



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

The 27th Legislature
First Session

Standing Committee
on
Resources and Environment

Tuesday, June 24, 2008
9:02 a.m.

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Standing Committee on Resources and Environment

Prins, Ray, Lacombe-Ponoka (PC), Chair
Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (L), Deputy Chair

Berger, Evan, Livingstone-Macleod (PC)
Boutilier, Guy C., Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (PC)
Drysdale, Wayne, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (PC)
Griffiths, Doug, Battle River-Wainwright (PC)
Hehr, Kent, Calgary-Buffalo (L)
Mason, Brian, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (NDP)
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Bill 23 Sponsor

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[Mr. Prins in the chair]

The Chair: Well, good morning, everyone. I'd like to call this meeting to order. We're having the orientation meeting for the Standing Committee on Resources and Environment. My name is Ray Prins. I'd like to ask everyone around the table to identify themselves, and then I'll go into a few other little notes before we start. There are two or three members, I believe, on the phone, so I'll ask them to identify themselves first.

Mr. Hehr: Kent Hehr, Calgary-Buffalo.

Dr. Swann: David Swann, Calgary-Mountain View.

The Chair: Thank you.
Then we'll go to my right here.

Ms Dean: Shannon Dean, Senior Parliamentary Counsel.

Dr. Massolin: Good morning. I'm Philip Massolin. I'm the committee research co-ordinator from the Legislative Assembly Office.

Ms Friesacher: Good morning. I'm Melanie Friesacher, communications consultant with the Legislative Assembly Office.

Ms Sales: Tracey Sales. I'm also a communications consultant with the Legislative Assembly Office.

Mrs. Kamuchik: Good morning. Louise Kamuchik, Clerk Assistant, director of House services, Legislative Assembly Office.

Mr. Drysdale: Wayne Drysdale, MLA, Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

Mrs. McQueen: Diana McQueen, MLA, Drayton Valley-Calmar.

Mr. Webber: Len Webber, Calgary-Foothills.

Mr. Berger: Evan Berger, MLA, Livingstone-Macleod.

Mrs. Sawchuk: Karen Sawchuk, committee clerk.

The Chair: Thank you very much for those introductions.

I'm just going to remind members and staff that, you know, I hear some BlackBerrys and stuff going on here. Don't have them on the table because they actually interfere with the microphones when they go. Another thing is that the microphones will be operated remotely by *Hansard*, so we don't have to touch these things once we've started.

For those on the phone I can't see your hands, so when we're voting or if you want to get on the speakers' list, you'll have to identify yourself and just let me know when you want to speak. I'll just keep a running list so that everybody will get their turn appropriately.

Before we get into the agenda, I would like to have a motion that we receive the agenda or accept it as it's printed here. Okay. Len Webber. All in favour? That's carried. I didn't hear the people voting on the phone, but I'm assuming that you were in favour of that motion.

Dr. Swann: We'll speak up if we need to.

The Chair: Okay.

We're moving right to number 3 on the agenda, which is orientation, and there are a number of parts to this orientation. First of all, the mandate. What I'll do is just outline briefly what the mandate is. Included with the briefing materials that we have for today's meeting was a document outlining the mandate of the committee. It includes the relevant standing orders and a copy of the motion referring Bill 23 to this committee for review. The mandate for this committee can be found in temporary Standing Order 52.01(1) where it sets out the scope of the subjects within this committee's purview. Those subjects are Agriculture and Rural Development, Energy, Environment, International and Intergovernmental Relations, and Sustainable Resource Development. We're covering five different departments and the items that are referred to us from the Assembly in these different departments.

For letters (b) and (c) on the agenda I'm just going to turn it over to Shannon Dean to address these items. Then if we have questions either on the phone or from members here, I'll just keep that list.

Ms Dean: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I'd like to first touch upon the privileges of this committee. Many of you members heard this briefing as part of your orientation a few months ago, but very briefly, as all members know, this is a committee of the Assembly as opposed to a cabinet policy committee or a standing policy committee. As this is a committee of the Assembly, many of the privileges and immunities of the Assembly flow through to you and the committee. Most importantly, you enjoy the benefits of parliamentary privilege, the key element being protection from defamation throughout the proceedings.

I'd like to refer members to section 13 of the Legislative Assembly Act, and this provides that a member cannot be subject to a civil action or prosecution by reason of any matter brought by the member before the Assembly or a committee of the Assembly or by reason of anything said by the member in the Assembly or any committee of the Assembly. As members are aware, this is a codification of the principle of parliamentary privilege, and it traces back to article 9 of the English Bill of Rights, which dates back to 1689. This provides that the proceedings of parliament cannot be questioned anywhere else.

Finally, one of the key powers of this committee that distinguishes it from other types of committees is that you have the power to summon witnesses. To date, as far as I'm aware, committees in Alberta have not had to resort to using that power. Instead, the approach that's been used is for the committee to extend invitations requesting that officials or certain persons appear. Usually cooperation has been achieved. Of course, if this did not occur, the committee could issue a summons through a warrant from the Speaker. This power is spelled out in section 14 of the Legislative Assembly Act.

Unless there are any questions on that, Mr. Chair, I will just move on to some of the key standing orders.

The Chair: I will ask if there are any questions to Shannon on this. I believe at this point we also have Guy Boutilier. Is he on?

Mr. Boutilier: Yes. Good morning, Mr. Chair and committee members.

The Chair: Okay. Can you introduce yourself?

Mr. Boutilier: Guy Boutilier, MLA for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

The Chair: Thank you very much. We've just started our meeting, Guy, and we're just into item 3(b) on the agenda. I think you probably heard a little bit of what Shannon said.

Mr. Boutilier: I did. Thank you.

The Chair: I'm going to ask any members on the phones if they have questions. Nobody here has questions?

Then we'll just move on to the next section, Shannon. Thank you.

Ms Dean: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Relevant standing orders governing the operations of your committee are temporary standing orders 52.01 through to 52.09 as well as temporary standing orders 74.1 and 74.2.

To summarize, the committee is charged with reviewing whatever matter is referred to it by the Assembly. This may be a bill or some other subject matter. It's important to note that these matters which are referred by the Assembly are the priority for the committee. The case here is that you have the Weed Control Act referred to you, and your requirement is that you report back on or before the fourth week in October.

Another thing that this committee may be charged to do is examine a request from a minister to inquire into a matter within the committee's mandate. The relevant standing order is 52.07(2). This is what occurred last year in connection with a policy field committee that was examining the beverage container recycling regulation. The committee may undertake to study issues on its own initiative through an inquiry. This committee may also undertake to review any regulation within its mandate.

Finally, the committee may wish to examine the annual reports of the departments and agencies within its mandate. Pursuant to Standing Order 52.05 all of these reports are deemed to be permanently referred to the committee. The committee also has the authority to conduct what we call public hearings on any bill or regulation under review. Finally, one of the new provisions this year is the ability of the committee to hold what we call public meetings under Standing Order 52.08. I believe that will be discussed a little bit later on in the agenda.

Those conclude my comments, Mr. Chair.

9:10

The Chair: Thank you very much, Shannon.

Any questions from members present or on the phone?

Seeing none and hearing none, then we will move on to part (d) of number 3, orientation. We'd like to talk about the scope of the review that we have before us, which is Bill 23, the Weed Control Act. Now, Bill 23 was referred to this committee by the Assembly after first reading under temporary Standing Order 74.1 on June 2 in the Legislature this spring. The review of the bill by a committee is different depending on whether it has been referred after first reading or second reading. With only the first reading given to Bill 23, the Assembly has not agreed at this point to the principle of the bill, allowing for a broader scope of review by this committee as we consider the overall subject matter of the bill as opposed to the specific wording it contains.

Assuming that the committee recommend that the bill proceed, our report can be more descriptive in nature than would be appropriate after second reading. The committee has the opportunity to communicate its ideas and concerns related to the bill as opposed to proposing specific amendments to its contents. Having just had first reading, we're debating the merits of the bill, not the specifics of the bill, so we can actually go fairly in depth into these hearings.

Would you like to add to that, Shannon, at this point?

Ms Dean: The only thing I would add is just to highlight the specific standing order. With respect to a bill that's been referred after first reading, the committee is empowered to look at the subject matter as opposed to the technical wording of the bill and report its observations, opinions, and recommendations. Given that the bill has not received second reading, then, again, your scope of review is very broad.

The Chair: It is very broad, so we can go to the stakeholders and ask for all kinds of input and seek input that way.

Any questions from committee members on the phone?

Dr. Swann: No.

The Chair: I'm hearing nothing. It must be pretty quiet in Calgary.

Mr. Drysdale: We're allowed to discuss this with our constituents outside and bring their recommendations here? This isn't confidential information that we're reviewing, is it?

The Chair: No. I believe that Bill 23 as it sits now is completely, totally public information. I believe all members of the Assembly should be out discussing this with their constituents if they want to, and if constituents want to join with other stakeholders, we're going to be advertising for input. Later on in this meeting we're going to discuss some of these issues. If stakeholders out there or constituents want to have input, there will be a process for doing that either directly through the MLA, or they could present directly to this committee at a later date. So I would absolutely recommend that all MLAs discuss this bill with their constituents.

Any other questions?

Then I will go on to the review process and the role of the departments in these types of referrals. The department responsible for Bill 23 is Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development. The department can provide a technical briefing to this committee at its request, which is one of the decision items we'll be considering under agenda item 5 in a few minutes here. The committee must also decide how it wants to approach its review, such as advertising for public input and/or holding public meetings. We will address this as well later on in our agenda. I think that's where we've just touched on your last question, Wayne.

After the committee has gone through this process, we will be reporting. In section (f) I'll talk about the committee report. The Assembly has directed the committee to report on its review of Bill 23 no later than the last week of October. I believe the Assembly starts again on October 14, so we have to report within a couple of weeks of when it starts.

On the direction of the committee the support staff will design and write a draft report for our consideration. Once approved, they will make arrangements for the report's printing and distribution and, I believe, probably for the presentation to the Assembly once it's approved, through the chair, of course.

Any comment or questions from the members?

At this point would you like to comment, Phil? We'll just wait until later. Okay. Thank you.

We will move on to item 4 on the agenda, Committee Orientation. What I'm going to say is that Karen Sawchuk is the committee clerk assigned to this committee. The committee clerk provides administrative and procedural assistance to the committee and is a primary contact for committee business. Any inquiries and correspondence regarding this committee can be sent to Karen, or inquiries can be asked of Karen.

I don't know if you want to tell us how you're going to do that or if you want to add anything at this point, Karen.

Mrs. Sawchuk: Well, that's fine, Mr. Chair. We're kind of the clearing house. We maintain control of all the myriad stacks of paper that come in for the committee and different inquiries and that type of thing.

The Chair: Okay. We do have a number of people supporting this committee, so I'll go on to the next person.

Tracey Sales is with us as well and was introduced a while ago. She is the communications co-ordinator with the Legislative Assembly Office. We'll use her expertise to draft and implement an effective communication strategy based on our discussions. We're going to have to communicate both to stakeholders and then back to the committee.

Melanie Friesacher is the communications co-ordinator and will be working with Tracey as required on this committee. Thank you, Melanie.

Shannon Dean, our Senior Parliamentary Counsel, will be providing assistance and legal advice to the committee from time to time when we need it.

Dr. Philip Massolin, the committee research co-ordinator, and his staff are here to provide nonpartisan research services to the committee and to assist in the drafting of the committee report. Once we have our information pulled together, these people will help us to develop this report and be able to report back.

Louise Kamuchik is with us again, Clerk Assistant and director of House services. She will assist as required to address any procedural issues that may arise. Louise, do you come to all of these meetings?

Mrs. Kamuchik: I love coming to these meetings. They're very interesting.

The Chair: Well, I'm so happy to hear that because there are a number of these committees. There are – what? – five of them.

Mrs. Kamuchik: That's right.

The Chair: They're meeting on different days. You, the researchers, and these staff are working equally hard for each committee?

Mrs. Kamuchik: Well, it keeps you out of trouble. That's why I like to come, and I'm here to help, of course.

The Chair: And Shannon as well. I suppose you're at all the meetings?

Ms Dean: No.

The Chair: No? Okay. You don't want to hear that anyway.

We do have an approved committee budget, and I think we all have a copy of that in our documents here. The committee budget for '08-09 is in the amount of \$144,000. It was on the internal committee website. The budget covers pay to members, travel expenses for meetings, advertising, and hosting during meetings. The budget was approved by the Members' Services Committee in December of '07, so this item is just for information purposes.

I believe that on our desks here we have expense claims so that at the end of the meeting you can hand those in, and they will be dealt with appropriately within our budget.

If there are any more questions on any of the items that we've dealt with – and I see we have another member. I don't know when you joined us; I just looked up and saw you here. Maybe you could introduce yourself as well.

Mr. Mason: Sure. Brian Mason, MLA for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Any questions on the budget at this point, on the advertising budget?

Mr. Boutilier: Mr. Chairman, I would ask just for future meetings if it would be possible that in the agenda, for those of us who are on a conference call, the actual constituency name also be placed by the names of the members of the committee. That would be extremely helpful as well.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you. That's taken as information.

Any other questions, comments? Any questions on the total budget? I'm assuming that when I say the total budget, we're talking \$144,000. It's broken down, so you can ask questions on either the different items or on the total budget. No questions?

Then we'll move on to number 5 on the agenda, Decision Items. We do have to make some decisions regarding the input process for the review of Bill 23 because that's the only business that we have before us right now. This committee is required to report back to the Assembly on this matter no later than the last week in October. However, it is otherwise up to the committee to decide how it wants to approach its review, so there are a number of things we have to decide today regarding the public input process. It's up to the committee to decide its own schedule and procedures, so there are a few items.

9:20

First of all, the technical briefing on the bill. The committee has already scheduled its next meeting for July 9. I guess my first question is: is the committee interested in inviting government officials involved in the drafting of Bill 23 to attend the next meeting and to provide a technical briefing on this bill? I would ask the members present if they have any questions or members on the phone as well if you have any questions on the possibility of having a technical briefing.

Dr. Swann: It sounds like a very appropriate request. I'd look forward to that.

The Chair: Okay. Anyone else?

I think to get a basic overview of the bill, we would need to have their rationale for presenting the bill. I believe the bill is to modernize the Weed Control Act and to repeal the old act, which is probably many years old. I'm not sure when it was done last, but it's just a matter of updating the existing bill. I think we need that technical briefing. Is there any member that would like to make a motion to invite the department of agriculture to provide that briefing? Wayne is making the motion that

the Standing Committee on Resources and Environment invite officials from the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development to provide a briefing on Bill 23 at the July 9, 2008, committee meeting.

That's the motion. Any questions?

Mr. Boutilier: Mr. Chairman, my question. When you say technical briefing, I'd like to just corral this a bit, put a fence around it relative to the input of government officials. Do you have a particular time period for the technical briefing, or is there a suggestion by committee members?

The Chair: Are you talking about just the length of the briefing at that meeting?

Mr. Boutilier: Yeah. That's exactly correct. Is it a five-minute briefing, or is it open ended? I just suggest that the committee members may want to consider a direction to government officials that when they attend, you know, they in a productive and expeditious way cover, I would think, the majority of the details but in an efficient manner of time.

The Chair: I think, Guy, this could be a fairly wide-ranging discussion. I would imagine it would be a half an hour to an hour and then time for questions and answers. I think it's not going to be a five-minute discussion for sure. It will probably be more like an hour.

Mr. Boutilier: Then, of course, having sat in the Legislative Assembly when much detail comes forward occasionally, I'm just wondering, obviously, what the committee members had thought of as a recommended period of time, be it, as you say, Mr. Chairman, a half hour or an hour or what would be deemed to be appropriate for an overview for committee members.

The Chair: Right.

Mr. Boutilier: The risk is that if it's wide open, it's far easier to have a longer rather than a more efficient, expeditious type of process. We want all the information. I'm just suggesting, Mr. Chair, that we put a frame around this. It is in the best interest, I know, of every MLA, who is extremely busy in many functions that they're attending.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you. I hear what you're saying. I think we could probably communicate that back to the department that we would like it fairly concise, but they still have to have the opportunity to touch on all the different aspects of the bill.

Mr. Boutilier: Absolutely. I totally agree, but I think your keyword is "concise."

The Chair: Yeah. Okay.

We have another question. Brian Mason.

Mr. Mason: Thank you, very much, Mr. Chairman. I would find it very useful, since this is a replacement act, if we had the side-by-side sections of the old and the new act. Maybe the briefing could include that.

The Chair: So the rationale of why we're changing parts of the bill.

Mr. Mason: Yeah. It would be easier to follow.

The Chair: Yeah. That's good information, a good suggestion. We'll bring that back to the officials and see what they say about that.

Any other questions or comments?

Mr. Hehr: Yeah. I have a question. Will the regulations dovetail quite significantly with this bill? Maybe Shannon could comment on that. I know I've reviewed the bill. I'm just wondering if in her opinion a discussion of some of the regulations and how they work with this bill would be important as well.

The Chair: Okay. I'll ask Shannon to comment on that.

Ms Dean: It has been my experience that the regulation-making

process typically follows after the bill is in the House and has received its respective readings and become law. I mean, the department officials may have some ideas with respect to what those regulations are going to look like, but I think the question is more appropriately put to them during the technical briefing as to how far along they are in the regulation-drafting process. I would say that they would be in the initial phases.

Mr. Hehr: Thank you.

Ms Dean: Does that answer your question?

Mr. Hehr: Yeah.

The Chair: Okay. Thanks, Kent.

Any other questions, then?

We still have a motion on the table, so if there are no further questions, I'm going to ask all those in favour to indicate. Opposed? I hear nothing, so that motion is carried. Thank you for that.

With the committee's concurrence, then, I will send a letter to the department inviting them to make this presentation at the next meeting. I'll have Karen make the appropriate arrangements, and I'll include some of the discussion suggestions from the members on conciseness and opportunity to ask questions. I believe that probably for the members that won't be at the meeting that if we have written materials for some of the presentations, they should be made available to these members prior to the meeting. I would hope.

Mrs. Sawchuk: Thanks, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you. That will be done.

In part (b) of the decision items here we have public input options, both written submissions and public hearings, and other opportunities. The committee must decide how it would like to communicate with the public. Is it the desire of this committee to conduct public meetings? Would the intent be to determine the level of interest once stakeholders have been notified and/or get public input resulting from advertising when it's completed before deciding on possible public meeting dates? I guess the question is: is it the desire of this committee to hold a public meeting?

Dr. Swann: It strikes me after having gone through a session with this committee last year that one of the more effective processes we used on the beverage container recycling program was to ask people if they would like to submit briefs and at the same time if they would like to present in person. I think that would be a reasonable way to get a sense of just how much interest there is in this and whether the extra cost and time involved in public hearings would be well used. I guess I'm saying that we could gauge that interest by a written submission and a request for a public presentation.

The Chair: I suppose what I determine to be a public hearing is that people could just come to this committee and present to this committee on the date that we determine through the advertising, you know, the closing of the input if we're going to get written input or submissions. People could also present to us directly, and that would be a public hearing. That way we could actually cross-examine these stakeholders and ask them questions as well. I think my view would be that you would advertise for written submissions and/or public input, and that would happen right here in this room.

I have a question here. Wayne.

Mr. Drysdale: Yeah. I think we should also have input from the ag

service boards or the AAAF. You see, they're the ones that implement this act and know as much about it. I think we should at least have their input or maybe even invite them to a meeting and have them give us their input either through the ag service boards or right directly through the AAAF.

Mr. Mason: My comment was along the same line. Maybe we should just identify the groups that would be most interested and send them a letter. I'm assuming municipalities and agricultural organizations would probably be the main ones.

The Chair: Yeah. That's what I was going to get to next: how do we identify these stakeholders, and how do we invite the interested parties? I know that this is a very broad-ranging subject, this Weed Control Act. There are a lot of stakeholders out there that would be interested. I could just myself think of, you know, seed growers and seed sellers, wheat inspectors, municipalities, seed-cleaning plants. There are different farm groups out there. There are custom sprayers, gravel pit operators, oil field operators. There are all kinds of people that would be interested in making presentations.

I think that what I'm going to do is ask Philip if he's got some ideas on how to identify these different groups and how to actually reach them and communicate with them.

9:30

Dr. Massolin: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think I do have some ideas. We're experienced through last year's process in providing these policy field committees with stakeholder lists. We can certainly put together a draft list and sort of provide a brief summary of information as to what these groups are, what they do, who they are, and how they relate to Bill 23. We can come back to this committee or work with the chair, potentially. I guess it depends on what the committee wants in terms of finalizing that list. Then the next step would be to approach those stakeholders for their input.

The Chair: Right. By July 9 we'll have the next meeting, and we should have a list of those stakeholders. Then, I think, the committee can decide if that is complete. Once we decide on our advertising plan, we'll be able to reach all these different stakeholders. Okay?

Mrs. McQueen: Mr. Chair, we'll have the stakeholders, but we'll also advertise in general just so that we don't miss anybody? We want to make sure that everybody has that opportunity.

The Chair: Absolutely. Individuals that are not part of some group could still have input either in writing or they could maybe apply to present directly to us. I think we're probably going to have to watch how long a list of presenters we get. We might have public hearings here for two days if we allow this to go to its full potential. I'm not sure what we want to do with that.

Mr. Mason: Maybe, Mr. Chairman, if we solicit written submissions first, then we could sort through those and decide which groups, whether it would be some or all, would then be invited if they wanted to appear before the committee as well.

The Chair: Well, I think I would suggest that any group that's going to meet here should have a written submission. But if they're going to present to us, I don't want them just reading their written submission because we can read as well.

Mr. Mason: They will.

The Chair: Well, I think that we would like to make good, productive use of our time when we have stakeholders presenting to us.

Mrs. McQueen: If I could just add that I wouldn't want to be saying who could speak before us or not. I think if we invite written and then formal presentations but perhaps put a timeline on that, that would be good. That way they'd know they've got 10 or 15 minutes, whatever it is, and then you're not having, you know, it dragging out.

The Chair: Sure. Okay. I think that in order to make this happen, we're going to need another motion here. I'm going to ask for a motion that

we direct the research co-ordinator to compile a draft stakeholder list for our review so that we can approve that and move forward at the next meeting.

If somebody would make that motion.

Mrs. McQueen: So moved.

The Chair: Diana makes that motion. Any questions or comments?

We'll be able to see that list when you come back. You'll be able to consult with us. I believe that any member that has any suggestions could maybe get them to Philip, and you would have a complete list. It might not be exhaustive at the next meeting, but at least we'll be able to see what the draft list is.

Dr. Massolin: Yeah. I think, Mr. Chair, it'll certainly be a draft list, that needs to be approved by the committee. In terms of input, we would welcome that, but if you could direct that through the committee clerk, that would be the best way to do it.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you. That's probably the best.

Any other questions on that motion, from the table or the phone-in people? No questions. Then I would ask for a vote. All in favour of that motion? I see that's carried. Any opposition? No comment, so that's carried.

At this point we need to make some decisions on communications. I would like to invite our communications staff, Tracey and Melanie, to lead us through their communications decisions or strategy as required. Based on these decisions, a plan will be developed for approval at the next meeting as well.

Go ahead, whoever wants to start.

Ms Sales: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Basically, what we're hearing from the committee, if I'm understanding correctly, is that you're definitely interested in contacting your stakeholders, not only that but the general public as well. What we can do for you for the next meeting is prepare a communications plan outlining some strategies for how to contact the general public based on your decisions. For instance, one of the things that we've done in the past is suggest that you put out an ad, and in the ad you can request that people provide written submissions. You can also indicate within the ad that the committee might choose to ask people to present orally at a later date and then ask people to indicate on their written submission whether or not they would be interested in doing so. It does give you a little bit of insight as far as if people are interested in presenting orally for the committee as well. That is one strategy that committees have used in the past.

Because this issue is going to be, I think, very interesting to the rural public, our plan would probably include advertising in Alberta's weekly papers because definitely the community papers are

a primary source for rural communities as far as their news, that sort of thing. For the next meeting we can definitely have a plan in place to present to the committee. We can have a draft ad as well for you to approve so that we can get things going.

The Chair: Okay. Anything else? Any questions on the ideas?

If there are no questions from members on this communications plan, then what we need is another motion to direct these people to begin the communications strategy. I would suggest a motion that our committee direct the communications co-ordinator to prepare a draft communications plan for review and approval at the next meeting.

Wayne makes that motion. Any discussion? All those in favour, indicate. Anybody on the phone? Opposed? That's carried. Thank you very much.

There is going to be some background research material required, so I'd like to turn the floor over to Philip to review some of the research options that may be pursued at the direction of the committee. The question is: would the committee like to direct that the research co-ordinator compile a background briefing or any other research materials for the next meeting of the committee?

Maybe, Philip, you can run us through that.

Dr. Massolin: Okay. Thanks again, Mr. Chair. I just want to give the committee a brief orientation as to what the research staff can provide for this committee. As you mentioned early on, the research section will provide nonpartisan research. You've heard this before. Just to reiterate, that means research support for the committee at large as opposed to individual committee members.

The other thing that I'll go into right now is just simply some of the research support we can provide. We've already talked about the draft stakeholder list that we'll put together for the next meeting. After that we can certainly lend assistance in terms of summarizing written submissions, oral submissions, providing analysis there as well to help expedite the committee in terms of getting through that information.

Another thing we can do, potentially for the next meeting depending on what the committee decides, is prepare a cross-jurisdictional comparison of Bill 23 to see how it stacks up with like legislation across Canada and potentially other jurisdictions. We'll await the committee's decision in that respect.

We can provide other research as it arises throughout the committee's proceedings throughout the summer and fall.

Finally, as you mentioned, Mr. Chair, earlier on in your statements, we lend assistance as well in preparing the final report, which is to be tabled in the Assembly in October.

I don't know if there are any questions or comments there.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Phil. Any questions or comments from members here or on the phone?

With this background research that you're going to do, Phil, would that also include comparisons of the old bill to the new bill so that we could see the rationale for changing it, or will that come from the department?

Dr. Massolin: Yes. I think that is the request that is going to be made to the department. That was the decision as I understand it.

The Chair: Okay. Then we can compare your information to theirs, and we can come to a decision at the end.

Dr. Massolin: Right.

The Chair: If we want the research co-ordinator to move forward with some information for us, we need another motion to ask the research co-ordinator to compile for review at the next committee meeting the information that we require. Do we have that motion? Brian makes the motion. Any questions, comments? From the phones? No comments. All in favour? On the phone nobody is in opposition? That means it's carried. Thank you very much. Then we have everything set in place for the next meeting. We're going to have all this information.

9:40

We need to talk about our meeting schedule as a result of the decisions made at today's meeting. Right now I anticipate that following our meeting on July 9, the next meeting for this committee will be in late August or early September. I don't think we have to decide on that meeting yet, do we? We'll probably decide that at the next meeting. At that meeting we'll consider the input we have received and whether the committee wishes to pursue a schedule of public meetings on Bill 23. So that's just information for the next meeting. We will decide at that point when we will have the next meeting, after we've got all this information.

That brings us to number 6 on the agenda, Other Business. Is there any other business that committee members would like to raise at this time? I'm going to ask that to the members here first, and then if I don't see any hands, we'll go to the telephones and see if there's any other business on your minds. I don't see anything.

Mrs. Sawchuk: Actually, Mr. Chair, if I could make one point. I was looking at our schedule for the Wednesday, July 9, meeting. Currently we have it down for 10 a.m. to noon. I believe that with the number of documents that are going to be coming back to the committee and with the briefing that we're going to be asking the department to present, we may in fact need some additional time.

The Chair: Okay. What you want to do, then, is either start earlier or go later. Is that correct?

Mrs. Sawchuk: Yes, Mr. Chair. I think we should add an hour onto it.

Mr. Mason: Go faster.

The Chair: Go faster? Okay. We can do that, too.

What we need is a motion, then, to actually change that meeting time.

Mrs. Sawchuk: We don't need a motion, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: We can do that by consensus? Okay.

Mrs. McQueen: I suggest that we start at 9 a.m. instead.

The Chair: Yes, 9 is fine with me. We'll start at 9 and go till noon. Is that correct?

Mrs. Sawchuk: Yes. That's okay. I'll make the correction on the site, then.

The Chair: That will be indicated on your next communications.

Any other business from the telephone people, if there's none here, for this meeting?

Dr. Swann: I think we should have a bit of a discussion about how

we set the agenda or the issues that should come before this committee. I know we are required to make a priority of those issues referred to us by the Legislature. I also think that many of us face resource and environment questions and should be free to initiate these issues to the committee for consideration for research, review, and recommendation to the Legislature. I'd like to hear further discussion about that and a process for submitting issues for consideration by this committee.

The Chair: Okay. I've heard the question. Does everybody else understand the question? Any discussion on that from other members?

Mr. Hehr: I'm in complete agreement. I think our committee has some real opportunity to put forward some initiatives on things like, you know, more environmentally friendly things we could be doing here in Alberta. If we come together with some ideas around this table on what areas we would like to do a little better on here in Alberta, I think that's a really good initiative, that we should be exploring and setting that agenda sooner rather than later to make the year or the next three and a half as productive as possible.

The Chair: Thank you.
Any other comments?

Mrs. McQueen: Just to ask about the process in the past, if you could just say how that was before. Was it brought through the chair, through the committee? Just a little bit of history on how we set agendas in the past.

The Chair: Thank you very much.
I'll just defer, then, to Shannon. Maybe you could explain how this has been done in the past and what our priorities are.

Ms Dean: We don't have a huge history. We just have last year to draw upon. There was one committee that didn't have a matter referred to it by the Assembly, so it did undertake to examine an issue. The way it was handled was basically a vote through the committee in terms of what it was going to deal with. I think it was affordable housing, at the end of the day.

The Chair: Go ahead, Diana.

Mrs. McQueen: Yeah. Then if, let's say, I wanted to bring something forward, we'd bring it, and then it would be a vote whether we're going to deal with it as an agenda item.

The Chair: That's what I presume. What I would like to see is that there would be some kind of a notice of motion or some kind of preparation so that people aren't just popping up their hands and saying, "Let's do this. Let's do that," because we do have priorities under the standing orders. Anything that's referred to us from the Legislature takes priority. Anything that's already being dealt with by committees or special committees we can't deal with because it's already being dealt with. So there are some rules around what we can and can't discuss.

The other part of it is that we do have a budget. We have time limitations. Every one of us is busy. There's no use running around trying to deal with issues if we don't have time to deal with them properly. You don't want to overload the committee to the point where you can't do a good job. We have to be very diligent and, I think, make informed decisions based on importance plus our ability to actually make a difference. I think we have to be very careful how we decide which items we would want to undertake to review.

Mr. Hehr: Hearing what you said there, we could do this, I think, in a round-table discussion and discuss whether the undertaking would be too onerous or not for the committee. If we all brought our ideas to, say, a one hour or one and a half hour discussion of priorities, I think that would lead to some fruitful negotiation between the group as to what we see as doable.

The Chair: Okay.
I also see Diana's hand up here. Go ahead.

Mrs. McQueen: Thank you. Maybe what we could do just following the discussion from yourself, Mr. Chair, is for the next meeting perhaps have a draft process that we would follow so that we wouldn't have to redo this, kind of vote on a process that we're going to follow for the next agenda. It would be nice to have something in draft form.

The Chair: For developing an agenda?

Mrs. McQueen: Yeah. On how we're going to, you know, develop agendas and move through the process of doing that, if that's possible.

The Chair: Sure enough.

Mr. Boutilier: Mr. Chairman, just on that point and also the point made earlier by Kent, I also would ask a question. I observed on CPAC the standing policy committees in the House of Commons. What role can the committee play relative to summoning a minister of the Crown responsible for a particular ministry on a subject area that we may be discussing to appear in front of the committee as well? I'm wondering if we have any previous experience in that regard.

The Chair: I'm going to ask Shannon to comment on whether we have any previous experience in that area.

Ms Dean: Mr. Chairman, typically if ministers appear before committees, they do so by accepting an invitation.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you. Does that satisfy you, Guy?

Mr. Boutilier: Well, with all due respect, accepting an invitation – I heard the mandate at the very beginning of the committee, where, in fact, it was indicated that we could be summoning Albertans to our committee, so I'm assuming that that process is to all Albertans, which would include ministers of the Crown.

Ms Dean: Mr. Chair, if I may.

The Chair: Yeah. Go ahead.

Ms Dean: There are some limitations with respect to summoning ministers and members of the House. We don't have any experience in that, so I would have to undertake to look at that further. But my preliminary response would be that it would have to be through an order of the Assembly to summon a minister of the Crown.

Mr. Boutilier: Just on that point, I do know that ministers quite frequently do appear in front of House of Commons standing committees, which is a similar process to our Legislative standing committees that we hold. I would think that we may want to look at rather than an invitation, you know, to a minister, just to be very

clear – I think we should really research that. This committee, of course, is a committee that is looking for important information. A minister responsible for such important areas, I would assume, obviously would be willing to come. Consequently, I'd like more detail, rather than just an invitation, on the powers of the committee that we have by the Legislature.

9:50

Ms Dean: Mr. Chair, if I may supplement. As far as I'm aware, the committees in Alberta have never had to resort to using the summons power. Ministers have accepted invitations to appear.

The Chair: Okay. We can look into that, Guy.

Mr. Boutilier: Yeah. I guess the point is that we want to, obviously, peel the onion back to deal with the real issues, so it's very logical for a minister of the Crown in whatever topic area we're talking about to be included as a courtesy to them and for the expertise that they bring.

The Chair: Thank you very much.
Brian.

Mr. Mason: Thanks very much, Mr. Chairman. Unfortunately, I'll be on vacation at the next meeting, and I won't be here, so I just wanted to make a couple of suggestions with respect to the process. It seems to me that any committee member should be able to put something that they want to talk about on the agenda and be given, you know, a few minutes to talk to the committee about it. After that, I think it's the committee's decision.

Drawing from my municipal experience, we often operated by asking for the administration to prepare a report. That would be the first step to getting something. Maybe we could deal with it in that way. A motion would be put asking for the research people to prepare a report for a meeting, and then coming out of that, the committee could decide if they wanted to take it up as an issue. I think the committee has got to be the ultimate decision-maker with respect to where we go with things, but I think every member should have a chance, first, to make a case. If the committee feels that there's enough interest in the issue, then the committee could take further action, which might include directing staff to research it for a subsequent meeting.

The Chair: Thanks.

My take on that, I guess, and the way I understand the process, would be that if some person wanted to have something on the agenda, they would first have to indicate through the clerk to the chair or to the committee that they would like to have some discussion on some type of an issue for the next meeting. If the committee then decides by vote or consensus that they wish to go that route and investigate or discuss a certain issue, they would have to pass a motion and then direct it back to the research or to the ministry or to stakeholders to actually get them there. But I think the process should be that whichever member wants to bring something, they should do that in writing to the clerk first. That way it would come onto our agenda so that we can have a bit of a notice ahead of time that these ideas are coming forward. Then it goes through the

committee process to decide whether or not we want to go on that route.

We may find after some consideration that these issues are already being dealt with by the ministry or by some special committee that's been appointed to deal with these things, and we may feel that we have other priorities. There's only so much time, and in order to do a good job, you need to dedicate some time. Plus you might have one or two or three items there, and we'd say that this is not a priority at this point in time. The committee will have those discussions at such time that they come up. Does that sound reasonable?

Anything else? Any other business here for members on the phone or the members here?

Dr. Swann: Would you just clarify what decision we've made now about tabling issues for consideration and how decision-making will proceed?

The Chair: Okay. I'm going to just ask Karen to maybe outline that. I think I've just covered it. It'll be in *Hansard* as well.

Mrs. Sawchuk: Thank you, Mr. Chair. If members have items that they'd like the committee to consider at the July 9 meeting, if they could have their topics, their submissions, in to me by next Wednesday, then we can include that on our agenda. In previous committees what we've asked is that there be even just one paragraph saying, "This is what we would like the committee to consider," so that members are aware of what they'll be dealing with or discussing.

The Chair: That sounds reasonable.

Dr. Swann: Thank you very much. I think it'll help us to be more proactive rather than reactive to the Legislature and have some really dynamic meetings around issues of concern. I'm thinking of issues as diverse as ethanol in Alberta, our approach to game ranching, and some of the concerns about wasting disease. I'm thinking about clean coal and what that means for Alberta. I mean, there is a host of pressing issues that Albertans are raising to us. It would be good to be able to say that we have a number of these issues on our agenda and that we're actually going to work through them on a prioritized basis as opposed to reacting to what's provided through the Legislature.

The Chair: Okay. Any other comments or questions?

I think we're at the end of our agenda, are we not?

Okay. I'd just like to remind everyone of the date of the next meeting. It's July 9, and we're starting at 9 a.m., not 10. The agenda today says 10, but it will be at 9 a.m. on July 9.

If there are no further comments or questions or input for this meeting, I'm going to call for a motion to adjourn. I see Wayne's hand went up first. All in favour? That's carried.

Thank you very much. See you July 9.

[The committee adjourned at 9:57 a.m.]

