



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

The 31st Legislature
Second Session

Standing Committee
on
Alberta's Economic Future

Lobbyists Act Review
Bill 208, Tobacco, Smoking and Vaping Reduction
Amendment Act, 2026, Review

Thursday, September 24, 2026
9 a.m.

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Second Session**

Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

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Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (NDP), Deputy Chair

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9 a.m.

Thursday, September, 24, 2026

[Mr. Wiebe in the chair]

The Chair: Well, good morning, everyone. I'd like to call the meeting of the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future to order and welcome everyone in attendance.

My name is Ron Wiebe. I'm the MLA for Grande Prairie-Wapiti and the chair of the committee. I'd ask that members and those joining the committee at the table introduce themselves for the record. We'll begin with the member on my right.

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

Mr. Haji: Sharif Haji, MLA for Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Dach: Lorne Dach, MLA for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Bhurgri: Abdul Aziz Bhurgri, research officer.

Ms Govindarajan: Vani Govindarajan, Parliamentary Counsel.

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

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

The Chair: We will now go to those joining us online. Please unmute yourself and turn your cameras on and introduce yourselves as I call your names.

Member Pitt.

Ms Pitt: Good morning. Angela Pitt, MLA, Airdrie-East, stepping in for MLA Chantelle de Jonge.

The Chair: Can you turn your camera on, please, as well? Thank you.

Member Bouchard.

Mr. Bouchard: Good morning, everyone. I'm Eric Bouchard, MLA for Calgary-Lougheed.

The Chair: Member Boparai.

Member Boparai: Good morning, everyone. MLA Parmeet Singh Boparai for Calgary-Falconridge.

The Chair: Member Hoyle

Member Hoyle: Good morning, everyone. I'm MLA Rhiannon Hoyle for Edmonton-South.

The Chair: And Member Stephan.

Mr. Stephan: Good morning. MLA Jason Stephan, Red Deer-South.

The Chair: Thank you.

For the record I will note the following substitutions: Mr. Rowswell for hon. Mr. Wright, Member Haji for Member Elmeligi, Ms Pitt for MLA de Jonge, and Mr. Cyr for MLA van Dijken.

Member Cyr, can you introduce yourself as well?

Mr. Cyr: Yes. Sorry, Mr. Chair. I was having some technical difficulties with my camera. I'm the MLA for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul, Scott Cyr.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

All right. We've got 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 the meeting can be accessed via the Legislative Assembly website. Those participating by videoconferencing 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 e-mail or message the committee clerk, and members in the room are asked to please signal the chair. Please set your cellphones and other devices to silent for the duration of the meeting.

We will now go to the approval of the agenda. Are there any changes or additions to the draft agenda? If not, would someone like to move that the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future approve the proposed agenda as distributed for its September 24, 2026, meeting? Mr. Dach. Do we have a seconder? Oh, we don't need a seconder. Any discussion? All in favour? Online? Any opposed online? Thank you. That motion is carried.

We will now go to the approval of the minutes. Next we have the draft minutes of the June 29, 2026, meeting. Are there any errors or omissions to note? If not, would a member like to move that the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future approve the minutes as distributed of its meeting held on June 29, 2026? Mr. Rowswell. Any discussion? All in favour in the room? Any opposed in the room? Online, all in favour? Any opposed? That motion is carried.

Next we move to item 4 on the agenda, which is the review of Bill 208, the Tobacco, Smoking and Vaping Reduction Amendment Act, 2026. Hon. members, at our June 29, 2026, meeting, when reviewing Bill 208, the committee adjourned debate on three motions that were moved by the committee members. These were reposted for members on the committee's internal website.

The practice in committee has been that motions which have been previously adjourned at a meeting are brought forward again as the first item of business at the next meeting. The first motion that was adjourned was brought forward by MLA van Dijken. I'll read the motion as follows. Moved by Mr. van Dijken that

in support of the committee's review of Bill 208, Tobacco, Smoking and Vaping Reduction Amendment Act, 2026, the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future invite officials from the Ministry of Primary and Preventative Health Services (a) to provide technical assistance as requested to the Legislative Assembly Office and (b) to attend meetings of the committee at the request of the chair to provide technical expertise to the committee.

Is there any discussion? Mr. Rowswell.

Mr. Rowswell: Yeah. You know, I think what I'd like to do is, if we could, focus on the Lobbyists Act and maybe defer it again. We support the motion, but we'd just like to get the Lobbyists Act out of the way and then move on to Bill 208 as soon as we can after that. Given that, I would make a motion relative to that if that's in order.

The Chair: It is, sir.

Mr. Rowswell: Okay. I move that

the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future adjourn debate on the motion until the committee has concluded its review of the Lobbyists Act.

The Chair: There's no debate on that, so are we all in favour of that motion? In the room, all in favour? Any opposed in the room? Any opposed online?

That motion is carried.

Next we have a motion that was also moved to this meeting, which was moved by Mr. Dach, that

in support of the committee's review of Bill 208, Tobacco, Smoking and Vaping Reduction Amendment Act, 2026, the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future direct the Legislative Assembly Office to prepare a crossjurisdictional analysis of similar, existing, or proposed legislation in select jurisdictions.

Is there any discussion on that? Go ahead, Mr. Dach.

Mr. Dach: Thank you very much for recognizing me, Mr. Chair. I wanted to speak to this motion before any motion to defer it happened on the floor. It appears as though it's the intention of the government members to just simply not move forward with 208, including these motions that have been adjourned, simply in the interest of dealing with another matter that we have on the agenda.

I think that we should be following the practice of this committee and committees in general in terms of dealing with the deferred motions as they come up at the next meeting, as we have on the agenda right now, rather than kicking them down the road. I think it's important that if a member brings forward a proposal such as Bill 208 for review to the committee, it's incumbent on the committee to treat it as respectfully as any other matter before it and deal with it in order of its appearance on the agenda. That includes dealing with motions such as mine that I made last meeting, that was deferred to this meeting, which I think we should be dealing with now rather than deferring once again to respect the members who brought forward Bill 208 and actually deal with the issue at hand.

This motion to further direct the Legislative Assembly Office to prepare a crossjurisdictional analysis is a standard request during the bill review process. It's not something that needs to be deferred. We simply should approve it, move on, and further the process of hearing more about Bill 208 on an important matter of health in this province.

I'm not sure if Mr. Haji wishes to add to that as well.

9:10

The Chair: Mr. Haji, do you have some quick comments?

Mr. Haji: Yeah. Thank you, Mr. Chair, for the opportunity. I think as a province we have the least restrictions when it comes to e-cigarette flavours, and unlike several other provinces that have implemented a partial or full comprehensive flavours ban, it is something that as a province we need to take action on.

Mr. Chair, among high school students vaping rates increased drastically. As a father it bothers me. Government documents show 19 per cent to 35 per cent since 2020. Bill 208 does not go far enough to address these issues, but it is important to point out that it is a step in the right direction. As the shadow minister for Primary and Preventative Health Services I believe this is something that we need to prioritize.

A 2024 survey found that 27 per cent of grade 12 students reported vaping, with even higher rates among children in rural Alberta, Mr. Chair. So this bill is addressing a real problem that families and parents are speaking to, and if . . .

The Chair: Mr. Haji, this motion is about the crossjurisdictional . . .

Mr. Haji: Yeah. I'm coming to the motion, Mr. Chair. I'm trying to show what happened since 2020 and the number of data that we have that showed really concerning numbers that are impacting our young population. In 2026 we don't have much information, and the motion is proposing that we need to get a well-informed crossjurisdictional scan, which could have been done quite early, and by this time we could have made a decision. We need to have that certain information. It is important that members of this committee are well informed on the

current state of flavoured vaping and its impact on junior high and high school children, particularly in rural Alberta comparatively with other rural populations in other jurisdictions.

I want the committee not to defer any motions that have been put forward which could have addressed issues that are impacted. I want to ask the committee to debate and discuss the motion that was brought forward by Member Dach.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Haji.

Is there any further discussion? Member Rowswell.

Mr. Rowswell: Yeah. I don't disagree with the merits of the motion. The one thing is that the Lobbyists Act has a one-year time frame over which we have to complete it, so that's the reason I'd like to focus on that and then get to 208 as soon as we can right after we get through the Lobbyists Act. That would be the logic of deferring.

To that end, I would like to make a motion, but if he can't debate it – I see Member Dach wants to say something. I would like to make a motion. I guess the fourth motion is debatable, so maybe we can save our comments until then if that would be okay.

The Chair: So you're moving?

Mr. Rowswell: I would like to make a motion if that's okay.

The Chair: You bet.

Mr. Rowswell: Okay. I'd like to move that

the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future adjourn debate on the motion until the committee has concluded its review of the Lobbyists Act.

as opposed to that motion up there.

The Chair: All in favour in the room and online? Any opposed in the room and online?

That motion is carried.

We will now move to the next motion on our agenda, which was also moved by Mr. Dach, that

the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future direct the Legislative Assembly Office to prepare a draft list of stakeholders in support of the committee's review of Bill 208, Tobacco, Smoking and Vaping Reduction Amendment Act, 2026, and distribute it to the committee members for their review.

Is there any discussion on this motion? Mr. Dach.

Mr. Dach: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, for recognizing me once again. The same argument applies to this motion. It appears as though the government simply wants to sweep this Bill 208 under the rug and let it die rather than put it forward on an important health matter especially affecting young people in the province. I know that it's important that we listen to as many people, as many voices far and wide. The preparation of a draft stakeholders list in support of the committee's review of the bill is a very, very standard procedure which we should be adopting, and we support this measure to prepare a draft list of stakeholders as we put forward in this motion because Bill 208 has validity and is very, very much worth while to bring forward now.

The argument that has been made by the government member Mr. Rowswell on the other side suggesting that there's a short time frame to deal with the Lobbyists Act doesn't hold water at all because one year is a lot of runway to deal with an act that's before the committee, which has plenty of time to deal with it in a very in-depth way. So it begs the question: what, in fact, is the government trying to do by not dealing with these motions and just simply adopting another measure, another motion to adjourn them, which is not debatable, to simply bury the bill? Apparently, they don't

seem to like their legislation. Maybe they think it was ill prepared. I mean, we certainly don't believe it goes far enough to protect the health of young people in particular, but to actually bury it and not deal with it is not the answer, in my view, Mr. Chair.

It's something that we should be going forward with as a committee and adopting these standard measures such as having a standard practice of bill review. Preparing a draft list of stakeholders is pretty rudimentary. You know, if indeed it is the government's intention to once again adjourn debate on this motion and now, as we've seen before the House and before this committee, not allow any further debate or discussion on Bill 208, I think it raises more questions than answers. One wonders why the government is not interested in promoting its own member's bill.

I'll leave it to Mr. Haji if he has any further comment about it.

The Chair: Mr. Haji.

Mr. Haji: Yeah. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think it's important that we point out that what is in conversation is junior high school children and vaping. What is in conversation are the implications that this will have on their health in the future. What is in conversation are the consequences that the inaction would lead to. The prior government did an environmental scan, developed the reports, and pointed out recommendations. This government didn't do any actions or steps to address the problem, but the impressive news is that we had a bill that was making an attempt to address this.

I think it looks like, given that the bill has been referred to a committee for consideration, Mr. Chair, this committee's responsibility is to debate the bill and provide the next steps. This is the second meeting that we're not debating on motions that were brought forward to the committee, and this is a second opportunity that we are deprioritizing children vaping. As a Member of the Legislative Assembly it puts me in an awkward situation when parents come to me and ask me what to do about vaping – 10 junior high schools in my riding and three high schools in my riding – and what actions we are taking as members, as their respective representatives.

9:20

It is quite interesting that members who were elected from rural Alberta, where data particularly shows that the numbers are high among young populations in rural Alberta – I would have expected that those members are the ones that would be screaming and saying that we need to debate those bills.

I do believe that we need to discuss these motions. Mr. Chair, we can ask for the support that is needed. We can do the environmental scans but at the same time also debate the other responsibilities and tasks that the committee has. Therefore, I strongly, strongly remind members of the committee that this is the only private member's bill that has been referred to this committee to debate and give considerations and provide the next steps on, but not having those done for months and months is quite disappointing. Therefore, I will support Member Dach's motion that this needs to be debated and serious consideration be given.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Haji.

Any further discussion? Mr. Rowswell.

Mr. Rowswell: Yeah. Again, it's the one-year time frame. We actually support Bill 208. We'd like to support it at the time. We'd just like to get the Lobbyists Act review finished, and then we can move on to Bill 208. We're not arguing the merits of the bill at this point. It's just that we want to put priority on the one that has a deadline and then get back to the one that doesn't have a deadline after that.

Given that, I'd like to propose a motion.

The Chair: Yes, you may.

Mr. Rowswell: I move that

the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future adjourn debate on the motion until the committee has concluded its review of the Lobbyists Act.

The Chair: Having heard the motion, all in favour in the room and online? Any opposed in the room and online?

That motion is carried.

Hon. members, the committee has made decisions regarding those three motions. I will now open the floor to a broader discussion on how the committee would like to proceed with the review of Bill 208. Go ahead, Mr. Rowswell.

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

the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future defer further consideration of Bill 208, Tobacco, Smoking and Vaping Reduction Amendment Act, 2026, until the committee has concluded its review of the Lobbyists Act.

The Chair: Thank you.

This is a debatable motion. Is there any discussion? Go ahead, Mr. Haji.

Mr. Haji: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Again, the government data shows that Alberta's youth vaping rate, once below the national average, is now above the national average, and this is data that we've had since 2020, but we don't know what happened after that.

Mr. Chair, as you know, technology, AI, communication in all aspects is changing in a speedy manner, and this will mean that youth vaping is reaching an alarming level, and one of the reasons is the misconception that it is a safer alternative to smoking. That, combined with the attractive flavours and the widespread online marketing, is creating a situation that, if we don't take action as quickly as yesterday, could have an impact that has farther consequences than we can imagine. Given the scale of this crisis, the continued delays on the motions that are brought to this committee are quite concerning.

Stronger action is needed, Mr. Chair. Alberta is behind other jurisdictions in restricting flavoured vaping products. We need enforcing of robust age verification requirements. We need limiting nicotine concentrations, Mr. Chair, and curbing of digital advertisements. These are some of the things that can easily be debated, addressed through the motions that we have in front of us and in general the bill that we have.

I agree with the member that in principle we are in agreement on Bill 208, but it does nothing if we are not taking actions. We can agree on principle things, but if we are not taking necessary actions, we are not prioritizing it. And if we are not prioritizing it, it means that the consequences that it comes with, the ones that we have watched happening in front of us – for example, I have quite a number of schools in my riding, Mr. Chair, and schools need greater support for prevention, cessation programs that help young people avoid or overcome their nicotine addiction.

The government launched tobacco and vaping reduction in 2022 and renewed in 2024, but there were no dedicated resources put forward. Again, this is the same thing, that we could agree in principle. If we are not putting the resources needed, if we are not taking the necessary actions, then, Mr. Chair, I doubt what effect that will be making on curbing the increasing vaping addiction, especially among junior high students as well as high school students. Public health advocates note that the annual funding has fallen significantly to address these problems, and this raises a serious concern about the government's commitment to reducing this youth nicotine addiction through flavoured vaping.

Bill 208 should have been debated, as I said before, in the House, and the motions that were brought forward to the committee should all have been debated. But in the absence of that, if we don't deal with this as a priority as it should be given, Mr. Chair, that we are representatives, we as members of this committee would have lost a big opportunity. Time doesn't wait for us. I do agree that there are other priorities that the committee has, but we could do all of them at the same time. It's not that one is holding the other, and it's not that one is prerequisite of the other.

Based on that, I support the motion that is in front of us, and I thank you for the opportunity, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you.

If there's no further discussion – go ahead, Mr. Dach.

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'll just briefly make some remarks about Bill 208 and the apparent willingness or desire of the government not to pursue debate on it and to deprioritize the motion. What we're basically talking about is nicotine addiction. It says in the title of the bill, Bill 208, Tobacco, Smoking and Vaping Reduction Amendment Act, and it does so, I believe, because we see the possibility of nicotine addiction going up. Over the last 25 years tobacco consumption, including cigarettes and other smoking materials, has gone down quite a bit, and what has happened in the past is that tobacco companies have targeted, particularly, young people and had some very, very large advertising budgets committed to maintaining a percentage, a high percentage, of people in our society using those products, smoking in particular.

In a reaction to this tobacco consumption going down, of course, now what we see are these vaping products and flavoured vaping products, and guess who owns these companies that own, that control these vaping products, Mr. Chair. It's tobacco companies. And what they're trying to do is addict as many of our young people as possible to become lifelong nicotine addicts with their vaping products. That's what this bill is meant to address, to protect a whole other generation of our young people becoming lifelong addicts to nicotine and all the health costs that that entails over their lifespan and perhaps the generations to come if indeed we don't address and continue to decrease tobacco consumption, including the use of vaping products, which encourage tobacco use and nicotine addiction.

So it was really, I think, a dreadful consequence to our health in this province and the health of young people that this bill is being delayed and consideration is not being prioritized in the moment. I hope the government knows that there's a cost that's being paid by young Albertans, in their addictions and their health, and through the health care system.

9:30

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Dach.

If there's no further discussion, I will call for the vote. We'll do a voice vote here first. All those in favour in the room and online, please say yes or aye. Those opposed in the room and online?

That motion is carried.

Mr. Dach: I have to ask for a recorded vote.

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

Mr. Roth: Mr. Rowswell.

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

Mr. Roth: Mr. Dach, Member Haji.

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

Mr. Roth: Mr. Bouchard.

Mr. Bouchard: In favour.

Mr. Roth: Member Hoyle.

Member Hoyle: Opposed.

Mr. Roth: Member Boparai.

Member Boparai: Opposed.

Mr. Roth: Ms Pitt.

Ms Pitt: In favour.

Mr. Roth: Mr. Cyr.

Mr. Cyr: In favour.

The Chair: Mr. Stephan, can you put your camera on?

Mr. Stephan: In favour.

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

The Chair:

That motion is carried.

We will now move to item 5 on the agenda. Hon. members, at our May 27, 2026, meeting the committee directed the Legislative Assembly Office to prepare a crossjurisdictional review in relation to the Lobbyists Act. The crossjurisdictional document was provided to the committee members for their review on September 22, 2026. At this time I would like to call on Mr. Abdul Bhurgri with the Legislative Assembly Office service to provide an overview of the document.

Mr. Bhurgri, go ahead.

Mr. Bhurgri: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I'm happy to give a brief presentation on the crossjurisdictional that was prepared by research services. Research services looked at 12 jurisdictions in Canada that have lobbyist legislation. I'm just going to read them out for the record. These are British Columbia, Yukon, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland and Labrador, and the Canadian federal jurisdiction.

In the crossjurisdictional document, if you look at pages 1 and 2, that lists all the jurisdictions that have a lobbyist act as well as the regulation. Since the lobbyist legislation was last reviewed in Alberta in 2021, we also looked at when each jurisdiction last amended their lobbyist act in Canada. On page 2 in the crossjurisdictional document you would see we have a table that lists all the legislations that were last reviewed. We have a column that explains the last time it was specifically amended as well as a column explaining what the specific amendment was related to.

There are a couple of things here that I think I'll note for the committee. One is that New Brunswick recently amended its lobbyist legislation. They did it only a couple of months ago, and they made certain substantial changes to their lobbyists act. Those changes, again, are listed within the crossjurisdictional document that we have. The

other jurisdiction that is of significance or might be of interest to the committee is Yukon because Yukon has not amended their jurisdiction to date. They first came up with it in 2012, I believe, but they have not amended it since.

These are sort of some of the main highlights of the cross-jurisdictional document. Now, before I talk about the structure of the document specifically and the way we have divided it, I'll just briefly reiterate or clarify the purpose of the crossjurisdictional document for the committee in these kinds of statute reviews. The crossjurisdictional document is a document that can be really useful for members when there's an issue that they're interested in and members want to have a look at how other jurisdictions are dealing with that issue. Especially during deliberation, I think, this document can be really useful for that purpose, to see if other jurisdictions are similarly dealing with that issue or if they have a different approach that they've taken to that particular issue.

Now that I've talked about that, I'll just again very quickly talk about the structure of the document and the way we have divided it. On page 4 there's a heading that we have about the structure of the document. We've divided the document into sort of nine separate issues. I won't go into too much detail about the content of the document itself or the specific issues, but I will give the committee a high-level overview of each of the issues.

If you look at the first sort of section that we have divided by, it's called the Definitions of Lobbying and Public Office Holder. What this section does is it looks at: what is lobbying? How is lobbying defined? Each jurisdiction sort of has a different way of defining it. There are some similarities in terms of this. One definition that I would say more or less applies to most jurisdictions is that there has to be a communication with a public office holder with the intent to influence. That's kind of the main general definition that I think you'd find in most jurisdictions. Then, specifically, there's also a section on what is not lobbying as well as explaining how each jurisdiction defines public office holders. There are lots of similarities. Government members, MLAs, may be involved and some jurisdiction staff. Again, we have a list. On page 10 we have a table that sort of talks about all of those differences.

The second section that we have is the requirement to register section. This talks about: who is a lobbyist? How does each jurisdiction sort of define their lobbyists? The threshold for lobbying: most jurisdictions have two kinds of lobbyists. They have an in-house lobbyist as well as a consultant lobbyist. On page 16 we have a table that lays out sort of the differences within each jurisdiction.

Then we have a third section that talks about the filing requirements. Each jurisdiction may have different filing requirements in terms of the content of the document. Some may require more sort of sharing, some may require less, but, again, the one common theme that we at research services found is that most of the time you'll have the lobbyist himself listed. If it's a consultant lobbyist then you'll list the client, the subject matter on which lobbying is being done. So there are some basic requirements that are more or less the same in all jurisdictions.

We also have a section on fees. In certain jurisdictions there are fees, in other jurisdictions there are no fees for lobbyists to file. We have listed that, again, on page 43.

We have a lot of tables in the document, and the reason for that is because jurisdictions can have very prescriptive requirements and the differences can kind of be minute, so this was the best way that we felt we could communicate that. Again, the page number for that is 43.

Moving on to the fifth section, we have the lobbyist code of conduct section. There are only a few jurisdictions in Canada that have a code of conduct. I'm just going to list them out. They are Quebec, Newfoundland and Labrador, and the federal sort of jurisdiction also has a lobbyists code of conduct. Other jurisdictions

at this point in time don't. New Brunswick, I do believe, in their recent amendment has sort of amended that and changed that. However, the legislation in New Brunswick is not yet proclaimed. The new amendment is not yet enforced, so it's only the current law that's applying.

Then we have a section on restrictions on lobbying. There are sort of five main restrictions that we have listed within this. This includes lobbying while providing paid advice to the government, lobbying in return for payment from certain public funds. Again, this is on page 45. There are five main restrictions that we have compared, so all of them you'll find in that list.

Then the seventh section that we have is about offences and penalties. This section talks about how different jurisdictions deal with any time a lobbyist does not, let's say, file when the lobbyist is supposed to file and how each jurisdiction deals with that. Offences are common in all 12 jurisdictions in Canada.

9:40

There are some jurisdictions that also have what are called administrative penalties. These are kind of a light version. Before you're charged with an offence, an administrative penalty plays a lighter role. I believe there are only a few jurisdictions that have this; British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan sort of being the prominent ones.

Then we have section 8, which is on powers and investigations of the commissioner or the registrar. We have listed both because in some jurisdictions it's the lobbyist registrar and in others it's the commissioner, so we've used both terms for clarity here. The one common thing that we found in all jurisdictions is that most jurisdictions have allowed the commissioner or the registrar to issue advisory opinions and interpretation bulletins to sort of further clarify the act. Again, there are some differences and similarities within them. For more detail, please look at section 61. We have, again, some nice tables laid out that specifically explain the differences between each of the jurisdictions.

The last section that we have is reviews of the statutes. In this section we just wanted to highlight which jurisdictions require the lobbyist act to be reviewed every five years, and what we found is that there are only three jurisdictions in Canada that require that. That's British Columbia, Alberta, and the federal jurisdiction.

These are sort of the main parts in which we have divided the crossjurisdictional document itself. I do believe that is it for my part, but if there are any questions that the committee may have about the document, I'm happy to answer.

The Chair: Well, thank you, Mr. Bhurgr.

Are there any questions or comments from the committee members in relation to the crossjurisdictional review? Mr. Dach.

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Chair, for recognizing me. I did have one question that occurred to me during the presentation when the gentleman presenting was listing those jurisdictions which do have a lobbyist act. It occurred to me, as I was trying to subtract those that do from the remaining provinces, that it might be easier to have him tell us a list of jurisdictions which do not have a lobbyist act. It may be a bit of a shorter list to comprehend, I would think.

The Chair: Go ahead.

Mr. Bhurgr: Thank you, Mr. Chair, for recognizing me. Yeah. That's a fair suggestion, Member. It is a long list because most jurisdictions in Canada do have it. In our list I think the only jurisdictions that really don't have a lobbyist act are, I believe, Nunavut and Northwest Territories. I think everybody else outside of that does have lobbyist legislation. If you look at pages 1 and 2,

we have listed all of those jurisdictions. You can find the individual legislation as well as any regulation that's connected. The table is a good reference point. I'd suggest members consult that.

Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Rowswell.

Mr. Rowswell: Yeah. I guess a couple of things. One is on the review. You said that it was B.C., Alberta, and then the federal government. Are you saying, then, that no one else has a structured one other than that they call for a review? Is that how that works?

Mr. Bhurgri: Yeah. Thank you for that question, Member, through the chair. Yes. These are the three jurisdictions that we found that generally, I would say, have a specific requirement to do a five-year review. Other jurisdictions sort of may review their statutes, but there's no specific provision that requires them to do it every five years. That is unique to these three jurisdictions, where a review is mandatory.

Mr. Rowswell: The next question. Some of the written submissions had 50 hours in order to be registered. Can you explain how we compare relative to other jurisdictions on that requirement?

Mr. Bhurgri: Sure, Member. We actually do have a list, and I'm just going to consult that myself as I answer this question. It's on page 21 if members want to have a look at it. Alberta currently has a threshold of 50 hours. That's when you have to register. I'm just going to list some of the other jurisdictions. For instance, British Columbia also has 50 hours, so that's similar. Yukon has a 20-hour threshold. Ontario also has a 50-hour threshold. Saskatchewan has a 30-hour threshold, and then there are some other jurisdictions that don't necessarily define it.

What the legislation does is that it says that, well, if a lobbyist has spent a significant part of their duties lobbying, then they must register. I think for that some of the lobbyist registrars or the commissioners have provided interpretation. For instance, in Manitoba they calculated that to be 100 hours. In some others they have defined it by days. So it's a really good question. We have a table that explains the specific differences. I'll just again for reference list out those page numbers. That's pages 21 to 23 of the crossjurisdictional document.

Mr. Rowswell: Thank you.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Haji.

Mr. Haji: Yeah. Well, thanks, Abdul. Under the restrictions in terms of the cooling-off periods of different jurisdictions, can you take us through that? What are the barriers? How does Alberta stand as far as the equalling of barriers with the rest of the country?

Mr. Bhurgri: Sure. Thank you very much again, Member, for that question. I'm just going to take a moment to consult our document because it is a long document. I don't remember all of that information. But we do have, again, a table that might sort of provide some information. I believe that table is listed on page 49.

In terms of prohibitions I believe British Columbia's prohibition is about two years. Yukon is six months. Then some other jurisdictions are close to one year. I believe Saskatchewan falls within that. Quebec is again two years. Prince Edward Island has a cooling-off period of about six months. Newfoundland and Labrador is again a year. I believe the federal jurisdiction is five years, if I'm not wrong. So that I think is the mean cooling-off period. But, yeah, the table that we have kind of lists the specific requirements and the differences.

Mr. Haji: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Any further discussion?

If not, I'd like to thank Mr. Bhurgri for your presentation on this.

We'll now move to the written submission part. Hon. members, at our June 29, 2026, meeting the committee invited written submissions from identified stakeholders and members of the public in relation to our review of the Lobbyists Act. The deadline for written submissions was August 17, 2026. The committee received 23 written submissions in total. The Legislative Assembly research provided the committee with a summary of the written submissions received.

I would now like to invite Mr. Bhurgri to provide an overview of that summary. Mr. Bhurgri.

Mr. Bhurgri: Thank you very much, Chair, for recognizing me. In this part of the presentation I'm going to highlight and talk about the submissions that the committee received as well as the submission summary document that was prepared by research services.

For the first part, talking about the submissions, the committee received a total of 23 submissions in this round. There were 15 submissions from nonprofit and business associations, chambers of commerce, societies, foundations, and advisory groups. There were two from prescribed provincial entities. There were two submissions from private corporations, one from the lobbyist registrar, one from Alberta Municipalities, and one from a constituency office as well as a private citizen.

Most of the submissions that we received were substantive in nature, were specifically either making specific recommendations about the act itself or sort of raising certain concerns. There was one submission that made several recommendations, some that were not about the Lobbyists Act, so those are not in our submission summary. You will only find the recommendations that are specifically about the Lobbyists Act in that.

I'd also like to highlight some submitters that specifically shared a willingness to give a presentation to the committee. I'm just going to list these submitters. They are the lobbyist registrar, the Southeast Alberta Chamber of Commerce, and the Nonprofit Chamber. There were also some submitters that indicated a willingness to provide more information if the committee so requested, and I'm now just going to name some of them. These are the Alberta Motor Transport Association, the Southeast Alberta Chamber of Commerce, the YMCAs of Alberta, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, the Alberta Medical Association, the Public Health Appeal Board, the Edmonton Chamber of Voluntary Organizations, the Public Affairs Association of Canada, and the National Association of Federal Retirees. I believe I've covered all of them in here.

Now talking about the submission summary document that was prepared by research services. What we did in this document is really look at what specifically each of the submitters were talking about and sort of took their submissions and divided them into issues. What we have done is we've divided them into specific categories and issues. If you look, we have a section that's called Overview of Issues Raised. We have three main sections, and I'll briefly highlight them, but that part of the document is a good summary of the main issues that submitters were either making a recommendation about or there were certain concerns that we're sharing that related to those specific issues.

9:50

Now I'm just going to provide the committee with sort of a brief summary of the specific sections that we have. The first section that we have is about the scope of the act. This section has all of the issues that relate to the scope. There were certain submitters that

made, for instance, recommendations about the definition of the term. Some submitters wanted certain definitions to be enhanced, changed. So if they're related to the scope of the act, we kind of put them in here.

Then you'll see we have a few other subcategories within this section that relate to some of the bodies that the act applies to. For instance, there are some bodies, municipalities, who the act does not apply to. There were some recommendations about continuing that exemption. There were some recommendations – I'd say quite a fair bit – about nonprofits because currently nonprofits are exempt. There were some submitters suggesting nonprofits should continue to be exempt while others suggested that nonprofits should not be exempt from the application of the act.

Then the second section is about transparency. This is a section where submitters were concerned about transparency as it exists in the act. Some submitters suggested sort of increasing the transparency. I think some of this – in the crossjurisdictional I referred to the threshold. Some submitters kind of wanted some of the thresholds to be gone or lowered. For some submitters maybe the thresholds are sufficient, so their request is to continue the act as is. So all the information sort of about that or those submissions that refer to that you'll find in your second section, which is on page 10.

The third and final section that we have is about administration and functionality of the act. These are submissions that really relate to submitters suggesting how the act could administratively be made better. Not all of those recommendations are about, like, changing the act. Some of them may be about improving the way the act is sort of currently, some of the requirements that the act has even outside, suggesting that the lobbyist commission, for instance, should provide more information, et cetera. So all of those are sort of in that section, which is on page 13.

Then the final section has a list of all the written submissions. If there are any submissions that members find particularly interesting as they go through our submission summary document, we always have at the end of the paragraph the submitter listed as well as their submission number, and all of the submissions are posted on the internal committee site. If members find a submission interesting, we highly recommend that you consult the original submissions. Since we are only summarizing, we can't always be that exhaustive, so the submitters are sort of the best source to look at.

I think that's it for my part for this, but if there are any questions about the submission summary document, I'm happy to answer. Thank you.

The Chair: Well, thank you, Mr. Bhurgri. Thank you for your summary.

Do any of the committee members have any questions with regard to the summary? Mr. Rowswell.

Mr. Rowswell: I'm just wondering. I don't know; maybe it's hard to calculate. What percentage of submissions supported the current system?

Mr. Bhurgri: Yeah. That's a difficult question to answer off the top of my head, Mr. Rowswell. I'd say that we received both kinds of submissions. I think we received quite a few submissions that wanted the act as it is, and I think it might be fair to say that there were quite a lot of them, although I wouldn't strictly give a percentage. But I would say that we received quite a few submissions that wanted the act to stay as it is, especially when it comes to exemptions and sort of continuing those exemptions.

Mr. Rowswell: And what were the top three issues, do you think, that people raised?

Mr. Bhurgri: That's also a really good question, Mr. Rowswell. Nonprofits I think is one theme that stood out the most for us. I think currently there were some, like I said, that wanted the exemption to continue. Others did not want that exemption to continue. I believe another sort of theme that came across was thresholds as well. I think that's another. Some submitters generally want thresholds to increase. Some want them lowered and even requirements. Administrative burden is sort of another one. If you notice, our third section has quite a few pages, and that's because a lot of people were concerned about the specific administrative burden that currently exists. Now, that may or may not be connected to the act in the sense that some of the administration is directly with the lobbyist registrar, but I think people made certain recommendations about it regardless. I'd say that these are a few main issues that I think regularly kind of came up with regard to the submissions.

Mr. Rowswell: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Rowswell.
Mr. Dach.

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I did have a question that occurred to me when the gentleman just spoke about administrative burden. Of course, that administrative burden would fall more heavily – and it could be interpreted as actual cost – upon the nonprofit organizations. I think that in looking at some of the submissions, that is one of their concerns, that they lack the capacity to shoulder additional administrative burdens that may be thrust upon them by changes to the Lobbyists Act. Is that a general argument that you found was being made by the nonprofits who were concerned about being able to have enough capacity to deal with the changes?

Mr. Bhurgri: Through the chair, yes, Member. I think that's a fair assessment. This is what we noticed as we were going through a lot of the submissions as well. I think especially with regard to nonprofits this was the biggest concern, that the capacity that exists within nonprofits is just simply not enough.

Just to give you a highlight of some of the other concerns. For instance, I think there were some that felt like maybe more guidance could be provided on: if they're talking to a public office holder, when is it not lobbying? They felt like this was a bit of an administrative burden as well because it's not always clear for them to assess that. Some of the submitters wanted sort of more guidance on: if they're talking to, let's say, the government or members of the government, when is it strictly lobbying and when is it not? They felt like this was an administrative burden because it was hard for them sometimes and they needed more resources to be able to determine that question.

With regard to nonprofit, the short answer is yes, that assessment is correct. That's what we noticed as well.

The Chair: Well, if there are no further questions on the summary, I would now like to open the floor to a discussion on whether or not the committee wishes to make the written submissions it received in relation to the review of the Lobbyists Act public. The ordinary practice when making written submissions public is to redact the personal contact information of the submitter, identifiable information about third parties, and any profane language before posting them. I would remind the committee members that those who made written submissions to the committee as part of this review were advised that their submission, name, and municipality may be made public by this committee.

At this time I would like to open the floor to discussion on whether the committee would like to proceed in relation to making the written submissions public. Go ahead, Mr. Rowswell.

Mr. Rowswell: I'd like to make a motion. I'd like to move that the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future direct the Legislative Assembly Office to make all written submissions accepted as part of its review of the Lobbyists Act publicly available on the Assembly website except for portions of submissions that contain any of the following: (a) personal contact information other than the name and municipality of the submitter, (b) personal information about the identifiable third party, and (c) profane or obscene language.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Rowswell.

Is there any discussion?

Seeing none, I would like to call the question. All those in favour in the room, please say aye. All those in favour online, please say aye. Any opposed in the room and online?

That motion is carried.

Hon. members, a common element of the comprehensive statutes review is to invite oral presentations so that the committee members have an opportunity to seek additional information from those who made written submissions and to invite others the committee may wish to hear a presentation from in relation to the subject matter under discussion.

I would like to open the floor for discussion on if and how the committee would like to proceed with oral presentations in relation to the review of the Lobbyists Act. Go ahead, Mr. Rowswell.

Mr. Rowswell: I'd like to make a motion. I'd like to move that the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future invite as part of the committee's review of the Lobbyists Act the following to make an oral presentation at the upcoming committee meeting: (a) the lobbyist registrar; (b) up to two individuals or organizations identified by a member of the government caucus to the chair no later than 12 p.m. on Friday, October 9; and (c) up to two individuals or organizations identified by a member of the Official Opposition caucus to the chair no later than 12 p.m. on Friday, October 9.

10:00

The Chair: Okay. Mr. Rowswell, can you verify that the motion on the screen is as you intended?

Mr. Rowswell: Yes, that's right.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Rowswell.

Any discussion? Mr. Dach.

Mr. Dach: I'd propose an amendment to the motion if I may.

The Chair: That's allowed, for sure.

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Chair. What I would like to do is to amend motion 7 by moving an amendment that

strikes out the word "two" in clauses (b) and (c) and substitutes "three."

That just gives a bit more leeway for each of the government and opposition sides to add an additional individual to the people who will make oral presentations. I think it's a reasonable request to have three for each side and get those three stakeholders for each of the government and opposition sides to come forward to speak to the committee.

We want to hear from, you know, more than just five stakeholders. There are a lot of high-quality submissions, and we'd like to make some choices. I think that both sides can choose who they wish to come out of the three that we're proposing be allowed for each side.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Dach.

Is there any discussion on the amendment?

Are we all in favour of the amendment to the motion in the room? Online? Any opposed online and in the room?

The amendment is carried.

Now we're going back to the motion as amended. Is there any other discussion before we go to the vote?

Mr. Rowswell: Are we changing that up there to "three"?

Mr. Roth: I can. It's just . . .

Mr. Rowswell: Okay. Fair enough. As long as we . . .

Ms Robert: Read "three" where you saw "two."

Mr. Rowswell: Okay. Fair enough.

The Chair: Seeing no further discussion, I'd like to ask those in the room and online: if you are in favour, say aye. Any opposed to the motion online and in the room? Seeing none.

That motion is carried as amended.

Are there any other questions or comments that members have in relation to the review of our Lobbyists Act?

Seeing none, are there any other items for discussion at today's meeting?

Seeing none, the date of the next meeting will be at the call of the chair.

I will now call for a motion to adjourn.

Mr. Rowswell: I adjourn.

The Chair: All in favour of adjournment? Online? Thank you. Any opposed? That motion is carried. Thank you, everyone. This meeting is adjourned.

[The committee adjourned at 10:04 a.m.]

