



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

The 31st Legislature
Second Session

Select Special Committee
on Electoral Boundaries

Tuesday, June 30, 2026
2 p.m.

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Select Special Committee on Electoral Boundaries

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[Mr. Lundy in the chair]

The Chair: Good afternoon, everyone. I'd like to call this meeting of the Select Special Committee on Electoral Boundaries to order and welcome everyone in attendance.

My name is Brandon Lundy, MLA for Leduc-Beaumont and chair of the committee. I will now ask that members and those joining the committee at the table introduce themselves for the record. We'll begin to my right.

Mr. Rowswell: MLA Garth Rowswell, Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright.

Ms Ganley: Kathleen Ganley, Calgary-Mountain View. Good afternoon, everyone.

Ms Gray: Good afternoon. Christina Gray, MLA for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Mr. Koenig: Good afternoon. Trafton Koenig, office of Parliamentary Counsel.

Ms Robert: Good afternoon. Nancy Robert, clerk of *Journals* and committees.

Mr. Roth: Good afternoon. Aaron Roth, committee clerk.

The Chair: All right. Thank you, everyone.

I'd now ask that those joining us online introduce themselves. I will begin with MLA Wiebe. Please go ahead.

Mr. Wiebe: MLA Ron Wiebe, Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

The Chair: Thank you, sir.

MLA de Jonge, please go ahead.

Ms de Jonge: Good afternoon, everyone. Chantelle de Jonge, MLA for Chestermere-Strathmore.

The Chair: All right. Thank you very much.

For the record, I will note the following substitution. Mr. Garth Rowswell is substituting for the hon. Mrs. Sawyer.

We do have a few housekeeping items before we turn to the business at hand. Please note that the microphones are operated by *Hansard*, so members do not need to turn them on and off. Members participating remotely should ensure they are prepared to speak or vote when called upon, and videoconference participants are encouraged to have their cameras on if possible when speaking. Committee proceedings are being live streamed on the Internet and broadcast on Alberta Assembly TV. Please set your cellphones and other devices to silent for the duration of the meeting.

With that, we can turn to approval of our agenda. Are there any changes or additions to the draft agenda? I see MLA Rowswell with his hand up. Please go ahead.

Mr. Rowswell: Yeah. I'd like to move to be allowed to submit a motion from the floor.

The Chair: All right. MLA Rowswell has asked for a motion to – do you just want to give the committee a brief overview of your intention with that?

Mr. Rowswell: Yeah. I'd like to move that the agenda be amended to extend the end time from 3 to 4 just to allow more time to make sure we have enough time to get through everything.

The Chair: Okay. Let me just check with the table here.

All right. Any further discussion on MLA Rowswell's request to make his motion? MLA Gray, please go ahead.

Ms Gray: Only to say that I also looked at the agenda and what's before us and the number of motions that have been submitted, and I think more time may be needed, so I would support this.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you very much.

I will call the question on allowing the motion from the floor. For those online we are going to try a little hybrid voting today, so we're just going to ask for voice votes that occur at the same time as those in the room. When I call a vote, we can all be prepared. This will be our practice run on this. All those in favour of the motion as presented by MLA Rowswell, please say aye. Perfect. Any opposed? That motion is carried.

Now, I believe, MLA Rowswell, you are able to officially make your motion to extend now that you have consent to do so. Please go ahead.

Mr. Rowswell: I'd like to move that the agenda be amended to extend the meeting end time from 3 p.m. to 4 p.m.

The Chair: All right. Thank you. I think we might be pulling that up on the screen. I'll ask for any discussion on that. We heard some comments in the previous motion.

Seeing none, I am prepared to call this question. Again, we'll do it in the room and online at the same time. All those in favour of the motion, please say aye. Any opposed? Hearing none, that motion is carried.

We can proceed on to our next – missed a set. All right. Would anyone like to move to approve our agenda as amended? We'll let MLA Rowswell take the triple crown here. So moved by MLA Rowswell that the Select Special Committee on Electoral Boundaries approve the proposed agenda as amended for its June 30, 2026, meeting.

Any discussion?

Seeing none, all those in favour, please say aye. Any opposed? All right. That motion is carried.

We can now move on to approval of minutes from the previous meeting. Are there any errors or omissions to note in the draft minutes? MLA Gray, please go ahead.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. No errors or omissions, but just under this agenda item. Assuming there are no concerns from anyone else, I imagine we're about to approve the minutes from this previous meeting. Someone asked me about the letter from the Acting Chief Justice. In previous meetings we clarified that once meeting minutes are approved and letters received, all of this stuff becomes public, but when I go to the public committee website, I don't see an easy-to-access place to get that information.

As we are going through this step and we're approving minutes from the previous meetings, I would just like to ask: where can members of the public go to see previous meeting minutes, and is there an option to make that more obvious or more accessible by putting it on the public committee website?

The Chair: Sure. I might turn to the table for a brief comment on that.

Go ahead.

Ms Robert: Sure. Thanks, Mr. Chair. Thanks very much for the question, Ms. Gray. You're right; they're not easy to find. They are

available on the library website. There is a link on the committee's website, but it is a bit of a slog to get through, so we are working with our IT branch and the Legislature librarian on just what you're suggesting, to have, like, just a button to press on the committee's website that will take you directly to the minutes. I can't promise that it'll be done tomorrow, but we are definitely working on developing that.

The Chair: Go ahead, MLA Gray.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much for that answer, and I think that will be a good improvement because this probably impacts committees other than this one as well. My one comment that I'll just put on the record is that right now the minutes become, like, one long PDF with all the documents embedded inside of it. I think for accessibility and usability it would be helpful if individual documents were posted when this system goes live. I just thought I'd mention that.

The Chair: Thank you, MLA Gray, for bringing that forward.

With that, I'm looking for a motion to approve our minutes from the previous meeting. Who wants to go ahead? Anyone? MLA Rowswell is on a roll. All right. So moved by MLA Rowswell that the Select Special Committee on Electoral Boundaries approve the draft minutes as distributed for its June 9, 2026, meeting.

Any discussion?

Seeing none, all those in favour, please say aye. Any opposed, please say no. Hearing none, that motion is carried.

We can move on to our agenda item 4, requests from the independent advisory panel. Hon. members, a letter from the chair of the independent advisory panel was received last week and posted on the committee's internal website. In the letter the chair asked that the committee approve the panel's request for access to a number of records from the '25-26 Electoral Boundaries Commission. The panel has also requested that the committee authorize the engagement of certain individuals to provide supports and advice to the panel to assist them in doing their work.

We will now consider debate under agenda item 4(a) on records. We will begin with the records of the commission that the panel requested. Now I'd like to open the floor to members for discussion or motions. I saw MLA Rowswell with his hand up. Please go ahead, sir.

Mr. Rowswell: I'd like to make a motion.

The Chair: Sure. Go ahead.

Mr. Rowswell: Okay. I'd like to move that the Select Special Committee on Electoral Boundaries request the Legislative Assembly Office to provide the independent advisory panel access to and the use of the following records held by the Legislative Assembly Office: (a) summaries of the written submissions and oral presentations made to the 2025-2026 Alberta Electoral Boundaries Commission; (b) supplementary input and material received by the 2025-2026 Alberta Electoral Boundaries Commission through its public meetings; (c) copies of the stakeholders list used by the 2025-2026 Alberta Electoral Boundaries Commission; (d) selected articles on electoral redistribution prepared by the Legislative Assembly Office for the 2025-2026 Alberta Electoral Boundaries Commission.

The Chair: All right. Thank you, sir. If you just want to confirm on the screen that that is the motion you're moving.

Mr. Rowswell: Yes, it is.

The Chair: All right. Would you like a brief opportunity to speak to it?

2:10

Mr. Rowswell: Sure. Yeah. Government Motion 37 is clear in clause C(f)(i) that the panel may have

the use of any information and statistics that the independent advisory panel considers relevant to its mandate, including any information and statistics gathered and input received by the Electoral Boundaries Commission most recently appointed under the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act, and any records held by the Legislative Assembly Office.

Our job on this committee is to ensure that the panel has access to all the resources they need to complete the work. Supporting the independent advisory panel request promotes efficiency, ensures that the independent advisory panel benefits from the institutional knowledge gained by the Electoral Boundaries Commission work, provides them access to important stakeholder perspectives, and equips the IAP with information they need to complete their work in an informed, independent, and cost-effective manner. Providing the IAP with access to records and materials gathered by the Electoral Boundaries Commission ensures they benefit from the important stakeholder and public engagement that the public commission already conducted, and granting this request would be in accordance with Government Motion 37.

The Chair: All right. Thank you, sir.

Are there any other members wishing to join this debate? MLA Ganley, please go ahead.

Ms Ganley: Yes, Mr. Chair. I have an amendment to move, and I believe you may have it already. The amendment would strike out "provide the independent advisory panel" and substitute "provide the independent advisory panel and the committee".

The reasons for this are just mostly in the interest of full transparency. The evidence that was before the commission is on the public record. It is accessible, but the summary is not. My understanding is that this was a summary of the evidence that was prepared for the commission, and I think it's just worth everyone having that information. I think if the panel is viewing something that is going to shape their read of the evidence, it's really important for us all to have this. The reason I'm concerned is that the commission themselves – all of them were in the room for all of the evidence, so they got sort of an overall view of what was going on whereas neither this committee nor the advisory panel reporting to it were in the room for that evidence.

The concern is that when you say "summary," what is being looked at? I'll give you an example here. For example, submissions in favour of sort of cutting Lethbridge up into a pizza were outnumbered by submissions that said that that community of interest should be kept together, like, significantly, many, many, many to 1. I think that that is relevant information. Simply to say that, you know, somebody said that we should carve it up like a pizza and somebody said that a city has its own interests isn't, in my view, necessarily an accurate summary.

I'm not saying that that's what the summary said; I have no idea what the summary says. I haven't seen the summary. But I do think that it is important for everyone to have access to that information and make sure that it reflects the weight of public opinion because I think the commission did incredible work, and I think Albertans did incredible work coming forward and providing that information.

I'm also not entirely sure, like, what a stakeholder list would be, so it would just be interesting to see what that is, and I think it's

important for everyone who's involved in the decision to have all the relevant information.

The Chair: Thank you, MLA Ganley.

Is there anyone else wishing to join this debate? MLA Rowswell, I see your hand. Please go ahead, sir.

Mr. Rowswell: Yeah. Government Motion 37 makes it clear in clause C(f)(i) that the panel have access to these resources. Supporting this amendment would put into question the independence of the panel. We have full faith in their ability to do their work. It's not this committee's role to do the work of the IAP; it is to ensure that they have the resources to fulfill their role. So I think given that, we would advise to vote no to this amendment.

The Chair: Thank you, MLA Rowswell.

Is there anyone else wishing to join? MLA Ganley, please go ahead.

Ms Ganley: Yeah. I mean, I think that's a significant mis-characterization of Government Motion 37. Had the government wanted an independent panel to advise them, well, they already had one. Had they wanted that, they could have drafted their motion as such, but they did not. Instead, they chose to set up a process where MLAs will be responsible for drawing the boundaries. Now we are being told that not only are we responsible for drawing the boundaries, which is entirely inappropriate – I agree with that, Mr. Chair; it's entirely inappropriate – but we are meant to do so without seeing the information based on which we are being advised. This is, I mean, incredibly problematic. If the government had wanted to set up a second panel, they could have done that. That's not what they've chosen to do. They've chosen to set up a process where politicians pick their voters.

I guess I would be remiss if I did not add at this moment that we continue to participate in this process, despite the fact that we get outvoted at every possible turn, because it is important for the public to bear witness. It is important for the opposition to put objections on the record. I think the idea that somehow in this entirely inappropriate process the inappropriate thing isn't that MLAs are drawing the boundaries but that the MLAs who are drawing the boundaries are asking for access to the same information that the panel who is providing us advice gets is absurd, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: All right. Thank you.

Are there any other members wishing to join on this amendment? MLA Gray, please go ahead.

Ms Gray: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I absolutely support my colleague's amendment which, to be really clear, does not infringe on the independence of the advisory panel. The language is quite simply changing it from giving the independent advisory panel access to summaries of written submissions, supplementary input and material, copies of stakeholder lists, and selected articles as prepared; it's just giving a copy to us as committee members as well. It increases transparency because it allows us to see what information and inputs were going into what this panel is doing.

I do have questions about what (a), (b), (c), and (d) may entail. I understand that summaries of written submissions and oral presentations exist and were already created for the previous process and so will be reused here. The difference is that the previous commission were all in the room for everything, so the summary was maybe a reminder. It is my hope that all five members that have been appointed to this new, illegitimate, and likely unconstitutional panel are reading everything and not relying only

on the summaries. I think that's really important, and that will be a major difference between the first process and now this second process.

For supplementary input and materials received, I'd actually be interested in hearing more, given this request is going to the Legislative Assembly Office, as to what information would be provided as of (b). I wouldn't necessarily need to ask these questions except for it seems that the government is not supportive of us being able to see these materials based on the one member who has spoken so far. So I would be interested. I'm just going to pause my comments at this point to ask the question: what is likely to be provided to the advisory panel under (b) based on how the Legislative Assembly Office is reading this draft motion?

The Chair: Thank you, MLA Gray.

Does the table have any information that you'd like to add?

Mr. Roth: Thanks, Mr. Chair. As I understand the request, there were written submission summaries similar to what committees of the Assembly receive when doing reviews and that sort of thing. There were some summaries of oral presentations, that sort of thing. Supplementary input would be things like PowerPoint presentations, if additional maps were provided, that sort of thing, to the commission. Stakeholders would be folks at the beginning of the review, letting them know there was a commission and letting them know that there would be an opportunity to participate in the process under the legislation, et cetera. Yeah. So that would be the information I can provide.

2:20

The Chair: All right. Thank you very much.

MLA Gray, go ahead.

Ms Gray: Thank you. Just in response to that. Am I correct, am I understanding this? Right now if you go to the Elections Alberta website, you can see all public submissions. Like, that's publicly available and listed. There's *Hansard*, which provides the record of everything that was said in the presentation meetings. You mentioned PowerPoint. Right now if somebody prepared a PowerPoint and submitted it to the commission, that currently isn't available on the Elections Alberta website.

Mr. Roth: Yes, that's correct.

Ms Gray: Okay. So that kind of thing is tied to the public record and not new or novel, but also currently the public can't find that document. And the stakeholder lists include the people who were being engaged to come and invite feedback.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

MLA Ganley, please go ahead.

Ms Ganley: Yeah. I'm just trying to understand here what it is we're dealing with because I will admit it's not clear to me what problem is being solved by the government by rejecting this amendment, like why it would be problematic for us to see the inputs. There's the potential that people submitted specific maps which form no part of the public record but which will now go to the panel but not to the public and not to the MLAs on this committee. Sorry; is that correct? Is that the understanding of . . .

The Chair: Sorry. I'll defer to the table here.

Mr. Roth: Sorry. Just to clarify, you're asking if those previous documents were available to the public? I mean PowerPoints and that sort of thing. I mean, the only way they were public was when they

were displayed, but there would have been other supplementary material that would have been provided by people. They may have drawn a map of their own, for instance, and that wasn't necessarily made public. That was just to the commission itself. Yeah.

Ms Ganley: So my understanding would be correct, then, that what this motion would do is provide those maps to the panel, but they wouldn't be public or available to the members of the committee.

Mr. Roth: I guess all I would say is that they are not currently. You know, in terms of interpreting the text of the motion, I probably wouldn't get into that, but as it stands right now those particular pieces are not on the website, for instance, of Elections Alberta, where the other documents are.

The Chair: All right. Thank you to the table.

Are there any other members wishing to join on this amendment? Go ahead, MLA Gray.

Ms Gray: I'm just going to reiterate that I support this amendment. I think we as committee members who, as part of this illegitimate process, are going to be recommending to the Legislature new maps potentially – if there are maps that have been presented that are going to go to this new advisory panel, they should be public. This should be transparent. It should be on the record.

It's so frustrating to me that with all of the public concern about this process that the government has invented with Government Motion 37, with all the lack of clarity about what Government Motion 37 says or doesn't say, a simple amendment to just say, "Great; let's provide all these records that the advisory panel has asked for but let's also get a copy so we know what's been submitted," can't be supported by government members. The resistance to any kind of transparency, honesty, accountability is such a disservice to the public and continues to drive home to me how likely unconstitutional this entire process is.

It's really frustrating, Mr. Chair, so I fully support my colleague's move here. I think having this stuff does not impact the independence, as the member across the way spoke to when he was referencing section C(f)(i), which includes the request for access to information. The government chose to put a legislative committee of elected MLAs into this process. They should be allowing us to see the information that decisions are being made on. I think that I could say this to anyone on the street and they would nod their head and agree. The government's rationale for not allowing some measure of transparency here doesn't hold water, and I continue to be appalled at how the government is proceeding with this committee.

The Chair: Thank you, MLA Gray.

Are there any other members wishing to join the debate on this amendment? Oh, MLA Ganley, go ahead.

Ms Ganley: Yeah. I think, in closing, what I would just leave with the UCP members of this committee is that we have an independent advisory panel, we have a chair, and they were picked, I'm guessing, by someone other than you specifically, though I won't ask to see the internal workings of your caucus. We have a chair who's made multiple donations. We have a member who is registered to lobby both the Premier and the Finance minister, the Finance minister being, I think everyone knows, one of the ridings that is extremely at issue. We have another panel member who has drawn maps, problematic maps, maps that the average member of the public would look at and call transparent gerrymandering and who has apparently also been just mere days before his appointment to this panel organizing a fundraiser for that same Minister of

Finance at which he was in attendance. I mean, I would like to think that the members of this committee were not aware of that, that this person was fund raising for the Finance minister, who has a deep interest in this matter.

I mean, this is why we moved the motion. I understand that things can get hyperbolic in these legislative committees, but the reason we moved a motion to prevent people with partisan involvement like that is because partisan considerations have no place in this process. It is not about political parties. It's about the voters, and it is about their rights. And I think at the end of the day – like, what is so concerning about these maps that are apparently going to this panel that members of the public and members of the opposition can't see them?

The Chair: Thank you, MLA Ganley.

Are there any other members wishing to join on this amendment?

Seeing none, I'm prepared to call the question on the amendment. All those who are in favour of the amendment, please say aye. Any opposed, please say no. All right.

That motion is defeated.

Ms Gray: Recorded.

The Chair: A recorded vote has been requested. Those in the room who are in favour of the amendment, please raise your hands.

Mr. Roth: Hon. Ms Gray, hon. Ms Ganley.

The Chair: All right. Those in the room who are opposed to the amendment, please raise your hand.

Mr. Roth: Mr. Rowswell.

The Chair: All right. For those members participating remotely, please turn on your cameras and microphones if you wish to vote. When the committee clerk calls your name, please indicate whether you are in favour or against the amendment.

Mr. Roth: Mr. Wiebe, Ms de Jonge.

Mr. Chair, total for the amendment, two . . .

The Chair: You didn't ask them how they voted.

Mr. Roth: Oh, pardon me.

Mr. Wiebe.

Mr. Wiebe: I'm opposed.

Mr. Roth: Ms de Jonge.

Ms de Jonge: Opposed.

Mr. Roth: Mr. Chair, total for the amendment, two; total against, three.

The Chair: All right. Thank you.

That amendment is defeated.

We can return to debate on the motion. Are there any other members wishing to join the debate on the motion? MLA Ganley, please go ahead.

2:30

Ms Ganley: My apologies, Mr. Chair. This isn't really directly on the motion. I don't know if it's because of the screen that's being displayed, but my understanding is that it's standard practice for members to turn on their cameras particularly when they're voting or particularly for a recorded vote, and I just can't tell if that happened.

The Chair: Their cameras were on.

Ms Ganley: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: They were there, and they were both looking very dapper, I can assure you.

All right. Oh, sorry. MLA Gray, please go ahead.

Ms Gray: Thank you so much. On the motion I feel like I have a sense of what (a), (b), and (c) all include. For (d) if the Legislative Assembly can just tell us what selected articles on electoral redistribution were prepared for the previous commission. What would be included in this motion with section (d)?

The Chair: All right. Thank you, MLA Gray.

Does the table have any comment on section (d)?

Mr. Roth: In terms of articles I know that there were some academic articles, for instance, put together, law review articles. These are things that the library would have put together, and that's what I'm assuming is being referred to there.

The Chair: All right. Thank you.

Are there any further comments or debate on the motion? MLA Gray, please go ahead.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much. So those articles were prepared by the library. They were given to the commission and now will be provided to this panel. I'm just curious. Do you know if that work done by the library is publicly accessible in another way?

Mr. Roth: I would assume the articles would be publicly accessible because, like, they're academic articles, right? So if you have access to the thing, anybody would likely be – I mean, it depends on what your subscription would be, but if you were to go through the library, I'm sure they would be able to pull those sorts of things.

Ms Gray: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: Okay. With that, is there any further debate on this motion?

Seeing none, I am prepared to call the vote on the motion. Again, those in the room and online, all those in favour of this motion, please say yes. All right. And all those opposed? All right.

That motion is carried.

With that, we can move on to section (b) under our agenda item 4, which is support and advice from persons. We'll now move on to the panel's request for support and advice from selected persons. I'd like to now open the floor to members for discussion or motions.

MLA Rowswell, I see your hand again. Please go ahead.

Mr. Rowswell: I'd like to make a motion. Moved that the Select Special Committee on Electoral Boundaries request the following persons provide, on invitation of the committee chair, advice to the independent advisory panel: (a) a political scientist to be identified by the chair of the independent advisory panel who has expertise in voting behaviour or electoral boundary determinations, (b) the chair of the 2025-26 Electoral Boundaries Commission, (c) the other members of the 2025-26 Electoral Boundaries Commission, and (d) officials from the Office of Statistics and Information with the Ministry of Treasury Board and Finance.

The Chair: All right. We'll just wait for our screen to catch up and make sure that that is your motion when we get a chance to look at it. If you would like to confirm.

Mr. Rowswell: Yup.

The Chair: Okay. Would you like a chance to speak to it?

Mr. Rowswell: Yeah. Again, Government Motion 37 is clear in clause C(f)(iii) that the panel may "request any person to provide the independent advisory panel with advice that the independent advisory panel considers advisable or necessary." Our job in the committee is to ensure the panel has access to the resources and the people they need to complete their work, and supporting this motion ensures that the independent advisory panel has access to people that they feel they need to do their important work while preserving the panel's independence and assessing the information it receives and formulating its own recommendations.

The Chair: All right. Thank you, MLA Rowswell.

Are there any other members wishing to join the debate? MLA Gray, please go ahead.

Ms Gray: Thank you, Mr. Chair. As we debate this motion and looking at the letter that was sent to you as chair and noting my colleague across the way's comments about section C(f)(iii), where it does talk about receiving "advice that the . . . panel considers advisable or necessary," the letter we received doesn't provide any explanation for why they're asking for these particular people in their advice and in fact includes the language "if required," so we're not even totally clear if it is required or not. My question to you as chair and to the Legislative Assembly table as the support for these folks is: do we have any more information about why they are making these requests, how they might be using this? Have any conversations happened with either the chair, the advisory panel, or do we have any more information?

The Chair: Sure. I will turn it over to the table, but I can confirm I have not had any conversations with the independent advisory chair or any of the members of the independent advisory panel myself.

I will turn it over to the table to see if they have any information to supplement.

Ms Robert: Thanks, Mr. Chair. No. No other information at all. We just took the request and sort of passed it through to the committee.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.

Are there any other members looking – oh, MLA Ganley, please go ahead.

Ms Ganley: Yes. I would like to move an amendment, which I believe was received earlier. The one I'm looking to move is the one which simply strikes out clause (a).

The reason for the striking out of clause (a) – and clause (a) reads "a political scientist to be identified by the chair of the independent advisory panel who has expertise in voting behaviour or electoral boundary determinations." What I would say is that I believe that this motion is outside of the scope of Government Motion 37.

Government Motion 37 essentially replaces the commission with this committee, with this sort of, like, adjunct advisory panel reporting to the committee, and it mirrors the considerations which exist in the electoral boundaries act, which the commission considered, and how people vote is not such a consideration. To say at a high level, the considerations are meant to be ones which focus on the rights of the electors, so their communities of interest, how many people are present in a riding, the respect for municipal boundaries – oh, I guess the government took that one out; just leave that one for now – the idea of, like, keeping common interests together and respecting the ability of Albertans to choose their representative, which is the point of representative democracy.

Those are the considerations. A political scientist, particularly in light of the fact that the letter also references a pollster, which I think is wildly out of order: like, this is problematic, and we have no information on what it is the panel wants to do with this person.

The very last thing the panel should be considering – the very last thing – is how people are going to vote. The panel should absolutely not be considering how politicians or political parties are being impacted by this. That's not what it's about. It's about the rights of voters. The reason I would like to strike out this political scientist – and I don't even know. They might have a good reason. We don't know what that reason is, but the framing of it, expertise in voting behaviour, really worries me. It really worries me, especially in combination with the request for a pollster, that this panel is potentially going to consider things like the fate of political parties, which are not only irrelevant considerations but the opposite of what ought to be considered relevant.

2:40

Yeah. It's really unclear why this would be needed. I think it really risks politicizing this process even more than it's already been politicized. Indeed, expertise in voting behaviour appears totally unnecessary. The panel shouldn't be considering voting behaviour. That's very problematic. I mean, honestly, it's what we've been saying all along, that the fear is that the UCP is doing this because they are concerned about voting behaviour. They are concerned about whether their government will be re-elected, and they should not be concerned about that. You should be concerned about the rights of voters. So I think this is problematic.

I think if the panel is wanting this information, at minimum it should be public. It should be publicly available. It's not clear to me, like, when they say, "political scientist," right? Something like a lawyer or a doctor is regulated by a regulator. Someone decides who falls into that category. It's not clear what is meant here. Do they have to have a PhD? Do they have to be teaching? Could the chair of the panel, who has donations to the UCP – I don't know – pick some former politician at the *Western Standard*? You know, there are just a lot of worries about what this means and what it could be. I think that as people on this panel we have to act for the public interest, for the public to know what is going on here, and to highlight things that should be irrelevant.

There's also the matter of cost, right? I mean, like, what work is this person doing? How much is it going to cost? What advice is even provided by a political scientist?

Yeah. I think it's problematic. A lot of this should be public. It should be public, even these things which are not themselves out of order, you know, things like speaking to the chair of the former boundaries commission, which is probably a good idea, honestly, or other members of the commission. I think it's worth the panel knowing what their thoughts were, but why can't that be on the public record? Why can't the opposition know about it? Why can't the public know about it?

I just think that when it comes to interests as fundamental as the right to vote, which I think is already infringed by the process we are engaged in right now, it is important to have as much transparency as possible, and it is in particular important to have irrelevant considerations like this ruled out.

The Chair: All right. Thank you, MLA Ganley.

Is there anyone else wishing to speak to the amendment? MLA Rowswell, please go ahead.

Mr. Rowswell: Yeah. Government Motion 37 is clear that the independent advisory panel has a lot of flexibility on what things they consider and who they engage in completing the work. In the

independent advisory panel chair's letter, he stated that the political scientists would only be engaged "if required." So they haven't decided that they would do that, and all we are improving is the ability to do that. Our job in this panel is to ensure that they have the resources and people to do the work.

I'm opposed to this amendment because it would interfere with the panel members having access to the people that they feel they need to do the important work that they're doing. Such interference would also call into question the panel's independence in assessing the information it receives and formulating their own recommendations, so I would advise to vote against the amendment.

The Chair: Thank you, MLA Rowswell.

MLA Gray, please go ahead.

Ms Gray: Yes. Thank you. I am speaking in support of my colleague's amendment. I think (a) should absolutely be struck. It should not be considered by this committee. Government Motion 37 does not include voting behaviour in the scope of what the panel is working on. It's not in scope of the act on which Government Motion 37 is modelled, and it's my understanding that considering the factors of voting behaviour and how voters will vote one way or another is contrary to the spirit of the Charter and protecting voters' rights. It's absolutely opening the door to politicization, and it is absolutely opening the door to including factors when drawing a map to know in advance how each riding is likely to vote, and that hugely increases the risk of gerrymandering. So the fact that we have a letter from the chair that references voting behaviour multiple times as something that this group of individuals is seeking to understand as they redraw the electoral map is shocking to me. It continues to further this being a potentially unconstitutional process, and it also speaks to, potentially, the absolute wrong intent of panel members.

We have a chair with political donations. We have a lobbyist who has direct financial interest in making sure the government is happy. We have another member who has submitted gerrymandered maps, is how I would characterize them, and not only that but on June 1 at the Petroleum Club helped organize and host a fundraiser for the Finance minister days before he was appointed to this panel. And now they want to know and be able to better understand and discuss voting behaviour with a political scientist. This is extremely concerning, and no, I don't agree with the member opposite that Government Motion 37 section C(f)(iii) is adequate cover for them to start talking about things that would be unconstitutional and lead to further gerrymandering.

Is this panel looking at who will win the next election as they make their decisions? If they are, that is inappropriate and not how these decisions should be being made.

The Chair: Thank you, MLA Gray.

Is there anyone else wishing to speak to this amendment? Go ahead, MLA Ganley.

Ms Ganley: Yes. Just in response to my colleague across the aisle what I would say is that this is essentially – so he's saying we shouldn't deny the panel things that they think that they might need, but this is essentially like a judge asking for an expert witness on something that only came in as hearsay evidence. It's not admissible. It's not relevant. It shouldn't be considered, so asking for more information on a thing that shouldn't be considered is not the panel doing its job. That's the panel engaging in irrelevant considerations and potentially violating the rights of Albertans, and a pretty fundamental right, the right to vote.

I mean, this government doesn't seem to have a lot of respect for people's rights in light of the four uses of the notwithstanding clause in a matter of months. You know, they have always claimed, at least, to care about Albertans' right to vote, and I think, I mean, this is a violation of that right. That is the problem with going down the path of not caring about people's rights, that it just seems to broaden until such time as we have people who think that their concerns and the fate of their political party is more important than the rights of the voters of this province.

Yeah. It's an irrelevant consideration. The fate of the UCP and whether they're going to win the next election is not the basis on which the boundaries should be drawn. Period.

The Chair: Thank you, MLA Ganley.

Are there any other members wishing to speak on this amendment? All right. Seeing none, I will call the vote on the amendment. Those in the room and online, all those in favour of the amendment please say aye. All those opposed to the amendment, please say no.

That amendment has been defeated.

We do have a request for a recorded vote. Those in the room who are in favour of the amendment, please raise your hands.

2:50

Mr. Roth: Hon. Ms Gray, hon. Ms Ganley.

The Chair: All right.

Those in the room who are opposed to the amendment, please raise your hands.

Mr. Roth: Mr. Rowswell.

The Chair: All right.

For those members participating remotely, please turn on your cameras and microphones if you wish to vote. When the committee clerk calls your name, please indicate whether you are in favour or against the amendment.

Mr. Wiebe: Against.

Ms de Jonge: Against.

Mr. Roth: Mr. Chair, total for the amendment two; total against, three.

The Chair: All right. Thank you.

That amendment is defeated.

We can return to debate on the motion. Are there any other members wishing to speak? I see MLA Gray's hand. Please go ahead.

Ms Gray: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am disappointed that the previous amendment was not carried by this committee, but given that, I will move a related one, and I think I see it right there, that the motion be amended by striking out clause (a) and substituting the following: (a) a political scientist to be selected by unanimous consent of the committee on recommendation of the chair of the independent advisory panel who has expertise in electoral boundary determinations.

I will speak to that, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Please go ahead.

Ms Gray: There are two things happening here. First, you will note that I have removed voting behaviour as a reason for engaging a political scientist. To be really clear, the committee should be allowed to engage people on things that are within their mandate.

Voting behaviour is not part of their mandate either through Government Motion 37 or through the legislation. It's not listed, it's not a consideration, and, in fact, it's contrary. Consideration of voting behaviour is contrary to the principles of effective representation. I've made these points earlier when speaking to my colleague's amendment, and I will repeat them here. In my amendment I've taken out the language of voting behaviour, and I think that's an important change.

Secondly, I have also asked that the chair's selection of a political scientist come to this committee so that we can work with the government members and agree on the person, specifically because when we talk about political scientists in Canada, when you think about political scientists, or when you Google Alberta political scientist, there are certain names that people hear more commonly. There are others that don't have as much of a public profile but do good work in the industry, but there are a lot of political scientists that have clear or identifiable partisan leanings.

I think we can acknowledge that. I believe that there are political scientists that UCP MLAs in the government will often dismiss because they see them as left leaning and not able to provide valid feedback, and I think the fact that the government will often do that is just a sign that they fully acknowledge that political scientists can have partisan leanings.

If the committee is determined to grant the panel's request for a political scientist despite our concerns that are founded in the mandate of this committee and the constitutionality of the process, then at least can we work to select a political scientist who does not have identifiable political leaning who can speak with expertise on electoral boundary determinations.

It is not our intent in any way, shape, or form to hinder the work, but at every turn we are trying to improve the transparency and to remove any opportunities for the type of gerrymandering that the public is worried about. We need to take the politicization out, and selecting by unanimous consent on recommendation of the chair is one way that we can do that.

Let's make sure that the political scientist that they engage has the full support of both parties. There are a lot of excellent political scientists who have deep expertise. There are also political scientists who maybe don't have as deep an expertise in electoral boundary determination but perhaps might have deep expertise in voting behaviour. Especially if partisan leanings come into effect, that's not the type of advice we want going to this advisory group. My amendment is intended only to ensure that the person chosen provides the panel with unbiased, nonpartisan advice and would not be interpreting voter behaviour through a partisan lens.

I think it's a good amendment, and I hope that the government would be able to support this.

The Chair: All right. Thank you, MLA Gray.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? MLA Rowswell, please go ahead.

Mr. Rowswell: Thank you very much. This amendment goes beyond providing administrative support and instead intrudes into the panel's decision-making authority and their independence. It's important to remember that all the committee is doing is approving their ability to hire the people that they want to talk to. The actual decision is up to the independent advisory panel. Requiring the committee to approve the individual goes directly against the independence of the independent advisory panel. Our job is to ensure the panel has access to resources and the people that they need to do their work, so I would advise not to support this amendment.

The Chair: Thank you, MLA Rowswell.

MLA Ganley, I see your hand. Please go ahead.

Ms Ganley: This does not intrude on the independence of the advisory panel because the advisory panel is not independent. It reports to this committee. If you wanted an independent process, all you had to do was to accept the report of the commission. We had an independent process. The government didn't like the independent process. That's why we're here today. So to suggest that trying to make something slightly less transparently partisan, trying to make something more transparent, or trying to make something just a little bit better is somehow interfering with the independence – it's not an independent panel. It's called an independent panel. Just because you use a word – a rose by any other name, I believe, is the vernacular there. It's called independent; it isn't actually independent.

The motion makes it incredibly clear. Whatever it is, voting behaviour is an irrelevant consideration. It just is. Having a potentially partisan person sort of slipped in to provide advice under this guise, advice which neither this committee nor the public can see, is incredibly problematic, especially when we know the majority of this independent advisory panel, just like the majority of this committee, are UCP political people. They're partisan people. They donate and hold fundraisers and have financial interests in the UCP's interests.

I would ask the UCP members of this committee to just reflect on what it is that is happening here today. I understand that there are ministers who are upset. I understand that the Minister of Finance is probably upset about his riding being lost. There was an independent – actually independent, not like this committee; an actually independent – commission, much like the one whose report has been rejected by the UCP, while the NDP were in government. They reported back, and the Finance minister also lost his riding. It was combined into the Justice minister at the time's riding. Do you know what we did about it? We put on our adult pants and we put the needs of the voters before partisan politics because that's what a representative should do. That's what we should be doing here today.

Far from impinging on the independence, which doesn't exist, of anything, this amendment by my colleague is meant to preserve even just a tiny sliver of an indication that somewhere this government thinks that the rights of voters are important. And yeah, it's disappointing. It's disappointing that members would speak against this. I mean, it is the lightest of touches in terms of amending potentially out-of-scope considerations by the panel of how the UCP and not the voters will be impacted, which I think should be totally irrelevant.

3:00

The Chair: Thank you, MLA Ganley.

Is there any other member wishing to join the debate on this amendment?

Seeing none, once again, I'll call the question. For those in the room and online, all those who are in favour of this amendment, please say aye. Any opposed to the amendment, please say no. All right.

That amendment has been defeated.

Ms Gray: Recorded.

The Chair: We have a request for a recorded vote. Those in the room who are in favour of the amendment, please raise your hands.

Mr. Roth: Hon. Ms Gray, hon. Ms Ganley.

The Chair: All right. Those in the room who are opposed to the amendment, please raise your hand.

Mr. Roth: Mr. Rowswell.

The Chair: All right. And then for those members participating remotely, please turn on your cameras and microphones if you wish to vote. When the committee clerk calls your name, please indicate whether you are in favour or against the amendment.

Mr. Roth: Mr. Wiebe.

Mr. Wiebe: Against.

Mr. Roth: Ms de Jonge.

Ms de Jonge: Against.

Mr. Roth: Mr. Chair, total for the amendment, two; total against, three.

The Chair: All right. Thank you.

That amendment is defeated.

We will return to debate on the motion. Are there any other members wishing to join the debate on the motion? All right. Seeing – oh, sorry. MLA Gray, please go ahead.

Ms Gray: Apologies, Mr. Chair. Could we just see the motion that we're on, just for final confirmation that we don't have any additional questions?

The Chair: Go ahead, MLA Gray.

Ms Gray: Thank you. My only comment, so no further amendments to this: obviously, we've registered serious concern around "political scientist," "voting behaviour," potential bias with a political scientist. Otherwise, I think access to those defined in (b), (c), and (d) is all reasonable. I'll just put on the record a comment that I think it would be inappropriate if under (c) only UCP appointees to the previous commission were contacted versus all. I suspect they will be contacting all, but I will just say that I hope that efforts are made to engage all five of the previous commission members as the new advisory panel proceeds.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you for those comments, MLA Gray.

With that, we can call the vote on the motion. We'll continue with our hybrid style. Those in the room and online, all those in favour of the motion, please say aye. All of those opposed to the motion, please say no. All right.

That motion is carried.

Ms Gray: Recorded, please.

The Chair: We do have a request for a recorded vote. Those in the room who are in favour of the motion, please raise your hand.

Mr. Roth: Mr. Rowswell.

The Chair: Those in the room who are opposed to the motion, please raise your hand.

Mr. Roth: Hon. Ms Gray, hon. Ms Ganley.

The Chair: And once again we'll go to our members participating remotely. Please turn your cameras and microphones on if you wish to vote. When the committee clerk calls your name, please indicate whether you are in favour or against the motion.

Mr. Roth: Mr. Wiebe.

Mr. Wiebe: In favour.

Mr. Roth: Ms de Jonge.

Ms de Jonge: In favour.

Mr. Roth: Mr. Chair, total for the motion, three; total against, two.

The Chair: All right.

That motion is carried.

We can continue on in the same portion of our agenda, 4(b). MLA Rowswell, please go ahead.

Mr. Rowswell: I'd like to make a motion.

The Chair: Go ahead.

Mr. Rowswell: I'd like to move that

the Select Special Committee on Electoral Boundaries authorize the committee chair to direct the Legislative Assembly Office to (a) engage legal counsel to be identified by the chair of the independent advisory panel to provide the panel with legal advice, (b) enter into a service agreement with an individual to be identified by the chair of the independent advisory panel to provide report-writing services to the panel, and (c) enter into a service agreement with an experienced independent pollster to be identified by the chair of the independent advisory panel to provide the independent advisory panel with advice on voting behaviour and historical voting patterns.

The Chair: All right. Looks like we have that up on the screen. If you just wanted to confirm that is the correct motion.

Mr. Rowswell: Yeah.

The Chair: Okay. Would you like a chance to speak to it?

Mr. Rowswell: Yeah. I'll do a short one.

The Chair: Go ahead. Yeah.

Mr. Rowswell: Government Motion 37, again, is clear in clause C(f)(iii) that the panel may "request any person to provide the independent advisory panel with advice that the independent advisory panel considers advisable or necessary." So our job is to provide this access to resources and people to complete the work, and approving the request ensures the independence of the panel by not interfering in the resources and experts they have requested.

The Chair: Thank you, MLA Rowswell.

Are there any members wishing to join the debate on the motion? MLA Gray, please go ahead.

Ms Gray: Thank you. For those who've been watching the motion so far this afternoon, the concerns that we just had with the previous motion are repeated and made even worse in this motion, so I would like to move an amendment specifically to address the problematic nature of (c) here. The motion has been submitted, and I believe it is as straightforward as striking out clause (c).

The Chair: Is that it on the screen?

Ms Gray: Yeah.

The Chair: Okay. Please go ahead.

Ms Gray: Okay. So clause (c) reads: "enter into a service agreement with an experienced independent pollster to be identified by the chair of the independent advisory panel to provide the independent advisory panel with advice on voting behaviour and historical voting patterns." Mr. Chair, this motion to add a pollster to look at voter data absolutely eliminates any faith that this group is doing anything other than gerrymandering the map. There's no reason to think there's any independence happening here at all with a request like this, and it's incredibly frustrating to see this.

Now, the government members have moved this motion, and it's my understanding that both the Official Opposition and the government were advised by Parliamentary Counsel that pollsters would be specifically outside of the scope of Government Motion 37, because Government Motion 37 includes a mandate: what should this group be looking at, and what should they be doing? And voting behaviour, pollsters, the analysis of who is likely to win and that vote intent is so inappropriate and not what should be happening. It is like the government is advertising that they want to gerrymander the map. It is so frustrating to see this and especially that this motion has been moved despite the advice from our Legislative Assembly Office that this is out of scope, advice that both government and Official Opposition caucuses received.

My amendment would strike it because we need to stick to the scope. We need to do our absolute best to try to keep things as close to constitutional as possible given the absolutely illegitimate and irregular nature of Government Motion 37. Voting behaviour and voting patterns are outside of the panel's mandate, and the panel cannot and should not be requesting assistance for things that are outside of its mandate and outside of the scope of Government Motion 37. Voting patterns, competitiveness, partisan lean: there's no reason to consider these factors in drawing a map unless the goal is to know in advance how each riding is likely to vote. Again, increasing the risk of gerrymandering.

To be really clear, pollsters and their expertise are to look at vote intent. The point of a pollster would be to understand the current voter intent landscape, and that shouldn't be a factor in how these ridings are drawn up. This shouldn't be a surprise to anyone on this committee. A pollster is only looking at the current data environment and voter intent, and we are trying to and what should be happening is to draw maps for the next 10 years. Today's vote intent should not be a factor. Polls are short term, dated. They expire. They're fallible. Pollsters have different levels of expertise as well as often get accused of having different partisan leanings, and these boundaries are supposed to be for 10 years in the future.

So given the clear advice that we all received prior to this meeting and given that a reading of the face of the motion does not include voting patterns, voting behaviour, or competitiveness – these are not areas that the panel was tasked with analyzing – I think that including (c) should have been ruled out of order but was not. Even just the consideration of (c) and inviting a pollster really brings in that improper influence to the panel and potential of tainting the work.

3:10

Voting behaviour should not be considered. I think I've made that point repeatedly in my remarks, but I believe very strongly in this. I think all members should be removing (c). It's just such a red flag as to what the advisory panel is up to and what types of questions they're looking at, and it signals just incredibly destructive gerrymandering. I think that the only way forward is to not include (c), and that's why I proposed my amendment, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: All right. Thank you, MLA Gray.

Is there anyone else wishing to speak to the amendment? Go ahead, MLA Rowswell.

Mr. Rowswell: Yeah. I think all members of this committee agreed that the chair of the independent advisory committee is highly qualified and possesses significant legal expertise. His extensive experience, including the Court of Appeal, means he knows what would fall into or out of scope of the panel's work. Again, Government Motion 37 is clear in C(f)(iii) that the panel may request persons to provide the independent advisory panel with advice that the independent advisory panel considers advisable or necessary. The chair's letter said that they may engage a pollster. They may not. That's up to them. We can trust the expertise that the chair has to know what's in scope and out of scope.

Our job on the committee is to ensure the panel has the resources, the information, and the people they need. So I oppose this amendment because it interferes with the panel's members having access to people they feel may be important, and it would also call into question the independence in assessing the information it receives and formulating its own recommendations.

The Chair: Thank you, MLA Rowswell.

Is there anyone else wishing to join in this amendment? MLA Ganley, please go ahead.

Ms Ganley: Yeah. I cannot support my colleague's amendment in strong enough terms. A pollster is the most out-of-scope thing for Government Motion 37 that could be imagined. The government could have been transparent about their intention. They could have just marched into the House with a motion that said, "The UCP want to redraw the maps to privilege themselves," and then maybe this would be in scope, but given the motion that they put forward, this is not in scope. Voting intent is not in scope.

Mr. Chair, I would just like to read a definition into the record: gerrymandering is the deliberate manipulation of electoral district boundaries to unfairly favour one political party or group over another; it allows politicians to choose their voters rather than letting voters choose their representatives, directly skewing election results. So gerrymandering is when you draw the maps based on voter intent. We now have a panel that is asking for an expert in voter intent to inform them about voter intent in order to draw the ridings. I mean, unless the intent is to gerrymander, there is no reason for that.

There is no reason why this could possibly be relevant. The relevant consideration is voters. It is their community of interest. It is, like, being equally represented. It is their access to effective representation. Redrawing boundaries on the basis of voter intent is gerrymandering. That's all that it is. It's transparent. It is cheating. It is rigging an election. It is all of those things.

So this is highly problematic. It absolutely should be struck. I mean, the UCP members don't even have to believe me. The advice that was provided to both sides was that this is out of scope because it couldn't possibly be more out of scope. It's the opposite of scope.

I think the member across the way – the points about the chair being qualified: qualified and ethical are not the same thing. Doctors that performed lobotomies on patients of schizophrenia to determine what would happen were eminently qualified. Qualified and ethical are not the same thing.

I think the point of this committee – you know, the member has indicated what he thinks our role on the committee is. It is absolutely not my role to take instructions from anywhere, from any political party, whether theirs or mine, whether an independent advisory panel. You could have every degree on the planet; you still are not in a position to tell me as an elected representative that I should disregard the rights of voters. I don't care how qualified the

chair is. His qualifications are not in dispute. His qualifications do not turn this into a relevant consideration. At the end of the day I am here to represent voters, and their right to vote is important to me, and no one will tell me otherwise. It is absolutely not my role, as Member Rowswell has suggested, to be rolled over by partisan interests and to privilege those ahead of the rights of voters.

So I support my colleague's motion in the strongest possible terms. I would add to that that this motion, the main motion, not the amendment, I mean, is by far the most problematic piece. There are other problematic pieces in here as well, which I suppose I could get into later, but we now have a panel engaging all sorts of experts. We have a judge and three lawyers, and they're saying that they need to engage another lawyer, which isn't necessarily problematic, but to suggest that their expertise ought to overrule what Parliamentary Counsel has said and what I can plainly see is an irrelevant consideration while they simultaneously request additional legal counsel in order to advise them on these matters is contradictory, and I think it's extremely problematic.

I think we have a panel with clear partisan leanings, and I know that my colleague and I are on this panel to try to arrive at the least bad option, which has not been particularly successful thus far as a strategy. I continue to think that it is important for us to be here so that the public is able to see as much as possible what is happening, but this is not a relevant consideration. It's not a partisan issue. I don't think that because I'm NDP. I think that because I can read and understand the right to vote.

The Chair: Thank you, MLA Ganley.

Are there any other members looking to speak to this amendment? MLA Gray, go ahead.

Ms Gray: I guess my question to my colleague across the aisle is that we in the Official Opposition received advice from Parliamentary Counsel that the ask for a pollster is out of scope. Did you not receive the same advice?

The Chair: Thank you for those comments, MLA Gray. I was just conferring with the table quickly here and just wanted to give the table a chance to say a few remarks quickly.

Mr. Koenig: Sure. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm mindful; I don't want to become involved in the debate here. I just want to clarify what Parliamentary Counsel did advise or did not advise. Did not advise that this would be out of order, so I just want to make that clear on the record. Of course, questions about order are determined by the chair, and whether the committee wishes to pass this is a matter of debate, and that is not for Parliamentary Counsel to determine. I just want to be very clear on that point.

3:20

The Chair: Thank you.

With that, I'll ask: are there any other members wishing to join debate on the amendment? MLA Gray, please go ahead.

Ms Gray: Again, just for the record – and thank you for the clarification because we do not want to misattribute anything – the Official Opposition received advice from Parliamentary Counsel that asking for a pollster is out of scope. We cannot call it out of order because the chair hasn't ruled it out of order, correct? But perhaps I could ask the chair if he received the same advice that the Official Opposition did.

The Chair: Glad we got a chance to talk about the scoping information. I believe you're correct, MLA Gray, that the information on the scope was provided to committee members.

Ms Gray: And the chair determined not to rule that out of order. Okay. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

With that being said, I think that my amendment striking out clause (c) is even more important. We have now acknowledged on the record that a request like this should be out of scope. There should not be pollsters. We should not be bringing in politicization. We should not be bringing in voter intent and voter behaviour. This should not be allowed.

I think all members should support my amendment that would strike out bringing a pollster into this, a pollster who could have partisan leanings, who is providing advice only on current voter intent when we should be drawing a map for Albertans into the future that should be free from gerrymandering and the politics of the UCP.

The Chair: All right. MLA Ganley.

Ms Ganley: Yes, Mr. Chair. I would just like to – in the instance that I at some point said “order” when I meant “scope,” I will amend those comments. It’s possible that in discussing this matter the wrong term was used, and I apologize to yourself, Mr. Chair. I understand that a determination of whether or not something is in order is something that only you can determine. I merely meant to reference that this is out of scope, i.e. that it is an irrelevant and improper consideration for the advisory panel.

Thank you.

The Chair: All right. Thank you.

With that, I think we are prepared to call the vote on this amendment. Once again we’ll go hybrid. Those in the room and online, if you are in favour of this amendment, please say yes. Those who are opposed to the amendment, please say no.

That amendment is defeated.

Ms Gray: Recorded vote.

The Chair: We do have a request for a recorded vote. Those in the room who are in favour of the amendment, please raise your hands.

Mr. Roth: Hon. Ms Gray, Hon. Ms Ganley.

The Chair: Those in the room who are opposed to the amendment, please raise your hands.

Mr. Roth: Mr. Rowswell.

The Chair: All right. For those members participating remotely, please turn your cameras and microphones on if you wish to vote. When the committee clerk calls your name, please indicate whether you are in favour or against the amendment.

Mr. Roth: Mr. Wiebe.

Mr. Wiebe: Against.

Mr. Roth: Ms de Jonge.

Ms de Jonge: Against.

Mr. Roth: Mr. Chair, total for the amendment, two; total against, three.

The Chair: All right.

That amendment is defeated.

We can return to the motion. Looks like we’re getting it up on our screen. Are there any members wishing to continue the debate on the motion? MLA Ganley, please go ahead.

Ms Ganley: Yes, Mr. Chair. Sorry.

Ms Gray: You have an amendment.

Ms Ganley: I do have an amendment. I absolutely have an amendment. I guess that I probably have to say it before it comes up on the screen. Apologies.

My amendment is with respect to this motion, that the motion be amended by striking out the words after “Boundaries” and substituting the following:

- (a) authorize the committee chair to direct the Legislative Assembly Office to (i) engage legal counsel to be identified by the chair of the independent advisory panel to provide the panel with legal advice, and (ii) enter into a service agreement with an individual to be identified by the chair of the independent advisory panel to provide report-writing services to the panel; (b) require the chair of the independent advisory panel to disclose all legal advice received by the panel from the legal counsel referred to in (a)(i).

I think you have this, so we can wait for it.

The Chair: Is that on the screen right now? Is that the amendment on the screen?

Ms Ganley: Yes.

The Chair: Okay. Perfect. Please go ahead and speak to it if you like.

Ms Ganley: Yes. Absolutely. The first thing I’d want to note is that, as the members have identified multiple times, the chair of the committee is a retired Supreme Court justice with significant expertise in this area. Members insisted on that individual and insisted on a contract which contains an extra \$5,000 a month that no one was able to identify as having occurred anywhere else, so we’re looking at significant compensation already. That’s potentially problematic.

Now, on top of that, we’re engaging additional legal counsel. Both of the members appointed by our side are lawyers, so I think that there’s significant expertise already. I do know that even lawyers engage lawyers sometimes depending on expertise in a specific area, so I don’t think it’s necessarily entirely out of scope although it is sort of an additional cost. Again, it’s an additional cost on a process that has a half million dollar additional cost that we didn’t need since we’d already had an independent outcome. But yes, this is potentially problematic.

I think that what we are essentially asking for in this particular amendment is that advice be disclosed. My concern here is essentially that when you combine the fact that the UCP have now authorized the panel to access one individual who could potentially be advising them on voter intent, which gives them access to the ability to draw the maps based on who they want to win rather than drawing the maps based on the rights of voters, and one, the pollster, who could have literally no other function besides providing the panel with information on who will win in what scenario, so we have those two individuals, and now we have legal advice going to the panel, my fear is that the legal advice going to the panel is: how can you gerrymander right up to the line without going over? What’s your best drawing the maps not in the interest of voters but in the interest of the UCP that we think we can get past the court? I think that is incredibly problematic.

Now, this problem could have been solved if the UCP had simply listened to reason and struck out the pollster in the first place and struck out the political scientist, if they had caused the panel to centre its considerations on the rights of the voters rather than the interests of the United Conservative Party, but that’s not what they

did. Now adding a lawyer onto this, who is potentially going to be asked to provide advice on how to do the best job of skirting the ethical principles of the law without going right up to breaking it, is really problematic.

This isn't a thing that we know is happening; it's a thing that we worry would happen. But the concern is raised because members of this committee just voted to allow the panel to access a professional whose only possible role could be to advise them on considerations which are irrelevant and out of scope, i.e. voter intent. So I think that this is problematic. I think that the least that the members of this committee can do is make it possible for that advice to be disclosed so that at least, you know, we know that isn't the question being asked and answered.

3:30

The Chair: All right. Thank you, MLA Ganley.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to this amendment? MLA Rowswell, please go ahead.

Mr. Rowswell: Yeah. Again, this amendment goes beyond providing administrative support and instead intrudes on the panel's internal deliberative process and their independence. The committee can ensure accountability and transparency without disclosure of privileged legal advice or compromising the panel's independence.

It is important that the independent advisory panel get independent legal advice. Directing the IAP to disclose all legal advice they receive is the opposite of independence. It's surprising to me that members opposite with legal experience would completely undermine solicitor-client privilege and compromise the independence of the independent advisory panel. Transparency regarding the independent advisory panel's output does not require disclosure of privileged legal advice that inform its deliberations.

With that, I would recommend not to support the amendment.

The Chair: All right. Thank you, MLA Rowswell.

MLA Gray, please go ahead.

Ms Gray: This absolutely does not intrude on the independence. If hired by the panel, a lawyer should act as an expert serving the public interest, so there should not be any solicitor-client privilege between the lawyer and the panel or any of its members. A lawyer can provide legal advice to the panel, as in the motion. It would potentially, without this amendment, imply solicitor-client privilege, and I think that's a problem. I think my colleague summarized it very well when she said that the panel seeking legal advice really just brings to mind the idea that they are trying to get as close to the line as they can without going over the line when it comes to the constitutionality here.

I don't think there should be a solicitor-client relationship with a legal counsel as they work on this. I think if the point is that the panel needs to be informed about what the law requires, then the inputs that the panel receives from a lawyer can and should be made public because it should only relate to the nature of the legal requirements of the process. What legal counsel do they need unless they think the work they are developing is going to be taken to court in the future because it is unconstitutional?

This does not intrude on independence. What it does is increase transparency, which is what my colleague and I have been trying to do from the very beginning, that the UCP members of this committee vote against at every single turn. This is a really good amendment because all Albertans should be concerned that the panel made up of three lawyers, or two lawyers and a judge – judges are lawyers first, though, so three lawyers would count. Sorry; I'm not one of the lawyers. They have legal expertise. They should be

getting legal advice only in the sense of an expert serving the public interest, and if they're getting legal advice from any other perspective, that's inappropriate, and that's what this amendment is intended to clarify.

I think this is a good amendment because it still is going to allow them to do that consultation. As we identified earlier in this meeting, we don't know why they're asking for any of these things. There is no rationale provided. The chair didn't have conversations, which is a good thing. We don't know from the Legislative Assembly why they are making these requests, what they intend to do, so we're left in this position of trying to imagine, trying to guess, trying to game out what potentially could happen.

This amendment is simply saying: fine; let's make sure that they have legal counsel that can provide that expert advice, and then let's make it public so that everybody knows because there shouldn't be solicitor-client privilege between a lawyer and these panel members. I think to do that just smacks of potential gerrymandering, which continues to be the name of the game every time we try to introduce motions and amendments here at this committee.

Truly, this is a good amendment. It would add legitimacy. It would appropriately contain that legal advice, and all it does is make sure that we have some knowledge as to what kind of legal advice they're receiving as they're making these determinations. I fully support it. I hope all government members will change their mind and will vote in support of this amendment by my colleague.

The Chair: Thank you, MLA Gray.

Is there anyone else wishing to join on this amendment? MLA Ganley, please go ahead.

Ms Ganley: Yeah. I would just add, picking up on what my colleague said, that this panel is not meant to be acting on their own accord. They are meant to be acting in the public interest, and if they are asking of this lawyer, "What does the legislation and the right to vote and the public interest require in this instance?" there should be no problem with that advice being public. There shouldn't be a concern there.

If, on the other hand, they are asking for advice on how to consider voter intent – which is something I'm not pulling out of the clear blue sky; they have asked for the advice of an expert whose only function is to advise them on voter intent, on who wins in what scenario – then that is problematic. That is problematic, and we can't say that solicitor-client privilege trumps that.

The members opposite are saying that they're surprised that I wouldn't want solicitor-client privilege in this instance. I'm surprised that the UCP members on this committee don't care about the right to vote. I'm surprised that they're willing to undermine the right to vote, that they're willing to support experts to help the panel consider irrelevant things and legal advice to potentially help the panel figure out how to execute those irrelevant things.

Now, I'm not suggesting that I know the panel is going to do this. I have no idea what the panel is going to do. None of us have that information, but when you set up public policy, it is appropriate to set up the rules to prevent bad actions and bad actors. In this case the bad actions and bad actors would be UCP gerrymandering, so I don't think it's at all surprising that I'd like to prevent that. I am both surprised and disappointed that the members of the UCP don't have more respect for the rights of their constituents.

The Chair: Thank you, MLA Ganley.

Is there any other member wishing to join on this amendment?

Seeing none, I am prepared to call the question on the amendment. All those in favour of the amendment, please say aye. Any opposed to the amendment, please say no. Okay.

That amendment has been defeated.

I'm getting quick on the draw with our recorded votes. A recorded vote has been requested. Those in the room who are in favour of the amendment, please raise your hand.

Mr. Roth: Hon. Ms Gray, hon. Ms Ganley.

The Chair: Those in the room who are opposed to the amendment, please raise your hand.

Mr. Roth: Mr. Rowswell.

The Chair: And for those members participating remotely, please turn on your cameras and microphones if you wish to vote. When the committee clerk calls your name, please indicate whether you are in favour or against the amendment.

Mr. Roth: Mr. Wiebe.

Mr. Wiebe: Against.

Mr. Roth: Ms de Jonge.

Ms de Jonge: Against.

Mr. Roth: Mr. Chair, total for the amendment, two; total against, three.

The Chair: All right. Thank you.
That amendment has been defeated.

We can return to debate on the main motion if we can get it back up on the screen. Perfect. Is there any other member wishing to join debate on this motion?

All right. Seeing none, we can call this vote. Once again it will be a hybrid vote. All those in favour of the motion, please say aye. And those opposed?

That motion is carried.

We do have a request for a recorded vote. Those in the room who are in favour of the motion, please raise your hand.

3:40

Mr. Roth: Mr. Rowswell.

The Chair: Those in the room who are opposed to the motion, please raise your hand.

Mr. Roth: Hon. Ms Gray, hon. Ms Ganley.

The Chair: And once again, for those members participating remotely, please turn on your cameras and microphones if you wish to vote. When the committee clerk calls your name, please indicate whether you are in favour or against the motion.

Mr. Roth: Mr. Wiebe.

Mr. Wiebe: In favour.

Mr. Roth: Ms de Jonge.

Ms de Jonge: In favour.

Mr. Roth: Mr. Chair, total for the motion, three; total against, two.

The Chair: All right.
That motion is carried.

I think we can conclude our deliberations under agenda item 4(b). Oh, sorry. MLA Ganley, please go ahead.

Ms Ganley: Yes, Mr. Chair. I have no additional motions here, just some additional comments. What has happened here today is that this committee, dragging the NDP members along kicking and screaming, has voted to allow the supposedly independent advisory panel made up of a judge chair with political donations, a lobbyist who is registered to lobby the Finance minister who lost his riding under the commission, and a person who drew gerrymandered maps of Calgary that would clearly violate the rights of myself and my fellow Calgarians and who hosted a fundraiser mere days before for that same Finance minister: that panel now will be asking for information about voter intent. And all of that will be kept under the dome of secrecy because the UCP refuses to allow the public to see what they're doing, which is fair; if I were them, I would be deeply embarrassed of my actions also.

Yeah. So that panel now has access to information about voter intent, information about how to draw the ridings to change the outcome of the election – and the public will never see it – and potentially legal advice about how to change the outcome with minimal chance of the court intervening and, in addition, experts that we know to be and all members of this panel were advised to be out of scope and draw in irrelevant information that ought not to be considered.

I just think it's worth summarizing on the record what happened here today because I think that democracy in the United States has been eroded if not destroyed by stuff like this, by gerrymandering like this, that puts the interests of politicians and political parties above the public interest and above the public's rights, and I think that the UCP bringing that here to Alberta is absolutely disgraceful.

The Chair: Thank you, MLA Ganley.

With that, I can move us on to other business. Is there any other business that needs to be addressed? Seeing none.

The date of the next meeting will be at the call of the chair, which takes us – oh, sorry. MLA Gray, go ahead.

Ms Gray: Do you anticipate any meetings in the next month barring any unexpected requests from the panel, or what do you think?

The Chair: I wouldn't anticipate, but we'll always keep our flexibility.

Ms Gray: I understand it could happen, but you don't know of any meetings in the next month or two that you think we might need?

The Chair: I'm not expecting it.

Ms Gray: Okay. Thank you very much.

The Chair: All right. With that, we can go to adjournment. If there's nothing else for the committee's consideration, I'll call for a motion to adjourn. MLA Rowswell looked very happy to make that motion. So moved by MLA Rowswell that the June 30, 2026, meeting of the Select Special Committee on Electoral Boundaries be adjourned. All those in favour, say aye. Any opposed? That motion is carried, and we are adjourned.

[The committee adjourned at 3:44 p.m.]

