



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

The 31st Legislature
Second Session

Select Special
Citizen Initiative Proposal
Review Committee

Tuesday, April 21, 2026
8:30 a.m.

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Select Special Citizen Initiative Proposal Review Committee

Lunty, Brandon G., Leduc-Beaumont (UC), Chair
Sawhney, Rajan, Calgary-North West (UC), Deputy Chair
Ellingson, Court, Calgary-Foothills (NDP)
Nixon, Jason, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre (UC)
Pancholi, Rakhi, Edmonton-Whitemud (NDP)
Sawyer, Tara, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UC)

Also in Attendance

Shepherd, David, Edmonton-City Centre (NDP)

Support Staff

Shannon Dean, KC	Clerk
Trafton Koenig	Law Clerk
Vani Govindarajan	Parliamentary Counsel
Philip Massolin	Clerk Assistant and Executive Director of Parliamentary Services
Nancy Robert	Clerk of <i>Journals</i> and Committees
Abdul Bhurgri	Research Officer
Rachel McGraw	Research Officer
Warren Huffman	Committee Clerk
Jody Rempel	Committee Clerk
Aaron Roth	Committee Clerk
Rhonda Sorensen	Manager of Corporate Communications
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Amanda LeBlanc	Managing Editor of <i>Alberta Hansard</i>

8:30 a.m.

Tuesday, April 21, 2026

[Mr. Lundy in the chair]

The Chair: All right. Good morning, everyone. I'd like to call this meeting of the Select Special Citizen Initiative Proposal Review Committee to order and welcome everyone in attendance.

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

Mrs. Sawhney: Thank you very much. Good morning, everybody. My name is Rajan Sawhney. I'm the MLA for Calgary-North West and the Minister of Indigenous Relations.

Mr. Nixon: Good morning, everybody. My name is Jason Nixon. I'm the MLA for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre and the Minister of Assisted Living and Social Services.

Mrs. Sawyer: Good morning. Tara Sawyer, MLA for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Member Ellingson: Good morning. Court Ellingson, MLA for Calgary-Foothills.

Ms Pancholi: Good morning. Rakhi Pancholi, MLA for Edmonton-Whitemud.

Mr. Shepherd: Good morning. David Shepherd, MLA, Edmonton-City Centre.

Mr. Koenig: Good morning. I'm Trafton Koenig with the Parliamentary Counsel office.

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

Ms Rempel: Good morning. Jody Rempel, committee clerk.

The Chair: All right. Thank you, everyone.

Before proceeding further, as this is the first meeting of this committee, I would like to discuss remote participation in committee meetings. As many of you know, section 6 of the Legislative Assembly Act permits participation in a committee meeting "by means of telephone or other communication facilities that permit all Members participating in the meeting to hear each other if all the members of the committee consent." Our committee meeting rooms are equipped to facilitate meeting participation by telephone and videoconference. If this is something we want to permit, then this committee may wish to pass a motion, which needs to be passed unanimously, to approve remote participation by members for the duration of the Legislature. I would note such a motion would not preclude the committee from determining that in-person attendance at specific meetings is required. In those cases, a motion would be considered at the end of a particular meeting requesting the attendance in person of members at a subsequent meeting.

With that said, is there anyone who would like to move a motion? MLA Sawyer, I see your hand. Please go ahead.

Mrs. Sawyer: I move that

the Select Special Citizen Initiative Proposal Review Committee consent, for the purpose of section 6 of the Legislative Assembly Act, to remote participation by any member in the committee meetings held at the designated committee meeting rooms in the Queen Elizabeth II Building during the 31st Legislature unless

the committee carries a motion in advance of a meeting that remote participation of members is not permitted at that meeting.

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

Is there any discussion on the proposed motion?

All right. Seeing none, I will call the vote. All those in favour of the motion as read by MLA Sawyer, please say aye. Are there any opposed? Hearing none.

That motion was passed unanimously.

With that decided, we will go to those joining online. We don't have any today, so we can move on. I'd also like to note that there are no substitutions for our meeting this morning.

Just a few final 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. Committee proceedings are being live streamed on the Internet and broadcast on Alberta Assembly TV. Also, please set your cellphones and other devices to silent for the duration of the meeting.

With that, we can move on in our agenda to approval of agenda. Are there any changes or additions to the draft agenda? Seeing none, would someone like to make a motion to approve the agenda? MLA Pancholi.

Ms Pancholi: Thank you. I move to adopt the agenda.

The Chair: All right. Thank you.

Any discussion? Seeing none, I'll call the question. All those in favour, please say aye. Any opposed? That motion is carried.

We'll move on to our next item, which is committee orientation. I do have a few words on the general mandate and committee support available. Hon. members, as this is the first meeting of the committee, I would like to provide a general overview of the role of a select special committee of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta. The same rules, procedures, and precedents governing other committees of the Assembly apply to these committees. However, select special committees of the Legislative Assembly are different from standing committees of the Assembly in that they are struck for a particular purpose. Once the committee has completed its work and submitted its final report to the Assembly, a select special committee is discharged. Select special committees are given very specific mandates in terms of reference by order of the Assembly and any relevant legislation, and these may not be modified by the committee.

The committee is supported in its work by the nonpartisan staff of the Legislative Assembly Office. Several staff from the LAO have joined us at the table today, and they will be available to support the work of this committee. Of course, there are staff from other Legislative Assembly Office branches who support our meetings, including research and committee services, communications services, Legislative Assembly security services, venues services, Alberta *Hansard*, and ITS and broadcasting.

I'd now like to discuss temporary substitutions. Standing Order 56(2.1) to (2.4) outlines the process for the substitution of chairs, deputy chairs, and committee members. For convenience substitution notice templates are available on OurHouse for members to use, or you may draft your own notice. Please note that it is the responsibility of the original committee member to ensure that a substituting member is prepared for the meeting and has all the appropriate materials. Should the original committee member participate in the meeting, then the substitution is no longer in effect.

Members who are not committee members or official substitutes may attend and participate in committee meetings. However, they may not vote or move motions. Should the proceedings move in camera, these members would require specific consent of the

committee to remain in attendance. If any members or your staff have questions about the substitution process, I would encourage you to please follow up with any of the committee clerks.

I would next like to address recorded votes. After a vote on a motion has been conducted, a committee member may request a recorded vote. The process for a recorded vote in a committee is similar to the process for a division in the House. I will first ask those in the room who are in favour of the motion to raise their hands, and then the committee clerk will call the names of those who have raised their hand and record the votes. We will then follow the same process for those in the room who are against the motion. If we have remote participants, they will be asked to turn their cameras on if they wish to vote. The committee clerk will call their names, and the members should indicate how they would like to vote. I will then ask one final time if all committee members who wish to vote have done so, so the committee clerk will record any final votes cast. After this the committee clerk will tally the votes and advise the chair of the number of votes cast which are in favour and against the motion. I will then indicate that the motion has been carried or defeated, and the details of the vote will be recorded in the minutes.

This may also be a good time to touch quickly on the process for introducing motions that have not been put on notice. A notice requirement is in place for this committee which requires many proposed motions and amendments to be put on notice. A detailed memo regarding when notice of motions is required was sent out last week. This is a standard practice for most standing and special committees of the Assembly. Please review the memo and follow up with the committee clerk if you have any questions.

If a committee member wishes to propose a motion that has not been put on notice, they may request the consent of the committee to do so. To request consent, a committee member would have to be able to provide a general description of the motion they wish to have considered and then move a motion that the Select Special Citizen Initiative Proposal Review Committee permit under Standing Order 52.041(3) a motion related to be moved despite prior notice not having been provided by the deadline established by the chair. It's important to note that this motion is debatable. However, at this point the debate applies to the request of consent and not the merits of the potential motion itself. The motion requesting consent is decided by a majority vote. If the motion is defeated, the committee will move on to other matters. If the motion passes, then the committee may formally move the motion, and it will be considered by the committee.

Now I'd like to turn to our next item on our agenda, which is the citizen initiative proposal review. Section (a) for this is the Government Motion 34/Citizen Initiative Act. As members will be aware, on March 10, 2026, the Assembly approved Government Motion 34, which established this select special committee for the purpose of reviewing the Alberta forever Canada citizen initiative proposal. Government Motion 34 and the Citizen Initiative Act set a reporting deadline for this committee. We are required to report back to the Legislative Assembly within 90 days of the proposal being referred to us if the Legislative Assembly is then sitting or, if the Assembly is not then sitting, within 15 days after the commencement of the next sitting.

At this point I would like to turn the floor over to the Law Clerk, Trafton Koenig, for further comments. Mr. Koenig, please go ahead.

8:40

Mr. Koenig: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'll be brief here. I'm just going to say a few words about the role of this committee under section 15 of the Citizen Initiative Act. Once the Speaker has received

notice that a policy proposal has been successful, that's tabled in the Assembly, and the government brings forward a motion to refer it to a committee. That's what happened with Government Motion 34, which I believe was passed on March 10. After it's referred to this committee, you will have two options, that are set out under section 15(2) of the act. The committee can table a report with respect to the policy proposal which is framed in fairly broad terms and provides a lot of discretion to this committee. The other option is to recommend referral to the Lieutenant Governor in Council for a referendum under section 15(2)(b).

If this committee recommends a referendum, it may also make recommendations on the form and substance of the referendum question or questions under 15(2.1), and if a referendum is recommended, it must generally be held on or before the next general election. If the next general election is less than one year away, the referendum is deferred and held before the following general election. That's just a very, very brief overview of section 15 of the act.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Koenig.

Do any committee members have any questions?

All right. Seeing none, we'll move on to our next piece of information. As this is the first meeting of the committee, I will provide a bit of an overview of how other select special committee reviews have been conducted. The process generally involves three broad phases: gathering information, deliberating on that information, and reporting to the Assembly.

At this point I would like to turn the floor over to Nancy Robert, clerk of *Journals* and committees, to expand on this topic. Ms Robert.

Ms Robert: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Good morning again, everyone. I'm just going to very quickly go over the typical process that committees follow when they're conducting a review. Of course, we've never conducted this type of review before, so it's all going to be quite new, but as the chair indicated, there are three broad phases: information gathering, deliberations, and reporting.

In terms of information gathering it can be quite typical for a committee, as a first step, to request a technical briefing on the mechanics of, say, a statute or something else. Once that is complete, committees then need to decide how they want to hear and receive information on the topic that they're studying. Usually this is done through seeking input from stakeholders and sometimes from members of the public as well. It's up to the committee to decide, if they do seek stakeholder input, which types of stakeholders they want. Sometimes the committee will name stakeholders themselves. Sometimes they'll direct the Legislative Assembly Office to propose a set of stakeholders for the committee's consideration and eventual approval.

In any case, once the stakeholders and possibly public participation is settled on by the committee, the committee then needs to decide how it wants to hear from stakeholders and possibly members of the public. Do they want written information? Do they want oral presentations? Do they want both? Committees have run the whole gamut on that type of information gathering.

The committee might also want to avail itself of the services of the Legislative Assembly Office research services if it requires background information on something, if it requires research, media scans, crossjurisdictional information, that sort of thing. The Legislative Assembly Office is available for that type of work if that is the wish of the committee.

Then once the committee has all the information it feels that it needs, it goes to the second phase, which is deliberations. The committee will gather and talk about what it's heard and make some

decisions on types of recommendations it wishes to make to the Assembly.

Once decisions are made on that, committees will typically direct the Legislative Assembly Office to draft a draft report containing all of the agreed-to recommendations, any contextual information, and the activities of the committee for the committee's consideration and approval. Once approved, the chair then presents the report to the Assembly. That's a typical process. Of course, it's up to this committee to decide how it wishes to proceed.

Now, in terms of reporting to the Assembly, as the chair has indicated, the committee shall report to the Assembly within 90 days of the proposal being referred to it if the Assembly is then sitting. If it is not then sitting, the committee must report to the Assembly within 15 days after the commencement of the next session. That's set out in section 15(2) of the Citizen Initiative Act.

The petition that this committee is considering was referred to the committee on March 10, 2026. The committee, based on those requirements, is required to report on June 8, which is 90 days after the petition was referred. If the Assembly is not sitting on June 8, the next deadline would be November 11, 2026, which is 15 days after the start of the fall sitting on October 27.

Under section 38.1(1) of the Standing Orders a member may also deposit with the clerk a report that is required to be laid before the Assembly in accordance with the act. Therefore, if the Assembly is not sitting on June 8, the committee chair would have the option to file the committee's report by intersessional deposit at any time prior to the start of the fall sitting.

If the report is tabled when the Assembly is sitting, the report is presented by the chair of the committee under Presenting Reports by Standing and Special Committees. There is no requirement in the act or the standing orders for concurrence to be requested by the Assembly in the report.

That's basically the process I wanted to just lay out for the committee, and I would be happy to answer any questions if there are any.

The Chair: All right. Thank you, Ms Robert, for providing us with that information.

I see your hand there, MLA Sawyer. I appreciate that, and I think this is a great time to segue into our committee discussing the next steps in the process based on some of the information that we've just received. Moving on to considering the next steps in the process, this would be a good time for the committee to do some planning around the review process and determine what kinds of information we need to be able to conduct our review. This could include things like inviting technical briefings or inviting input from stakeholders.

At this point I'll open the floor to discussion. I see MLA Sawyer was first off the gun, so I want to give her a chance. Please go ahead, MLA Sawyer.

Mrs. Sawyer: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I wanted to move a motion that

the Select Special Citizen Initiative Proposal Review Committee invite officials from the Ministry of Justice and the office of the Chief Electoral Officer to provide technical briefings on the Citizen Initiative Act at an upcoming meeting of the committee.

The Chair: Thank you, MLA Sawyer.

Having heard this motion, I will now open the floor for discussion. MLA Pancholi, please go ahead.

Ms Pancholi: Thank you, Chair. I appreciate the motion brought forward by MLA Sawyer. I do agree that there is value in getting a technical briefing particularly from the Chief Electoral Officer of

Elections Alberta, as Elections Alberta is the key entity responsible for managing the receipt of the petition, verifying the signatures, confirming the process has been followed under the Citizen Initiative Act. However, I don't think it's necessary for us to have a technical briefing from the Ministry of Justice. Apart from the Ministry of Justice being the ministry responsible for the act, the administration of the act and in particular the details around managing a citizen initiative petition are purely done by the Chief Electoral Officer at Elections Alberta.

I think it's important that this committee be of course well informed as it goes forward with this work, but we also want to be efficient. We are cognizant of the fact that this process has already been delayed significantly. We believe there is value in hearing from the Chief Electoral Officer but don't need to hear from the Ministry of Justice, so I'd like to move an amendment to the motion, please.

The Chair: All right. Please go ahead.

Ms Pancholi: The amendment would read by striking out "Ministry of Justice and."

The Chair: Okay. We'll have a discussion on that amendment. MLA Nixon, I saw your hand. Please go ahead.

Mr. Nixon: Yeah. I'm not sure why you would strike out the Ministry of Justice. The Ministry of Justice is responsible for the act. This is the first time that a petition of this kind has made it this far. There have been lots of different conversations taking place on exactly how this process would work afterwards. I think it's important that we get it right, and I would very much disagree with the hon. member's amendment and would encourage the committee to vote it down. I think we need to hear from Elections Alberta and the Ministry of Justice.

8:50

The Chair: Thank you, MLA Nixon.

Is there anyone else looking to join the debate on our amendment? MLA Ellingson, go ahead, please.

Member Ellingson: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think I'd just like to reinforce from my colleague that it is Elections Alberta, it is the Chief Electoral Officer that administers the act. It's the Chief Electoral Officer and Elections Alberta that have managed the petition to this point. They are the ones that would be responsible for carrying forward any next steps that this committee recommends. They are certainly well aware and well informed of what is in the act. The Ministry of Justice simply is redundant in this. The Chief Electoral Officer is the administrator of this. They know exactly what's going on, and they can tell us everything that we need to know so that we can move forward in this process.

The Chair: All right. Thank you.

Is there anyone else? MLA Pancholi, please go ahead.

Ms Pancholi: I'll just add that it's incredibly important that we be as expeditious as possible in the next steps of this committee. I want to highlight for this committee – I'll probably be repeating this a number of times because it's important to note – that this petition was first tabled with the Legislative Assembly on December 2, and it took until March 10 for this committee to be called and convened, for the matter to be referred. Further, it took another, well, 42 days into the 90-day period that this committee has to do its work before the chair called the first meeting of this committee.

Provided that, it's really important that we move quickly, any additional steps or further stakeholders or technical briefings need

We do not want to create more opportunities for delay, so I want to highlight that right now, which is a position you'll hear consistently from the Official Opposition on behalf of the almost half a million Albertans who signed this petition, that we need to move quickly in our work in this committee.

The Chair: Thank you, MLA Pancholi.

MLA Nixon, I saw your hand. Go ahead.

Mr. Nixon: Again, nothing to do with the amendment, but it does need to be responded to. First of all, the hon. member knows that the House wasn't sitting in December when it came through, not in a timeline that could have addressed this. Then when the Legislature returned, we were in budgets, and you cannot set a standing committee during estimates, of which the hon. member is completely aware.

I do think this is a historical moment in Alberta, the first time that I've ever heard the Official Opposition not want to have a department come in so that they could ask them questions. There's a statement that only Elections Alberta is involved in this. I don't think that's actually correct, but if we pass the hon. Member from Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills's motion, we can find out when we go and ask both of these entities what they know about it and what we need to know to be able to make the decisions that we have to make. I will stress again that the Department of Justice is responsible for this act.

The Chair: All right. I see MLA Sawyer. Please go ahead.

Mrs. Sawyer: Thank you. I would just like to address the comments from the other member on moving quickly. This is a serious topic, and to not want to hear from everyone on the technical side – I want to make sure that I've heard from both the Justice office as well as the electoral. I don't think that it is responsible of us not to look at all the information just on the sake of speeding. That is not doing our job. I'm not rushing such a serious process and not having an opportunity to look at things.

The Chair: Okay. Well, thank you, members.

Oh, sorry. MLA Pancholi, please go ahead.

Ms Pancholi: I just want to highlight as we begin our work in this committee how important it is that all members speak factually to what is happening. The House was sitting on December 2 when this petition was tabled. There were a number of days after that in which time the committee could have been convened. So I just want to make sure we're clear on the record that we are factual and accurate about things that can be easily proven by looking at calendars online.

Thank you.

The Chair: All right. Thank you, members.

Having heard that debate, I am prepared to call the question on this amendment. All those in favour of the amendment, please say aye. All those opposed? All right.

That amendment has been defeated.

Now we can move back to the main motion, and I will give members the opportunity for continued discussion on the main motion. Is there anyone else looking to contribute?

All right. Seeing none, I will now call the vote on our main motion. All those in favour, please say aye. All those opposed? All right.

That motion has been carried.

We can continue on during our discussions on our next steps in the process. MLA Pancholi, please go ahead.

Ms Pancholi: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'd like to move a motion. That motion is that

the Select Special Citizen Initiative Proposal Review Committee invite the proponent of the Alberta Forever Canadian petition to present to the committee at its next meeting and respond to questions from committee members.

The intention behind this motion, Mr. Chair, is that this is, as you've noted, the first time that a citizen initiative proposal has come to a committee. We believe that it's important as part of the information gathering to hear from the proponent of that petition, Mr. Thomas Lukaszuk. We think it's important that he can come and speak to the process by which he gathered the petitions as well as anything that he sees appropriate to share with this committee. I also think he should be made available to answer questions from committee members, and this is pretty standard, I think, in any committee of this type to gather the appropriate information.

We believe it's very timely and important that Mr. Lukaszuk be invited at the next meeting of this committee because it is part of that information gathering before we continue on with our work. It's entirely possible that we could have the technical briefing that this committee just agreed to with Elections Alberta and the Ministry of Justice at the same meeting. It's entirely possible to combine those two together as part of the important information-gathering stage, which the committee clerk has highlighted.

I encourage all members to accept this motion.

The Chair: All right. Thank you, MLA Pancholi. I believe you did in fact read that motion into the record in your comments, so I will now open the floor up to discussion on the motion.

MLA Nixon, please go ahead.

Mr. Nixon: I think this is probably premature. We have not had technical briefings. Our number one task here is to review the process, not the merits of the petition. The petition is actually pretty clear. It's very clear. It says, "Therefore, we as represented by the [signatures] and applicant below propose a referendum on the following question." So it's pretty clear what the intention was.

I'm not sure how we would even know if there's any other questions we would want to ask a potential stakeholder coming to the committee until we've had our technical briefings, so my viewpoint is that it's premature and we should wait, have our briefings, then have a conversation about which stakeholders we may or may not want to hear from based on that information.

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

MLA Pancholi, please go ahead.

Ms Pancholi: It's possible that it's been some time since some of the members on the government side, particularly those who are ministers, have sat on a committee such as this. I know a number of our members have sat on committees many times where we definitely are willing to put in the work in one meeting to get as much information as we can. It is not unusual to have technical briefings and stakeholders present at the same meeting. That has certainly occurred before.

The member across the way had no problem with having the Ministry of Justice come to present to this committee. He seems to have some hesitation about hearing from the proponent of the largest petition in Alberta's history and one of the largest in Canadian history to ever be gathered. Frankly, I wish I was surprised, but I'm not surprised to hear that that member is not interested in hearing from the proponent on this. In fact, that's been the government's position all along, to delay, delay, delay.

Let's be clear, Mr. Chair. The reason why the government members want to delay the process and the work of this committee

has nothing to do with estimates. It has everything to do with the fact that they would like to postpone the work of this committee and its completion until after the Legislature rises in mid-May. The reason why, just as we've just heard from Ms Robert, is that the timing is that if this committee work is not completed by the time this Legislature is scheduled to rise, which is scheduled for May 14, the work of this committee will not be tabled with the Assembly until November of 2026. Very coincidentally, that falls after the date of a proposed referendum, that we know this government has been very supportive of from the beginning, on separatism, and that petition will be completed sometime in the next few weeks. They're trying to put off listening to the almost half a million Albertans who signed this petition.

9:00

The proponent of the petition is the representative of those signatories, and he deserves the right to speak to this committee as soon as possible. There's no reason to delay this until further down the road. We can have the technical briefing and the presentation from Mr. Lukaszuk at the same time. The members on this side of the House are ready to put in the work. We are ready to sit for more than an hour, and we're ready to listen to all those presentations so that we can proceed expeditiously with the work of this committee.

The Chair: Thank you, Member.

Is there anyone else wishing to join this deliberation? MLA Shepherd, please go ahead.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I recognize I'm just here observing today. I'm not a voting member of this committee, but I just wanted to, in that role, make a short observation. That being that at multiple times in the House, in the media, on her radio program, the Premier has stated this committee was necessary because she was unclear about the intent of the person who put forward this petition, Mr. Lukaszuk. So it seems odd to me that since the Premier has stated multiple times that the whole purpose of this committee, the reason it is here, is because she and the government members are unclear about what Mr. Lukaszuk's intent was in putting forward this petition, what result he wanted, you would think the committee would want to hear from him on that point.

Thank you.

The Chair: All right. Thank you, MLA Shepherd.
MLA Sawhney, please go ahead.

Mrs. Sawhney: Thank you very much. I would respectfully disagree with this motion because I do believe it is very important to hear from the technical experts, and we want to have a thorough discussion on what that conversation will look like. Although I'm new to the committee process, I do know that in this kind of conversation hearing from the technical experts is going to be the basis of our further discussion. I know there is a desire to cram everything into the next meeting, but I strongly disagree with that approach. Let's have the technical experts here at the next meeting and have a thorough conversation.

The Chair: Thank you, MLA Sawhney.
MLA Pancholi, please go ahead.

Ms Pancholi: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'd like to note a couple of things. The first is that this committee has been in receipt of over almost 1,100 e-mails from Albertans who have concurred with the importance of hearing from the proponent of this petition in this

committee. I would also like to note procedurally that the only concern that the members on the other side have raised is that they don't want to hear from the proponent of the petition at the same time as the technical briefings. However, it seems that the government members intend to vote down this amendment.

I can't presume the outcome of a vote, but if they were to vote down this amendment, they would be making no commitment to hearing from the proponent at any point in this committee. They have not put forward a motion 24 hours or 48 hours ahead of time as required by the chair that would suggest that the proponent would come forward at another meeting as one of the stakeholders, so I would seek confirmation. Do the government members intend to support the petitioner coming before this committee at all, or is it simply a concern about the next meeting and holding it at the same time as the technical briefing?

The Chair: Thank you, MLA Pancholi.

MLA Nixon, please go ahead.

Mr. Nixon: I think two quick things. The first is that MLA Shepherd said that the Premier somehow called this committee because she wanted some clarity on the issue. This committee is required under the act. This is a legislative process, which indicates to me that my friends on the other side of the aisle probably do need a technical briefing to make sure that they understand how the process works. As I said in my comments, we may need to hear from the proponent of the petition. We don't know it yet. This is cart before horse. We'll have that conversation after we have the technical briefing. That's what I think. I think my colleagues agree with me. Probably time to vote, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Sure. We'll call the question soon. I want to give MLA Pancholi a chance.

Go ahead.

Ms Pancholi: Thank you, Mr. Chair. What we just heard from the government member is that they will not make a decision about whether they're going to hear from the proponent of this petition at all. There's no commitment there at all. They want to wait until we receive a technical briefing. I want to highlight again that we are in this timeline because the government has chosen to delay repeatedly, over and over. The House was sitting on December 2 when this petition was tabled with the Legislature. The government had the ability to convene a committee right away, in which case, since this spring session began, we could have been sitting and doing all of this work in order to complete the committee's mandate before the rise of this legislative sitting. It is the government and the UCP who have chosen repeatedly to delay. They chose to wait until March 10 to convene this committee, and then, inexplicably for a committee that has a short timeline of 90 days, this committee did not meet for the first time until 42 days into that 90-day period.

I want Albertans who are watching and listening to know that the reason this government is now making these procedural motions that they want to wait suddenly to hear from the technical briefing before they decide if they're going to hear from the petitioner for the largest petition in Alberta history is because they do not want to complete the work of this committee before the Legislature rises. They want to wait until the separatists, who are supporting their party, who they have changed the legislation for multiple times, who they have overturned court decisions for, to get a chance to have their question put on the ballot in October. That is why we are seeing these procedural games being played.

When every other opportunity has come for government to work quickly, they work very quickly. When it came to changing legislation while the court matter was still happening, they changed

the legislation, but in this case they're refusing to do the work because they want to delay, and that delay is silencing the voice of almost half a million Albertans. All Albertans should know that these procedural games are because the UCP and the government members are afraid of Albertans who have used their voices to say very clearly that they want Alberta to remain in Canada.

The Chair: Thank you, members.

Are there any other comments?

Seeing none, I am prepared to call the question. All those in favour of the motion as proposed, please say aye. Any opposed?

Ms Pancholi: Recorded vote, please.

The Chair: Well, I'll announce that it has been defeated first.

The motion has been defeated.

We do have a request for a recorded vote. Just to let everyone know, a recorded vote has been requested. Those in the room who are in favour of the motion, please raise your hands.

Ms Rempel: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I see Mrs. Pancholi and Member Ellingson.

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

Ms Rempel: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I see the hon. Mrs. Sawhney, I see the hon. Mr. Nixon, and I see Mrs. Sawyer.

I have two votes in favour and three against.

The Chair: All right. Thank you.

That motion is defeated.

All right. So we can continue on this agenda item in relation to our next steps.

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

Mrs. Sawyer: I have a motion that I'd like to move, if I may, Mr. Chair. I move that

in support of the committee's review of the Alberta Forever Canadian petition, the Select Special Citizen Initiative Proposal Review Committee invite officials from the Ministry of Justice and the office of the Chief Electoral Officer (a) to provide technical assistance as required to the committee and Legislative Assembly Office and (b) to attend meetings of the committee when requested in order to provide technical expertise.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.

MLA Sawyer has moved a motion and read it into the record, so it's on our screen for us to look at. I will now open the floor for discussion on this motion.

All right. Seeing none, I'm prepared to call this question. All those in favour of the motion, please say aye. Are there any opposed? All right.

That motion is carried.

Is there any other member wishing to bring discussions forward on this agenda item, on our next steps in the process? MLA Ellingson, please go ahead.

Member Ellingson: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'd like to bring forward a motion. Despite the fact that we've already heard from the government that we're going to be delaying this committee for as long as we can so that we don't conclude before we rise, I'd like to bring forward a motion that reads that

the Select Special Citizen Initiative Proposal Review Committee meet as follows: on April 27, 2026, to hear presentations and technical briefings from invited parties and on May 1, 2026, to

hold deliberations and make recommendations for the purpose of Section 15(2) of the Citizen Initiative Act.

9:10

Mr. Chair, we are very well aware, everyone sitting here, that we have all received the over 1,000 e-mails from Albertans urging us forward in this work. As we have already heard at this meeting, over 400,000 Albertans signed this petition. This is the largest petition in Alberta's history. As we have already heard, these are incredibly serious deliberations, but Albertans want us to have those deliberations and have a conclusion in time to present to the Legislature before it rises. There is nothing more important in front of us than the work of this committee today. It must be heard, deliberated, and concluded before we rise on May 14.

The voices of Albertans are clear, Mr. Chair, and I think that they will be watching and listening to know that this committee takes their voices seriously and moves forward on this work. I propose that we meet on April 27 and May 1 to hear our technical briefings, have our deliberations, and reach a conclusion before we rise.

The Chair: All right. Thank you, MLA Ellingson, and for reading that motion into the record earlier.

I will now open the floor for any further discussion or deliberation on this motion. MLA Nixon, please go ahead.

Mr. Nixon: To be clear, there can be intersessional tablings, correct? I'd just go back to Nancy who made that clear at the start. That's up to this committee?

The Chair: Go ahead, Ms Robert.

Ms Robert: Thanks, Mr. Chair. Yes. That is correct.

Mr. Nixon: So again, I mean, you've got to contact, obviously, the CEO, the Justice department officials, to make sure that the dates line up for it to work. I think that's how it has always been done on legislative committees, frankly, just professional courtesy. I'm very sure, Mr. Chair, you can get this date booked in an appropriate time without this level of prescriptive measures, so I don't think we need to pass this.

The Chair: Thank you, MLA Nixon.

Are there any others? MLA Pancholi, please go ahead.

Ms Pancholi: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The reason for the level of prescription is because when left to their own devices, the UCP will delay, delay, delay. We've already seen proof of that. We have a 90-day period of time. The first meeting of this committee was not scheduled until almost halfway through that period of time. There was no explanation for that. There was no reason for that. It could have been held before estimates. Estimates was only two weeks, yet here we are. It's 42 days into that 90-day period before we're even having our first meeting. We could have had a lot more time. I agree we want to be able to make sure that all officials can attend, but the reason why we have to be so prescriptive in the dates of these meetings is because the UCP has left no choice.

An intersessional deposit might be possible, but it does not allow for the Legislature, if it so chooses as a result of the recommendations from this committee, to respond to those until after the referendum held in October, conveniently after the supporters of separatism who are the base of the UCP's party and good friends with the Premier get their voices heard.

Let me be clear. This petition, signed by over 400,000 Albertans, was completed months and months and months before any other petition on the same topic. In fact, the only reason that we have a situation where petitions can be filed on the same topic is because

the government moved with great expedition to amend the legislation to allow that.

When the government wants to, they can move quickly, and of course when they don't want to, they move incredibly slowly. This motion is intended to be prescriptive because the government requires that level of prescription to be able to get this work done in a timely way for the Legislature to be able to consider the report filed by this committee before it rises in mid-May.

The Chair: All right.

MLA Sawhney, please go ahead.

Mrs. Sawhney: Well, there are a number of things with which I would agree. The voices of Albertans are very important to the government, and it is important to move expediently and efficiently, but the reality is that the CEO and the Justice department officials need time to prepare. We need to assess their availability. This is professional courtesy, and it is the way that it has always been done, so I think it's important to keep that in mind. Being overly prescriptive with the dates right now is actually pretty irresponsible.

The Chair: Thank you, members.

MLA Ellingson, please go ahead.

Member Ellingson: I mean, of course, I think we all want to extend official courtesy to those working for the government and in the Justice department, but we also want everyone to be working and moving expeditiously on this item which is so incredibly important to Albertans. I guess what I will also say, Mr. Chair, is: there you have it. We had a motion that said that we needed to bring the Department of Justice forward, and now here we are already delaying when we would be having our meetings so that the Justice department can have the time to do their work. The plan of this government has been laid out pretty clearly through the motions and discussion of this meeting. They want to delay, delay, delay so that we cannot have a conclusion before the other petition goes forward, that other petition that this government has been supporting since the beginning. They've made it pretty clear in this meeting, through the motions and through the debate, their plan to delay, delay, and stall. The citizens of Alberta will not have this.

The Chair: All right. Thank you, members. I am prepared to call this question.

All those in favour of the motion, please say aye. All right. Are there any opposed to this motion?

That motion is defeated.

Ms Pancholi: A recorded vote, please.

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

Ms Rempel: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I see Ms Pancholi, and I see Member Ellingson.

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

Ms Rempel: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I see the hon. Ms Sawhney, I see the hon. Mr. Nixon, and I see Mrs. Sawyer.

I have two votes in favour and three votes against, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: All right. Thank you.

That motion has been defeated.

Moving on, if there is any further discussion under this item. MLA Pancholi, please go ahead.

Ms Pancholi: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'd like to move a motion, and that motion is that

the Select Special Citizen Initiative Proposal Review Committee take all necessary steps to conclude its work in accordance with section 15(2) of the Citizen Initiative Act and report to the Legislative Assembly on or before May 7, 2026.

If the schedule that we outlined, that my colleague Member Ellingson put forward, is not acceptable to the government members, I think Albertans who have signed this petition at least deserve a commitment from the government members on the other side that the work of this committee and the report will be tabled with the Legislative Assembly by May 7, before the Legislature is scheduled to rise. Once again I will highlight that 1,100 Albertans alone on this issue sent e-mails to this committee, to committee members specifically requesting this particular motion, that the work be concluded before May 7.

Now, we see very clearly that the government members have no problem ignoring the almost half a million Albertans who signed the petition, to ignore them for as long as possible, but they should also be careful about ignoring the 1,100 Albertans who also specifically requested that we complete our work by this time. Mr. Chair, if the government members on the other side, as they have voted down, hearing from the proponent – they have voted down a schedule to deal with this matter quickly, to deal with the work in this committee quickly and expeditiously despite the delays being entirely on the government side.

If the government members also vote down this motion, it will be confirmation that they never had any intention to listen to the half a million Albertans who signed that petition, that they are ignoring their voices, and that they do not want to make any decision on this petition or put forward any recommendations until after the separatists who support their party, who are trying to tear this province apart, who are creating economic instability in our province, who are also good friends of the Premier, and who sit as members of their party – that they are willing to listen to them, and they want to prioritize and give advantage to that group of people over the almost half a million Albertans who signed the forever Canada petition. It will be confirmation that they don't believe in direct democracy, that that is all talk, Mr. Chair. When the direct democracy doesn't work to support a position that they favour, they ignore it. So this is an opportunity for the members on the other side to be clear, to say that, yes, they intend, before this Legislature rises, to complete the work of this committee. If they cannot support this amendment, we will know which side of the separatism debate these members are supporting.

9:20

The Chair: Are there any other members looking to join the deliberations on this motion? MLA Sawyer.

Mrs. Sawyer: I just want to be clear. I'm going to address, you know, the motion and not pontificate and try and make digs because I don't think that helps us. I'm listening to inaccurate information being said about us on this side. I am intent on doing my job that I've been tasked with and taking the time. To try and put dates and deadlines – I want to make sure I've done my job thoroughly. That doesn't mean I'm avoiding it; it means I'm actually taking it seriously. We have, as has been presented to us, a timeline that goes past May 7 that we have to get this work done. They might want to rush, but I like to do a job properly and fully, so I'm not in support of it.

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

MLA Nixon, go ahead.

Mr. Nixon: Again, it would probably be helpful to the Official Opposition to have an opportunity to get technical briefings to make sure they understand the act, which is why we are starting with that. I think the hon. member is under the impression that the Legislature would have to pass something for something to proceed as a result of the work of this committee. As I understand the act and understand how the referendum process would work, this would be, actually, at the end of the day, a decision to be made by cabinet as it would move towards a referendum question, meaning that we definitely could see the government proceeding with the recommendations of this committee based on intersessional reports.

That said, that's why we probably need to bring in the people that are responsible for the act, ask them some questions here quickly about timelines and other issues like that, to be able to make sure that we can make the most appropriate decisions. I also agree with the Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills. I just don't see the point of ordering some of the silliness that we continue to hear from the other side, because it just delays things even more. It's just unfortunate to continue to see that member, Mr. Chair, continue to disparage both members of this committee, but worse yet disparaging hon. members of the Legislature who aren't even in the room to defend themselves, which sadly is a pattern of the Official Opposition.

Let's have the technical briefing and figure out the best way forward. What is being presented by the opposition that you cannot move forward unless you meet May 7 is not accurate, and that will be made clear through that technical briefing process. Then we can get to work on making sure that we get this right for the people of Alberta.

The Chair: Thank you, MLA Nixon.
MLA Pancholi.

Ms Pancholi: Thank you, Mr. Chair. As we heard from Parliamentary Counsel under section 15(2) of the act, one option is that this matter is referred to cabinet for consideration of a referendum, but the other option is the broad discretion, as Parliamentary Counsel characterized it, to table a report that may include recommendations that the Legislature take action. I'm concerned to hear that the members on the other side are presupposing what that recommendation may be. They are not interested in hearing from the proponent of this petition, yet they're presupposing what that recommendation in that report may be. It very well may be a recommendation that the Legislature do take action.

Mr. Nixon: Point of order, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: A point of order.

Mr. Nixon: The member is putting words into our mouth. Again, nothing to do with this motion either. This is going to delay this process even more if they continue to do that.

To be clear, that's not what I said. I did say that there are options during intersessional tablings that do not fit within the timeline that the hon. member is presenting, which is unfortunate. You know, here's the good news, Mr. Chair. She's going to have an opportunity to ask the people who made the legislation and those who are responsible for the law exactly how this works so she can educate herself. If this is going to continue, though, I will say to you, Mr. Chair, that this is going to create significant disorder in this committee.

The Chair: Do you have a standing order?

Mr. Nixon: Standing Order 23(h), (i), and (j).

The Chair: Okay. Thank you, Member.

Ms Pancholi: Mr. Chair, the hon. member just used that period of time to continue on debate. Certainly, there's no grounding there in any standing order. Just because the member is personally offended does not make this causing disorder in the committee. There is no grounds here. He just continued on debate about our interpretation of section 15(2) of the Citizen Initiative Act. This is not a point of order.

The Chair: Thank you, members. I will say this is an extremely important topic, as all members here have pointed out several times today. I would suggest, as your chair, that it is such an important topic that deserves a very respectful conversation for the entirety of our committee. I would say perhaps for the most part that we have hit that mark. I'm hopeful that we will continue to hit that mark. I understand all members here have lots to say on this, including perhaps outside of this committee. It's important that everyone has their voice. I would respectfully ask for the respectful tone to continue.

Maybe a warning instead of a point of order. I don't think this rises to a point of order right now today, but I along with all Albertans watching would anticipate a continued respectful dialogue from all members on this committee.

We are a little short on time, so I will open the door for . . .

Ms Pancholi: Mr. Chair, I was still in the middle of my comments when the member raised his point of order.

The Chair: I was in the middle of leaving that door open for final comments so we can hit the end of our meeting. Please proceed, MLA Pancholi.

Ms Pancholi: Thank you, Mr. Chair. As I was saying, the outcome of this committee's work is not to be presupposed. It leaves the possibility that there could be some recommendation that comes from this committee that does require action to be taken by the Legislature. This is why I believe the 1,100 Albertans who have written to this committee have requested that this committee complete its work by May 7 so that there's the possibility that whatever action the Legislature is going to take can happen before the Legislature rises on May 14.

I also want to note that we all want to do our jobs appropriately and thoroughly in this committee; therefore, I imagine all members are disappointed that 42 out of the 90 days of the work period that we have for this committee were eaten up doing absolutely nothing. I agree that if the members opposite want to do thorough work, so do the members on this side. It's unfortunate that we have not been given the time by this committee, by the UCP, to actually do that work properly. The urgency here is not created by the Official Opposition. The urgency is created by the UCP's decision to delay. Half a million Albertans deserve to have their voices heard and deserve to have them heard now.

The Chair: All right. Thank you, members.

With that, I am prepared to call this question.

All those in favour of this motion, please say aye. All those opposed? All right.

That motion is defeated.

Ms Pancholi: A recorded vote, please.

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

Ms Rempel: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I see Ms Pancholi, and I see Member Ellingson.

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

Ms Rempel: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I see the hon. Ms Sawhney. I see the hon. Mr. Nixon, and I see Mrs. Sawyer.

I have two votes in favour and three against.

The Chair: All right. Thank you.

That motion is defeated.

We can, in our short time together here today, conclude the rest of our agenda.

Is there any other business that needs to be addressed?

Seeing none, we will move to the date of the next meeting. In light of our conversation earlier, the next meeting will be set at the call of the chair. I will commit to working with our technical briefing stakeholders to make sure that we can have some scheduled alignment.

All right. With that, we are at the end of our meeting. I would call for a motion to adjourn. MLA Sawyer, I saw your hand first.

Any discussion? I'll call the question.

All those in favour that the April 21, 2026, meeting of the Select Special Citizen Initiative Proposal Review Committee be adjourned, please say aye. Any opposed? That motion is carried, and we are adjourned.

[The committee adjourned at 9:29 a.m.]

