



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

The 27th Legislature
Fourth Session

Standing Committee
on
Legislative Offices

Lobbyists Act Review

Wednesday, October 26, 2011
6:30 p.m.

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[Mr. Mitzel in the chair]

The Chair: Good evening, everyone. I'd like to call the meeting to order. Welcome to this meeting of the Standing Committee on Leg. Offices. We're meeting for the review of the Lobbyists Act.

I'd ask that members and those joining the committee at the table introduce themselves for the record. My name is Len Mitzel. I'm the MLA for Cypress-Medicine Hat, and I chair this committee.

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

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

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

Ms Blakeman: Laurie Blakeman. I'd like to welcome each and every one of you to my fabulous constituency of Edmonton-Centre.

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

Mr. Odsen: Brad Odsen, lobbyist registrar.

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

Ms Neatby: Joan Neatby, Alberta Justice.

Mr. MacDonald: Good evening. Hugh MacDonald, Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. Quest: Good evening. Dave Quest, Strathcona.

Mr. Blackett: Good evening. Lindsay Blackett, Calgary-North West.

Dr. Brown: I'm Neil Brown, the MLA for Calgary-Nose Hill.

Mrs. Sawchuk: Karen Sawchuk, committee clerk.

Mr. Hinman: Paul Hinman, MLA for Calgary-Glenmore, via conference call.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Hinman.

Ms Notley: Rachel Notley, Edmonton-Strathcona.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We have before us the agenda for this meeting tonight. Would someone be prepared to move the agenda? Moved by Mr. Quest that the October 26, 2011, agenda of the Standing Committee on Leg. Offices be adopted as circulated. Any amendments to the agenda? Seeing none, all in favour? Opposed? That's carried.

Is someone prepared to move the adoption of the minutes of the last meeting? Moved by Mr. Lindsay that the minutes of the October 18, 2011, meeting of the Standing Committee on Leg. Offices be adopted as circulated. Any errors or omissions? Seeing none, all in favour? Opposed? That's carried.

We're here for consideration of the draft final report of the Lobbyists Act. At our last meeting we had some extensive deliberations regarding the Lobbyists Act, and based on those discussions, our support staff have prepared a draft final report for our review.

Dr. Massolin, could you please give us a brief overview of the report before I open the floor for discussion?

Dr. Massolin: Yes, certainly, Mr. Chair. Thank you. If the committee members would like to turn to page 1, you can see the table of contents there. This report follows a format used for a similar review, a review of the FOIP Act last year with the health PFC committee. You have, as you can see, the items listed there, including the committee mandate; introduction, which basically provides an overview of the Lobbyists Act; acknowledgements; the public consultation process, which includes information on the written submissions as well as the public presentations here in the committee room; and then, finally, the committee recommendation. Then there are three appendices, as you can see, to list those individuals who have presented to the committee either in written or oral form, and the final appendix, appendix C, is a minority report.

That's it, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Okay. I'll open the floor for discussion.

Mr. Marz: Would it be appropriate at this time to ask for clarification on the minority report that's included in it?

The Chair: Uh-huh.

Mr. Marz: Perhaps Ms Blakeman could clarify the second-last paragraph. "Waiting until ten years have passed since the implementation of the Lobbyists Act creates unnecessary opportunities": could you tell me what that 10 years is that you're talking about? Ten years hasn't passed for this review, and it'll likely be five years till the next review, so where does the 10 years come from?

Ms Blakeman: I didn't bring my copy of the act. My understanding was it was a 10-year review.

Mr. Marz: It was my understanding that we would probably be doing it in five years.

Dr. Massolin: Mr. Chair, I can assist with this.

The Chair: Dr. Massolin.

Dr. Massolin: Yes. Section 21 of the Lobbyists Act says, "Within 2 years after this Act comes into force and every 5 years after that, a special committee established by the Legislative Assembly shall begin a comprehensive review of this Act" and so forth.

Ms Blakeman: Was the FOIP Act 10 years? I think it's 10 next time.

Thank you for the correction, then. It's not 10 years. If I could ask that that be amended. It's not 10 years; it'll be five.

Mr. Marz: Is five in there? Okay. Thanks very much.

The Chair: Well, it's actually seven because you have it written as seven years since the implementation of the Lobbyists Act. So it would be seven years, right?

Ms Blakeman: Yup. Thank you.

The Chair: Any other questions? Mr. MacDonald.

Mr. MacDonald: Yes. Well, Ms Blakeman, I would just like to thank you. I know you were busy, and it was on short notice, but I appreciated reading that.

Ms Blakeman: Well, I'm pleased I could give you pleasure in reading my report.

Mr. MacDonald: That's good.

Mr. Chairman, I don't know if this is an appropriate time, but I have another question for the committee if that's okay.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. MacDonald: The exemptions from the Lobbyists Act: I thought I would have a look and see which agencies, boards, and commissions were exempted if there was a list somewhere. With my research skills I cannot find it. I do know that an outfit like AIMCo, for instance, is exempt from the Lobbyists Act. I'm wondering – I know it's not reasonable to suggest this evening – if at some point in the next couple of weeks I could get a list of all government agencies, boards, and commissions, please, that are exempt from the Lobbyists Act.

Dr. Massolin: It's in the regulation.

Mr. MacDonald: Which regulation, if you don't mind?

Dr. Massolin: This is the Lobbyists Act general regulation. I believe it's schedules 1, 2, and 3 of the regulation that you're looking for.

Mr. MacDonald: Okay. I'll find it, then.

Ms Neatby: There are three schedules to the regulation. Schedule 1 contains the provincial entities that are prescribed for the purposes of the act, schedule 2 lists the provincial entities that are not prescribed provincial entities for the purposes of the act, and schedule 3 lists members of provincial entities to whom the act does not apply.

Mr. MacDonald: Thanks. I'll look that up.

The Chair: Thanks, Ms Neatby.
Any other comments?

Mr. Hinman: Paul here.

The Chair: Yes, Mr. Hinman.

Mr. Hinman: I'm looking at the Lobbyists Act online here. Whereabouts are the schedules, then? How do we find the schedules?

The Chair: Ms Neatby, you could probably direct him to those. They wouldn't be in the Lobbyists Act; they're in the regulations. Is that correct?

Ms Neatby: Yeah. There is a regulation that's made under the Lobbyists Act. It's called the Lobbyists Act general regulation. The regulation number is AR247/2009.

Mr. Hinman: Thank you very much.

Mr. Odsen: Another way to find it, Mr. Chair, is on the Lobbyists Act website. Under Resources I have the complete list reproduced from the regulation. So you can either go to the Queen's Printer website, or you can go to my website and find it there, too.

The Chair: I've just been informed by Dr. Massolin that the link will be put on the committee website as well.
Did you have any other comments, Mr. Hinman?

Mr. Hinman: I'm good. Thank you.

The Chair: Okay. Ms Notley.

Ms Notley: Yes. I just also wanted to get on the record to thank Ms Blakeman for her work in consolidating our collective resolutions into the minority report that she took the lead in writing. Much appreciated.

Ms Blakeman: No problem.

The Chair: Any other comments?

If not, are you ready for a motion regarding the report?

Mr. Marz: I would move approval of the motion prepared.

The Chair: We've had one minor change on there. Moved by Mr. Marz that

the Standing Committee on Leg. Offices authorize the chair to finalize the committee's report on the Lobbyists Act review based on the discussions held here today at the October 26, 2011, committee meeting as corrected in the minority report.

Any discussion on that motion?

Seeing none, all in favour? Opposed? That motion is carried.

All right. I guess now that the committee has approved the final report, I'll endeavour to have it tabled in the Assembly shortly after we resume sitting. As I noted, the minority report, for the record, is attached to the report.

In addition, it's been common practice for the LAO communications staff to work with the chair to organize appropriate media releases in conjunction with the release of the committee's final report. If there are no objections, I'd like to ask for a motion by the committee to authorize this. Moved by Mr. Quest that

the Legislative Assembly Office communications services work with the chair of the Standing Committee on Leg. Offices on the media relations component for the release of information on the committee's report on the Lobbyists Act review.

All in favour? Opposed? That is carried.

6:40

Is there any other business to be brought before the meeting tonight? None.

Date of the next meeting. Currently it is scheduled for November 15. Now, the budget has to be done before mid-December. Traditionally budgets have been done and completed prior to these dates in December for the last four years. If we look at December's dates, there's really not much time to get this done before the end of December. We had the 15th of November set for a meeting, there are meetings already scheduled as well that will include most of us, and I'm asking if we can have the meetings with the officers scheduled for the evening of the 14th and the evening of the 15th. We can do three on the 14th, two on the 15th, and we'd have them done.

Ms Blakeman: I can't be here at all on the evening of the 14th. There's not a hope. But you don't need me to do this.

Mr. Hinman: I've got a meeting on the 14th as well in the evening.

Ms Notley: I also have a meeting on the 14th in the evening.

Ms Blakeman: Okay. That's three of the opposition, then.

Mr. Marz: What about the 16th, Mr. Chair? Is there any availability there?

The Chair: Mr. Marz is asking about the 16th.
Mr. MacDonald, do you have comments?

Mr. MacDonald: We're set to go for Tuesday, the 15th, right? I could be here on the evening of the 14th.

The Chair: Of the 14th and the evening of the 15th?

Mr. Hinman: It would take two evenings to do it?

The Chair: That's what I'm asking. We would hold three on one evening and two on the other. That wouldn't make it too long a meeting, then.

Mr. MacDonald: Okay. I can't attend. No.

Ms Blakeman: I thought we had these booked for the 15th and 16th. Are we trying to move these back by a day?

The Chair: We had them booked for the 15th, all day long on the 15th.

Ms Blakeman: Oh. See, I've got it the two evenings. I've got it Tuesday night and Wednesday night from 6:30.

The Chair: Yes. Okay. You're right, Ms Blakeman.

Mr. Hinman: We had it Monday evening and then Tuesday to finish, I thought.

The Chair: Actually, it was Tuesday and Wednesday. But we were doing the evenings, and we had booked these quite some time ago. We had booked the evenings if, in fact, we were in session.

Mr. Hinman: I guess my question is that we originally had them for 8:30 on the 15th to come in. Is that correct?

The Chair: Yes.

Mr. Hinman: Could we not stay with that time? I've scheduled for that, and that works into my schedule much better. If I've got to wait all the way to the next evening, the 16th, because I've got things on Monday night, then the next morning to come to that meeting works far better for me.

What time are we going to meet on Monday evening?

The Chair: Well, I was suggesting a change, and I was asking whether we could meet in the evening of Monday and the evening of Tuesday. Some other meetings have come up for others of us as well, I guess.

Ms Blakeman: So there are meetings for the Tory caucus during the day on Tuesday, which is why – right. Silly me. All right.

Mr. Hinman: We can't leave it at 8:30 on Tuesday?

Ms Blakeman: No. The Tories have got meetings.

Mr. Hinman: But they've rescheduled those. This was scheduled before that.

The Chair: I do understand. I'm going to have to work with the clerk and see if I cannot come up with something. I will poll everyone as soon as possible.

Dr. Brown: Is there any urgency, Mr. Chairman, to doing it before we come back into session, when everybody, presumably, is here?

Ms Blakeman: Yeah. You're trying to get the budgets approved and sent in so they get rolled into the larger budget.

The Chair: That's the other point, that perhaps they could be done in two evenings while we're in session.

Ms Notley: Except that it's been telegraphed to us that it's very possible that we're going to have evening sittings because, of course, that's such a reasonable way to conduct the business of the Assembly. That would put those of us who end up spending a lot of time . . .

Mr. MacDonald: With young families.

Ms Notley: Well, we're just in the House. We'll have to be in the House because I can't trust that the Tories will necessarily extend the debate in our absence.

The Chair: Okay. I've got another date, then. How about November 25? That is a Friday. We're in session.

Dr. Brown: Mr. Chairman, I didn't hear any objection to the added date, the Tuesday evening. We could perhaps get . . .

Ms Blakeman: No. Tuesday was booked before. We're all good for Tuesday.

The Chair: The thing is, you know, that we had booked these with the Leg. officers, and a couple of them have actually changed their schedules. One of them actually rescheduled his speaking in Toronto in order to be here for the meeting.

Mr. Hinman: Which rescheduled meeting?

The Chair: It was a conference in Toronto for the FOIP officer.

Mr. Hinman: No, no. Which date got changed? I guess I'll go back. The 15th doesn't work? I wasn't aware that we ever changed it from the 15th. When did that get changed?

The Chair: I'm just talking about it now, Mr. Hinman.

Mr. Hinman: Okay.

Mr. Marz: We're still on for the evening of the 15th, right? Tentatively.

The Chair: Ms Blakeman.

Ms Blakeman: Thanks. The only thing I would ask the chair to exercise caution with is knowing that on the Monday three of the four members representing opposition parties on this all-party committee are not available. I would ask that due consideration be given to that, please. I just don't feel it's appropriate with these committees to hold a meeting when 75 per cent of the people representing opposition parties are not available.

The Chair: I agree.

Mr. Marz: What about the 16th in the afternoon?

The Chair: How about the 16th of November, use the whole day?

Ms Blakeman: I had it in for the evening. Yeah, sure. Fine.

Mr. MacDonald: The 16th is good for me.

The Chair: Mr. Hinman.

Mr. Hinman: Yes. That would work better for me.

Mr. Marz: I have a meeting on the 16th for one hour in the morning. We could work around that.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Odsen: Just a question for clarification, sir. Are we talking now about the presentations from the officers for their budget for next year?

The Chair: Yes.

Mr. Odsen: We're not talking about this process?

The Chair: No, no. We're not talking about this. We're done with this. I'm trying to get consensus with regard to the presentations from the five officers.

Mr. Odsen: Thank you.

The Chair: Okay.

I don't see any objection to the 16th of November. Okay. We will have pretty well the entire day then.

Ms Notley: Up until 4:30. I'm booked at 4:30.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Marz: The 15th is out?

The Chair: It will be the 16th now, not the 15th.

Mr. MacDonald: So there's no meeting on the 15th.

The Chair: I think that if we started by 8:30, we'd be done by 3:30.

Mr. MacDonald: Are we going to do all five?

The Chair: We're doing five, yes.

Mr. Marz: I'll be a bit late.

The Chair: Okay. We're fine, then.

Is there anything else?

Well, thank you for your consideration on this.

If there's nothing else, a motion to adjourn. Moved by Mr. Quest. All in favour? That's carried. Thank you.

[The committee adjourned at 6:50 p.m.]

