complexity of the response you're looking for, that if I was writing a submission, I would say that you've got to take a month. Then you've got to build in the fact that people are on vacation because this stuff is all landing right as everyone is taking off for vacation. I would say two months.

The Chair: I guess that if they're all going on vacation, someone is minding the store.

1:30

Ms Notley: Yeah, but typically the submission writer – there's usually one or two in a lot of these organizations.

Anyway, I would say two months, June 15 to August 15, unless people profoundly disagree, but I wouldn't suggest that it be any shorter than that.

The Chair: So we're looking at somewhere around either July 31 or the first part of August, then. Is that correct?

Ms Notley: I think that's saying August 15.

The Chair: Mr. Lindsay, you had a comment?

Mr. Lindsay: Mr. Chair, the comment I was going to make was that, really, the date that is critical, obviously, is the date for submission, so the advertisement date is really immaterial as long as we tie down the submission date. I think that's what we've arrived at, so I agree.

The other part of it, you know, is: are we going to have public hearings or just have submissions in writing and deal with those?

The Chair: There will be both. There'll be public hearings as well later on this fall.

Mr. Lindsay: Anyway, I think the August 1 deadline for submissions is reasonably realistic.

The Chair: August 1 would be two months from June 1.

Ms Notley: But we're not planning on having people get the announcement until June 15, so I would have said August 15.

Mr. Rogers: Just a thought, Mr. Chairman. The likelihood that we get the ads out and the notification to all of the stakeholders is probably somewhere around mid-June. If you give at least six weeks from mid-June, you are essentially somewhere around August 1. Taking into account summer and the reality that staffing in various organizations is limited over the summer, at a minimum we'd be looking at the end of July. A little more generous timeline might very well be the 15th of August and, keeping in mind that our staff has to collate and co-ordinate the information as it comes in, moving toward a meeting of this body likely in late summer or early fall. Again, as we look at the timelines moving out, whether we're working towards that November date or not, the reality is that once this stuff starts coming in, the staff has to do a lot of work, a lot of massaging of it to put it in some format for us to work with around this table. I just offer those thoughts.

The Chair: Mrs. Sawchuk has just mentioned to me that once the deadline is in, it would probably take a couple of weeks for the staff to be able to organize the submissions and then do a review and then make up some discussions. We're looking at meeting toward the end of August, then, for the committee here to review those and also make a decision with regard to the oral presentations. Maybe if there's any additional research required as well, it would take a couple of weeks?

Dr. Massolin: Mr. Chair, a minimum of two weeks, I think, is what past experience has shown.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Reynolds: Depending on the number.

Dr. Massolin: Of course, as Mr. Reynolds has correctly pointed out, it depends on the number of submissions we get. If it's a few, it could take less.

Mr. Rogers: I would just suggest, Mr. Chairman, that maybe as a compromise we might stretch the deadline for submissions to the end of that first week in August and then allow our staff to start working with that in the second week of August. Then we'll make our decisions in terms of our next course of action based on the amount of work that they've got before them.

The Chair: If I may, just guessing, we'd be looking at the last week of August in order to have our next meeting and to go over those items I just mentioned. Is that correct? Okay.

Is everyone comfortable with the deadline for submissions of August 5? That will give us our meeting by the end of August. We're working on the timelines here now. We've got August 5 and, given the two weeks, the week of August 21 in order to have the committee meeting two weeks after.

Ms Notley: Well, the staff would have two weeks as of Friday the 19th, so I think you'd be looking at the week of the 22nd.

Mr. Rogers: Mr. Chairman, if I may, if the staff isn't going to speak up, I'm going to speak up for them. Until we have some sense of the size of the submissions, I really think it's pretty hard to tie the staff's hands at this point. Shouldn't we get some indication of what has come in and maybe a canvass of the membership? I think it's really hard.

Folks, please speak up. I mean, if you get just a few submissions, great. You can probably crank it out in a week. But the reality is that if our efforts are as good as we hope – we've talked about really getting the public all excited and involved in this by way of large stakeholder lists, good strategic advertising, electronic and otherwise – and all of a sudden they are bombarded with a ton of stuff, will it be realistic to assume that they will get it all together in two weeks?

Dr. Massolin: What I can say on that, Mr. Chair, is that what has happened in the past is that the committee meeting has been scheduled, and roughly about two weeks has been allotted in that in-between time, between the deadline and the next meeting, to review the submissions. We've just dealt with the number of submissions that have come our way.

The other point I would make is that the two-week period is not just for us to do our work. We tend to give at least a few working days, three or four or five working days, to post that so the members can actually review our work. It's not two weeks of us doing the work; it's fewer days than that.

The Chair: Well, I would then suggest to the committee that they be prepared to meet the last week of August, the week of August 23. We're not setting a date, but just be prepared for some time after August 22 to meet.

Ms Blakeman: Set the date. This is always a problem for us. By the time we get there, then everybody has already got stuff booked. Please set the date.

Thank you.

Mr. Lindsay: Mr. Chair, I was understanding that we're trying to do everything we can to keep August clear, so I still think we should have the deadline for submissions as the middle of August and then have our first meeting sometime in the first week of September.

The Chair: I'm going to suggest, if I may, the week of August 29, Monday, August 29.

Mr. Rogers: We're booked for a conference.

The Chair: I think that's why I was going to August 22 before.

Mr. Rogers: Again, most people will have finished their summer holidays regardless of conferences or not.

The Chair: I'm seeing some nods. I'm going to make a decision here if that's all right, September 6. I'm echoing Mr. Hinman. The meeting is on September 6. The deadline would be the 12th.

Ms Blakeman: That's August 12?

1:40

The Chair: And the meeting is on September 6. We'll be reviewing written submissions. We'll be discussing, making decisions on oral presentations, and requesting additional information. I'm thinking that it's going to be a three- to four-hour meeting. Do we want to go from 10 o'clock till 2? Do you want it earlier?

Some Hon. Members: No.

The Chair: The meeting will start at 10. At the moment I'm thinking 10 till 2. If it goes 10 till 3, it goes 10 till 3. Okay? All right.

The next meeting after that. Of course, we'll have made the decisions on the oral presentations and if there's any additional research required. I think that right after that, possibly within two weeks, we could have another meeting with the oral presentations and maybe any other requests for submissions and maybe some requests for additional research. I'm suggesting two weeks after that.

Ms Notley: I think that you need to give people more than two weeks' notice of public hearings.

The Chair: Dr. Massolin, what's the general rule with regard to public hearings and oral presentations? If they have two weeks' notice, is that enough time for them?

Dr. Massolin: I think it's usually a little bit longer than that but not much longer if my memory serves, and I stand to be corrected on that. I guess the whole part of the process here is that usually in the meeting after the submissions have been submitted and reviewed, then the decision is made as to potentially whom to invite and that sort of thing. There's that part of the process as well, I think, that the committee perhaps should contemplate at this point.

The Chair: Okay.

Ms Friesacher: Just to note as well that in the advertisement, just based on past experience, we've noted: in your written submission indicate if you're interested in making an oral presentation upon request by the committee. A lot of times the stakeholders will say: please invite me; I want to discuss further. Or the committee comes back and says: we'd like to invite these. So they're aware that they can be called upon.

The Chair: Okay.

Ms Blakeman: But there is an expectation, if they're going to do an oral presentation, that it wouldn't simply be reading the written one, that there would be additional information that's brought forward.

The Chair: I hope so.

Ms Blakeman: Yes. I just thought I'd put that on the record to be helpful to people.

The Chair: Okay. I think we've set the dates that we can at the moment, then. When we have our meeting on September 6, we will know, first off, how many oral presentations there will be. We'll also know how many written submissions there were. Then we can probably set our timelines for our next meetings. Okay?

That sets our timeline, but I want to go back for just a moment now to Mr. Odsen if he has any comments with regard to some technical briefings with regard to the Lobbyists Act.

Mr. Odsen: Well, thank you, Mr. Chair. To be honest with you, I saw this agenda item, and I didn't really know what that might mean in the sense of, I guess: what is it that the committee is looking for in terms of technical briefings? Do you want me to tell you what kind of servers we have and what our software is, or do you want me to talk about the process that a person goes through to register or the kind of process if they have questions? I mean, I'm certainly glad to provide whatever the committee wants me to provide. I'm just not sure what that might be.

The Chair: Well, I guess the reason that was put on there, Mr. Odsen, is that I had thought, perhaps, that the committee may want to know a bit of background with regard to the Lobbyists Act and the process regarding registration and, in fact, if there have been any issues that you've had with regard to the process. I guess that's the technical aspect I was looking at.

Mr. Odsen: Well, certainly, I can do that. I can describe the process as it occurs, walk the committee through the process. I can talk about the kinds of issues that have come up in the course of the two-plus years now that we've been in place.

The other thing. I don't think it's been mentioned – and this is my first opportunity to have a quick look at the list of stakeholders – but I think that I would take the position that in a sense my office, the office of the Ethics Commissioner, the registry, is a stakeholder as well. I would likely be providing some comments based on my experience working with the act, the kinds of things that I think might be important for the committee to be considering in terms of the legislation.

The Chair: That's, I think, what I was looking for. If we had that at the beginning of our next meeting, I think that would serve us well.

Ms Blakeman: I hope I don't already have this because then I'd be embarrassing myself, but could I get a copy of the act? Can I get the one that comes from the Queen's Printer, the little one that I can carry around, not the one that's printed off the website?

The Chair: Yes.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you so much. Then I've got a copy I can mark up.

The Chair: We'll get one for every one of the members.
Mr. Rogers.

Mr. Rogers: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. To Mr. Odsen: I would really appreciate that type of a presentation. This process that we're going through is to help us to potentially recommend changes, adjustments, what have you to improve the act, so it would help me as one member of this committee to get a sense of what challenges you have faced in this first period of operation, I guess – what has worked, what hasn't worked well – in order to help us to sift through what we hear from the public as well and, obviously, digest that all together into something. Again, I'm not assuming that this process will lead to major changes to the act. We may find, based on your experience and what we hear from the public, that the thing is working very well. I don't know that. But that would certainly help me as one member around this table in terms of the kind of input that I would give to ultimately conclude this process.

The Chair: Yes. I think that's exactly what we'd be looking for, a technical briefing on the act and the process.

Ms Notley.

Ms Notley: Yeah. What I was thinking of as well is that I remember that just before the act went into effect, you went around and met with all the caucuses and went through the act and had a fairly good discussion about the process. I think that those materials would be good just in terms of reminding the committee members what some of the key areas were that were the key components of the act as well as, as others have now said, anything that you've identified that may be an issue and, on those issues that you may identify, if there are any, whether you're able to advise in terms of any sort of crossjurisdictional comparisons where, you know, it's worked differently or whatever just on the issues that you've identified. We may ask for more of that down the road or we may not, but in terms of giving you a sense of the type of information we would need, I certainly found that that briefing that we had way back when was helpful, and it sort of got me focused on those issues.

The Chair: Thank you.

Just to mention to the committee, the statutes review is very formal, so I need a motion that the standing committee invite the officer to make a presentation. Moved by Ms Blakeman that the Standing Committee on Leg. Offices invite the office of the Ethics Commissioner to make a presentation on the Lobbyists Act at the next committee meeting.

Any discussion? All in favour? Opposed? That is carried. Thank you.

Any other business that the committee wishes to raise?

Dr. Massolin: Sorry to interrupt proceedings here, Mr. Chair, but just before the committee gets to other business, may I just mention to the committee that as research staff we've obviously helped the committee put together a stakeholder list, and we'll implement that. We can also provide additional research, of course, including sort of an interjurisdictional comparison of Alberta to other jurisdictions that have lobbyists legislation. We can also put together a discussion paper that includes comprehensive background information for the committee and possibly for members of the Alberta public in case they need some background on the act. We've done that in a previous statute review that occurred last year on the FOIP legislation. Of course, we will put together a submission summary of the written submissions and can do so as well for the oral submissions, and of course we'll lend assistance to the committee in preparing the final report.

1:50

I was wondering at this point: does the committee have any direction as to what we should be working on for subsequent meetings of the committee, a crossjurisdictional comparison or discussion guide, et cetera?

The Chair: Any comments?

Mr. Bhullar: Mr. Chair, I think a crossjurisdictional comparison is imperative. I think we need that. As well, I don't know if there are any summaries of any specific think tanks that have done any specific reports or presentations on this matter. That would be helpful. I think both of those areas would be helpful.

The Chair: Thank you.
Anything else?

Ms Blakeman: I'm sorry, Dr. Massolin. About the third thing you mentioned was a backgrounder or something about how the legislation actually works.

Dr. Massolin: Well, just a discussion paper or guide that basically gives detailed background on the act.

Ms Blakeman: Great. Yes, I'd like one of those, please.

The Chair: Yeah. That will be circulated prior to the meeting if you have it done, or whenever.

Ms Blakeman: Please release it to us whenever ready. We all kind of Swiss cheese our reading and stick it in whenever we can, so if you start giving it to us as soon as it's ready, we can probably have read it by the time we meet.

My next question. You're going to kill me. Are we meeting before September 6, or are we expecting that we're going to get the briefing from the lobbyists registrar and all of the written submissions at the same meeting and get it done in two hours?

The Chair: Four.

Ms Blakeman: Four hours. Okay. I'm looking forward to that.

The Chair: Any other comments regarding this?

Any other business? I've got one point on other business that does not pertain to the Lobbyists Act. I'd just like to acknowledge the contributions of Mr. Frank Work, the Information and Privacy Commissioner. He's advised that he will not be seeking reappointment at the end of his current term of office, which is December 5. There will of course be an opportunity for members to offer their best wishes to Mr. Work during the next few months, but I did want to have this acknowledged on the record.

Anything else?

The date of the next meeting, then, is September 6. A motion to adjourn? Moved by Mr. Lund. All in favour? That is carried. Thank you.

[The committee adjourned at 1:53 p.m.]

