



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

The 30th Legislature
Second Session

Select Special Committee
to
Examine Safe Supply

Tuesday, January 18, 2022
9 a.m.

Transcript No. 30-2-1

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Select Special Committee to Examine Safe Supply

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Sigurdson, Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (NDP)
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Tuesday, January 18, 2022

[Mr. Jeremy Nixon in the chair]

The Chair: Good morning, everyone. We've got quorum, I think, so I'd like to call the meeting to order and welcome all members and staff in attendance to this meeting of the Select Special Committee to Examine Safe Supply.

My name is Jeremy Nixon. I am the MLA for Calgary-Klein and the chair of this committee. I'd like to ask members and those joining the committee at the table to introduce themselves for the record, starting to my right with the deputy chair.

Mrs. Allard: Good morning. Tracy Allard, MLA for Grande Prairie.

Mr. Stephan: Hello. MLA Jason Stephan for Red Deer-South.

Mr. Yao: Tany Yao, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

Mr. Turton: Morning, everyone. Searle Turton, MLA for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain.

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

Ms Sigurdson: Lori Sigurdson, MLA for Edmonton-Riverview. I think I need my little sign.

Mr. Shepherd: Morning. David Shepherd, MLA, Edmonton-City Centre.

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

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

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

The Chair: Perfect. I also wanted to throw out a special thank you to anybody who had to travel from a distance, especially if it was last night, for being here today. You certainly showed your commitment there.

I would like to note for the record the following substitutions: Mr. Turton for Mr. Amery.

Hon. members, section 6 of the Legislative Assembly Act authorizes members of the committees of the Legislative Assembly to participate by teleconference or other methods of communication if unanimous consent is granted. As members are aware, the committee rooms are equipped to facilitate meeting participation by teleconference and videoconference. For members to participate in this meeting using one of these methods, the committee either must pass a motion unanimously to allow teleconferencing and videoconference today, or members may instead pass a motion to approve attendance by teleconference or videoconference for the duration of the committee's mandate. This would not preclude the committee from determining that members' attendance in person at specific committee meetings is required in the future. Do members have any questions about this issue?

Hearing none, would there be a member willing to move a motion to authorize participation by teleconference or videoconference? Mr. Shepherd.

Mr. Shepherd: Yes, Mr. Chair. I would so move.

The Chair: Perfect. I'm guessing that the motion sounds like this, on notice, Mr. Shepherd, that

for the duration of the mandate of the Select Special Committee to Examine Safe Supply pursuant to section 6 of the Legislative Assembly Act committee members and invited guests be permitted to participate by teleconference or videoconference subject to the provisions that the committee may require members' attendance in person at a particular meeting upon a passage at a previous meeting of a motion to that effect.

Sound right?

Mr. Shepherd: That reflects my intention, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Perfect. Excellent.

All in favour? Excellent. Any opposed? Hearing none. Thank you.

The motion is carried unanimously.

I would now like to invite those members who are joining us via Microsoft Teams to now introduce themselves.

Ms Ganley: Good morning. Kathleen Ganley, Calgary-Mountain View.

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

Mr. Milliken: Hi, everyone. Nicholas Milliken, MLA, Calgary-Currie.

The Chair: Perfect. Is there anybody else joining us online?

Ms Sorensen: Hi. Rhonda Sorensen, manager of corporate communications.

The Chair: Excellent. Thank you, Rhonda.

Perfect. A few housekeeping items to address before we turn to the business – oh, sorry. We have a new member just joining in.

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

The Chair: Perfect. A few housekeeping items that need to be addressed before we turn to the business at hand. A note for members that masks should be worn in the committee room except when you are speaking, and members are also encouraged to leave an appropriate amount of physical distance around the table.

Please note that 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 meetings can be accessed via the Legislative Assembly website.

Those participating by videoconference are asked to please turn on your camera while speaking and mute your microphone when you're not speaking. Members participating virtually who wish to be placed on the speakers list are asked to e-mail or send 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 the meeting.

Excellent. We are now at item 3, approval of the agenda. A draft motion has been prepared for this, but would anybody like to put a motion forward to approve the agenda? Perfect.

Mrs. Allard: So moved.

The Chair: MLA Allard, that the agenda for the January 18, 2022, meeting of the Select Special Committee to Examine Safe Supply be adopted as distributed, not revised. All in favour?

Sorry. Before I do that, any questions?

Ms Sigurdson: I have a question.

The Chair: Yes.

Ms Sigurdson: I'm just wondering if this is the appropriate time to bring forward the motion about the silent reflection that was put forward earlier.

The Chair: We have it a little bit later in the agenda.

Ms Sigurdson: Okay. So later on?

The Chair: Yeah.

Ms Sigurdson: Do you know when exactly?

The Chair: It's under other decision items – right? – 5(c).

Ms Sigurdson: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: Yeah.

Perfect. That said, any other questions about the agenda?

Hearing none, all in favour? Any opposed? Online, all in favour? Any opposed? Hearing no opposition, that motion is carried. Perfect.

All right. Now agenda item 4, committee orientation, mandate and scope of committee examination. Hon. members, on December 7, 2021, the Legislative Assembly passed Government Motion 115, which established this committee. The mandate of this committee is limited to five very specific matters of review: to

- (a) examine the concept of safe supply, defined as the provision of pharmaceutical opioids, heroin, crystal methamphetamine, cocaine, or other substances to people who are addicted to or dependent on these substances;
- (b) whether there is evidence that a proposed safe supply would have an impact on fatal or nonfatal overdose, drug diversion, or associated health and community impacts;
- (c) whether there is evidence that a proposed safe supply would be accompanied by increased risks to individuals, the community, other entities or jurisdictions;
- (d) examine historical evidence regarding the overprescribing of opioids; and
- (e) whether there is evidence that a proposed safe supply would be accompanied by any other benefits or consequences.

It is important to remind all members as well as those who may be observing these proceedings that the committee is not authorized to expand its scope beyond these five matters. Government Motion 115 very specifically mandated that the committee must submit a report to the Legislative Assembly on its review of these matters no later than April 30, 2022, which gives us a very short window of three and a half months to be able to do this work.

Hon. members, I would conclude my remarks on the committee's mandate by reminding members and those observing the proceedings that pursuant to Standing Order 52.041 a memorandum was posted to the committee's internal website advising the committee that notice of motions and amendments are required prior to all meetings that will be called as part of this review. I would encourage members and their staff to review this memorandum, particularly part C, which speaks to the types of motions that are not required to be put on notice. Of course, the committee clerk is always available to answer questions that members or staff may have.

I also wanted to mention that proceedings of this committee cannot continue while main estimates are taking place, so that further narrows our timeline, of course, to accomplish the duties of this committee. We will make sure we figure that out as a team.

All right. Section (b), review of Legislative Assembly Office committee support. Members, included in the terms of reference for the committee contained in Government Motion 115: the committee may call upon resources of the Legislative Assembly to support this committee in its work. Such services include Parliamentary Counsel, research services, and corporate communications. At this time I would like to call upon Ms Nancy Robert, clerk of *Journals* and committees, to provide the committee with an overview of various services that are available to the committee as we begin our work. Ms Robert.

9:10

Ms Robert: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Once again, good morning, everyone. We're pretty far into the Legislature, so I think most members are fairly familiar with the different services that the Legislative Assembly Office is able to provide to support the committee during its review, but I'll just quickly go over what those services entail. Communications services is available to provide the committee with a communications plan should the committee decide it needs or wants to engage with the public during its review. Research services is available to provide a variety of briefings and research to support the committee, including, if the committee was interested, a draft stakeholder list. They can summarize any submissions the committee might receive; they can conduct cross-jurisdictional research; when the committee is getting ready to do its deliberations, they can put together a summary of issues and recommendations that the committee has heard to help it with its deliberations; and, of course, research services can and will draft the committee's final report for the committee's review. The office of Parliamentary Counsel is available to support the committee, primarily through the committee chair, with drafting advice and assistance.

The committee clerk, Parliamentary Counsel, and myself are available throughout the duration of the committee to provide any procedural advice that the committee might need. Ms Sorensen, Mr. Koenig, and I are all in attendance today, and if you have any specific questions for any of us, we'd be happy to try to address them.

Thank you.

The Chair: Perfect. Thank you, Ms Robert.

I do believe Member Irwin has a question.

Member Irwin: Yes. Thank you, Chair, and thank you, Nancy, as well. I'm just curious. You mentioned a little bit about research services' capacity. Could you expand a little bit on, I guess, your research capacity? Would you have the ability to do a cross-jurisdictional analysis on this issue? I know there's a whole body of research out there.

If so, Chair, when would be the appropriate time perhaps to move a motion about conducting said research?

The Chair: I do believe we have that up under 5(c), Member Irwin. Ms Robert.

Ms Robert: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you, MLA Irwin. Yes, research services has the capacity to do cross-jurisdictional research. Of course, when the time comes to discuss that specific item, perhaps we can have a bit of a discussion on exactly what it is you're looking for and that will sort of – I'll have a better idea of what kind of time frame we'd be looking at. Of course, we're in a short time frame. Depending on what it is the committee is looking for, perhaps we could address it at that time when we get to that item. Would that work?

Member Irwin: Okay. Yes. I appreciate that. Thank you.

The Chair: Perfect. Any other questions for Ms Robert on that topic?

Hearing and seeing none, we will move on to section 5, committee decision items, section 5(a), inviting technical briefings. Hon. members, we know it's common practice to begin reviews and inquiries in committees of the Legislative Assembly by considering whether the committee wishes to receive technical briefings from government departments or other entities, and I would like now to open the floor to discuss any motions in relation to inviting technical briefings as we begin our work.

Mrs. Allard: I have a motion, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Mrs. Allard.

Mrs. Allard: Thank you, Mr. Chair. To start this off, I'd like to move a motion so that we can discuss it. I'd like to move that the committee invite officials from the Ministry of Health to provide a technical briefing to the committee with respect to the committee's mandate as described in section 2 of Government Motion 115.

The Chair: Excellent. Hearing the motion, is there any discussion on the motion?

All right. Hearing and seeing none, would we like to vote on the motion? All in favour, please say aye. All opposed, please say no. Those online, if you're in favour, please say aye. All right. Those online, if you're opposed, please say no. Perfect.

That is so carried.

Excellent. Are there any other motions or items to discuss at this time?

Mrs. Allard: I have another motion, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Sure.

Mrs. Allard: It's a quiet committee this morning. I think I'm in the right spot here.

I wanted to move that

we as a committee request that officials from the Ministry of Health work in conjunction with the LAO office staff as requested to support the committee during the course of the committee's work and that officials attend committee meetings and participate when requested in order to provide technical expertise.

The Chair: Perfect. Hearing the motion, is there any discussion on the motion?

Excellent. Hearing none, I'll call the question. All in favour, please say aye. Any opposed? All online in favour, please say aye. Opposed? All right.

That is carried.

Oh, sorry. Mr. Shepherd. Is that for . . .

Mr. Shepherd: Yes. Sorry. I just wanted to move another motion or request the indulgence of the committee

to consider a motion that was not submitted.

I believe that's possible to do if we have unanimous consent.

The Chair: Absolutely.

Mr. Shepherd: So . . .

The Chair: Sorry. Sure. Yes, please share with the committee what you're thinking, and we will . . .

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. This issue that we are considering today is, in fact, a public health issue, and the person in government that is in charge of public health, I think, should provide the context and analysis of the public health concerns

to this committee. Now, I do apologize. I had intended to move this as an amendment to the previous motion and, unfortunately, missed the opportunity to do so.

I am requesting the unanimous consent of the committee to consider a motion

to invite the chief medical officer of health to also provide a technical briefing on the impact of drug poisoning and overdoses on public health,

being that indeed last summer the chief medical officer of health herself noted that this was an issue of great import, one of the top issues that she wished to address after the current COVID-19 pandemic. Indeed, we heard some strong support from the Premier and other members of government that that was an area that they wanted to support her in pursuing. So I think it would be most appropriate to invite her here to the committee, and I would ask the indulgence of the committee to allow a motion to come forward for debate to invite her to do so.

The Chair: Excellent. I believe we don't need unanimous consent for that motion, but we do need a majority vote, so hearing the intent of the motion, is there any discussion on that?

Mrs. Allard: I'm happy to comment from the government side that I would support MLA Shepherd's recommendation, and I would be prepared to support the introduction of this motion.

The Chair: Excellent. Any other members that would like to comment?

All right. Seeing none and demonstrating the intent to – okay. We're going to get that posted up for everyone real quick here.

Member, if this meets your intention. Moved by Mr. Shepherd that the SSC to Examine Safe Supply invite the chief medical officer of health to provide a technical briefing on the impact of drug poisoning and overdoses on public health.

Mr. Shepherd: Yes, that reflects my intent, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Perfect.

All right. Seeing the motion, is there any further discussion on the motion?

Ms Robert: Did they vote?

The Chair: Yes, we voted to allow the motion.

Okay. Seeing the motion as it is, is there any further discussion? [interjections] So you need to have a vote to allow the motion. I apologize for that. Okay. Now that we've seen the motion, can we vote to approve to allow the motion. All in favour, please say yes. Perfect. Any opposed? Any opposed online? All right.

So carried.

Good. All right.

Now is there any discussion on the motion?

All right. Seeing none, we will vote. All in favour? Any opposed? Any online in favour? Opposed? All right.

It is carried.

Love that. We're already working together. This is good.

9:20

All right. Any other motions under section (a) for consideration or discussion?

Hearing none, we will move to section (b), process for developing stakeholder list. Mrs. Allard.

Mrs. Allard: Thank you again, Mr. Chair. This motion is a little bit lengthy. I believe it was provided in advance, but I'll read it into the record. I would like to move that

the Select Special Committee to Examine Safe Supply appoint a subcommittee on committee business as follows: the subcommittee must recommend a timetable for the committee's work, recommend stakeholders to be invited to make presentations to the committee as part of the committee's review, and make recommendations on any other matter referred to it by the committee; the subcommittee is composed of Mr. Nicholas Milliken, MLA, as chair of the subcommittee, three additional members from the government caucus, and two members from the Official Opposition caucus; two-thirds of the subcommittee's members are required to constitute quorum; the subcommittee may meet from time to time at the call of the chair of the subcommittee; and, finally, substitutions of the subcommittee's membership are permitted with members of the main committee.

The Chair: Excellent. Hearing the motion, is there any discussion? I have Member Ganley.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I mean, I've been on a couple of committees that have these sort of subcommittees doing substantive work. I think my first comment would be that I'm not generally a fan. I think it's better, generally, if members of the Legislature do our work on the public record. Essentially, what a subcommittee does when it's doing substantive work like this is that it kind of moves that substantive work, like picking which stakeholders are allowed, off the record, and I find that problematic.

That being said, not to presume the will of the committee, but I assume it's going to move forward, so I do have what I think is an amendment to the motion – yes; it wouldn't be a subamendment – that we, I believe, submitted in advance, that would just require that at least one member of the opposition be present in order for the subcommittee to meet.

I just feel that this, even though it's not on the public record, which, in my view, would be ideal – I think that this at least ensures that the subcommittee can't meet on comparatively short notice in the absence of an opposition member. I don't know if I need to do anything to – I think you have the wording of that motion already.

The Chair: Yes. Member Ganley, you just need to officially move that, so if you can do that for us.

Ms Ganley: I would move that.

The Chair: There you go. Yes, we did receive it in advance.

Knowing MLA Ganley's amendment, is there any discussion on the amendment? MLA Yao.

Mr. Yao: Hi. As much as I appreciate the intent of what you're trying to make here, MLA Ganley, most of the opposition MLAs are based here in Edmonton, here at the Legislature. You guys don't have too many excuses not to attend any event whereas myself and several other members do have to travel from very, very far away. It is expected that you would be at any of the meetings. Based on your amendment, it enables you to actually hold up proceedings just by your absence, so I object to the wording of your amendment.

Thank you.

The Chair: Okay. I caught Member Sigurdson's eye.

Ms Sigurdson: Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I just want to concur with MLA Ganley's comments. It has nothing to do with where people live, and we're certainly very happy as the Official Opposition to attend meetings. It's about transparency. It's about accountability. It's about people being able to see. I know today that there are many people who are watching this, and when we go into a subcommittee, you cannot see that. It's not a transparent process; it's all behind closed doors. That is the major concern, and it's

certainly nothing about the opposition attending meetings. We have no difficulty with that at all. I just want to make that on the record, Mr. Chair, and certainly want all my colleagues here to support this amendment.

The Chair: Thank you, MLA Sigurdson.

I do believe I have MLA Milliken up next.

Mr. Milliken: Hi, Mr. Chair. Can you hear me?

The Chair: Yes, I can hear you.

Mr. Milliken: Perfect. All right. I guess just a couple of comments. I would say that, first off, I've been on a couple of committees where these subcommittees have been struck, and they've been really, really valuable with regard to sort of a pressure-free opportunity for members of all sides to do a bunch of work in a collaborative fashion. Then I think what's really important to remember is that the subcommittee is only ever going to make recommendations, so the ultimate decision will be made by the committee as a whole on the record. It's an opportunity for people to work together and an opportunity to bring those forward to the committee and then ensure that the whole committee, obviously, has the ability to vote on any of those recommendations.

On the second point with regard to the quorum I would just say that, you know, committees as a whole are based in large part on a ratio based on what we see in the Assembly, and then I would also just note that when we do work in the actual Assembly, the full House, there is no requirement for anybody from the opposition to show up. In fact, there's no real requirement, given the numbers in the Assembly, for members of the government to show up. I think that it's just something that we all as MLAs, doing the good work of especially this committee – first and foremost, I don't think that there's going to be an issue with individuals showing up. I think that we've all proven through past experience with subcommittees that that's the case.

Again, I would just say that I would go against the amendment. That said, of course, I think that it's fair to say that, as has been the case with other subcommittees, there's been a lot of accommodation made to ensure that all members can make it who want to make it.

Thank you very much, sir.

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

MLA Shepherd is up next.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'll be brief in my remarks. In responding to Mr. Milliken, I guess, in talking about having a pressure-free environment in which to do work, I do not consider public scrutiny and conducting the business of the Legislature and indeed our democracy in public to be an issue of pressure on me as a member. I consider that to be my duty, so I would disagree with that terminology or the suggestion that somehow we must step out of public scrutiny in order to be able to do what can admittedly be difficult work. At times we will disagree and perhaps have some different opinions, but I think that can be done in the light of day.

Secondly, in regard to Mr. Yao's remarks I find it unfortunate that after we had such a good start in terms of being able to work co-operatively, there would be the intimation that we are bringing this forward because we intend to disrupt these proceedings, that our members do not take this process seriously and do not believe that indeed this is incredibly important work that we are doing on behalf of Albertans, that has real implications for individuals' lives. It is not our intent in any way to disrupt the work of this committee or the opportunity to ensure it's done properly. Certainly, I don't

want to suggest that the government would have any ill intent in that. We brought this forward simply as an opportunity for a show of good faith and balance in our work. If members of the government disagree with that and feel it's not necessary, that's fine, but that was our intent.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Shepherd.
I have Mr. Stephan next.

Mr. Stephan: Sure. Thanks, Mr. Chair. I'm really happy to hear that the members of the opposition will be able to attend the special subcommittee meetings, and with that being the case, this amendment really isn't necessary because not only one but two members of the opposition are invited and are able to attend. I will not support an amendment like this that basically gives an effective veto to the members of the opposition if they disagree with the content or the agenda of the subcommittee meetings not to attend and frustrate this from proceeding. It's quite obvious that we're not going to support this. That would give an effective majority vote almost to the members of the opposition because they could just stop everything in its tracks by not attending if they don't like the subject matter.

I mean, in good faith this is, you know, common. It's based on the number of seats in terms of the composition of the subcommittee. Let's just approve the motion that was made. We're not going to approve this NDP amendment, so let's just move on.

9:30

The Chair: Okay. Thank you, MLA Stephan.
MLA Sigurdson is up next.

Ms Sigurdson: Yeah. Mr. Chair, I wonder – I have just maybe a point of clarification, or you could help me understand something. When MLA Milliken was speaking, he didn't have his video on. My understanding is that you're supposed to have your video on when you're presenting in a committee.

Secondly, MLA Stephan, if he is wearing a mask, is oftentimes wearing it inappropriately. You had just explained to us at the outset of the meeting that we all must wear masks in the meeting, and I'm just concerned about this. These are two points I'd like you to clarify, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Yes. Thank you, MLA Sigurdson. Certainly both important points to bring up. In regard to the videoconference I will be more diligent in watching for that personally as well as wearing masks for everyone's safety in the chamber. I will be more diligent in regard to watching that and calling that out. I appreciate you bringing it forward and ask all members to do their best to comply with the rules that are set out. Thank you. Perfect.

MLA Milliken, a good chance for you to show us your pearly whites there.

Mr. Milliken: Hi. Can you see me as well as hear me?

The Chair: Yes, sir.

Mr. Milliken: Thanks. I've had a little bit of an Internet issue on my end, so my apologies for that. I've actually put my hand down, but given the opportunity I think I'd just probably reiterate the fact that I'm really glad to hear that it sounds like members from all sides are taking this committee for what it is, which is really, really important work. Everybody seems to be taking it seriously. My apologies if the term "pressure" came across in some way to Member Shepherd. That wasn't the intention; just if you could be charitable on that one.

The idea there, though, is historically what we have seen and what I have seen in my experience with regard to subcommittees is that there's been such a really good collaborative approach that gets done in those committees, and it's really, really good. It usually leads to really, really effective time management in order to make sure that the mandate of this really important committee gets done effectively and quickly in a way that doesn't limit the great work or the potential of the great work. Again, that collaborative experience can be really, really valuable.

Then I'd just like to reiterate to all members again that it only ever results in recommendations. The great work that can be done both in camera and on the record leads to a situation where on the record all the decisions get made, so everybody gets to see that in the light of day.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Excellent. Any further comments on this amendment?
Hearing and seeing none, we will vote.

All in favour of the amendment, please say aye. All opposed? Online, all in favour, please say aye. Online, all opposed, please say no. Perfect.

That is defeated.

Back to the main motion. Any further discussion on the main motion?

Hearing and seeing none, all in favour of the main motion?
[interjection] Oh, sorry.

Ms Ganley: Sorry, Mr. Chair. I was typing in the chat, but I just didn't get quite enough time.

The Chair: All right. MLA Ganley.

Ms Ganley: Yes. The amendment having been defeated, I just want to reiterate. I understand the purpose of this motion, but, I mean, basically one of two things happens. Either we find ourselves in a situation where the majority of the work and the discussion takes place off the record and then the decisions are sort of just passed through the committee, or we essentially do the work twice; we go to the subcommittee, we have the conversation, we send the recommendations to the main committee, and then people make comments at the main committee in order to ensure that they're on the record. So I will not be supporting this, not because I don't think it's important to invite stakeholders, but just because I think that it is important to do that work and have those discussions on the record for our constituents to see it.

Thank you.

The Chair: Excellent. Thank you, MLA Ganley, for your comments.
Any further discussion on the motion?

All right. Hearing and seeing none, all in favour of the motion, please say aye. All opposed, please say no. Online, please say aye if you are in favour. And if you're online and opposed, please say no. All right.

That motion is carried.

Are there any further decision points under (b) to be discussed?
MLA Sigurdson.

Ms Sigurdson: Yeah. Thank you. I just wanted to bring up the point about written submissions to the committee and if that could also be done, that people can submit to the committee.

The Chair: All right. Thank you, MLA Sigurdson. That will be for discussion under (c).

All right. Any further business under section (b)?

Hearing and seeing none, we will move into section (c), which might be a good time for what we were just discussing. MLA Sigurdson.

Ms Sigurdson: Yeah. I think I'm going to go to the one I was talking about originally if I could just start with that. This motion was submitted beforehand, and I can read it for the record, that at the beginning of each meeting of the Select Special Committee to Examine Safe Supply the committee observe a moment of silent reflection to commemorate the lives lost in Alberta due to drug poisonings and overdose.

The Chair: Hearing the motion from MLA Sigurdson, is there any discussion? MLA Sigurdson.

Ms Sigurdson: Thank you. In the first 10 months of 2021 1,372 people died in Alberta from drug poisoning. Sorry; I mixed that up. Yeah. That was the first 10 months of 2021: 1,372. In 2020 it was 1,351, so even though it was only the first 10 months of last year, we know that we're on track to have the deadliest year ever. We know that 22 per cent of drug poisoning deaths are Indigenous people in our province, and we know that the First Nations population only makes up 6 per cent, so it's dramatically higher in that population. I think that, really, it's incumbent on us as representatives of our constituencies across this province to really understand the gravity of the situation, that we're in an extreme crisis and so many lives are being lost.

So I think having a moment at the beginning of each meeting – and I think that we do that in the Assembly, certainly, at the beginning of each day – and that we really are understanding the gravity of this, having an opportunity for a moment of silent reflection regarding the drug poisonings is a very important thing for us to do because we're making important decisions here that mean life and death for people in our community, sadly.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, MLA Sigurdson, for that. Any further discussion on the motion? MLA Allard.

Mrs. Allard: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I sincerely appreciate the intent of the motion and would support the intent behind it. I agree that we've lost too many, and it's a very sombre thing, so I would support that. I would just like to propose an amendment if I could. It's hopefully minor and hopefully agreeable. I'd just like to move, if possible, that

the motion be amended by striking out everything after "reflection" and just substituting "on the lives lost due to the illness of addiction."

I suspect we're sort of in a semantic mode here. That would be more agreeable to me and, I think, more robust, but I sincerely appreciate the moving of the amendment and the spirit behind it.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Excellent. Thank you, MLA Allard. I do believe we have MLA Ganley up on the amendment.

Ms Ganley: Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Not to be disagreeable, but it might be my legal background. I'm just very – you know, I think the language we use in a lot of cases is important. In law we sort of have this concept of the most – it's sort of from tort law – recent event being the sort of salient, causal event in a lot of ways. In this case I think it's really important to recognize that, yes, many of these individuals may be suffering from addiction and, yes, that's a really important thing to recognize. But in the case of a lot of these individuals that are losing their lives, the proximal cause – that's the sort of terminology used – is a drug supply that's

tainted. So I think that, you know, if we're going to do our work, we need to kind of recognize what it is we're dealing with.

9:40

In this case, yes, it is absolutely the case that we need to be concerned about addictions, that we need to be addressing that, but it is also the case that for many of these individuals the actual proximal cause of death is drug poisoning. It's drug poisoning due to a supply of drugs that involves people taking something that they don't think that they're taking. So I think that the original motion better covers what's going on because it covers both overdose and drug poisoning. I think that it is, in my view, better to stick with the original language because it more appropriately captures what we're talking about.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, MLA Ganley. I believe we have MLA Stephan up next.

Mr. Stephan: Sure. I'd actually like to propose a subamendment to the amendment if that's possible. I'm hoping this perhaps is a good compromise, because I think it is important to focus directly on what it is that we're meeting about, and that is about drug addiction. So I'd like to move that

the motion be amended by basically striking out everything after "reflection" and substituting "on lives lost due to drug addiction."

I believe that drug addiction is really what is the root cause of the deaths that are occurring, but it's not only the physical loss of life but the destruction to communities, to families. I know, certainly, in Red Deer, in our community, that drug addiction is causing so much destruction, and I know that our government's focus, of course, is helping to encourage and assist those individuals suffering under drug addictions to become free from their addictions. So I'd like to just put "on the lives lost due to drug addiction." It's simple. It's proximate, as the member opposite mentioned. I'm hoping that we can actually commemorate, and I hope that our work will reduce lives lost due to drug addictions.

Thanks.

The Chair: Excellent. Just consulting with the team here, it sounds like that would significantly change the intent of the initial amendment, so it would be out of order. What we would need to do, in order to get the intent of what you're going for with the subamendment, is to defeat the current amendment and then put forward a new amendment. Of course, you would need the majority of the people here to be able to support the new amendment. Again, we'd need to defeat the current amendment and then pass the new amendment, not to presume how people will vote. The member can also withdraw the amendment.

Mrs. Allard: With that said, I'm happy to withdraw my initial amendment and defer to MLA Stephan to submit his amendment instead if that's acceptable to the chair and the committee.

The Chair: We do need unanimous consent to withdraw, so I will ask one question: is there anybody opposed to withdrawing this amendment?

Ms Ganley: Sorry, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Yes. MLA Ganley and then MLA Shepherd.

Ms Ganley: Okay. So are we planning to vote on this amendment, or we're trying to – sorry. I apologize. I've somewhat lost the plot of what's going on.

The Chair: Yes. It got a little bit chaotic there. We have an amendment before us. MLA Stephan just proposed a subamendment to that amendment. That subamendment is out of order because it would dramatically change the intent of the initial amendment. So the subamendment can't be voted on. It's not relevant at this time, so that brings us back to the current amendment. MLA Allard just proposed that we withdraw her amendment. We would need unanimous consent now to accept the withdrawal of that amendment, and then we can consider further amendments at that time. Are you up to speed? Does that makes sense, MLA Ganley?

Ms Ganley: It does. Thank you. Yes.

The Chair: Perfect.
MLA Shepherd.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I was interested – and, of course, we had submitted a subamendment to this potential amendment. I'd be interested in putting that forward. Now, if we are to defeat – if this amendment is withdrawn, I assume, then, that the subamendment would not be allowed to be moved. Is that correct?

The Chair: That would be correct. Yes.

Mr. Shepherd: Okay. That is the only thing I needed to clarify. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: MLA Allard has offered
to withdraw the amendment.

So we would need to vote on that now. With that on the table, I'll ask one question: is anybody opposed to withdrawing the amendment?

That is defeated.

Any further discussion on the amendment as proposed by MLA Allard? MLA Shepherd.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Chair. As I stated, I would like to move a subamendment to this amendment.

The Chair: Excellent. Yes. MLA Shepherd, continue.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you. I'd like to move a subamendment to the amendment. I appreciate the point that Member Allard has brought forward. I appreciate the concerns that Mr. Stephan has forcibly brought forward reflecting his personal views on the situation. I recognize, I think, that perhaps we can achieve a balance here in our statement. Now, the wording of our motion that we've presented is, in fact, in line with the Ministry of Health. It is the language that they use to describe the deaths that are related to this subject, which is the language of poisoning and overdoses. They do not report deaths due to addiction.

I think it's important, as my colleague Member Ganley has noted, that we are dealing with a situation with a toxic supply. That is the cause of the spike in deaths. Now, of course, many of the individuals who are partaking in that toxic supply and therefore overdosing and some losing their lives are indeed people that are struggling with addiction. However, a toxic supply can also take the lives of people who do not have an addiction, who may be casual users. I think acknowledging the role of drug poisoning in the context of a toxic supply is an important consideration when the purpose of this committee is to discuss the option of safe supply – that is the express purpose why we are here – but I also recognize that addiction, obviously, is a very serious issue.

It's a very important part of our work, and I recognize that for government members this is something that has been a priority for

their government, expanding that end of the spectrum of supports for individuals who are indeed struggling with addiction. Indeed, I think we are all here with the belief that individuals should have that opportunity and that indeed that opportunity is one of the best that is available if individuals are able to stay alive long enough to access it.

I think we could find a compromise in the subamendment that I put forward, which includes both. I would move the subamendment, that I believe has been submitted, that at the beginning of each meeting of the Select Special Committee to Examine Safe Supply the committee observe a moment of silent reflection to commemorate the lives lost in Alberta due to drug poisonings, overdose, and lives lost due to the illness of addiction.

I think in the spirit of the committee and the spirit of co-operation and collaboration that we've largely been able to establish this morning, this offers a good and reasonable compromise. This recognizes, I think, that we're cognizant of the fact that Albertans are dying each day due to this crisis and that we keep these human beings in mind, and it acknowledges both sides of the challenge.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, MLA Shepherd.

Hearing the subamendment, is there any further discussion? MLA Allard.

Mrs. Allard: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to the member opposite, Member Shepherd. I appreciate the comments and the spirit of collaboration, and I would concur that that seems to be striking a good balance and encompassing the intent of the committee, I would think, to commemorate the lives lost and to look at this as a wholesome issue. I appreciate that amendment, and I would be prepared to support it.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

9:50

The Chair: Excellent. Thank you, MLA Allard.

Are there any further comments on this?

Excellent. Hearing none, we're just going to wait and get that written up so we can make sure we're all agreeing on the right wording.

There we go. Okay. Moved that

the amendment be amended by striking out "on the lives lost due to the illness of addiction" and substituting "to commemorate the lives lost in Alberta due to drug poisoning, overdoses, and lives lost due to the illness of addiction."

Hearing the subamendment as proposed by MLA Shepherd, is there any further discussion? MLA Stephan.

Mr. Stephan: Well, you've put "and lives lost due to" twice. I don't know if that's necessary. And is it: "and lives lost due to drug addiction"? It doesn't really matter that much, but it's just kind of odd. Isn't it just "due to drug poisonings, overdose, and addiction"?

The Chair: And the illness of addiction.

Mr. Shepherd: Mr. Chair, I'm not quite clear, I guess, on the procedure, but certainly I take Mr. Stephan's point regarding the repeat of the phrase "the lives lost." I would be comfortable with the friendly amendment to remove the "lives lost" after "and," the second "lives lost." Now, I don't know if that's allowed under the means by which we introduce subamendments, but certainly I would have no objection to that.

The Chair: Excellent. Can we propose a subamendment to a subamendment? Yes.

Mr. Koenig: Thank you, Mr. Chair. We're sort of getting into the procedural weeds here. What I might suggest is that this was just an administrative correction because, of course, we can't amend a subamendment. So this was just an administrative correction by the clerk to reflect the member's preferred wording for his subamendment. Is that right? Okay.

The Chair: Perfect. So now that we've administratively corrected that, we will need MLA Shepherd to formally move his subamendment.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Chair. With that, then, I would formally move the subamendment as administratively corrected.

The Chair: Perfect. Thank you, MLA Shepherd.

Any further discussion on the subamendment?

Hearing and seeing none, let's vote on the subamendment. All in favour, please say aye. Any opposed? All in favour online, please say aye. Any opposed online? Excellent.

That is carried.

All right. Back on the main amendment. Any further discussion on the amendment? All right.

Hearing and seeing none, all in favour, please say aye. Any opposed? All in favour online, please say aye. Any opposed online? All right.

The amendment is passed.

Now we're back on the main motion. Any further discussion on the main motion?

Hearing and seeing none, we will vote. All in favour of the main motion, please say aye. Any opposed? All in favour online, please say aye. Any opposed?

That is carried.

Excellent.

We are back on item (c), other decisions. Are there any other discussion items for today?

Member Irwin: Yes, Chair.

The Chair: Excellent. Yes, Member Irwin.

Member Irwin: Okay. Thank you. Yes. I posted in the chat as well. Previously I had asked Nancy just about research capacity, so I would like to introduce a motion on that very topic.

The Chair: You may do so, Member Irwin.

Member Irwin: Thank you. The motion would read that the Select Special Committee to Examine Safe Supply direct research services to provide the committee with a crossjurisdictional analysis of safe supply across Canada by February 18, 2022, and present their research at the following meeting.

The Chair: Thank you, Member Irwin.

Hearing the motion, is there any discussion on that motion?

Member Irwin: Yeah. Can I just add some comments?

The Chair: Yes, you can, Member Irwin.

Member Irwin: Thank you, Chair. Yeah. You know, I'm sure many folks in this meeting have started to look at some of the research. There is a great deal of research, particularly quite recent research, on safe supply in particular. Obviously, I could share research, but there would certainly be value in having a nonpartisan lens and having the good folks at research services directing that research. We may have some crossjurisdictional analysis being

done by department officials, but again I think it would be very valuable to get a comprehensive look from research services.

The Chair: All right. MLA Shepherd.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just want to speak in favour of this motion. Having participated in a number of committees and indeed a number of reviews of legislation and others, I think this is a very common piece, a policy review looking at how it is conducted in other jurisdictions. I would note it is also a very common tool of use by the current government, certainly in a number of areas, whether it's from health care to education, certainly the MacKinnon report and certainly in public health recommendations. The comments regularly reference what is done in other jurisdictions and where Alberta stands in comparison. I think it would be a very reasonable thing and very helpful for us as a committee to do the same here, to have a look at how this somewhat new policy and direction is being undertaken in other provinces and have that as a point of comparison for our province.

The Chair: Thank you, MLA Shepherd.

Ms Robert has some comments on this topic. Ms Robert.

Ms Robert: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you, Member Irwin, for explaining a little bit about what it is that you're after with the motion. I just wanted to get some further clarity if you don't mind. Typically when research services does crossjurisdictional analysis, it's on legislation, like legislative schemes across the country. Now, please correct me if I'm wrong, but I'm not sure there are legislative schemes with respect to safe supply in the country. I think federally there's probably an exemption in the Criminal Code perhaps with respect to providing safe supply. I think B.C. has some programs in place with respect to safe supply, but I'm not sure if other provinces do. I'm just wondering, like: is that what you're looking for, which provinces are doing what?

You talked about a large body of research, so I'm just wondering – you know, if you're looking for information on this large body of research, I wonder if perhaps a literature review is more what you're looking for. Or are you looking for what's happening in other provinces in the country with respect to safe supply policy? If you could address that, I'd really appreciate it.

Member Irwin: Yes.

Ms Robert: Thank you.

Member Irwin: Yeah. Thank you. I probably can't play the new card. But, yes, to be fair, I wasn't totally sure about the scope of what research services has done historically. You're right. I mean, B.C. is an example of a province. Yeah, perhaps maybe – I'm just thinking as I speak out loud here – a literature review might be a little bit more appropriate. Basically, we're looking at, you know, current practices, current policies on safe supply. I don't know what would be the best approach, but I would love for the whole committee to have access to some of the research that has been undertaken.

As MLA Shepherd mentioned, you know, there is a lot of research recently, because this has just sort of been elevated in the public conversation. I'm open to other advice as to whether it would be better to seek sort of a literature review, but, like I said, I'm not certain what we've done historically on this.

10:00

The Chair: Ms Robert.

Ms Robert: Thanks, Mr. Chair. Well, we've done both. Typically, as I said, if it's crossjurisdictional research it's typically done on

legislation. If there were programs across the country on safe supply, we could certainly do a crossjurisdictional on those programs. I'm not sure that there are, but that certainly could be something that we could do if there were. Otherwise, if there are not, it would be a pretty short report, just seeing, you know, what B.C. does. But if it's this sort of body of research – like, is it from other countries, or where is this research derived from? I mean, if it's that that you're looking for, then I would say that a literature review is your possibly better method here.

The Chair: Excellent. I see that MLA Ganley has risen.
MLA Ganley.

Ms Ganley: Yes. I was just going to add that it can probably be both. I don't know if I would need to amend this. I think what it was looking for was a crossjurisdictional analysis sort of specifically on – I guess legislation isn't right, but it would be like practices and policies with respect to safe supply, because I think, as has correctly been identified, it is sort of an exemption-based process. So just, like, sort of policies from other jurisdictions. I think it's always worth having the crossjurisdictional. I think adding a literature review to that is good. I don't think it's problematic at all, but I think the initial intent of the motion was to ensure that we sort of had that crossjurisdictional. If we wanted to do both, I think that would be delightful; more information is always better.

Mr. Yao: I guess a question regarding a literature review. Would this be all science-based journals? I mean, we're looking into the science of this versus anecdotal concerns from – I'm sorry; I have to choose my wording carefully here – or just anecdotal stories from people who have lost their loved ones, I guess. My concern is that we should have a science-based approach to this very serious issue of drugs, of pharmaceutical addictions.

Please, Ms Robert.

The Chair: Yeah. Ms Robert, can you comment?

Ms Robert: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Certainly, if the committee were to request a literature review, a motion would have to be passed to that effect. The text of the motion could include that we refine it to academic journals, any research, any literature review in this regard, if that assists.

The Chair: Excellent. So we would need an amendment to this motion to include a literature review and targeted on academic journals.

Ms Robert: That, or a second motion.

The Chair: Or a second motion. Okay. Excellent.

Ms Sigurdson: I'd like to make an amendment to include those two aspects, making sure that
it's academic journals that are reviewed and the crossjurisdictional policies of Canada, and also a literature review.

The Chair: Right. Hearing the intention behind the amendment, we would need to get committee approval in order to consider that amendment, so that's where we are now.

Any discussion about that? MLA Stephan.

Mr. Stephan: Yeah. I'd rather just consider the first motion independently of this second motion, Chair.

The Chair: Okay.
MLA Shepherd.

Mr. Shepherd: No. Sorry. I wasn't raising my hand.

The Chair: Any other discussion about the proposed amendment?

Mrs. Allard: I just want to see it first.

The Chair: Okay. We're going to get it up on the screen.

Ms Robert: We have to agree to hear it . . .

The Chair: We have to agree. Well, that's what I was about to do.

Ms Robert: . . . because it wasn't put on notice, right?

The Chair: Yeah. Okay. Oh, so we have to agree to hear it before we discuss it. Perfect. I am learning. We need to agree to hear it. So hearing the intention, can we vote?

All in favour of hearing the amendment, please say aye. All opposed? Online all in favour of hearing the amendment, please say aye. All opposed?

That is defeated.

We don't need to write it out, then. Excellent.

MLA Shepherd.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to return to the main motion. I think I made most of my points earlier, but I'll just again state that I think there is great value to clarify, as Ms Robert has noted, that there may not be specific provincial legislation in this regard. But I think there are at least four provinces who have begun to institute practices and policies in this regard, so certainly I would be in favour of a crossjurisdictional analysis of the practices and policies that are currently being considered or that are in place in provinces in Canada.

The Chair: Excellent. Any other discussion? MLA Glasgo – I mean Frey.

Mrs. Frey: It's okay, Chair. I do the same thing all the time.

I think the important part for me in this discussion is that we're getting quality medical evidence, that we are getting the perspectives from physicians as well as from the scientific community, not just in the social sciences, which obviously would have a large play as well. I'm totally in favour of this motion as it's written. I would just like to add something if MLA Shepherd would be – I think it's MLA Shepherd who moved that. I can't see that far away. Oh, my apologies, Member Irwin. I can't see that far away. I need new glasses. I would like to add "quality medical evidence" to this motion. Then I think I'd be more than happy to support it as well as the government caucus.

The Chair: Excellent. MLA Shepherd.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate the intent of MLA Frey in putting this forward. I have some concern with the insertion of the word "quality." For lack of a better term, that word itself is qualitative. It does not have a scientific basis or definition. It's to be defined by the individual. What indeed constitutes quality medical advice as opposed to scientific medical literature or something of that ilk? I find that it's lacking in clarity as to what the intent is there, and I'd ask perhaps if the member could clarify what she means by quality and if we could see if we could find some more precise or perhaps even legal terminology.

The Chair: Excellent. Before I pass it back to MLA Frey, Ms Robert also wanted to ask some clarifying questions.

Ms Robert: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just wanted to sort of clarify. A crossjurisdictional will be on government policies across the country, so when you talk about medical . . .

Mrs. Frey: You'd need a separate motion.

Ms Robert: Well, I'm wondering if that's more in line with a literature review. Do you know what I mean?

Mrs. Frey: Fair enough. Whatever you think is best.

Ms Robert: Well, typically a crossjurisdictional – yeah – is just with respect to legislation or government policies.

The Chair: Okay. Mr. Koenig.

Mr. Koenig: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just might make a suggestion to the committee. Of course, research services – I mean, Ms Robert can correct me here if I'm describing it wrong – typically would just be summarizing literature out there. Of course, they are not medical experts or in, really, a position to evaluate medical information. I might just remind the committee about those motions that were passed earlier on in the meeting where technical expertise from the Ministry of Health will be provided to the committee. That might be the technical expertise to really comment on medical information or even pointing to scientific literature that's sort of by leaders in the field. They might be able to provide a bit more in-depth direction for the committee's consideration.

10:10

The Chair: Excellent. MLA Frey to comment.

Mrs. Frey: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. To clarify my comments, I meant academic and peer-reviewed. But I totally understand how my words could have been construed as not being clear, so thank you for asking.

I think, for me, I would be fine with just dealing with this motion. I understand the clerk's concerns as well. I agree that my amendment would have been out of order just considering that that's not necessarily what this motion is suggesting. So if we could just maybe deal with this one and then deal with the literature review at another meeting. If we could get some consent on that, I think that might be helpful as well so we can clarify what we're asking for.

The Chair: Thank you, MLA Frey.

MLA Ganley, you did have your hand up.

Ms Ganley: Yes, I did, but I think it's been handled. I was just going to point out that the crossjurisdictional and the literature review are different things. But I think we're all there now, so I'll just let it be.

The Chair: There we go. Perfect.

MLA Allard.

Mrs. Allard: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just wanted to go back to what Member Shepherd had said. I would concur with him. I've been concurring with him a lot today. That's interesting, right? I'm not sure if the wording is up there, but you talked about practice and policy, correct?

Mr. Shepherd: Uh-huh.

Mrs. Allard: And have we amended the motion, or is that the motion as it stands now?

The Chair: I believe we are currently on the motion as it stands.

Mrs. Allard: As it stands now. So if that's what the crossjurisdictional analysis is referring to, practice and policy of government across Canada, I would support that.

Thank you.

The Chair: Excellent. Ms Robert.

Ms Robert: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chair. It would be my advice that you don't need to change the motion. I think research services is listening to this meeting, and they will have heard all of this discussion, so they will take the direction of the committee on that.

Thank you.

The Chair: Excellent. Hearing that, any further discussion on the motion before us?

Hearing and seeing none, I will call the question. All in favour, please say aye. Any opposed? All online if you are in favour, please say aye. Any opposed online?

That motion is carried.

We're back on 5(c). Is there any further business to be discussed? Excellent.

Hearing and seeing none, we will move on to section . . .

Member Irwin: Oh, sorry, Chair. I typed, but at about the same time as you were . . .

The Chair: Thank you. Member Irwin, do you have any further items to discuss?

Member Irwin: You know what? I can actually save this one, I think, for our next meeting. I appreciate it, though, Chair.

The Chair: Okay. Sounds good.

Any further items on section 5(c) before I race off to 6?

Hearing none and seeing none online, we will go to section 6, other business. Is there any other business that members wish to discuss at this time? All right.

Hearing and seeing none, we will move to section 7, date of the next meeting. The next meeting will be at the call of the chair. Of course, we will do a poll.

Then we move on to adjournment, unless there's any further discussion on that. If there is nothing else for the committee's consideration, I will call for a motion to adjourn.

Mrs. Allard: So moved.

The Chair: MLA Allard.

All in favour? Any opposed? All in favour online? Any opposed? That is carried.

Everybody travel safely back to your homes.

[The committee adjourned at 10:14 a.m.]

