



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

The 30th Legislature
Third Session

Standing Committee
on
Alberta's Economic Future

Lobbyists Act Review

Tuesday, May 3, 2022
6 p.m.

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Third Session**

Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

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[Mr. Neudorf in the chair]

The Chair: Good evening. I'm going to call this meeting to order. Welcome to members and staff in attendance at this meeting of the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future.

My name is Nathan Neudorf, and I'm the MLA for Lethbridge-East and the chair of this committee. I'd ask that members and those joining the committee at the table introduce themselves for the record, starting to my right with the deputy chair.

Ms Goehring: Good evening. I'm Nicole Goehring, the MLA for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

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

Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk: Jackie Armstrong-Homeniuk, MLA, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

Mr. Walker: Jordan Walker, MLA, Sherwood Park.

Member Irwin: Janis Irwin, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Mr. Barnes: Drew Barnes, Cypress-Medicine Hat.

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

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

The Chair: I will call the names of two MLAs online and have them respond. Mr. Bilous.

Mr. Bilous: Good evening. Deron Bilous, MLA, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

The Chair: Thank you.
MLA Sweet.

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

The Chair: Thank you.

We have had two others join us in the room. I will go to them now.

Mr. van Dijken: Glenn van Dijken, MLA, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock.

Ms Rosin: Miranda Rosin, MLA for Banff-Kananaskis.

Mrs. Frey: Michaela Frey, MLA, Brooks-Medicine Hat.

The Chair: Thank you.

A few housekeeping items to address before we turn to the business at hand. Please note that the microphones are operated by *Hansard* staff. Committee proceedings are live streamed on the Internet and broadcast on Alberta Assembly TV. The audio- and videostream and transcripts of meetings can be accessed via the Legislative Assembly website. Those participating by videoconference are encouraged to please turn on your camera while speaking and mute your microphone when not speaking. Members participating virtually who wish to be placed on the speakers list are asked to send an e-mail or a message in the group chat to the committee clerk, and members in the room are asked to

please signal the chair. Please set your cellphones and other devices to silent during the duration of this meeting.

Up next is the approval of the agenda. Can I have someone who would approve that? Moved by MLA Walker that the agenda for the May 3, 2022, meeting of the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future be adopted as distributed. Any discussion? Seeing none, all in favour in the room, please say aye. Any opposed in the room, please say no. All those online in favour, please say aye. Anybody online opposed, please say no. That motion is carried.

Approval of the minutes, April 26, 2022. We have the minutes for the April 26, 2022, meeting of the committee. Are there any errors or omissions to note? If not, would a member move – thank you. MLA Goehring moves that the minutes of the April 26, 2022, meeting of the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future be adopted as circulated. In the room, all those in favour, please say aye. All those in the room opposed, please say no. Online, all those in favour, please say aye. Online, anyone opposed, please say no. That motion is carried.

Deliberations and recommendations. Hon. members, the committee commenced deliberations as part of its review of the Lobbyists Act on March 30, 2022, and continued on April 26, 2022. I would remind members also that the notice requirements under Standing Order 52.041 are in effect for this meeting in accordance with the memorandum sent to members on February 24, 2022.

In addition, members will recall that at its first meeting on September 13, 2021, the committee invited the Ethics Commissioner and officials from the Ministry of Justice and Solicitor General to attend meetings of the committee and to participate, when requested, to provide technical expertise. Today Mr. Josh de Groot, lobbyist registrar and general counsel, and Ms Joan Neatby, barrister and solicitor for the Ministry of Justice and Solicitor General, are here should the committee ask them to participate in the proceedings. Good evening.

At this time I would open the floor to any discussion, motions that members may wish to bring. Appropriate to continue where we were from the last meeting. I will go directly to MLA Barnes.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, Chair Neudorf. I appreciate it. Thanks to everybody for your time here tonight. I'd like to start with main motion 13. I will read it, and I'll explain my rationale, please. I move that

the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future recommend that the Lobbyists Act be amended to prohibit a public office holder from registering as a consultant lobbyist or organizational lobbyist for a period of time immediately following the day they cease to hold public office in accordance with the existing prohibitions in the Conflicts of Interest Act.

That's the end at the end of the motion. I'd like to move it.

Mr. Chair, a little bit of the logic. You recall from that September 21 meeting and other times that the Ethics Commissioner gave us advice that she would like to see some alignment between the Conflicts of Interest Act and the Lobbyists Act, that there's some uncertainty and a grey area when elected officials and government employees and government subcontractors move from under the Conflicts of Interest Act to the Lobbyists Act.

I will also point out that we had several submissions suggest a waiting period for political appointees and staffers who wish to become lobbyists, that there be some kind of longer or some kind of, in effect, cooling-off period. One of the suggestions, I recall, suggested that any government employee or member of the governing party wait three years after leaving government to begin work as a lobbyist. That was from Harding. Other suggestions were for four years as an appropriate waiting period. I actually think that was from MLA Frey, that the four years be considered.

Mrs. Frey: No, it wasn't.

Mr. Barnes: I'm sorry if it wasn't.

Others suggested a cooling-off period of five years. I have the names Vanderveen, Gamble, and Fournier who suggested that to us. Another submission suggests that a government agent who has served in an executive capacity with a for-profit entity and the government within the previous 10 years should be permitted for that cooling-off period to lobby the Alberta government.

Again, on a recommendation from the Ethics Commissioner for the strongest possible way to protect taxpayers' dollars, for the best way to increase transparency for how government spends hard-earned tax dollars, I'd like to make this motion, which, of course, is really direction to the Department of Justice and Solicitor General to come up with the proper means to align the Conflicts of Interest Act and the Lobbyists Act with their proper cooling-off period.

Mr. Chair, I'll just remind you in closing that former Prime Minister Harper was big on asking for cooling-off periods, asking for some protection for the taxpayer for tax dollars between lobbyists and where their money is spent. So I would ask all my colleagues to please support this motion.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, MLA Barnes. Just for clarification, in my reading of it you are not suggesting a specific period of time; you're just saying: a period of time yet to be determined.

Mr. Barnes: That is correct. I understand and believe that the Conflicts of Interest Act is one year, but there were a lot of submissions for longer than one year: three, four, five, and even one at 10. So let's not tie the hands of the Solicitor General and the Justice department. Let's give the Legislature, all 87 members, a chance to really strengthen the cooling-off period and protection for taxpayer dollars. Let's see where their final legal part comes out.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

I will now open the floor for discussion. Are there any members wishing to speak? Online, any members wishing to speak?

Seeing none, we have a motion moved by MLA Barnes. In the room, all of those in favour of the motion, please say aye. All those opposed, please say no. Online, those in favour, please say aye. Online, those opposed, please say no. In my opinion,

that motion is defeated.

MLA Barnes, your next motion.

Mr. Barnes: Okay. Thank you. Main motion ID: this one is number 7 from the website. I will move that

the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future recommend that the Lobbyists Act be amended to (a) reduce the annual number of hours spent lobbying before a person is considered to be an organizational lobbyist from 50 to 20, (b) include time spent lobbying and preparing to lobby in determining if a person has spent the required annual numbers of hours to be considered an organizational lobbyist, and (c) prohibit the practice in which an organization engages an external consultant to prepare the organization's lobbying activities for the purpose of minimizing the number of hours spent lobbying by that organization.

Again, the real key here, Mr. Chair, is more transparency, more accountability. In regard to (c) it was mentioned, again, by the Ethics Commissioner that, you know, sometimes a lobbyist group will hire an outside organizational lobbyist, and it won't count in the hours. Of course, direct lobbying or not, again I think it's important to shed some sunlight on this. For the organization doing

it, they certainly have to review the objectives. They have to review the success of the objectives and probably pay a bill. So I don't think it would be a big extra onus on anybody's paperwork. I think, you know, we need to err – it's not an err. We need to guard on the side of more transparency and more accountability.

6:10

This is to really close a loophole in our Lobbyists Act where an organization engages an outside consultant to do all their prep for their in-house lobbying. The outside consultant's preparation time is not counted towards the organization's threshold, and the organization might not meet that threshold through the lobbying time. Again, let's tighten this up. You know, they can still do it. They just have to account for it, and they have to show the taxpayer, they have to show the Alberta citizen, they have to show other government members where the time and effort are being spent.

With that, I would ask everyone to please approve this motion.

The Chair: Thank you, MLA Barnes.

We will now go to discussion. I have seen MLA Goehring, who would like to speak.

Ms Goehring: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to the hon. member for this motion. We supported the previous reduction, and we were proud to have implemented it. My colleague MLA Bilous spoke to this in a previous amendment, about striking a balance on this. We believe from what we heard from the invited stakeholders that the current threshold does that at this time, so with that, I will be opposing your motion.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

MLA Frey.

Mrs. Frey: Yes. MLA Goehring and I are in agreement on this. I feel like this would also disproportionately affect small organizations. Small organizations might have to spend more time because they don't have as many people who can go out and do the same things. I also note that there are multiple stakeholders who actually want their 100-hour threshold back, and other provinces have higher thresholds. Right now I think that in Alberta we do have the right balance, and I actually really appreciate that because I think that it's, of course, important to strike a balance between too much and not enough. For that reason, I will be voting against this motion.

The Chair: Thank you.

MLA Barnes, would you like to respond?

Mr. Barnes: Yeah. Thank you. I know it's a great concern between, you know, the best efforts for every dollar spent by every Albertan, but I think that this committee, that this Legislature, that this government is best to err on the side of more transparency for the Alberta citizen, more protection for taxpayers. You know, there's a principle in business, of course, that you can't manage something unless you measure it. Asking organizations to do a bit more measuring will only help their management, their effectiveness, and their ability to get value for their time and effort anyway. So I for one prefer to err on the side of transparency and the taxpayer.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Anyone else wishing to speak?

Seeing none, I will call the question. In the room all those in favour of the motion, please say aye. In the room all those opposed,

please say no. Online, those in favour, please say aye. Online, those opposed, please say no. In my opinion, that motion is defeated.

The next motion, MLA Barnes.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you again, Mr. Chair. Main motion ID is number 8 this time. I will move that

the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future recommend that the Lobbyists Act be amended as follows, (a) to require a return filed by a designated filer to identify any gifts, favours, or other benefits that a public office holder is permitted to accept and to the knowledge of the designated filer after reasonable inquiry were offered to a public office holder within the last 12 months by the consultant lobbyist or organizational lobbyist for which the return is being filed; and (b) require disclosure of the following particulars with respect to each gift, favour, or other benefit referred to in clause (a): one, a description of the particular gift, favour, or benefit; two, a description of the circumstances in which the gift, favour, or other benefit was offered; three, the actual value of the gift, favour, or other benefit; four, the name and title of the public office holder to whom the gift, favour, or other benefit was offered; five, the date that the gift, favour, or other benefit was offered; and six, a statement with respect to whether the public office holder accepted the gift, favour, or other benefit.

Thank you, Mr. Chair. That's the motion.

Some of my supporting ideas and logic are that the act does not do enough to promote public transparency and accountability about gifts, favours, or benefits from lobbyists to public office holders. It does not do enough to facilitate enforcement of section 6.2, prohibited gifts, as mentioned, again, by the Ethics Commissioner on page 14 of her report. Schedules 1 and 2 of the act do not include a disclosure requirement to enhance compliance, transparency, and accountability with respect to section 6.2, prohibited gifts.

Again, I just think that for the Albertan sitting at home, you know, in his chair who looks at the registry, it would be nice to see more as to the value and the purpose of the flow of gifts and favours, whether they were accepted or not. It helps Albertans understand the direction of where people want their tax dollars to go to, and it helps Albertans decide where they want to get involved.

Again, in an effort to enhance transparency and disclosure, I would ask all my colleagues here tonight to please support this motion.

The Chair: We will open this for discussion. Any members wishing to speak? Online, any members wishing to speak? Mr. van Dijken.

Mr. van Dijken: Yeah. I guess that when I look at this motion, it looks to me like a lot of increased filing, increased paperwork. I'm not sure that there's any real advantage to be gained here. I understand the intent in the heart of the motion, but we already require that our elected representatives – I know for myself – report any gifts. I'm just failing to see where we're actually going to get an extra advantage here to improve accountability.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. van Dijken.

Mr. Barnes, do you care to respond?

Mr. Barnes: Well, thank you. Yeah. Thanks, everybody, for their time and effort in this. You know, there's a lot of stuff to plow through. Public office holder is defined differently in both the Lobbyists Act and the Conflicts of Interest Act. So it's more than just elected officials. MLA van Dijken, you started that with: I'm unsure that it's going to do what's stated. It's an age-old saying that

transparency and sunlight improve things. I'm sure that more transparency and more sunlight will provide better protection for hard-earned tax dollars. As important or more important, it will allow Albertans to get more involved in their government, allow Albertans to know more about where our culture and society are headed. That's why I ask you to support it, please.

The Chair: Any others wishing to speak?

Mr. van Dijken: Just in response, I'm not aware of what others might be receiving. I'm completely oblivious to that. But I recognize that for me, I'm not exposed to this really at all out in rural Alberta.

One thing that comes to mind is that I was at an event. It was a consultative event in a community. It was – you mentioned the culture – the culture of that community to pass on a gift to myself. It was a coffee mug. Are we then requiring that cultural community to be in filing for that type of a social gift, a cultural gift to anyone? I don't know. Like, where does it begin? Where does it end? I'm trying to figure out what's the right balance. I think the balance is there. I'm trying to scroll through crossjurisdictional as to what other jurisdictions are doing, and I'm not finding anything that would the address that we're out of line with the crossjurisdictional.

6:20

Mr. Barnes: Thank you. I appreciate that that's a legitimate concern, but there are thresholds for the value of the gift.

Again, because this is just a motion to Justice and Solicitor General and then on to the Legislature, I don't think we have to be exactly precise here; we just have to, you know, put forward the desire for more accountability and more transparency.

The Chair: Thank you.

Anyone online wishing to speak to this motion?

Seeing no others, I will call the question. All those in favour of this motion in the room, please say aye. In the room, any opposed, please say no. Online, those in favour, please say aye. Online, those opposed, please say no. In my opinion, that motion is defeated.

Next motion, MLA Barnes.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you again, Chair Neudorf. Main motion 9 from what we submitted on the website. I will move that

the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future recommend that the Lobbyists Act be amended for the purpose of calculating the time spent lobbying to include any time spent arranging a meeting between a public office holder and a client of a consultant lobbyist or organizational lobbyist.

Again, from the Ethics Commissioner, her office's report on page 34, B6:

there is potential uncertainty in the Act as to whether arranging a meeting on behalf of a client between a public office holder and a consultant lobbyist alone is "lobbying" for the consultant lobbyist. This may create confusion for lobbyists that may affect their compliance. It also creates a possible gap in the Act.

Well, a possible gap in the act doesn't sound like a good thing to me. I think it's good for everybody to end uncertainty. I don't know. Arranging the actual meeting sounds to me like it could be the heart of the lobbying. So I think very, very much for that reason it should be included. Again, we're making a motion to the Legislature, to the Solicitor General and Justice to strengthen this. I think this is a good step. This is a good way for this committee to indicate that we want more transparency and accountability.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, MLA Barnes.

Any wishing to speak to this motion? Online, any wishing to speak?

Seeing none, I'm prepared to call the question. In the room, all those in favour of this motion, please say aye. All those opposed, please say no. Online, those in favour, please say aye. Online, those opposed, please say no. In my opinion, this motion is defeated.

Next motion, MLA Barnes.

Mr. Barnes: Thanks again, Chair. We'll move on to main motion 10. I move that

the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future recommend that the Lobbyists Act be amended in the case of an organization lobbyist's return to include the following: (a) the name and business address of each organization, group, or entity that, one, is affiliated, subordinate, or associated with the organization for which the return is being filed and, two, is carrying on related lobbying activities; and (b) the name and business address of each organization, group, or entity that exercises a controlling relationship over the organization for which the return is being filed.

Thank you. That is the motion.

A little bit of discussion. The act takes an unnecessary, inflexible, and narrow approach to the registration of collective in-house lobbying by a group of parent and subsidiary corporations. Depending on how many subsidiary corporations are at issue, one group of parent and subsidiary corporations could be required to maintain many registrations in the Lobbyists Act. This way it allows them to work under their umbrella but be identified. Mr. Chair, I pulled the copy of the lobbyists registry today, and there are many groups. You know, the Chambers of Commerce may be the easiest one to highlight, who may represent up to 200 or 500 different members. They may have the ability or the desire to lobby just for some of those groups at a time. Maybe not necessarily all of them.

I think, again, to improve taxpayer protection, to improve transparency, to improve accountability, I would like to see our lobbyist registry include all the names of the organizations that they represent, even if it's a link to somewhere else where they can be found, and if an organization, say, isn't lobbying on behalf of their whole list but minimizes the list for a particular reason, I think they should disclose that.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Anyone wishing to speak to this motion? Member Irwin.

Member Irwin: Thank you, and thank you to the member for bringing forth this motion. We agree, actually, with your point that it is a good amendment to ensure transparency and accountability, because we can imagine that Albertans may not know, you know, how companies and subordinates are connected. So we are happy to support something that offers a high level of transparency and accountability.

The Chair: Anyone else wishing to speak to this motion? Online, anybody wishing to speak?

Hearing none, I will call the question. All those in the room in favour of this motion, please say aye. In this room, all those opposed, please say no. Online, all those in favour, please say aye. Online, any opposed, please say no. In my opinion, the noes have it.

That is defeated.

Next motion, MLA Barnes.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, Chair Neudorf. Main motion 11. I move that

the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future recommend that the Lobbyists Act be amended to increase the penalty for an offence under sections 19(1), 19(2), and 19(3) to (a) not less than \$25,000 for a first offence and (b) not less than \$100,000 for a second or subsequent offence.

That's the end of the motion.

Really, again, taxpayer protection, transparency, accountability. Again, I think, you know, it's important to have some teeth, so what I've done here is that I've moved the maximum fines under the current Lobbyists Act to minimums. Again, we had several people wonder about the penalties, and we also had a submission from a Blanchard also to prohibit the person who committed the offence for a period of not less than two years from lobbying.

Mr. Chair and committee members, I present that as an indication from Albertans that they think that if the act is violated, there should be penalties, and again this is up to the Ethics Commissioner and up to her department, and I would like to see this important act not only have more transparency and accountability; I would like to see it have some stiffer penalties.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much, MLA.

We will now open this to discussion. I have MLA Frey and Member Irwin. I'll start with MLA Frey.

Mrs. Frey: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm curious as to why the language is the way that it is, and then – I think it's clarified – the intention is that this is a minimum, and you see it as such. Okay. Well, I'm noting that. That's concerning to me just given that this change of wording, especially that it's intentional, means that there's no limit given for the amount that fines could be. It seems like this is giving a lot of power to one office.

Now, I totally agree that if somebody is breaking a law, they should be punished for that. There's absolutely no question there, and I believe that our whole caucus would agree with that. But if you are violating the Conflicts of Interest Act or the Lobbyists Act, you should be fined. Now, what I am concerned about, though, is the language of this motion, and as it reads, it would give a disproportionate amount of power to the Ethics Commissioner's office. I think that that needs to be tempered with respect to this motion, so I will be voting against this.

The Chair: Thank you.

Member Irwin.

6:30

Member Irwin: Thank you, Chair. You know, I think we agreed with this, perhaps the intent of it, but we are open to increasing fines, but changing maximums to minimums is a fairly significant move. I think, you know, we would rather see amounts being increased rather than reversing maximums with minimums. I think, again, we're supportive with updating the amounts for fines, but we can't in good spirit support this motion.

The Chair: Thank you, Member.

MLA Barnes to respond.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you. Forgive me for not knowing this, but what's the appeal mechanism, if I could ask, if somebody is fined under this? Do they appeal to the Court of Queen's Bench? Can they appeal to the Legislature? What is the mechanism?

Mr. Koenig: I hate to not be able to answer that question off the top of my head. I don't believe it is the Ethics Commissioner that is

imposing the offences and penalties or enforcing those. I think she is responsible for the administrative penalties, but I am, again, not a technical expert in this area. So in terms of the conviction of a person who is guilty of an offence under the act, the committee may wish to seek further information from the technical experts in the room.

The Chair: Thank you. We believe that Ms Joan Neatby could answer that question. If the will of the committee, by a show of hands, would like to have her come to the table to respond, I'm willing to do that, but if it's not necessary – as it is slightly outside the scope of the motion. In favour of getting further advice at this time, please raise your hand. Opposed to doing that direction, please raise your hand. Defeated three to one.

At this point in time I would recommend that the committee remember that we have the ability, as I hear a consensus about some of the intent, that the report that the LAO will provide this committee to table in the Legislature can highlight things like penalties and fees and appeal process, without trying to predict the will of the committee on this motion, but they would be able to highlight that in terms of the report.

Ms Robert.

Ms Robert: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just wanted to clarify that the committee would have to say that, though. They would have to say: please put that in the report.

Thank you.

The Chair: Committee recommendations and highlights in the report can identify certain topics such as this one perhaps, if it was not to be passed as a motion, but there is general agreement that possibly raising the level of the fine or addressing that area in particular could be highlighted in said report.

Mr. Barnes: Can I make that recommendation?

The Chair: It would be more appropriate at the time when we direct the LAO to do that report. I believe it would be more at that point in time where we could direct them to do so. Thank you.

Anyone else wishing to speak on this motion? Online, anybody wishing to speak? Hearing and seeing none, I am prepared to call the question. In regard to this motion in the room, all those in favour, please say aye. In this room, all those opposed, please say no. Online, those in favour, please say aye. Online, those opposed, please say no. In my opinion, the noes have it.

That motion is defeated.

The final motion. If I am procedurally correct, I believe this is your final motion, MLA Barnes.

Mr. Barnes: Yes, it is. Thank you again, Chair, and thanks to everybody for indulging me your time. Main motion ID 12. I will move that

the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future recommend that any amendments made to the Lobbyists Act take into account the importance of public transparency with respect to the practice of lobbying.

That's the end of the motion.

We had several submissions advocating and asking for increased transparency, increased understanding when it comes to respect for lobbying activities. We have some specific ones: the act should be amended to provide increased transparency with respect to lobbying activities. I have the names Stirling, Gamble, Mireau, Buhler, Chizek, Roberts, Driedger, Smella, Bertrand, Van Brabant, Pitman, Saxby, Sumner, Epp, McBeth, McKenzie, and Batchelor.

So with many Albertans behind us I would ask my committee members to approve this motion.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you. I will now open up for discussion. I have MLA Goehring.

Ms Goehring: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to the member for this motion. I have to say that I am fully in support of this motion because it speaks to the intent and the principle that all changes to the Lobbyists Act should be made in, so I fully support it.

The Chair: Thank you.

Any others wishing to speak to this motion? Mr. van Dijken.

Mr. van Dijken: Yeah. When I look at this motion, I think to myself: well, is that not already the actual will of the ministry? So I guess we're putting it into word, into, actually, description, and I would think this is unnecessary to actually have to state this, but, myself, I'm okay with the wording of this motion, and I'm just not sure that that's really all that necessary.

The Chair: Again, our recommendations and our motions are, in my understanding, emphasis and opinion to provide to the ministry. It is still up to the ministry to do with it as the ministry will, so again recommendations and motions of this committee are distinctly that. This could be viewed as an emphasis for an intent and helps to highlight the will of the committee to the ministry in their deliberations at that point.

Mr. van Dijken: As a follow-up, then, I guess I need to have a little bit of an understanding as to – you know, you talk about: are we amplifying the intent by stating it as a motion made in committee as opposed to giving direction to officers in preparing their report?

The Chair: This is separate. The motion is separate from the report, right? Motions are the will of the committee stated, drawn up, voted upon. Recommendations are part of the report.

I don't know if anyone would like to comment further on that. Ms Robert or Mr. Koenig?

Mr. Koenig: I mean, I'm happy to just maybe say a few words. I would suggest that a motion passed by the committee is a reflection of the committee's intent. It's quite clear that the committee wished to make this specific recommendation. General commentary in the report I don't think would rise to the same level in terms of intention, so in terms of the intent of the committee and what it wishes to recommend, that would likely be reflected very strongly by a motion that was passed where the members made a determination by a vote on what they wanted to have included in that report.

Mr. van Dijken: Okay. That's a good clarification.

The Chair: Thank you.

Anyone else wishing to speak? Online? I want to make the last offer. Anyone online wishing to speak to this motion?

Hearing none, I am prepared to call the question on this motion. In the room, all those in favour of this motion, please say aye. In this room, any opposed, please say no. Online, all those in favour, please say aye. Online, anyone opposed, please say no. There's no one left, but I have to still do it. In my opinion, the ayes have it.

That motion is carried and so ordered.

Thank you, members.

If there are no further comments or motions, I believe, that would be in order, we shall now move on to a discussion of developing the

committee's report to the Assembly. As members know, the method by which the committee reports its deliberations and recommendations to the Assembly is by way of a written report. The common practice is to request that the Legislative Assembly Office research services prepare a draft report of the committee's recommendations and other information the committee wishes to convey in relation to matters heard during its review of the Lobbyists Act.

At this time I would like to open the floor to a discussion or motion. I actually have some context provided either by Ms Robert or Mr. Koenig on that report because they have been here the entire time and taking notes and understanding. If they would like to provide any feedback prior to our discussion that they would wish to.

Ms Robert: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think you've covered it pretty well, but certainly if anybody has any questions about the structure of the report, I'd be happy to go over that with you.

The Chair: Thank you.

I will now open the floor to discussion, and we do have a motion which we can draw up to the screen while we're having the discussion. Are there any members wishing to speak to the report to be prepared by the LAO?

Mr. Barnes, I will ask you if you wish to emphasize a certain number of items that were contained within your motions, in particular, that you would like to have addressed. You can do this as a fulsome thing, or you can do it one by one. I would encourage you to be as productive with your time as possible, and if you could do it more generally, that would be helpful. But that's only a hint in my direction, not an order.

6:40

Mr. Barnes: Yeah. Thank you, Mr. Chair, but I'm puzzled. Like, all the motions were defeated except for the last one. If I, you know, talk, I'm still a believer in all of my motions, so do we really want to go back through all that?

The Chair: No, but I would like to suggest that you could possibly say, "I would like the intent of a number of my motions, in particular the addressing of the raising of fines" or something of that nature, where you could highlight a specific couple of items. Or you could say, "I would request that the intent of the motions that carried be recognized in the report" or "Even those motions that didn't pass highlighted specific areas that I'd like to address," something of that nature.

Mr. Barnes: If I could, Mr. Chair and colleagues, obviously, coming into this meeting tonight and last meeting, I had no idea which motions were going to be accepted or rejected. Now that I have some understanding of exactly what people in this committee are thinking, I think it's appropriate that I ask for an adjournment now. Let's reconvene in a week or whatever. Let's come back with just this specific goal of starting to write the report. Let's give everyone five, 10, or 15 minutes to talk. I mean, the real importance of getting things laid out in the proper manner is preparation time, and of course I had no idea what to prepare for.

The Chair: I will let MLA Goehring speak.

Ms Goehring: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to the member for the suggestion to adjourn. However, I think that we're . . .

The Chair: Sorry. I think he was asking a question, and we will do that.

MLA Goehring, please proceed.

Ms Goehring: I think that, you know, the members have put in some significant work around the table, and I believe that the committee's will at this point is to move into discussion of the report. I would suggest that because you have a strong desire to ensure that your motions and such are reflected in the report, perhaps we could discuss a minority report and the acceptance of the committee to accept minority reports if that's something that you would be open to rather than adjourning this discussion, because I believe the majority are wanting to proceed with the discussion. To me, a minority report would seem the best solution.

The Chair: Thank you. Counsel was actually just saying the exact same thing.

MLA Barnes, you had previously requested – and it is an option for you – a minority report, which would capture all of those motions that were defeated.

Actually, I'd ask Ms Robert to comment on that more fully.

Ms Robert: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Basically, the minority report would be whatever you put in it. Whatever you write gets appended to the majority report and gets tabled with the report. So it's totally up to you as to what you would want to include in it.

Mr. Barnes: Okay. Thank you.

Ms Robert: Sorry. And the minority report is not subject to the committee's approval.

Mr. Barnes: I can just do it?

Ms Robert: You can write whatever you want.

Mr. Barnes: Okay. But I still think adjournment and some proper time to prepare are important, so should I ask for an adjournment, please?

The Chair: Well, if you do that, then we do have to vote on that adjournment, and we either adjourn or not. If we vote to adjourn, then this meeting is adjourned and completed. If we vote against adjournment, then we continue on with the meeting, with the debate.

Was that a hand up, Ms Goehring? Okay. Well, I thought he was still asking for clarification.

Mr. Barnes: I will move adjournment.

The Chair: Okay. So the motion to adjourn has been put forward. All those in favour of adjourning, please say aye. All those opposed, please say no. That motion is defeated. Thank you.

Now we will go back to discussion in terms of the report. Do we have anybody willing or wishing to speak in terms of the directions to the LAO? There is a motion. Could I ask that the motion be put forward? Okay. Is there discussion? Online, anybody wishing to speak?

Hearing none, seeing none, would somebody be willing to move that the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future direct research services to prepare a draft report of the committee's review of the Lobbyists Act, including any recommendations made by the committee, and that the chair and the deputy chair be authorized to approve the draft report after it has been distributed to committee members for their review? Mrs. Frey. I will now call the question. In the room, all those in favour of this motion, please say . . .

Ms Goehring: Discussion?

The Chair: Oh, sorry. Pardon me. I'll back that up.
Discussion? MLA Goehring.

Ms Goehring: Thank you.

The Chair: Sorry. I apologize. I'm out of order.
MLA Frey, you may speak to the motion.

Mrs. Frey: Thank you, Chair. I'll be super quick. I definitely want to hear what MLA Goehring has to say as well. I know we heard from most committee members at our last meeting significant opposition to recommendation 2(a), but that's pretty much all we could agree on, so I'm hoping that this report will take that into consideration.

I do think it's really important that we take our job seriously here. Our review of the Lobbyists Act, of course, is a very important duty. It happens routinely, but I'm glad to see that we're taking some of the time to discuss the recommendations that we had made earlier. I know that we've all very much enjoyed this time, but I am very much looking forward to seeing the committee's report.

That is my rationale for the motion, and I will resign the rest of my time.

The Chair: Thank you, MLA Frey.
MLA Goehring.

Ms Goehring: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, I think that this is a motion that can be supported. I note that, you know, Mr. Barnes put some motions on the floor that we had support for, and they didn't pass. Knowing that this committee will be putting forward a report, I would also just like to note that the Official Opposition will also be submitting a minority report.

But, with that, we support this motion.

The Chair: Thank you.
Anyone else wishing to speak? MLA Barnes.

Mr. Barnes: Yeah. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm quite concerned about this committee's work when two of us are going to have minority reports. Did we really accomplish what we were tasked to do?

The Chair: I believe we have done the work that we were tasked to do. We reviewed it. We've had multiple meetings, including several more than were originally scheduled. This is the due process that has been ordered, and we followed the recommendations that have come before. So I believe that we have, but that is a matter of opinion.

Is there anyone else wishing to speak either with regard to highlighting anything for the LAO in their report or on this motion? I will ask those online if they're willing to speak or wishing to speak.

Seeing none, I will now call the question. It has been moved by Mrs. Frey that

the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future direct research services to prepare a draft report of the committee's review of the Lobbyists Act, including any recommendations made by the committee, and that the chair and the deputy chair be authorized to approve the draft report after it has been distributed to committee members for their review.

In this room, all in favour, please say aye. In this room, those opposed, please say no. Online, those in favour, please say aye. Online, any opposed, please say no. Hearing none, that motion is carried.

Other business. Is there any other business that members wish to discuss? Seeing none in the room, online, any other business? I see none.

The date of the next meeting is at the call of the chair.

I would now entertain a motion for adjournment. Mr. Rowswell moves that the May 3, 2022, meeting of the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future be adjourned. All those in favour, please say aye. Any opposed, please say no. Online, all those in favour, please say aye. Any opposed, please say no. That motion is carried. This meeting is now adjourned.

Thank you, members.

[The committee adjourned at 6:50 p.m.]

