



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Second Session

Special Standing Committee
on
Members' Services

Tuesday, October 25, 2016
9:32 a.m.

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Special Standing Committee on Members' Services

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Cortes-Vargas, Estefania, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (ND), Deputy Chair

Cooper, Nathan, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (W)
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South West (ND)
Fildebrandt, Derek Gerhard, Strathmore-Brooks (W)
Jabbour, Deborah C., Peace River (ND)
Luff, Robyn, Calgary-East (ND)
McIver, Ric, Calgary-Hays (PC)
Nixon, Jason, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre (W)
Piquette, Colin, Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater (ND)
Schreiner, Kim, Red Deer-North (ND)

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Janet Schwegel	Managing Editor of <i>Alberta Hansard</i>

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[Mr. Wanner in the chair]

The Chair: Good morning. I'd like to call the meeting to order.

Before we start with our business items, I'd ask that members and those joining the committee introduce themselves for the record.

Mr. Cooper: Nathan Cooper, MLA for the outstanding constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Mr. Nixon: Jason Nixon, MLA for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre, where the people from Olds go on vacation.

Ms Jabbour: Debbie Jabbour, MLA, Peace River.

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

Ms Dean: Shannon Dean, Law Clerk and director of House services.

Mr. Reynolds: Rob Reynolds, Clerk of the Assembly.

The Chair: Robert Wanner, chair of this committee.

Mrs. Sawchuk: Karen Sawchuk, committee clerk.

Cortes-Vargas: Estefania Cortes-Vargas, MLA for Strathcona-Sherwood Park.

Mrs. Schreiner: Kim Schreiner, MLA for Red Deer-North.

Mr. Dang: Thomas Dang, MLA for Edmonton-South West.

The Chair: Thank you, everyone.
On the phone lines?

Mr. Fildebrandt: Derek Fildebrandt, Strathmore-Brooks.

Mr. Piquette: Colin Piquette, Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater.

Ms Luff: Robyn Luff, Calgary-East.

The Chair: Thank you, everyone.

The agenda and minutes were posted on the website. If anyone requires copies, let Karen know.

Same lines as before. The microphone consoles are operated by *Hansard* staff. Please keep your mobile off so that they don't interfere with the audiofeed. Audio of the committee is streamed live on the Internet and recorded by *Alberta Hansard*. Audio access and meeting transcripts are obtained via the Legislative Assembly website.

The approval of the agenda. Are there any changes or additions to the agenda? Seeing none, would a member move adoption of the agenda? Mr. Nixon. Thank you. Anyone opposed? The motion is approved.

Approval of the minutes. Members, as an oversight the minutes of the February 24 meeting were inadvertently missed on the September 26 agenda, so I'm asking: are there any errors or omissions that you see in either set of minutes? Then I would ask someone to approve the minutes of February 24 and September 26. Mrs. Schreiner. All in favour, please raise your hands. Opposed? On the phone, is there any opposition to the motion to approve the minutes? Hearing none, I will move the minutes of February 24 and September 26 adopted as circulated.

Did I ask for that already, Karen?

Mrs. Sawchuk: Yes.

The Chair: So a second time it's approved.

Outstanding business: the employee respectful workplace policy. As members will recall, this motion was debated at some length in our earlier meeting. It was concerning the options outlined on page 10 of the Respectful Workplace Policy document and was adjourned at our last meeting. During the discussion that followed, a request for additional research was made. Both the requested research document as well as the September 26 briefing notes and attached workplace policy document were posted on the internal committee website for our meeting today.

Before we proceed and continue on our discussion, I wonder if Shannon Dean and Cheryl Scarlett could provide an overview of the crossjurisdictional report and the respectful workplace policies that you've researched.

Ms Dean: Certainly, Mr. Speaker. Very briefly, generally speaking, most jurisdictions in Canada have a process that involves either the whip and human resources and the Clerk or a combination thereof. In some jurisdictions the Speaker has a role in the complaint process.

We were also asked to survey other countries such as the United Kingdom, Scotland, Australia, and specifically the Scandinavian context. There are a number of different approaches with those countries. Some involve a grievance procedure and an independent officer, and some may or may not involve a committee of parliament.

There was a specific question, again, raised about the Scandinavian context, and we surveyed three countries. There's a summary of that research in the crossjurisdictional document, which indicates that for Sweden, Norway, and Denmark there were no specific policies in place. The information we received was that complaints involving members would be resolved on a case-by-case basis, typically in consultation with the Speaker.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Does Cheryl have anything to supplement on that?

Ms Scarlett: No.

The Chair: Members, do you have any questions of Cheryl or Shannon? Does anybody on the phone have any questions?

Mr. Dang, you had a question.

Mr. Dang: Thank you. I just wanted to comment really briefly. Thank you for all the work you guys did on this comprehensive document here. It's quite thorough in the jurisdictions that it covers and is going to be very useful for us as we shape the policy and move forward.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Cooper.

Mr. Cooper: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just have a quick question of Ms Dean if I may. Based upon the conclusion of the crossjurisdictional report that research services provided and in context of the recommendation of the policy that was moved at the previous meeting, that

complaints against a member to provide employees the option to report complaints to the whip and/or director of human resources and the Clerk, who may appoint an independent investigator if required. Human resources... would work with the whip of caucuses involved during the process,

would you say that that would make our policy in line with or exceed the other jurisdictions across Canada?

9:40

Ms Dean: It would be similar to what's placed in a number of other Canadian jurisdictions.

Mr. Cooper: Thank you.

The Chair: Hon. members, are there any other questions, observations with respect to the information provided?

I'd like to proceed now to the discussion on the adjourned motion. I want to remind the committee that in a subsequent motion on September 26 the LAO workplace document was approved, to approve the LAO policy except for page 10, so it's the page 10 item that we're dealing with today. I'm asking that we now move to the motion moved by Mr. Cooper. Do we need that read into the record?

Mrs. Sawchuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Moved by Mr. Cooper that

the Special Standing Committee on Members' Services move that the respectful workplace policy for the Legislative Assembly Office combine options 1 and 3 concerning employee complaints against a member to provide employees the option to report complaints to the whip and/or director of human resources and the Clerk, who may appoint an independent investigator if required. Human resources and the Clerk would work with the whip of caucuses involved during the process.

The Chair: Mr. Cooper.

Mr. Cooper: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think there was some concern at the last meeting that perhaps the policy didn't have the necessary checks and balances of other jurisdictions across Canada. There was some concern from government members that this was the appropriate path forward. I think we've seen the good work that research services has done. I think that in order to have the policy approved in a timely fashion, as much as I would have liked to have seen the policy adopted in its entirety at our last meeting, it's my hope that government members have all of the information that they would like to have in order to proceed with what is a very important policy and one that we need to ensure that we have in place to ensure that all caucuses as well as the Legislative Assembly can continue – I think, generally speaking, there is a very healthy work environment – to ensure that that work environment is in place and also that all of those bodies can use the adoption of what essentially is a new policy as an opportunity to remind each caucus, the LAO, and other employees in the precinct of what healthy workplaces look like.

I sure hope that we can get this policy approved today, and I encourage all members of the committee to accept the recommendation as was presented.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Dang.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'd like to thank Mr. Cooper for his comments and for his work that has gone into this motion. At this time I would like to move an amendment, and then perhaps I'd like to elaborate a little bit on why I'm moving this amendment and on some of my thoughts about it. Is that acceptable to you, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: Yes. I think it's in order.

Mr. Dang: Thank you. I would move that

the motion be amended by adding the following at the end of the motion: "and be it further resolved that this approval be on an interim basis and that the Special Standing Committee on

Members' Services form a subcommittee to review this matter in addition to the separate issue of complaints between members."

Sorry; we don't have copies at this time.

I guess the intention of this is that we all know that everyone in this committee is absolutely committed to ensuring that there is a safe workplace environment with no disrespectful behaviour for any employees and that we cannot tolerate any forms of harassment in the workplace. So we know that there needs to be a formal policy in place to ensure that we have a safe environment. This is a very important, very serious, and complex issue, and we want to make sure that we get it right for everyone involved.

The intention of the amendment is that we can send the issue to the same subcommittee that's already being struck later on for the member-to-member issues so that we can fill the existing gap in policy right now as an interim measure and we have the opportunity to flesh it out with more thought and due diligence at the committee level as well. That way, the membership would be the same as the other subcommittee, and we'd be able to look at and flesh out the details so that we wouldn't be shoehorned into one thing without enough thought. I think that subcommittee offers a good opportunity for us to work toward that.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Having heard the amendment, do you need it read again for everyone?

Mrs. Sawchuk: Motion to amend by Mr. Dang:

and be it further resolved that this approval be on an interim basis and that the Special Standing Committee on Members' Services form a subcommittee to review this matter in addition to the separate issue of complaints between members.

My apologies, Mr. Speaker. I should have added that this is to be added at the end of the motion by Mr. Cooper.

The Chair: Is there any further discussion on the amendment to the motion? Mr. Cooper.

Mr. Cooper: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I do have a few comments around the motion. I appreciate that there's some desire to accept the recommendation in its entirety for now. I do have some concerns and reservations with respect to the motion as well as Mr. Dang's comments.

I take exception to the fact that, you know, he mentioned that they don't want to be shoehorned into one recommendation or another, yet we have some very robust cross-jurisdictional research provided by LAO professionals, that provides evidence and background information that the policy as it was presented is a good one, a robust one, one that puts it in line with or exceeds many jurisdictions across the country. I guess part of my curiosity for the government members would be: what additional information would they hope to gain at the subcommittee that would potentially change the current recommendation? That would be one question I have.

Another question I would have is: what sort of timelines do they anticipate that work being completed in? At the end of the day, it will require an additional Members' Services meeting to remove, if you will, the interim measures that are being put in place. And, I guess, in many respects every recommendation or policy is interim, as in all of them are able to be changed at any time by Members' Services seeing a need and then making a recommendation to that. So I do have some reservations that perhaps we're delaying making a decision that we are capable, able, and should be willing to make today.

There's a good possibility that I'll vote in favour of the motion because I certainly would prefer seeing something accepted today than it not being accepted and just sent to the subcommittee, as I

can only imagine that that was another possibility that could have taken place. But I would love to hear as to what additional information they believe that they may receive at the subcommittee that would create a different decision and what are the sort of timelines that they would like to see in terms of trying to get that interim framework removed as I don't think that we've been shoehorned into making one decision or another but that we have the information to make a good decision today.

9:50

The Chair: Mr. Dang.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think we're not trying to drag our feet on this issue or anything. I think that that's why it was very clear from the beginning that we had to put this interim measure in place. You're right, Mr. Cooper. I think that we absolutely do need a formal policy in place to help protect a safe workplace environment, but what we also want to do as members is ensure we have due diligence, and what that means is that we can create policies that are effective and appropriate. We want to get these policies right. What that sometimes means is talking about it through more time. Sometimes that means talking with some of our other colleagues throughout our caucuses and other members across the aisle. I think the subcommittee would allow us to have those opportunities, allow us the opportunity to have time to consult with others and to discuss some of these bigger issues that might go on.

I think that this measure that we're using as an interim measure may actually end up being the final measure. I wouldn't want to presuppose what would happen if it were to go to committee. Absolutely I do think that sending it to a subcommittee would allow us to have the opportunity to discuss all these different issues, and we could look at the existing interim measure. We could look at other options as well, and we could finally decide: well, which one of these is going to be best for everybody? That's why there's an interim measure, so that there's a formal policy in place, and that's why we're going to be moving forward to try and build on and create an even better policy.

The Chair: I just want to clarify if the members on the phones have received a copy of the amendment.

Ms Luff: Yeah. Thanks, Karen.

The Chair: Hon. members, are you ready to vote?

Mr. Cooper: More so looking for some feedback on timelines, I guess. I hear the member's position. While I don't entirely agree with the position about the implication that it might not be right, I also didn't hear any sort of feedback on what additional information may be available that would strengthen, if you will, the policy. I am a little bit curious about timeline, and I think that that will likely have some determination as to whether or not I am inclined to support the motion. Clearly, we have a desire to try to get this policy adopted in a timely fashion. You know, unfortunately it's been the government side that hasn't been quite as quick to act on this. Now we see a further delay. I'm hoping to get some feedback on what they feel is a reasonable timeline on having the interim tag, if you will, removed.

The Chair: Member Cortes-Vargas.

Cortes-Vargas: Thank you. Absolutely. Just in hearing some of the context, I think it's important to know that what we're trying to do is develop a mechanism in which we're having co-operative discussions with all party members, and we know that in our own caucus we have a lot of expertise on this subject, expertise that

makes this a critical issue, to develop a policy that truly not only creates a safe workplace environment but prevents these issues from coming forward. We know that this can be the appropriate measure, but as we know with a lot of policies, things evolve, as we understand, and I know that building a place where we can have that discussion is important.

In regard to the timeline I think it's really up to the committee members. That subcommittee that's being struck could develop that timeline with the subcommittee members, but we could look at making sure that we have things ready for the estimates that we're going to be meeting for anyways. If we meet for estimates, we could look at this information again, and that would give an appropriate timeline as well. Again, if we're still approving this policy, we could come back and bring this up later, or we could continue to just have a place for those discussions to happen in their co-operative manner.

I feel like this method allows for that, and the timeline can be developed so that it works with the timing of the committee when it meets normally anyway. It doesn't prevent any measures from being put in place. We have measures in place. It allows for further comment and evaluation of the best way to move forward in a safe workplace and how to prevent those things. It also allows for continual conversation with the members that have expertise on this knowledge to provide some input as well because, yes, we have expertise from the LAO, that provided crossjurisdictional analysis on the other policies, but we also haven't had one in Alberta prior to this, and we want to make sure that it's the appropriate one for the system we have in place.

I hope that answers the majority of your questions. A lot of it was around timelines, so I'm hoping that we can develop that within the meeting times we already have allocated so it wouldn't require a sole meeting just so we can look at the report. We would have to meet for the subcommittee anyway for whatever comes out of it, so it really doesn't add anything in addition. It allows for an immediate measure because we know it's important and we know it has to be moved on. But it allows for continual evaluation for it because it is a really important issue and it is one that shouldn't just be moved on without evaluating its effectiveness.

Mr. Nixon: When we met about this about a month ago, I at that time raised concerns that this would go on and on and on, and I'm starting to become more concerned that that, in fact, is becoming a reality. I mean, the reason we adjourned this motion was so that the parties could go back and talk to caucuses, and that's been about a month. So I guess Mr. Cooper has a fair point when he asks: how much longer does the government need to talk to their caucus members? I mean, a month is a long time. I'd like to support this amendment because at least it gets us something in place for a serious issue. I don't like the word "interim" given that we can come back and change this any time if the subcommittee chose to do that anyway.

Second, we still have no indication – we've been back and forth now two or three times this morning – of how long we anticipate the government members are going to take to do this. The opposition is ready to vote on it now, so how long? I mean, you asked for a month last meeting. Are we talking another month, six months, a year? I'd like to know the answer to that.

The Chair: Ms Jabbour.

Ms Jabbour: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just want to make a couple of comments. Actually, the issue of a harassment policy is something that came on my radar very shortly after I got elected, so we've been having conversations in the Speaker's office for a very

long time on this, recognizing the importance. You had brought up the question, Mr. Cooper, about what more information we might want. I've had the opportunity to talk with my colleagues across Canada and the Commonwealth on the policies that they've put in place. It's quite interesting to see some of the difficulties they've encountered and identified along the process, particularly when it comes to member-against-member policies.

So, you know, we want to have this as clean as possible. I'd be personally quite interested to see if other jurisdictions have found any issues with the way their process works. There are some variances in the information that Parliamentary Counsel has given us on the research on other jurisdictions. I'd be curious again: why are there variances? Which process has been found better than the other? Have they found any problems? So I think that potentially could be information that could help us going forward. I think particularly the idea of having a subcommittee in the context of also looking at the member-to-member piece would give us the opportunity to kind of align some of these and make sure that we're doing it in a way that is best for us going forward because it is something that's pretty new for our province.

Then in regard to timelines my own personal feeling on that is that it needs to be done as quickly as possible, keeping in mind, again, that this has been on the agenda for a long time.

The Chair: Mr. Clerk.

Mr. Reynolds: Thank you. Oh, sorry. Was there anyone else on the list, Mr. Speaker?

The Chair: No.

Mr. Reynolds: I just wanted a point of clarification, Mr. Dang, with respect to your motion. I think I understand it correctly. Your point would be that when you say "an interim basis," we would be able to go out and move forward with the respectful workplace policy because we're anxious to get this rolled out and advise staff of the sort of workplace that we envision.

10:00

The missing piece is the part concerning employee-MLA interactions, which, of course, only really the committee could deal with. Is it your intention or your expectation that we would go ahead with this policy, rolling it out, with the part on page 10 being approved on an interim basis? It could be changed, but what was suggested in Mr. Cooper's unamended motion would be what we move forward with. I just want to clarify that.

The Chair: Mr. Dang.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, absolutely. That's absolutely the intention, that we would move forward with the original, unamended motion up until the point that the subcommittee would report back to this committee, and then from there we would see what that report had to say. The intention absolutely is to allow our LAO colleagues to move forward with the workplace policy so that there would be that safe space immediately.

Mr. Reynolds: Thank you very much.
Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: On the amendment, Mr. Cooper.

Mr. Cooper: Just a quick question and something that I hadn't considered in light of the Clerk's comments. In the rollout of the policy do you think you would have to communicate that this is an

interim measure? I think that could create some uncertainty amongst staff. It's something I actually hadn't considered until that moment. In fact, I was just about ready to vote in favour – and I still very well may because I think we need to get there – but I have some reservations about rolling out a policy that says, "This is an interim policy" and creating some uncertainty. I don't know how that may or may not happen.

Cortes-Vargas: I don't feel like there's a need to presuppose that something is going to be changed. It's allowing for a conversation to happen to evaluate the policy. It has the potential to allow for it, but we always have that potential. Essentially, we're adopting the motion as follows. We're being clear in our intention that we want to continue to look at it. We're being clear in our intentions that we want to work with all party members to develop a policy that is good. Maybe the comments are: this is working perfectly for our system. Maybe the comments are, "This is the correct way," and we don't do anything. So we're accepting the policy.

The Chair: In actual fact, the policy itself was approved earlier by this committee. As I understand it, this particular item would proceed with the support, unanimous, I hope, of the committee, and if it's determined, I guess, at any time, this committee could amend that component of that policy.

Mr. Nixon, did you have a question as well?

Mr. Nixon: Well, I share Mr. Cooper's concerns after hearing the Clerk's comments. I think the word "interim" is problematic. It's also not what, I think, the government whip is describing with her description of what they're trying to do. I respectfully would submit that we should approve the amendment and then possibly pass something that says that we would review that section of the policy over the next six months or something. We should get away from the word "interim."

The Chair: Can I just clarify, Mr. Nixon? In your suggestion – and the mover of the amendment may or may not wish to consider it – are you looking for something that's more definitive in terms of time?

Mr. Nixon: No, not time. I think that the word "interim" is problematic for the credibility of what we're approving and if we're going to be rolling it out. If we let it roll out, we also then say that we're charging the committee with another task in addition to its other task of reviewing this. If they come back with other recommendations, then, of course, this committee could make adjustments as required. I sense from the government members that they don't want it to come out with the word "interim" in it either. We want it to be credible. We could still accomplish both tasks, get it approved and get it working, and then charge the committee with having a look at how it's working and whether or not we want changes at a later date.

The Chair: Mr. Dang.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think that's absolutely the intention of my amendment here. I'd look perhaps to the Clerk or Parliamentary Counsel for some guidance on how to proceed with that. Could somebody subamend this amendment perhaps?

The Chair: Mr. Clerk.

Mr. Reynolds: Thank you, Mr. Chair. First of all, let me say that when I asked my question, I wasn't trying to, as it were, cast the cat amongst the pigeons. I was just trying to ascertain the intent here.

Having said that, I think that what we would ultimately do – and I'll discuss the amendment – would be to have an asterisk just there and say, "This matter is under review by a subcommittee of the Members' Services Committee," just for the sake of completeness for employees, but it would still last. It would be clearer from perhaps an amendment to your amendment, commonly called a subamendment, or we can find another way to do this. Where it reads "and be it further resolved that this approval be on an interim basis and that," if you consider taking out the words "this approval be on an interim basis and that," the amendment would read: "and be it further resolved that the Special Standing Committee on Members' Services form a subcommittee to review this subject matter in addition to the separate issue of complaints between members."

Mr. Nixon: I will move that subamendment to read exactly what the Clerk said. There you go.

The Chair: Mr. Clerk, were you finished with your comments?

Mr. Reynolds: I was except to say that I hope your faith isn't misplaced.

The Chair: A subamendment has been moved. Is there a simpler way to make a friendly amendment, or do we want to go through the subamendments? Okay.

Any further discussion? Do we need that reread into the record, the subamendment? Everybody clear? I just want to confirm that our members on the telephone hear this, or do we still need to send a hard copy?

Ms Luff: I can hear you.

The Chair: Mr. Fildebrandt.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Aye.

The Chair: Mr. Piquette.

Mr. Piquette: Yeah. Okay. Thanks.

The Chair: Go ahead.

Mrs. Sawchuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The subamendment, the amendment to the amending motion, is by Mr. Nixon, that the proposed amendment to the motion

be amended by deleting the words "this approval be on an interim basis and that" before the words "the Special Standing Committee on Members' Services form a subcommittee to review this subject matter in addition to the separate issue of complaints between members."

The Chair: Hon. members, having heard the subamendment, everyone in favour, please say aye. Opposed, say no. On the phones? Thank you. The motion is carried. The subamendment is carried.

Now I think we need to move to the amendment. Is that correct, Mr. Clerk?

10:10

Mr. Reynolds: Yes, Mr. Chair. It would be on the amendment as amended.

The Chair: Thank you. On the amendment as amended, telephone members in favour, say aye. In the room, all in favour, say aye. Opposed? The motion is unanimous.

The main motion now as amended. The amended amendment is passed. Now to the amended motion. All in favour, please say aye. That includes those on the telephone. Is that correct? Opposed, say no. The amended motion is carried. Thank you, Members. We took the scenic route on that one.

By the way, for the record – I should have mentioned this at the outset – the policy was in the original discussion item. I wanted to note on the record that I do not have any issue with the suggested process for complaints by an employee against the Speaker being referred to the Ethics Commissioner. That discussion was in the original motion, and I have no objections to that, so it will stand.

We're now at item 4(b), complaints between members, consideration of a subcommittee being formed, as passed at our September 26 meeting. During that discussion members indicated they wanted an opportunity to discuss the matter with their caucus colleagues prior to bringing it back to the committee for a decision. The motion passed at the September 26 meeting reads as follows. Moved by Mr. McIver that

the matter of a subcommittee to address complaints between members be deferred to the next meeting of the Members' Services Committee.

Hon. members, is there a will to strike a subcommittee?

Mr. Reynolds: I think they just did.

The Chair: You're right. They already just did on the first item. So we already have a subcommittee.

Is the committee ready to identify the members for the subcommittee? We need three government caucus members, one Wildrose caucus member, and one PC caucus member.

Mr. Cooper.

Mr. Cooper: Thank you, Mr. Chair. In conversation with my colleagues, I will be the Wildrose member that would like to be appointed to the subcommittee on member-to-member complaints as well as reviewing member-to-staff complaint policy. If you would include me in that motion, that would be wonderful.

I think that in light of some of the previous discussions – and I'm not sure if it's possible as we don't have a member from the third party here today – I might just say that in order to be appointed to the subcommittee, you must be a member of this committee, and as such, I think it's possible to determine who from the third party would likely also serve on the subcommittee. But I'm not sure if it's possible today given the circumstances.

The Chair: It's my best recollection that when this matter was discussed when Mr. McIver was present, he indicated that since he was the only member, he would be the PC representative, the third-party representative.

Is government caucus prepared to identify the three names? Ms Cortes-Vargas.

Cortes-Vargas: Yeah. We were just thinking that we'd divide and conquer the work of the committee. I know Debbie Jabbour had volunteered to be on it and MLA Piquette and MLA Luff. MLA Luff?

Ms Luff: Yeah.

The Chair: Would somebody be prepared to move a motion appointing those members identified?

Mr. Dang: I think I would so move. I would move that the subcommittee to review complaints in the workplace between members and staff be comprised of such members that were just

named – MLA Jabbour, MLA Piquette, MLA Luff, MLA Cooper, and MLA McIver – and be chaired by MLA Jabbour.

The Chair: Having heard the motion, all in favour, please say aye. To members on the telephone, are there any ayes? Anyone opposed? Hearing none, the motion is carried.

Now the review of Members' Services Committee orders. There were three members identified last meeting. I think the intention was to review the various rules considering caucus expenditures as well as the consolidated Members' Services Committee orders. I would hope that the subcommittee taking these areas into consideration – do I need to identify those for the record? Yeah. The names came in after. It will be Mr. Dang, who will be the chair of this subcommittee, Ms Cortes-Vargas, Mrs. Schreiner, Mr. Nixon, and Mr. McIver.

I want to urge them to look at, in referring to the consolidated orders, the membership guidelines for caucus as well as for Members of the Legislative Assembly. I think we had ample discussion on that at the last meeting. With the reading into the record of the names, do we need a motion? Not necessary? Thank you.

We're at the agenda item subcommittee on family-friendly workplace practices and policy, consideration of the subcommittee report. You should have a copy of the final report from the subcommittee, which was provided at the end of last week.

Ms Luff, could you provide an overview of the report and the subcommittee's recommendations?

Ms Luff: Yeah, I can absolutely do that. The subcommittee met several times – I forget the exact number – to discuss ways that we can learn to make the Legislature more family friendly, and we came up with seven recommendations. I do want to note that, like, throughout this process the committee was very focused on ensuring that we are not recommending any sort of perks to MLAs, that we are doing this to try and make the Legislative Assembly more family friendly for everybody who works at or visits the Legislature and the Federal building. Aside from the two recommendations that are changes to the standing orders and changes to the Legislative Assembly Act, all of the other recommendations are really intended to make the entire precinct more family friendly for everybody.

Just going over the recommendations quickly, the first recommendation is changing the standing orders "to explicitly permit Members to bring infants on the floor of the chamber."

10:20

The second recommendation is changing section 34 of the Legislative Assembly Act to

permit Members to be absent from the Legislative Assembly without financial penalty due to pregnancy, child birth or the care of a Member's child following the birth or adoption of that child for one regular Spring or Fall sitting of the Legislative Assembly within one year of the birth of the Member's child or coming into the care of that Member, or in any other circumstance authorized by the Speaker.

I know that's a long recommendation. The wording is based on what is used in Newfoundland, which was what we thought was the best sort of example based on our crossjurisdictional analysis. It would explicitly be putting in a bullet point that folks could be absent to care for a new child and in the other circumstances authorized by the Speaker.

We recognize that folks do get 10 days already for instances where your child might be sick or for whatever other reason, but we wanted to give that flexibility to the recommendation, you know, to

just ensure that any circumstance where someone needed to care for family would be something that could be put into consideration.

Recommendation 3. We had a lot of discussion in terms of just ways that people could feel more comfortable and that families have greater access to the Legislature precincts. The recommendation is that

greater access to the Legislature precincts be provided to the partners and children of Members, as well as the caregivers of Members' children, including access to parking facilities, the Edmonton Federal Building and the Legislature Building.

Recommendation 4 was for improved family-friendly facilities and signage. That one is just around looking at where we can put in more infant change tables in men's and women's bathrooms or family bathrooms, anywhere around, also providing high chairs and booster seats in the Legislature cafeteria, and then improved signage to indicate where those facilities are. That's, you know, at the discretion of the government and Infrastructure in terms of where those new change tables can be that aren't interfering with architecture, et cetera, but there's an interest in having more than there currently are.

Recommendation 5 is that "the Speaker explore the possibility of creating a family room in the Legislature precincts," being a space where parents with perhaps slightly older children who are not infants could take their children. We're flexible on where that is, whether it's in the Legislature itself or whether it's in the Federal building.

The sixth recommendation is surrounding child care feasibility. We did look into what has sort of been done already. Apparently, there has been a space identified in the Federal building, and it is currently in the hands of Human Services about what to do with that. The committee liked the idea of looking into the feasibility, of course being very aware of costs given the current economic situation. We recommend that

the government examine the [feasibility] of creating a childcare facility in the Edmonton Federal Building or elsewhere . . . which includes an assessment of . . . demand by Members and staff, the physical space requirements . . . [and] the estimated costs.

While being very aware of cost and need, we believe that looking into it is a good idea.

Then the seventh and last recommendation is that

a resource guide be prepared for Members who are expecting children or who are new parents to outline the facilities and resources available to them, including a list of accredited childcare facilities near the Legislature precincts and the procedure for obtaining security access for partners, children and caregivers.

This is just to make life a little bit easier. If you were expecting a new baby or looking into adopting a baby and you just need to know exactly what to do, having this guide prepared would be nice. You know, you don't have to do a whole bunch of research yourself; that's provided to you.

Those are our seven recommendations. I, you know, thank all the committee and subcommittee members for their participation. I think we had really productive discussions and came up with these seven recommendations. The only question that I have at this time – sorry. Does someone want to say something?

The Chair: No. Keep going.

Ms Luff: The only question that I have: I've asked that the committee receive this report and approve the report.

Then the other thing is that I'm not sure if we need to make a motion around the changes to the Legislative Assembly Act, that the Members' Services Committee recommend that the Legislative Assembly Act be amended. This has sort of been something that's

been on the table for a long time, and I don't know if that's something that we explicitly have to do as the Members' Services Committee at this time.

I'd open the floor to any questions. I would recommend that the Members' Services Committee adopt the report.

The Chair: Are there any subcommittee members who'd like to add to Ms Luff's report? Mr. Cooper.

Mr. Cooper: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you, MLA Luff. I might just very briefly add, with respect to some of the recommendations, that I think the committee did some very good work. While we don't always see eye to eye on all of the recommendations, I think that, generally speaking, the report is a positive one. I also encourage members of the committee to accept it.

I just might very briefly mention that if anyone is in correspondence with the Minister of Infrastructure, you'd be more than welcome to let him know that if he would like to find an available space for the Leader of the Official Opposition in the Assembly, we would be more than pleased to turn over our closet to turn that into a family room in the Legislature.

The Chair: Noted.

Are there any other questions or comments from subcommittee members?

I would ask the committee clerk to read into the record the motion by Ms Luff that I think is under consideration.

Mrs. Sawchuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The suggested motion is that

the Special Standing Committee on Members' Services approve the report of the subcommittee on family-friendly workplace

practices and policies and that the Speaker on behalf of the committee table the report in the Assembly.

The Chair: Having heard the motion, all in favour, please say aye. On the telephone? All those opposed, please say no. The motion is carried unanimously.

I want to just add to the last items for discussion the usual process on a motion to approve, in this case, a subcommittee report. Letters from myself will be sent to the appropriate ministries. Correspondence on behalf of the Members' Services Committee will be directed to the Minister of Infrastructure regarding the recommendations concerning building and structure improvements and to the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General with respect to any amendments in the Legislative Assembly Act. Those will be followed up on as a result of your approval today.

Hon. members, are there any other business items that you would like to see dealt with today?

I would just indicate that there are no immediate issues that I can recall for a future meeting date, but we will advise accordingly if there are.

Do I obtain a motion, or can I declare it adjourned? A motion. Ms Cortes-Vargas.

Cortes-Vargas: Member Cortes-Vargas.

The Chair: Member Cortes-Vargas . . .

Cortes-Vargas: Thank you.

The Chair: . . . has moved adjournment. All in favour? On the phone? Those opposed? Hearing none, the motion is carried. The meeting stands adjourned.

[The committee adjourned at 10:29 a.m.]

