



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

The 30th Legislature
Second Session

Select Special
Democratic Accountability
Committee

Wednesday, July 22, 2020
5 p.m.

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Second Session**

Select Special Democratic Accountability Committee

Schow, Joseph R., Cardston-Siksika (UCP), Chair
Horner, Nate S., Drumheller-Stettler (UCP), Deputy Chair

Allard, Tracy L., Grande Prairie (UCP)
Ceci, Joe, Calgary-Buffalo (NDP)
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South (NDP)
Goodridge, Laila, Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche (UCP)
Nixon, Jeremy P., Calgary-Klein (UCP)
Pancholi, Rakhi, Edmonton-Whitemud (NDP)
Rutherford, Brad, Leduc-Beaumont (UCP)
Sigurdson, R.J., Highwood (UCP)
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (UCP)
Stephan, Jason, Red Deer-South (UCP)*
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* substitution for Brad Rutherford

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[Mr. Schow in the chair]

The Chair: Okay. I'd like to call this meeting to order. Welcome to the members and staff in attendance for the orientation meeting of the Select Special Democratic Accountability Committee.

My name is Joseph Schow, and I am the MLA for Cardston-Siksika and chair of this committee. I am now going to ask members joining the committee at the table to introduce themselves, starting on my right.

Mr. Horner: Nate Horner, MLA, Drumheller-Stettler.

Mrs. Allard: Tracy Allard, MLA, Grande Prairie.

Ms Goodridge: Laila Goodridge, MLA, Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche.

Mr. Smith: Mark Smith, MLA, Drayton Valley-Devon.

Mr. Jeremy Nixon: Jeremy Nixon, Calgary-Klein.

Mr. Sigurdson: R.J. Sigurdson, Highwood.

Mr. Stephan: MLA Jason Stephan, Red Deer-South, substituting for Brad Rutherford.

Ms Sweet: Good evening. Heather Sweet, MLA, Edmonton-Manning.

Mr. Dang: Good evening. Thomas Dang, Edmonton-South.

Member Ceci: Good evening. Joe Ceci, Calgary-Buffalo.

Ms Sorensen: Rhonda Sorensen, manager of corporate communications at the LAO.

Ms Cherkewich: Good evening. Teri Cherkewich, Parliamentary Counsel office.

Dr. Massolin: Good afternoon. Philip Massolin, clerk of committees and research services.

Mr. Roth: Hello. Aaron Roth, committee clerk.

The Chair: Thank you, everyone at the table.

We'll now go to those who are on the phone or joining us by video conference.

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

The Chair: Thank you, Member Pancholi, for joining us.

I also note the following substitution for the record: Mr. Stephan is here for Mr. Rutherford, as he said in his introduction.

Based upon the recommendations from Dr. Deena Hinshaw regarding physical distancing, attendees at today's meeting are advised to leave the appropriate distance between themselves and other meeting participants. Please note that the microphones are operated by *Hansard*, so members do not need to turn them on and off as they speak. Committee proceedings are being live audiostreamed on the Internet. Please set your cellphones and other devices to silent for the duration of the meeting. That also means me; all set.

Okay. We'll move on now to agenda item 2, approval of the agenda. Does anyone have any changes to make?

Seeing none, would a member please move a motion to approve our agenda? Ms Goodridge has moved that the agenda for the July 22, 2020, meeting of the Select Special Democratic Accountability Committee be adopted as distributed. All those in favour, please say aye. All those opposed? On the phone, in favour? Great.

Now item 3, approval of minutes from the July 13, 2020, meeting. We have draft minutes of our last meeting, which were posted to the committee's internal website for members' review. Are there any errors or omissions to note in the draft minutes?

Seeing none, would a member please move a motion to adopt the minutes? Mr. Smith has moved that the minutes from the July 13, 2020, meeting of the Select Special Democratic Accountability Committee be adopted as distributed. All those in favour, please say aye. All those opposed? On the phone? Thank you. That motion is carried.

The previous motion, to adopt the agenda, was also carried for the record.

Moving on to item 4 of the agenda, briefings and research for review arising from Government Motion 25, stakeholder and other input, hon. members, at the July 13, 2020, meeting of the committee we had reached the portion of the agenda where members were discussing and proposing motions in regard to inviting stakeholder submissions and other input, either orally or in writing, to the committee as part of our review pursuant to Government Motion 25. I would like to open the floor to any additional discussion on this matter.

Mr. Horner: I'd like to make a motion, Chair, when it's appropriate.

The Chair: I see Mr. Horner first.

Mr. Horner: Sure. Yeah. If it is the appropriate time to move a motion, I would move the motion that was formerly number 3 from our last meeting, and I'd read it aloud: that

the Select Special Democratic Accountability Committee authorize the subcommittee on committee business to develop a stakeholder list based on the focus issues identified.

The Chair: Okay. The motion is on the screen. That is a debatable motion. Any comments that someone would like to make? Mr. Dang.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have some serious concerns with this motion. I think that, certainly, we had concerns in the subcommittee meeting, in private, to discuss these focus issues already, and we continue to have those concerns, that with the makeup of the subcommittee and the structure of the subcommittee it's unclear and unknown if any caucus members will have their input considered or even, frankly, allowed because subcommittees can meet without any ND members present. The Official Opposition may not even have the opportunity to have its voice on this, and I think that's quite a concern in terms of the focus issues and compiling stakeholders to speak to the focus issues.

At the last meeting the UCP members on this committee even voted down my motion for public input on the focus issues in terms of requesting information from stakeholders or members of the general public, so I think it's a little bit rich that they would be trying to keep hiding this under the cover of the subcommittee without any official record here.

I mean, let's be clear. This is input on democracy laws – right? – the very foundation of the work we do here in the Assembly and laws that will impact public participation. So for the UCP members here to call this enhanced democratic participation, and now that the subcommittee is to decide the stakeholders based on an in-the-

shadows review that the main committee hasn't even approved yet – so we don't even know what the finished focus issues will be. We don't know if the Official Opposition will be involved in those discussions, and now we're already deciding that those stakeholders will be approved without knowing what those issues will be. This is something that's simply unheard of, right?

I mean, it seems that this committee is only going to rubber-stamp what's done in the shadows by the UCP majority in the subcommittee, and I think that's very concerning for us. I think that we shouldn't be doing this off the record, and we shouldn't be doing this behind closed doors.

The Chair: Okay. Are there any other comments regarding this motion?

Mr. Jeremy Nixon: I think it's fairly standard to push stuff like this onto the subcommittee. There will be NDP members on that subcommittee that will be there to be able to bring voices from their perspective, caucus and make suggestions with regard to stakeholders. So I just highly recommend that they actually show up to that subcommittee meeting so that they can make sure their voices are heard.

Thank you.

The Chair: I'd like to acknowledge Ms Sweet.

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Mr. Chair. This isn't about whether or not the members of the opposition will show up to a committee meeting or not. The issue that we have here is that we're talking about democratic accountability. We're talking about reviewing legislation that very clearly impacts all levels of government in this province. We are looking at financial pieces. We are looking at all the different ways, referendums potentially, all of these different things that impact every single Albertan in this province. The fact that the government is choosing to try to put everything outside of camera so that there is no record or accountability to the conversations that we are having as a committee is the fundamental problem.

We are talking about democracy. We are talking about the rights of Albertans, and every member in this room and specifically the members of the government continuously stand in the House and say: "Albertans have a right. They have a right to referendums. They have a right to have their voices heard." Well, the reality is that if that is the case and the government truly believes that, then having these meetings outside of camera, not on the record, so Albertans don't actually know what is being said, is the fundamental issue here.

Although I appreciate the member's motion or whatever to look at having a subcommittee look at the stakeholders list, I think that Albertans have a right to have input into that stakeholders list and to have it on the record to understand who's being invited and why.

The Chair: Next on my list is Mr. Horner.

Mr. Horner: Yeah. Just a quick comment. I would say that there's nothing preventing the subcommittee from pursuing town halls if that's the will of the subcommittee. We have four months and six months, running concurrently, for our different tasks that were given to this committee, and I think the subcommittee is bipartisan, well represented, and can get to work.

The Chair: Anyone else? Mr. Dang.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Well, I would contest that, certainly, the subcommittee does not have the authority without the

consent of this committee to actually do any of that type of work. I mean, when the members opposite such as Mr. Nixon voted down last week the requirement for a single member of the ND caucus, the Official Opposition, to be even present at a subcommittee for it to meet, I think it's a little bit rich that he talks about showing up for work when he doesn't even respect the quorum requirements that have become precedent in this place. I think, certainly, there's also a concern that if there was to be a tour of some sort or other types of consultation by the subcommittee, it will not be on the record. It's going to be behind closed doors, and Albertans will not be able to refer to things like *Alberta Hansard* as the members opposite voted down those decisions, again at the last committee meeting.

5:10

So to say that we have all these opportunities for public consultation and openness and transparency is simply not true. It's very clear that the UCP government here and the UCP majority members here are trying to actually stifle that freedom of speech, are actually trying to stifle the light being shone on what's being done in the subcommittee, and it's going to be done under the cover of darkness. I think everyone should vote against this so that this committee can actually do their work in the open, and Albertans can actually see what is going on.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you for that, Mr. Dang.

I see Mr. Nixon.

Mr. Jeremy Nixon: Yeah. I appreciate that. I think, again, this is being brought to a place that it doesn't need to be. At the end of the day, this is about efficiency. This is about using the subcommittee to put some parameters around this and bring it back to this committee. At the end of the day, everything still has to come back to this committee. If members across have concerns about who the stakeholders selected by the subcommittee were, they'll have plenty of opportunity at that point to voice their concerns, as they're currently voicing their concerns. I would argue seriously against that this is restricting their freedom. This is about efficiency so we can get this committee down to work, to the business that it was assigned to do. Yeah.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Nixon.

I have a question from the phone. Ms Pancholi.

Ms Pancholi: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'd just like to take an opportunity to put on the record for those Albertans who might be tuning in to this committee meeting for the first time and who maybe were not watching the last committee meeting. The concern that we consistently have in the Official Opposition with respect to the subcommittee is, as Member Dang indicated, that it happens in the shadows. But we are also concerned about the fact that there is precedent in this Legislature for subcommittees to require a quorum that involves opposition members, and the government members of this committee struck down the requirement that quorum for the subcommittee include the NDP opposition members. It's baffling, I think, for us as to why they would want to have subcommittee meetings without members of the opposition present.

I also want to note that our other concern is that we sought clarification at the last committee meeting that the role of the subcommittee was, in fact, to make recommendations to the committee for consideration. We expressly sought to amend the motion that was brought forward. I note that Member Goodridge had specifically said that the role of the subcommittee was only to make recommendations to the committee and that that discussion

could happen fulsomely within the committee. That amendment was also struck down.

So there are significant concerns from the members of the Official Opposition that there is an intent by the government members to intentionally use the darkness of the subcommittee work to exclude members of the opposition and that they are thinking that the subcommittee will have a broader role than simply making recommendations to the committee. This is why we continue to push that it's important to have as much transparency as possible outside of the subcommittee work but actually within the committee as that is what Albertans demand in terms of transparency, particularly on a committee that's focused on democracy.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you, Ms Pancholi.

I'm beginning to see a pattern in what's being contributed to this conversation from both sides. Unless anyone else has anything new to add to this conversation – I do still want to recognize Ms Sweet.

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just a point of clarity, actually. In the motion, the last part of it says, "To develop a stakeholder list based on the focus issues identified." The committee hasn't approved the focus issues yet, so I'm confused as to how the subcommittee can start creating a stakeholder list when the actual committee hasn't approved the focus issues yet. Like, we don't actually even know what the committee is recommending to move forward on, so how do we develop a stakeholder list and a subcommittee when the whole committee hasn't approved the focus issues?

The Chair: Just a moment. Once the subcommittee creates the issues of focus, then they can create a list of stakeholders.

Ms Sweet: Okay. Sorry. Can I get one more point of clarity, then?

The Chair: Most certainly.

Ms Sweet: If the subcommittee is creating the focus issues and the stakeholder list, are they doing that at the same time, before the committee can actually debate and agree to what the focus issues are? I feel like that's out of order in the context of: the committee should have an authority to decide what the focus issues are prior to the subcommittee then creating the stakeholder list, because the committee hasn't actually agreed to what the focus issues are.

The Chair: With regard to your point of clarification, as far as citizen-initiated referendum and recall, those focus issues have already been outlined. So far as the other two purposes committed, those would be outlined by this committee, I guess, when we get to those, and then the subcommittee will look at stakeholders, but we actually have not laid out the focus of the second portion.

Ms Sweet: I guess this is a question of whether or not this is an appropriate amendment, but I think we would then have to amend to say that the stakeholder list, based on the focus issues, only identify the committee's approved focus issues. Like, we can't create a blanket motion that states that the subcommittee has the authority to create the stakeholder list when we haven't actually approved all the focus issues. So can we amend it to make sure that we are only approving the stakeholder list for those two sections?

The Chair: As we go back and do this dance here a little bit, the understanding is that, again, as I said, the initial focus of the committee has been outlined already, but the second portion will be outlined by the subcommittee, and then we'll come back here to vote on and have a conversation about that and determine whether

we approve that or not. So the focus of the subcommittee and their job to look at stakeholders will be done at the direction of the committee as a whole.

Ms Sweet: Okay. I think there still needs to be clarity in the motion, though, that the only stakeholders that are able to be created are already the focus issues that the committee has approved. Any future focus issues that may come out of the subcommittee – the stakeholder list cannot be approved until the focus issues have already been approved by the committee, because you're giving the subcommittee the authority to act as if the committee has already agreed to our future focus issues.

The Chair: I'm going to allow Dr. Massolin to give some clarification on this.

Ms Sweet: Yeah. Thank you.

Dr. Massolin: Okay. Mr. Chair, my understanding – and I could be incorrect – is that what is happening here is that the subcommittee has been tasked with a few things. First of all, from the last meeting the subcommittee has been tasked, according to the motion, to determine the focus issues, and that is with respect to the two pieces of legislation. That had to be brought back to the committee for approval. That was passed.

This motion proposes that the subcommittee look at the stakeholders based on those issues. In my way of thinking – and again I could be wrong on this – you'd have the subcommittee working to define proposed issues, put in a recommendation in the subcommittee report, report it to the committee for approval by the committee, and then, likewise, that the stakeholders, based on those proposed issues, be approved by the committee.

The Chair: Just for clarification of order, the subcommittee would determine the focus, bring it back to the committee, we'd vote on it, and then we'd send the subcommittee back to determine the stakeholder list?

Dr. Massolin: Well, for efficiency purposes, Mr. Chair, I think you could do both. I mean, the idea is that the subcommittee is representative of this committee in terms of its composition and representative of the House. It's been delegated with responsibility. It could do both of those things as proposed recommendations to the committee, and then the committee could make the final approvals.

The Chair: Thank you for that clarification.

I do see that Ms Pancholi has a question. I think we've got some clarification, so unless there's anything new to add – she has now. Sorry. Go ahead, Ms Pancholi.

5:20

Ms Pancholi: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm just wondering if we could consider an amendment that actually establishes the order that Member Sweet has suggested. I mean, I understand what Dr. Massolin just indicated. But if it's the will of the committee that, first, the focus issues be established by or recommended by the subcommittee, then come back to the committee, and then go back to the subcommittee to determine stakeholders based on the approved list of focus issues, I think it sounded like that was certainly something that was already part of the mover of the motion – that was part of what he was contemplating. So I would like to ask, maybe Parliamentary Counsel or Dr. Massolin, whether or not we could actually establish that order, that it does happen first, that the subcommittee reports back on focus issues before establishing or recommending stakeholders.

The Chair: Thank you for your input.

That motion will be a substantive motion and would require the approval of the committee.

Okay. Well, you're free to put that motion up, so if you would like to maybe give us a draft motion that we could – an amendment, rather.

Ms Pancholi: Sure. Perhaps Parliamentary Counsel can weigh in, but it simply could say something to the effect of: MLA Horner to move that the Select Special Democratic Accountability Committee authorize the subcommittee on committee business to develop the focus issues identified and report to the committee – I mean, I'll look to Parliamentary Counsel – and then go back to the subcommittee to establish a stakeholder list based on the focus issues approved by the committee.

Alternatively, Mr. Chair, it could also say that the stakeholder list would be developed once the focus issues identified have been approved by the committee.

The Chair: Can we get that up there?

Member Ceci: Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Yep.

Member Ceci: Can I ask a question of clarification just on “focus issues identified”? It's on the two pieces of legislation that we have been charged with looking at as well as the citizens' initiative and recall. That's the substance of the information that the focus issues will be derived from. Is that correct? On those four pieces: that is what I'm trying to get clarity on.

The Chair: This just pertains to the Election Act and election finances because the other two have been already outlined, the focus.

Member Ceci: Okay. So it's just on the two pieces of legislation . . .

The Chair: Correct.

Member Ceci: . . . digging into those, seeing what the issues are, and bringing those recommendations back to the committee as a whole.

The Chair: Okay. After a lot of back and forth we're prepared to have a discussion on this amendment moved by Ms Pancholi. Does anybody have anything else to add to it?

If not, we can call – I'll read it in for the record, though. Moved by Ms Pancholi that

the motion be amended by adding “and approved by the committee” after “identified.”

That amendment is to the motion put forward by Mr. Horner.

Does anybody have any comments to that motion?

Seeing none, I'm prepared to call the question. All those in favour of the amendment . . .

Ms Pancholi: Sorry, Mr. Chair. I did want to make a quick comment on that. It's a little bit delayed when I'm on teleconference.

The Chair: Okay. Yeah. Go ahead.

Ms Pancholi: My concern around this is that the subcommittee will bring forward a limited base list of stakeholders based on their also recommended focus issues. This is just about being clear and efficient in our subcommittee work, because if the committee does

not approve both the focus issues and the stakeholders recommended, it will have to go back, and that would end up in a discussion about perhaps what the focus issues are again and a new set of stakeholders. It's really to just be efficient in terms of making sure that stakeholders are responsive to the issues that have been identified and approved by the committee.

The Chair: Thank you for that.

Any other comments? Any amendments?

Seeing none, I'm prepared to call the question on the amendment moved by Ms Pancholi. All those in favour, please say aye. All those opposed, please say no.

That amendment is defeated.

We are now back on the main motion, moved by Mr. Horner. Any other questions or comments to that effect?

Seeing none, I am prepared to call the question on the motion moved by Mr. Horner. All those in favour, please say aye. All those opposed, please say no. On the phone – I do apologize, Ms Pancholi. I did not recognize you on the phone for the last amendment vote, but I suspect we know where she voted. Moving forward, I will do my best to recognize you for that vote. I do apologize.

That motion is carried.

Mr. Dang: Recorded vote, please.

The Chair: Mr. Dang has asked for a recorded vote. All those in favour of the motion, please raise your hand. Those in favour are Mr. Horner, Mrs. Allard, Ms Goodridge, Mr. Smith, Mr. Nixon, Mr. Sigurdson, and Mr. Stephan. I didn't recognize you over there, my friend. Something is different. All those opposed: Mr. Ceci, Mr. Dang, Ms Sweet. On the phone?

Ms Pancholi: Opposed.

Mr. Roth: Mr. Chair, total for the motion, seven; total against, four.

The Chair:

That motion is carried.

Okay. We are still on agenda item 4, briefings and research for review arising from Government Motion 25, stakeholder or other input. Are there any other comments? Mr. Dang.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think it's important that this committee has the opportunity to hear from our stakeholders and members of the public. I think it's important that we have the opportunity even though this government majority has decided to hide many of the focus issues and the stakeholders that they wish to bring forward in the cover of darkness and to use the subcommittee without the benefit of the record and without the benefit of *Hansard* and the full view of the public.

However, I'd like to move a motion at this time that I think will allow us to address some of those concerns and still allow this committee to have input from the public.

The Chair: Please.

Mr. Dang: I would move number 12, for the benefit of the table. I would move that

the committee invite the following to make a presentation to the committee:

- (a) the UCL Independent Commission on Referendums, UCL, referring to University College London.
- (b) Mr. Lorne Gibson, and
- (c) any other stakeholder suggested by members of the committee to the committee clerk no later than 4:30 on Friday . . .

It says “July 17,” but this was for previous committee dates, so with the leeway of the chair I would suggest Friday, . . . July 31.

The Chair: Just give us a moment while we write in the changed date.

Yeah. We have a motion on the floor. Mr. Dang, if you’d like to expand upon that.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think it’s very important that members of this committee and the public are able to hear from key stakeholders on the issue of referendums. I know that members of both sides of this House have stakeholders in mind because this UCP has used their majority already to try and hide their stakeholder list from the public. Instead of doing that, we should be able to actually have those people present to this full committee and be on the record on the issue.

We also know that this UCP government and majority have an issue sometimes with keeping track of democracy, so I think we certainly want to be able to bring in one of the most credentialed people in Alberta and perhaps one of the most recognizable names in terms of elections and fairness in elections, Mr. Lorne Gibson, who was, of course, the former Election Commissioner here in this province. I think he would have valuable input, specifically regarding things like disclosure, specifically regarding things like what amounts to a fair campaign and around when fines should be levied and issues like that. I think it’s certainly important that Albertans have the opportunity to hear from Mr. Gibson.

I think it’s certainly important that Albertans are going to have the opportunity to hear from all of our stakeholders and to have the full knowledge of what the committee will be deciding on and to be able to have on the record specific concerns that both the government members and opposition members are going to be able to raise. I think that it’s a little bit disingenuous that the government members would say that all of this can be done in subcommittee earlier, but I think that certainly they can agree that if we were to have presentations to the full committee in the committee room here, we would have this opportunity to have that more fulsome debate and to actually get that back and forth on the record so that we are able to present fully back to the Assembly.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Dang.

Do we have anyone else who’d like to add to that discussion? I see Mr. Stephan.

5:30

Mr. Stephan: Sure. I’d like to speak against this motion. We just passed a motion in terms of developing the procedure and that. That stewardship would clearly fall within the stewardship of the subcommittee, of which, of course, members of the NDP will be invited to be part of and make submissions on who the appropriate stakeholder presentations should be. Without speaking to the merit of any of those particular suggestions, I think that this is clearly inconsistent with the motion we just passed, and because of that, to respect the process that we are trying to establish to do the business that we’ve been assigned to do, it would probably be best done by the subcommittee. So I wouldn’t support this motion.

Thanks.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Stephan.

I’d like to recognize Mr. Ceci.

Member Ceci: Thank you. You know, I can’t really understand the previous speaker’s point. The biggest elections scandal we have had in this province in the entire time that I can remember, and we don’t

want the public to understand how it all took place and the views of the person who was in charge of that review and the work that cost hundreds of thousands of dollars to individuals who didn’t follow the rules in this province. I think it’s highly irregular to suggest that Mr. Gibson would talk anywhere behind closed doors. I think Mr. Gibson’s views are what Albertans would like to hear, full stop. If we don’t provide him an opportunity to share his views about our Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act as well as the Election Act, I think members of the public see the work of this committee – well, they wouldn’t see the work of this committee. They wouldn’t see the work of the subcommittee, for sure, and they would question this committee and its ultimate goals.

So, really, sunlight is always the best disinfectant for understanding how we improve the situation that we’ve been charged to look at. Mr. Gibson: there is no better person to share how we can improve both the Election Act and Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act than that person. He knows it better than any of us will ever know it. He put his reputation on the line, and he did great work in the service of democracy for this province. To not listen to him in public and question him in detail – like, you know, the only thing I did was follow media reports on a regular basis. I would like the opportunity to get a lot closer to the person who was behind generating all of those media reports. To not have him speak to Albertans through this committee would be a tragedy and a travesty of our work.

So I think MLA Stephan’s views are out of line around what Albertans want . . . [interjections] Not what you want, sir.

Mr. Stephan: Mr. Chair, I need to correct the record.

The Chair: Is this a point of order? Are you calling a point of order?

Mr. Stephan: I’ll let him finish and then . . .

Member Ceci: You know, I don’t mean to generate an insult. That wasn’t my point. I just think it’s not in keeping with what Albertans need and want. Your reliance, sir, on procedure is not helpful, frankly, with regard to what’s needed to move this committee’s work forward. That’s my view.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Ceci.

The next on the list is Mr. Sigurdson.

Mr. Sigurdson: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I’m just going to state right now that I’m looking at this, and based on motion 3, which we’ve already passed, this appears to be work of the subcommittee now. I would just like to say that overall, like, we’re grinding to a halt here. We need to get this into subcommittee because how slow we’ve moved – we’re moving into hours already, and I think we’re not even at six, eight motions through right now. I think that shows how important it is to get this to a subcommittee so that we can actually get through this. We have a substantial amount of work to get through. It’s apparent that this is going to be far more effective in a subcommittee atmosphere to be able to get through the amount of work that we have to. In reality the previous NDP government utilized subcommittees multiple times. It’s not under the veil of anything. It’s about efficiency and being able to get the work done. We have a limited amount of time to do that.

With that as well, we’re creating a stakeholder list. Those stakeholders will come back to this committee. We’re not hiding stakeholders from anybody. I would just like to say, like: let’s focus on this. We have a subcommittee. They’re tasked to do this work. Let’s get down to that work, and let’s get this subcommittee

formed so we can actually get through this, which is very important work.

Thank you, Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Sigurdson. I have Mr. Dang.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I take great offence to the language used by Mr. Sigurdson there. I think he referred to it, saying: we need to get this into subcommittee because we are “grinding to a halt.” I think that translates loosely to: we need to get this into the shadows. Very clearly we have the opportunity here to have Albertans have their input to this committee. I don’t know why Mr. Sigurdson is here if he’s not in this committee to do the work that was assigned to us by the Assembly. I don’t know why he wants to hide it in the shadows, but this Assembly assigned the members of this committee, all of us, to do this work, and we should be willing to do that work. We should be willing to come and actually talk to stakeholders, invite stakeholders to present in front of us. If they’re not willing to do their jobs, if they’re not willing to actually spend the time in this committee on the record to do our jobs, then I don’t know why they’re here, and perhaps they should resign from this committee and assign someone else who is willing to do their job.

The Chair: Thank you for that.

Next up would be Mr. Stephan.

Mr. Stephan: Yeah. I guess, first of all, you know, I’m a little bit – I hope, MLA Dang, that we can work in a collaborative way. I don’t really like the tone of the comments you just made.

But MLA Ceci, you know, I offer no opinion on the suggested list.

The Chair: I’d ask that all members would make their comments through the chair.

Mr. Stephan: Oh, sorry, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: No problem. Please proceed.

Mr. Stephan: MLA Ceci seemed to imply that I expressed an opinion on the suggestions by MLA Dang, and I didn’t. This motion should simply be rejected because we just passed the motion saying that the determination of the stakeholders would be made by the subcommittee. Members of the NDP Party are invited and appreciated to be constituent members of that subcommittee, and we should allow the subcommittee to perform the stewardship that they just received.

Thanks.

The Chair: Thank you.

Next on the list is Member Pancholi.

Ms Pancholi: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just want to note that I think it’s – and Member Stephan’s comments, I think, really confirmed this for me, which is that I think the members of the government are being very careful right now in committee, when it’s on record, when this discussion is happening in the light of day for Albertans to listen to, to not express an opinion on the invitation or the motion put forward that Mr. Lorne Gibson come and speak as a stakeholder to this committee. I note how careful they’re being to not express an opinion on that because I believe they really do want to push this into the subcommittee, which is unrecorded, which is not going to be expressed in the light of day. I think that once again the government members are really trying to hide from Albertans what they feel about Mr. Lorne Gibson and why he was removed as

Election Commissioner and why they don’t want him to participate. They want that discussion to happen off-record and off-camera, because once again there’s a lack of transparency. Albertans desperately want and need to know what Mr. Gibson has to say. They don’t even want to put on the record right now any view on that because they do want that all to happen in the shadows.

I think that’s precisely our concern from the beginning about the subcommittee. They’re hiding behind a procedural issue right now to really make sure that any discussion about Mr. Gibson and his knowledge and his experience around democracy remains in the shadows because we know what’s going to happen, Mr. Chair, in the subcommittee. The government members have their majority and they will absolutely – I’m almost willing to guarantee – vote down the possibility of Mr. Gibson coming and speaking as a stakeholder. They don’t want to have transparency right now about their reasons why they don’t want him to come as a stakeholder. They want that to happen in the subcommittee, where Albertans won’t see it, and that’s why I think all Albertans should be concerned, again, about the subcommittee and what’s happening there and about why the government members refuse to comment on Mr. Gibson and his knowledge and his experience. I think that I absolutely will vote in favour of this motion because I think Albertans need and want to know about it.

5:40

The Chair: Thank you, Ms Pancholi.

I would just like to provide a word of caution about presupposing the outcome of any vote or a decision of the Chamber, committee, or subcommittee. But thank you for your remarks.

Again, I am beginning to notice a pattern in the remarks, so I’d like to make sure that we have this discussion continue, if so, that there’s new information to add.

Next on my list is Mr. Nixon.

Mr. Jeremy Nixon: I’m not sure if I’d be adding new information, but I’d like to echo what Mr. Sigurdson said. Let’s move forward.

The Chair: Is anybody in this committee – I have Ms Sweet.

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just want to acknowledge what Mr. Stephan said in regard to the subcommittee and the motion that was passed. I appreciate the comments in the sense of: yes, we did agree that the subcommittee would be able to create a stakeholders list. Absolutely, we did. The requirement of that, though, was to then to bring it back to the committee for approval, to be debated and voted on.

We are all here right now, so I appreciate there are members of the subcommittee that could take this question right now, of whether or not the UCL Independent Commission on Referendums and Mr. Lorne Gibson should be able to come to the committee. Go to the subcommittee. We could have that conversation there. We could then bring it back to the same group of people that are sitting here right now and have a conversation again, or we can just do it right now. I’m not sure – although I appreciate the comments that we do have a subcommittee that has the capacity to do that.

The motion is currently on the floor. The motion is in front of every single member of this committee, including the members of the subcommittee. We can have the debate, and we can talk about whether or not this committee right here today would support having a presentation by the UCL and by Mr. Gibson at the committee. Why don’t we just do it now? Why are we using the subcommittee as an excuse to take this exact motion to a subcommittee, to have the exact same conversation we’re having right now, to then bring it back and talk about it again, to then vote, when we’re all here right now? You’re talking about urgency and

efficiency. You're talking about the fact that the government has to get all this work done, this committee needs to be getting this work done, we should be efficient, yet we have an efficiency mechanism in front of us right now.

A question has been put to the floor: can these two groups, organizations, or individuals please come and present to the committee for a presentation? Does it need to go to the subcommittee, or can we all not, now that we are sitting here together, members of the subcommittee and the committee, vote on whether or not this A and B should be able to come to the committee? Why does it have to go to a subcommittee? We're all here.

Isn't that why we want everything else to go to the subcommittee, to be fast and efficient? Like, it is ironic what has been said around the table about the efficiency and requirement of the subcommittee to make these decisions on behalf of the committee because we need to get them done to bring it back to the committee for recommendation, when the motion clearly right in front of us right now gives all of us the authority to vote and make a decision.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you very much.

I have Mr. Sigurdson. Again, I want to caution members.

Mr. Sigurdson: Thank you, Chair. I'm going to keep this really, really quick just as new information. I just want to say that in a previous amendment they were saying that we couldn't create stakeholders because we didn't have any focus issues, and now they're saying – and we haven't created those focus issues yet – that we're creating the stakeholder list ahead of that. This is a complete contradiction. We haven't even got there yet. We just need to get to subcommittee. I would like to move on and vote on this as soon as possible.

The Chair: Mr. Dang.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Well, perhaps Mr. Sigurdson should pay attention to the things that were just said in the subcommittee. Indeed, two of the items have already been determined and assigned to this committee for review.

Certainly, I think, if we're talking about efficiency, the members of the government caucus as well as the opposition caucus under this motion: all they would need to do is send an e-mail with a list of their stakeholders to the committee clerk. It's not that much work. Honestly, I don't know why we can't just move on and say that yes, we want to hear from stakeholders, we want to hear from the public, and we want to understand the expertise given to us by people like Mr. Gibson and the UCL independent commission as we move forward with this. I don't see why the government is trying to hide this process in the shadows.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Dang.

Mr. Nixon.

Mr. Jeremy Nixon: I feel like I'm going to be repeating myself again. Again, I don't like the insidious intent that's been insinuated here and . . .

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

The Chair: A point of order has been called.

Mr. Dang: Under 23(h), (i), and (j), Mr. Chair, he just implied that there was insidious intent, and that is clearly implying false motives to another member.

Mr. Jeremy Nixon: That was being implied about us.

The Chair: Just a second. Mr. Dang has called a point of order.

Does the government side wish to argue this point of order?

Mr. Jeremy Nixon: Chair, I wasn't insinuating that they had insidious intent. I was saying that that was being applied to us and the government members on this side, that we wanted to bring this, frankly speaking, into the dark, when we know full well that any stakeholders that would be approved by the subcommittee would come back before the committee as a whole. I think this is a matter of debate.

The Chair: I tend to agree with Mr. Nixon. While I would want to issue a word of caution about inflammatory language, I don't find a point of order given that it wasn't directed at any specific member so much as a broad comment made. I don't find a point of order, and I'd like the member to continue his remarks.

Mr. Jeremy Nixon: Thank you.

In regard to the specific motion I would like to, again, make sure that we're referring this back to the subcommittee so that we can take a look at all stakeholders in a suite of options. Instead of right now narrowly focusing on a couple, let's allow the subcommittee to pull together a collective list of stakeholders and then come back with those recommendations to this committee. I think that right now to start to cherry-pick specific people – that's not to discuss the merit of these guys. Maybe they're going to be excellent. But allow the subcommittee to take a look at all options and then to make appropriate decisions based off that.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Again, I'm starting to hear repetition from both sides. Ms Sweet, you're next. Please keep your remarks brief, and then I think I'm going to call the question.

Ms Sweet: Mr. Chair, I think you can call the question.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms Sweet.

Thank you, members of the committee, for your robust discussion on this matter. The motion is proposed by Mr. Dang, and it has been read into the record, so we will now vote on that motion. All those in favour of the motion so moved by Mr. Dang, please say aye. Those opposed, please say no. On the phone? That motion is defeated.

Ms Sweet: Recorded vote, please.

The Chair: Ms Sweet has requested a recorded vote. All those in favour of the motion, please raise your hand. Mr. Ceci, Mr. Dang, Ms Sweet. All those opposed to the motion, please raise your hand. Mr. Horner, Mrs. Allard, Ms Goodridge, Mr. Smith, Mr. Nixon, Mr. Sigurdson, Mr. Stephan. On the phone, Ms Pancholi.

Ms Pancholi: In favour of the motion.

Mr. Roth: Mr. Chair, total for the motion, four; total against, seven.

The Chair:

That motion is defeated.

I see Mr. Dang.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think I have another motion to make under this section. For the benefit of the table it's motion 8.

The Chair: Just give us a moment to put that up on the screen, Mr. Dang.

Mr. Dang: Of course.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Dang has moved a motion. Would you please read that motion into the record?

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would move that the committee request costing for holding town hall meetings throughout the province for the committee's consideration at its next meeting.

I think that it's something that we had spoken to a bit earlier. I know that Mr. Horner had said that the subcommittee may have the opportunity to do some town halls or hear from the public. I know that we don't want to presume any of the decisions of the subcommittee in terms of things like the focus issues and other issues like that, and then we've heard pretty clearly that we don't want to presume stakeholders either. I think that we want to give the committee the opportunity at the next meeting to do town hall meetings if they so choose, right? I think it's a fairly reasonable ask. I think it's pretty standard to have our research services just cost this out for us and then give us the information so that we can move forward at a later date.

The Chair: Thank you.

Anyone else? Mr. Smith.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's becoming pretty obvious to me, with a lot of the motions that are being placed on the floor by the opposition, that they're not getting the idea that the subcommittee can do a lot of this work, can work within the finite timelines that we have, and can bring all of those things back to the committee for recommendation. This motion, I think, fits in with so many of the motions that they brought forward to this point. The fact that they don't like the idea of a subcommittee or that the subcommittee could do some of the work in preparation for this committee: I understand that they don't like it, but we should move forward. This motion should be defeated, and we should allow the subcommittee to start doing its work and make sure that this province can move forward.

5:50

The Chair: I will recognize Ms Sweet.

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think I just want to clarify. When we did the bipartisan committee in regard to Children's Services and the death review panel, we travelled. We travelled quite a bit, actually. Part of the reason for that is because it was such an important issue to Albertans that we wanted to make sure that we were able to speak to a variety of different communities and make sure that communities understood that not only the government but all parties were taking the issue quite seriously.

When we start talking about democracy and democratic accountability, again, this is something that impacts every Albertan. Every Albertan has a right to vote. Every Albertan is impacted by the decisions made by government. Any changes that are made to the system and how democracy is going to work in this province should be something that travels around the province and actually talks to the constituents of this province, not just our constituents but all constituents. Although I appreciate that the subcommittee can do some of the work – that has been laid out by the government, that a lot of the work is going to be downloaded on the subcommittee – we do also have a responsibility as the committee to make sure that all Albertans' voices are being heard, not just stakeholders, but, like, the average person that voted for you and I in our communities has a right to be able to come to a meeting and

be heard. You did it with the Fair Deal Panel. I think, actually, to be honest, that this is way more important than the Fair Deal Panel, and the context of this is going to impact our democracy moving forward. I don't understand, and I look forward to hearing from the government.

The government has created many panels that travelled the province on many different issues, and the government makes a panel for almost every issue and travels the province on, it feels like, every issue to hear from Albertans. Why would this committee not be considered the same? Why would we be inconsistent? Why would the government be inconsistent in not having a committee specifically to meet their needs when it comes to democratic reform? Travel the province and hear from Albertans. To me it's a no-brainer. It is our ultimate responsibility to represent our constituents. This, holding town halls and just asking for how much it would potentially cost to do that, doesn't seem like it should even be a partisan issue. It's definitely not a subcommittee issue because we should all be doing it, every single one of us on this committee, not just a select few that are going to sit on a subcommittee. Every single one of us: it's our responsibility. We were elected to be here. We're talking about democracy, and it shouldn't be decided by a select few how that looks.

The Chair: Thank you.

Next on the list is Ms Goodridge. Please go ahead.

Ms Goodridge: Thank you, Mr. Chair. While I appreciate many of the arguments that were brought forward by Ms Sweet, I would just like to throw out for clarification and on the record that the Fair Deal Panel and the child intervention panel – that work was very important. Both of those had extensive travel around the province. Both of those happened in a world before the COVID-19 pandemic. I would simply argue that that is an important fact. You are no longer comparing apples to apples; you're comparing apples to elephants. That's for starters.

Second of all, I really, truly believe that this is something to be brought to the subcommittee to be able to discuss some of these different options. We've learned through this pandemic that there are so many venues available to us such as Skype and different types of town halls that can happen virtually. I believe that this is a debate that we should be having in the subcommittee to make these decisions and bring forward to the committee their recommendations.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you.

I have next Mr. Ceci.

Member Ceci: Thank you. Just a couple of quick points. MLA Smith suggested that it was out of order and to let the subcommittee do its work, this motion. I guess I disagree. I think we can make suggestions and direct information, direct motions to the subcommittee to address. I don't think that's out of order at all. If it's important to this committee that we hold town halls to hear the views of Albertans, we can do that.

Secondly, MLA Goodridge, two weeks ago I attended a school busing town hall. Were one of you the chair of that?

Mr. Horner: I missed you.

Member Ceci: Yeah, yeah. That was two weeks ago. I think it was still in COVID times we're talking about that you were going around the province. I mean, there was a lot of social distancing for sure, right? You invited folks at specific time slots to come and

speak to you. So there was some accommodation of the COVID situation we're in.

Nonetheless, I think it's totally appropriate to direct a motion like this to the subcommittee to address and that we could find ways to achieve that town hall in safe ways, so I would support this motion.

The Chair: Thank you for that.

I have Mr. Nixon, followed by Mr. Dang.

Mr. Jeremy Nixon: Thank you, Chair. Just to clarify, too. I think we're not – or at least I don't think we're trying to debate what the merits of town halls are. Personally, I would love to travel across this province. I got to do it with the Tobacco and Smoking Reduction Act. It was good to connect with people. But I think what we're discussing – again, especially considering the complexity around COVID and Ms Goodridge's comments, this could be and should be something that we push forward to the subcommittee to figure out the logistics of anything that we should do and consider a suite of options and then be able to present that. So I'm happy to push that to subcommittee.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Nixon.

I also have Mr. Dang.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think it's a little bit interesting here. We seem to be debating, certainly from the government side, perhaps the merits of actually hosting a town hall or not and whether we should be. I don't think that's actually the case. I think what we're trying to figure out here is not whether we should host a town hall. It's not whether the subcommittee should determine we should host a town hall. It's none of those things. We're actually trying to debate here whether we should know how much a town hall would cost, right? Should we ask research services to tell us how much this would end up costing us?

I think that it's going to be a little bit of red tape even to try and push this off to another subcommittee and spend more time butting around the question. Instead, we want this to have easy access to costing. We know the subcommittee cannot actually make those decisions. The decisions around spending money must be made by this committee, unless I'm wrong. But I believe those decisions cannot be delegated away from this main committee. Indeed, at the end of the day this committee will have to make that decision anyways, and we might as well get the ball rolling so that we understand and have a fulsome picture of the issue before we move forward.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms Goodridge.

Ms Goodridge: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I believe that we are now getting to a point where we're starting to have a lot of repetitive debates going around. I do believe that this is the work of the subcommittee to determine the types of town halls they are looking at. Town halls, as I've come to learn in the past few months, have a variety of different meanings and a variety of different costs depending on whether it's virtual or in person. Therefore, I believe that the subcommittee is best suited to make the determination as to what type of town hall rather than have the committee services do research on potentially three to six or 15 different types of town hall options.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms Goodridge.

I'm trying to go back and forth in fairness' sake.

Okay. Now I have Member Pancholi, actually, just jumping on the list. Please go ahead, Ms Pancholi.

Ms Pancholi: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I actually think Member Dang expressed my comments. It's not repetitive. Actually, it was intended to clarify what exactly the motion is that's before us that we're debating, which is not a decision about whether or not to hold town halls but just to cost it. So I'll leave my comments at that.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Stephan: I just think that's putting the cart before the horse. You, first of all, decide – the subcommittee will decide on the merits, taking all of the factors into consideration, whether or not to have a town hall, which isn't under debate here, and the mode and form of which that would take. Then that would inform the costing analysis. I think we're putting the cart before the horse here, so I don't think I would be able to support this motion.

6:00

Ms Sweet: Actually, just a point of clarity because we are asking for costing. Maybe Dr. Massolin can let us know. This is a pretty typical request, and I believe the LAO already has some of this work completed. Could you maybe just tell us: would this take a lot of time to be able to put together, and are we making a big request, or is this something that is actually not exceptional in a request? To whoever it makes sense to answer the question.

The Chair: I'll allow Mr. Roth to answer that question.

Mr. Roth: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just by way of background, I suppose, in terms of committee travel, there hasn't been any in this Legislature for committees of the Legislature. In the previous Legislature there was one instance of a committee. It was actually a subcommittee of the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future. It travelled to four locations. We have some ballpark costs, just depending, but again it would be structured based on whether the committee wanted to be full in-person or combined with Skype and that sort of thing. We do have a little bit of information, but it would have to be tweaked. Like I said, there were four town halls in that particular case of a subcommittee of five members that were travelling.

The Chair: Okay. Seeing no one else on the list of speakers, I am prepared to call the question on the motion moved by Mr. Dang. All those in favour of the motion, please say aye. All those opposed, please say no. On the phone? That motion is defeated.

Mr. Dang: A recorded vote, please.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Dang. Mr. Dang has requested a recorded vote.

All those in favour, please raise your hand: Mr. Ceci, Mr. Dang, Ms Sweet. All those opposed to the motion, please raise your hand: Mr. Horner, Mrs. Allard, Ms Goodridge, Mr. Smith, Mr. Nixon, Mr. Sigurdson, Mr. Stephan. On the phone?

Ms Pancholi: In favour.

Mr. Roth: Mr. Chair, total for the motion, four; total against, seven.

The Chair: Thank you.

That motion is defeated.

We are still on item 4, briefings and research for review arising from Government Motion 25, stakeholder and other input. Is there anything else to add to this?

Seeing none, we'll go on to . . .

Ms Pancholi: Sorry. Mr. Chair, I'd put my name on the list.

The Chair: Not a problem. There must be a bit of a lag there. Please go ahead, Ms Pancholi.

Ms Pancholi: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'd like to move the motion that is, I think, numbered as 9. I move that committee research services provide to the committee a written summary of the UCL Independent Commission on Referendums for the committee's consideration at its next meeting. I'll watch that go up on the board.

The Chair: I appreciate the motion and you bringing attention to it. However, this motion would actually go under other business. We're still dealing with research and stakeholder input. You're more than welcome to bring that motion to the floor at the proper time.

Ms Pancholi: It is a summary of research, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Sometimes I rely on the members to my left for counsel, and they have advised me that this should go ahead, please. We have heard the motion.

Do you want to expand upon that, Ms Pancholi, or open it for discussion for other members?

Ms Pancholi: Certainly. I'll just expand briefly on it, Mr. Chair. The UCL independent commission – the UCL is the University College London – did extensive cross-jurisdictional research on the issue of referendums, and we're simply asking for a summary of that significant work that was done. It's work that would be valuable for the work of this committee, simply to inform our discussion around something we've already established as a focus issue, which is referendums. I'm simply bringing forward that a summary be provided of that work for consideration at our next meeting.

The Chair: Thank you.

Do we have anyone else who wants to add to that discussion?

Mr. Stephan: Without getting too much into the merits of the report, I expect it would be very valuable input, but again I would expect that that would be input among other stakeholder input that would be developed by the subcommittee. I'm just wondering if this is really – I mean, I guess the subcommittee would make the determination in terms of stakeholder input. This does seem intuitively to be a good stakeholder, but why are we elevating one stakeholder above another in terms of process? Again, I think it's important that we respect the process and be consistent. While I think this is probably a very good and valuable stakeholder, I would like that to be considered as a potential candidate by the subcommittee among other excellent stakeholder candidates.

The Chair: The chair recognizes Ms Sweet.

Ms Sweet: I'm sorry, Mr. Chair. I wasn't actually going to say anything, but now I feel like I must. I just find the irony of the red tape that has been created in this committee already by the subcommittee and the fact that it seems like with every decision that we are going to try to make in this committee, the ultimate response is going to be to send it to a subcommittee, which, by very definition, is red tape. It's, like, counterintuitive, and I just don't understand.

The research that would be required on this referendum, I think – we're not even asking for them to be present or even to be considered as a stakeholder. We're just looking at research and, literally, articles that need to be summarized so that we understand them. They're not stakeholders. It is research that has literally been done on referendums. This government has literally just put a bill

into the House and potentially, by the sounds of it, maybe more around referendums.

I would think that having some literature to review around the process of referendums shouldn't be something that would be sent to a subcommittee when it has nothing to do with stakeholders. It is literally articles written by a research organization, an independent commission. Why everything has to go to the subcommittee to be debated, to only then be brought back: I'm not sure I understand.

I would suggest we just support this and get some actual work happening in front of the members of this committee.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you, Ms Sweet.

Do I have anyone else from the government side wanting to add to that?

Seeing none, I have Ms Pancholi on the phone. Please go ahead, Ms Pancholi.

Ms Pancholi: Yeah. I simply wanted to confirm what Member Sweet just said, which is, again, that this is not an invitation to the University College London or the commission to come as a stakeholder. But it's well-documented, well-established research that is simply going to give us some background information. I think the purpose of the committee is to gather that information and use that to inform our discussion, our debate, and our decisions in this committee. The motion does not seek this input as a stakeholder but as background research information.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms Pancholi.

I would like to pass the conch to Dr. Massolin for a moment on this topic.

Dr. Massolin: Okay. What would you like me to talk about?

The Chair: About the timelines.

Dr. Massolin: Oh, the timelines. Sure.

I would say that, depending on when the next meeting is, if you have the next meeting of the committee next week, that's a pretty tight timeline. That's what I would say on that.

Member Ceci: I didn't mean to interrupt, but I don't think anybody is suggesting next week.

The Chair: The motion says, "Next meeting," and the meeting has been scheduled for Tuesday afternoon or evening.

Ms Pancholi: Mr. Chair, if I could just clarify, this motion was drafted long before we had any meetings scheduled. Certainly, I'd be open to, you know, an amendment to extend the timeline.

The Chair: Ms Pancholi, I do want to let Dr. Massolin finish, and then I'm happy to hear what you have to say after that.

Dr. Massolin: I'm finished.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.

Ms Pancholi, go ahead.

Ms Pancholi: Sorry. I just want to say that this motion was drafted long before we had any meetings actually scheduled. Certainly, it was drafted long before we knew there would be two meetings before we would get a chance to discuss this. Certainly, I'm open to an amendment and proposing an amendment which could certainly extend the timeline to be reasonable for the research to be done.

The Chair: Do you have an amendment in mind, Ms Pancholi, that you'd like to put forward? Oh, sorry. Given that it is your motion, someone else would have to do it.

Mr. Dang, do you want to go ahead?

6:10

Mr. Dang: Yeah. I'd perhaps just, with your leeway, Mr. Chair, ask Dr. Massolin what a reasonable timeline would be, and then I would amend it to be such.

Dr. Massolin: Mr. Chair, for this and other motions of this kind, I would suggest that the committee just simply say: at a subsequent meeting. You know, what happens is that for written research, when it's completed – and we'll endeavour to do this as quickly and efficiently as possible because I know the timelines are tight – that research is posted on the internal website. So it doesn't have to be tied to a meeting per se, although at a subsequent meeting the research could be orally presented by research services and questions could be posed at that point. Just for this type of motion and any subsequent types of motions of this kind, "at a subsequent meeting" might be a good means by which to express what the committee might want.

The Chair: Thank you, Dr. Massolin.

Mr. Dang: Perhaps I would move that we strike out the words "at its next meeting" and replace them with "at a subsequent meeting," with the understanding that that would mean that they would be posted as soon as they were available.

The Chair: Just give us a moment while we put that motion on the screen.

I'll read the amendment on the screen. It's moved by Mr. Dang that

the motion be amended by striking out "at its next meeting" and substituting "at a subsequent meeting."

Mr. Dang, does that meet your smell test?

Mr. Dang: Yes. That's good. Yeah.

The Chair: Okay. Perfect.

All right. Do we have any discussion on that motion? Mrs. Allard.

Mrs. Allard: Thank you, Chair. I just googled it, and it's online, but I'm assuming that research will give us a sort of layperson's overview. I would be happy to support it. I think this is information we need, so I would support that amendment.

The Chair: Anyone from the opposition side?

Mr. Stephan.

Mr. Stephan: Yeah. I appreciate the clarification by my friends the members opposite. I didn't appreciate that this is a report, not a stakeholder, so we're not contradicting the process. I think this would be valuable information to the work of the committee, so I can support this motion.

Thank you.

The Chair: I'm sensing some consensus. Imagine that.

Well, if that's the case, I will ask if there's anyone else who would like to add to this?

Seeing none, I'm prepared to call the question on the amendment moved by Mr. Dang. All those in favour of the amendment, please say aye. Any opposed, please say no. On the phone?

That amendment is carried.

We are now back on the main motion as amended by Mr. Dang and moved originally by Ms Pancholi. Does anyone have any comments they'd like to add to this discussion?

Seeing none, I'm prepared to call the question on the motion as amended by Mr. Dang and moved by Ms Pancholi. All those in favour, please say aye. All those opposed, please say no. I did hear on the phone Ms Pancholi, so I will take that as a vote.

That motion is carried.

Okay. We are still back on item 4. I'd like to recognize Mr. Dang.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'll be brief here. I think I have a similar motion; it's number 10. With your indulgence, I'll also try to perhaps orally make a change to the wording that may speed up the process a bit and that won't be substantive.

The Chair: I'll allow it.

Mr. Dang: I would move that

committee research services provide to the committee a written summary of international academic commentary on referendums, citizen initiatives, and recall legislation for the committee's consideration at a subsequent meeting.

I'm just substituting the words "at a subsequent meeting."

The Chair: Yes. I understand. Just give us a moment while we change the wording on the screen.

Do you want to . . .

Mr. Dang: Yeah. Just really quickly, I think there is some international commentary that perhaps includes the UCL report but also other reports as well, particularly in Commonwealth jurisdictions but in others as well, around referenda, and I would hope that research services would be able to provide us with some of that information as both the committee and the subcommittee move forward with their work. I think that would be valuable for all members, and I think that we'd give quite a bit of leeway for research to do this in a reasonable amount of time.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Dang.

Would anyone from the government side like to add to that?

Mrs. Allard: Once again, I think that this would be valid information to consider for the committee, and I would be in support of that motion as amended.

The Chair: Would anyone else like to add to that discussion? Sounds like consensus. That's two in a row. Some people might call that a streak.

Mr. Smith: I guess the question I've got: was there not a past motion that we voted on with regard to crossjurisdictional research and study? Would this place us at odds with that motion, that was passed?

The Chair: The wording in this is different, which would put the motion in order. This motion is in order.

Seeing no further discussion, I am prepared to call the question. All those in favour of the motion moved by Mr. Dang, please say aye. Any opposed, please say no. On the phone?

That motion is carried.

Okay. We are still on item 4. Is there any further discussion or input here?

Seeing none, other business. Are there any other issues that members wish to bring forward to the attention of the committee?

Ms Pancholi: Mr. Chair, I'd like to speak if I can.

The Chair: Ms Pancholi, please go ahead.

Ms Pancholi: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I wanted to bring forward what I think was numbered as motion 11, which I'll read out. It says MLA Pancholi to move that

the committee meetings be scheduled in a manner that provides members with (a) at least three business days to prepare any motions that are required to be put on notice under Standing Order 52.041 and (b) at least seven days of notice before the day on which a committee meeting is to be held.

I'll give some time for that to get up there.

The Chair: That motion is on the screen. Please go ahead.

Ms Pancholi: Thank you, Mr. Chair. This is simply to, I think, reflect what should be a fair process and consideration for the members of the committee, particularly as we potentially start to move off to different parts of the province shortly, to make sure that there is some fairness in the process.

I think, Mr. Chair, that we can all agree that there were at the beginning, at the initiation of this committee incredibly short and probably, I would say, unprecedented timelines given to members of the committee to bring forward motions pursuant to Standing Order 52.041. As you will remember, members of the committee were notified at 10:30 p.m. on a night that they had to have their motions in by the next day at 4:30 p.m. but that also had to be reviewed by Parliamentary Counsel ahead of time. I think that was quite an abbreviated timeline that did not allow for the proper consideration, given the scope of this committee's work. This is simply to clarify that if motions have to be provided ahead of time to the committee, at least three business days be provided to all members of the committee to allow for proper consideration of the issues as well as review by Parliamentary Counsel.

As well, Mr. Chair, part (b) of the motion is simply to reflect, again, that we are all very busy members in the committee, and some of us sit on several committees, and scheduling as well as when we are in the House and coverage in the House if we're going to be sitting in this committee, which is allowed to sit at the same time as the Assembly – allowing seven business days' notice to arrange for meetings. I think this is simply to allow for – it's a reasonable motion to allow for all participants to fully do their work and research and prepare for meetings and prepare motions prior to meetings being held so that when we are in this committee, we are making good and useful use of our time, and we're not stumbling because we had rushed through with motions that did not have enough time for consideration.

I hope that members will all see this as benefiting all members of the committee. We want to be prepared and do our best work when we're here. I think it's only reasonable to consider this motion.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms Pancholi.

Mrs. Allard.

6:20

Mrs. Allard: Thank you, Chair. While I appreciate the comments from Ms Pancholi, I would say that, you know, we have a lot of work to do. We have a short timeline. I believe that there is flexibility in the relevant motion that was put forward by Mr. Horner at our last meeting regarding scheduling for both the committee and the subcommittee. I would have confidence in the process.

I can understand that it started a bit bumpy, but I would have confidence in the process going forward and in the chair's ability, both for the committee and the subcommittee, to schedule accordingly. I don't believe we need to restrict when the chair can

make motions and schedule meetings. I think it's too cumbersome. We want to be nimble. Certainly, we've already made a provision that if a member cannot attend a committee meeting, substitutions are permitted. So I think we've sort of built in the flexibility required, and we need to not tie our hands in terms of moving the process forward.

Thank you, Chair.

The Chair: I'd like to recognize Ms Sweet.

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just in response to the motion, I appreciate what the hon. member from the government is saying, and I recognize that we do have a lot of work to do. I think there's a process that we could probably put in place where we could maybe set dates farther ahead so that we're doing more than just calling one meeting. Maybe we, if it would be the will of committee, could say, "For the month of August these are the following dates that we're going to meet" so that everybody can plan their schedules that way.

Honestly, as a member of the subcommittee as well as a member of this committee in the last two days the dates have changed a few times. I appreciate that there are reasons for that, and it's not intended as a criticism to anybody, but next week we're still in session, and the dates changed two different days next week already, and we haven't even landed on a date yet. You know, I appreciate what you're saying. It's just that trying to schedule and say, "Okay; we'll do it," and then you adjust your schedule, to then have that meeting cancelled and then rescheduled is also complicated.

I appreciate the concern around the seven days' notice, but I do believe that maybe if we could, at the will of the chair, get more dates ahead of time, in the context that if the expectation is that we're going to be meeting once a week, let's say – like, I don't know what the expectation is as of yet – we set a consistent schedule for a couple of weeks. If they get cancelled, they get cancelled, but at least then we all know on this committee and on the subcommittee what days we're meeting for consistency purposes so that if we do leave this place at some point, hopefully, people also can create their schedules.

Mr. Smith: I think that depends on you, doesn't it?

Ms Sweet: Maybe it does. Fair point.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms Sweet.

I'd like to recognize Ms Goodridge.

Ms Goodridge: Thank you, Mr. Chair. While I appreciate the intent of this motion, I do not want to tie the hands of the committee to be required to have seven days' notice. Being one of the committee members that probably has the furthest to come from to make it to one of these meetings, at a more than five-hour drive, I am quite confident in the ability of the chair to be able to accommodate that, knowing that the chair himself has quite a long drive to be able to make it to these meetings. We all have busy schedules. There's also the possibility and the ability to have substitutions.

I appreciate that many members are on multiple committees. I myself am on multiple committees and have many things going on, including flooding and trying to work with remediation, et cetera. However, my constituents expect me to show up to work, and I believe that that is the expectation of this committee. We have a finite timeline.

I would urge all members to not support this motion.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Dang.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think that I would be open to at least – and I hope my colleagues on this side and the opposite side would be open to perhaps changing the parameters of this motion if that would be more amenable. I think that there has been some concern raised by government members that seven days is too long, and I can understand why they would consider that the case. I can understand that. Certainly, as somebody who chaired a subcommittee in the former Legislature, it can be difficult to schedule at times when you want to be fluid.

I think with the new Standing Order 52.041 or whatever it is, there are a lot of requirements that go into staff research time and member research time and other types of work as we come to prepare for these meetings and make sure that we are prepared for these meetings. I want to just see if perhaps we amended section – or even struck out (b). I think if we struck out (b), it would mean that we would have at least three days' notice before a committee was called. Certainly, giving members the stability of knowing that, well, we have to be either in the House or not in the House because now we're meeting – and we met for some time today while the House was sitting. For example, with the subcommittee, I mean, there was supposed to be a meeting Wednesday morning, and now it's next week, right?

Like, there are a lot of things that change very quickly, and sometimes we don't even get an e-mail notice as quickly as it disappears from our calendars. I think this subcommittee disappeared from my calendar faster than I got the e-mail notice. I think, certainly, if there's an opportunity that we can work with the government to establish a notification schedule that is more amenable, I would be prepared to move that motion.

I'd maybe like to hear from government members on what a timeline would be first, though.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Dang.

Before we have any further discussion, actually, just as the chair I'll take a couple of liberties here. Meetings are called at the discretion of the chair, and it is in no way my intent to pigeonhole any member in particular. As you've already noticed, our legislative schedule now and legislative schedule in the fall, which this committee will run into, will present some barriers for attendance for certain members. We've allowed for things like substitutions. I am happy to work with members on both sides of the chair to ensure that there is adequate time to get things like motions prepared, but I also do have concerns as the chair about the constraints of being able to call a meeting. Although I'm not trying to enter this discussion from one side or another, it is my job to call these meetings and hope that the members on both sides recognize that this is no intent of malice but, rather, just trying to ensure that this committee can meet the tight timelines set out by the government motion.

With that said, I would like to – we finished with Mr. Dang, did we not? Mr. Dang, did you speak last? Correct?

Mr. Dang: Yeah.

The Chair: We'll go to Ms Goodridge, and then we'll go to Mr. Ceci.

Ms Goodridge: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Based on the suggestions brought forward by Mr. Dang, I would propose an amendment of removing (b) and changing (a) to at least two business days.

The Chair: Just give us a moment, Ms Goodridge, while we're putting this up on the screen.

A lot of pressure typing in front of people. I don't want your job for that reason alone.

Okay. We have an amendment on the floor moved by Ms Goodridge. Ms Goodridge, could you read that out if it's satisfactory to you?

Ms Goodridge: Yeah. Oh, read it into the record?

The Chair: Yes.

Ms Goodridge: I move to have the motion amended as follows: at least two business days to prepare any motions that are required to be put on notice under Standing Order 52.041.

The Chair: Just read the amendment.

Ms Goodridge: Oh.

In (a) by striking out "three" and substituting "two," and striking out clause (b).

The Chair: We have an amendment now on the floor. Does anybody want to enter that discussion?

Mr. Dang: I think that certainly this is better than nothing. I think that I appreciate that we're trying to work with some fluid timetables here. Of course, Mr. Chair, I know that you've tried to poll a number of times for the next meeting. I mean, I'm sure that there are many conflicting schedules. I mean, there are as many members and staff here as we can count. Certainly, I would prefer more time because, as always, we do want to do our homework before we come to this committee, but I generally agree that if we can find a timeline that works, then we would be happy to support that.

The Chair: Mrs. Allard, and then Mr. Ceci.

Mrs. Allard: Yeah. I would just say that I would support this as amended. It does say "at least two business days" as amended, so it doesn't preclude us from having longer timelines. I believe MLA Sweet and others have commented on the fact that we could potentially build out a bit of a timeline, and I would be open to that, at the will of the chair.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mrs. Allard.

6:30

Member Ceci: I'm trying to follow along the discussion, looking at the minutes that are now approved. Mrs. Allard referenced Mr. Horner's moving of a motion with regard to the committee schedule. I don't see that here. I do see the subcommittee business being scheduled from time to time at the call of the chair, but I don't see anything referencing the committee itself. Can somebody just point me to where that is in our minutes?

Mrs. Allard: I was referencing the subcommittee.

Member Ceci: Oh. Is that what the motion is about?

Mrs. Allard: I apologize. I spoke to both; I spoke to committee and subcommittee scheduling.

Member Ceci: Okay. So we're trying to get some clarity on the scheduling of the committee. It's not referenced at all in the minutes. Thank you for that clarification. I understand the amendment now – right? – by you. Okay. Thanks.

The Chair: Anyone from the government side?
Ms Sweet.

Ms Sweet: Thank you. Again, I think that, you know, having the ability to amend it to strike out “three” and add “two” and then strike out (b) is a good compromise on both sides of the House. At this time I would support that. Again, Mr. Chair, I do recognize that you do have to balance all of our schedules, so I do appreciate that calling these meetings can be a challenge. But I appreciate that the government is willing to see if we can look at building out some kind of a schedule. Again, of course, I recognize that it’s at the will of the chair.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you for that.

Any other comments to add to this discussion?

Seeing none, I am prepared to call the question on the amendment moved by Ms Goodridge. All those in favour of the amendment, please say aye. Any opposed? On the phone? Thank you.

That amendment is carried.

Back to the original motion moved by Ms Pancholi – just wait as we get it up on screen – as amended by Ms Goodridge. The motion moved by Ms Pancholi as amended by Ms Goodridge reads that

the committee meetings be scheduled in a manner that provides members with (a) at least two business days to prepare any motions that are required to be put on notice under Standing Order 52.041.

All those in favour of that motion, please say aye. Any opposed, please say no. On the phone? Thank you.

That motion is carried.

Is there any other discussion under other business?

Seeing none, the date of the next meeting: members are currently being polled for the next committee meeting, which moves us towards adjournment. Is there nothing else for the committee’s consideration?

Would anyone like to move to adjourn?

Member Ceci: I’ll move it.

The Chair: Mr. Ceci moves that the July 22, 2020, meeting of the Select Special Democratic Accountability Committee be adjourned. All those in favour? All those opposed? On the phone? We’re adjourned.

[The committee adjourned at 6:33 p.m.]

