Legislative Assembly of Alberta

The 31st Legislature
Second Session

Standing Committee
on
Resource Stewardship

Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) Act Review

Monday, November 24, 2025
9 a.m.

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Second Session

Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship

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9 a.m. **Monday, November 24, 2025**

[Mr. Dyck in the chair]

The Chair: Excellent. Thank you, everyone, for attending here this morning for Resource Stewardship. I'd like to call this meeting of the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship to order and welcome everyone in attendance, both here in person and online.

My name is Nolan Dyck, and I am the MLA for Grande Prairie and new chair for the committee. Happy to be here for my very first one, and I'm looking forward to this. I'd like that members and those joining the committee at the table introduce themselves for the record, and we'll begin with my right. After we're through the table here, we will then turn online. So to my right.

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

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

Mrs. Petrovic: Chelsae Petrovic, MLA for Livingstone-Macleod.

Mr. Cyr: Scott Cyr, MLA, Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul.

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

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

Dr. McGraw: Rachel McGraw, research officer.

Ms Govindarajan: Good morning. Vani Govindarajan, Parliamentary Counsel.

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

Mr. Huffman: Warren Huffman, committee clerk.

The Chair: Excellent. We'll go online in this order, if we may: Ms Calahoo Stonehouse, then Ms Al-Guneid, and then Mr. Ip.

Member Calahoo Stonehouse: Good morning. MLA Jodi Calahoo Stonehouse, Edmonton-Rutherford.

Ms Al-Guneid: Hi, everyone. Nagwan Al-Guneid, MLA for Calgary-Glenmore.

Mr. Ip: Good morning, everybody. Nathan Ip, MLA for Edmonton-South West.

The Chair: Excellent. Thank you, everyone, for their introductions.

For the record I will note the following substitutions. Mr. Stephan is substituting for Mr. Yao.

Now, we do have a couple of housekeeping items to address before we turn to our business at hand here this morning. Please note that the microphones are operated by *Hansard* staff. Committee proceedings are live streamed on the Internet and broadcast on Alberta Assembly TV, and the audio- and videostream and transcripts of meetings can be accessed via the Legislative Assembly website. For those participating by videoconference, you're 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 to the chair. Please also set your cellphones and other devices to silent for the duration of the meeting.

Now we do need to approve the agenda. Are there any changes or additions to the draft agenda? If not, would someone like to move? I'll let someone approve the proposed agenda as distributed for its November 24, 2025, meeting. I see MLA Cyr. Thank you.

Any discussion?

Mr. Stephan: It's super.

The Chair: It's super. Excellent.

All in favour? Any opposed? That is carried.

Next we have the draft minutes of our September 16, 2025, meeting. Are there any errors or omissions to note? I see no hands raised. If not, would a member like to move that the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship approve the minutes as distributed of its meeting held on September 16, 2025?

Any discussion?

Mr. Rowswell: I'll move it.

The Chair: Okay. We have a mover. Thank you very much.

All in favour? Any opposed? Anybody online have any discussion? Are any opposed? I don't see any hands or anything, so that motion is carried.

All right. Well, we are here today to review the Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) Act and review research by the Legislative Assembly Office, specifically our cross-jurisdictional comparison. At our meeting on June 27 the committee passed a motion requesting the Legislative Assembly Office to prepare a crossjurisdictional comparison to assist us in our review of the Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) Act. I would like to invite Dr. McGraw to give us an overview of that research and respond to any questions members may have.

Please go ahead when you are ready, Doctor.

Dr. McGraw: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and good morning to the committee. I'll very briefly discuss the crossjurisdictional comparison prepared by research services on the request of the committee for its current review of the Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) Act. The crossjurisdictional comparison focuses on similarities and differences in public interest disclosure legislation across 13 Canadian jurisdictions in order to provide the committee with a comparative frame of reference as it conducts its current review of Alberta's Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) Act. The document compares the scope of the legislation; definitions of key terms, including wrongdoing, disclosure, and reprisal; the processes for managing disclosures of wrongdoing and complaints of reprisal; the investigative procedures, reporting requirements, and offences and penalties across the jurisdictions compared. The document is not an exhaustive comparison of all aspects of public interest disclosure legislation in Canada, and research services recommends that the committee members consult the original legislation for further details.

That concludes my remarks regarding the crossjurisdictional comparison. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Well, thank you very much for the presentation.

Do members have any questions related to this report? All right. I see MLA Rowswell.

Mr. Rowswell: Yeah. I just wanted to confirm, relative to penalties, how Alberta ranks or where we're at across the country.

Dr. McGraw: For penalties, I believe that's in section 8 of our document. In our review we found that there are pretty comparable penalties across jurisdictions. For example, Alberta has the same penalties as British Columbia, which are $25,000 for a first offence and $100,000 for a subsequent offence. Let's see in other jurisdictions. Some do not have any monetary penalties at all, and the penalties are disciplinary penalties. It looks like Quebec has some of the highest penalties, up to $100,000 for a wrongdoing by an institution; for an individual it's up to $30,000. Pretty comparable across jurisdictions. Yeah.

Mr. Rowswell: Thanks.

The Chair: Yes, Ms Sweet.

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just a quick question: are you able to tell me when the last amendments were done in all the other provinces for legislation?

The Chair: Go ahead.

Dr. McGraw: Thank you to the member for the question, through the chair. I believe, off the top of our report here, we cannot provide that information immediately, but if the committee would like us to provide that information, we could definitely respond in writing.

Ms Sweet: Can I follow up?

The Chair: You bet. Go ahead.

Ms Sweet: Yeah. Just a follow-up to that. If we could maybe get the information about the frequency of amendments in other jurisdictions in comparison to the last time Alberta did it, I would appreciate that.

Dr. McGraw: Thank you, Member.

The Chair: I'm just going to put this out to the committee. The question was about just gathering all the information of when the other provinces have changed their whistle-blower legislation.

That's correct, summarizing correctly?

Ms Sweet: Yeah. It's just the dates. We haven't made any amendments in Alberta in the last three reviews. I'm just curious how often other provinces are amending their legislation.

The Chair: Perfect. This is open. We would just need the committee's will for this, on this idea. I don't believe we need a motion for this, but it would just be any debate, then we can request this. Let the committee clerks do this.

Mr. Rowswell: I don't see a problem with this. Good idea.

The Chair: Sounds good. All right. Perfect.

Any other questions on this section?

Perfect. I'm not seeing any hands up and I'm not seeing anything online, so thank you for your presentation.

We are now going to move to the written submissions summary. At our September 16 meeting the committee agreed to issue an invitation to stakeholders and the public to provide written submissions in relation to our review of the Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) Act. I would note for the record that the committee received 13 submissions, 12 of which were received prior to the deadline established by the committee, with one coming two business days afterwards. All submissions received came from identified stakeholders. These submissions were posted to the committee's internal website as they were received.

At the September 16 meeting the committee also directed LAO staff to prepare a summary of the written submissions received. I would like to invite Dr. McGraw again with LAO research services to provide an overview of the summary document.

9:10

Dr. McGraw: Thank you again, Mr. Chair, and thank you again to the committee. I also have very brief comments about the submission summary this morning. As you noted, Mr. Chair, the committee invited stakeholders and the public to make written submissions with respect to the act and potential amendments to the act. The committee also directed research services to produce a summary of written submissions received during the submission window for the committee's consideration during its review of the Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) Act.

The summary of written submissions summarizes the issues identified and recommendations proposed in written submissions received by the committee. The committee received a total of 13 submissions: five from public entities, three from postsecondary institutions, one from a nurses union, one from a financial institution, one from the Centre for Free Expression, one from the Public Interest Commissioner, and one from the Public Service Commission.

The issues identified and recommendations made by stakeholders in their submissions are organized into three main categories in the document, which are the scope of the act, which includes recommendations and issues pertaining to the application of the act; strengthening protections for whistle-blowers and witnesses, which contains issues and recommendations pertaining to creating an environment that protects people from reprisal when making disclosures; and the final section includes recommendations and issues related to improving the functionality of the act or pertaining to improving the investigative and reporting procedures. The submissions summary is not an exhaustive representation of all the issues and recommendations identified by stakeholders in their submissions, and research services recommends that the committee members consult the original submissions for further details.

That concludes my remarks. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Excellent. Thank you very much, Dr. McGraw.

As mentioned before, the committee has received 13 written submissions, and the Public Service Commission submission was received on Tuesday, November 4, which was two business days after the Friday, October 31, deadline. The committee should decide if it would like to accept the late submission, and I will – I apologize. I'm jumping ahead. I would, first of all, like to open the floor for questions to Dr. McGrath on the written submissions.

Yes, Ms Sweet.

Ms Sweet: I do have a question. Did we do an analysis over the recommendations from the last review that we did in comparison to the written submissions, and is there a consistent theme around requests for things that were asked to be changed in the last review that are now being asked to be reviewed again or adjusted again or amended again? It's 9 a.m.

Dr. McGraw: Thank you to the member for the question. Through the chair, research services did not do an explicit analysis comparing the submissions this time to last time, but we can confirm that there are some similar recommendations this time compared to last time. I believe that the previous submission summary document is available for committee members if they

would like to review the previous documents from the previous review, if you would like to do that comparison.

The Chair: I just confirmed with the committee clerk that that review is available for members.

Anyone else? Member Stephan.

Mr. Stephan: Sure. Just a question: did any of the submissions discuss concerns about people inappropriately using the whistle-blower legislation to make false accusations that they know are false?

Dr. McGraw: Thank you to the member for the question. Through the chair, none of the submissions submitted for this round contained specific concerns about that. There were some references to that possibility made by the Centre for Free Expression and the office of the Public Interest Commissioner mentioning that that was a possibility, that there was fear about that, but none of the other submitters indicated a specific case or echoed that concern.

The Chair: Excellent. I'm not seeing any more hands up on the written submission. Does anybody online have a question?

I'm not seeing any hands up online, so thank you so very much for the presentation, Dr. McGraw, on the written submission.

Members, as we are now needing to decide upon the written submissions, as mentioned before, the committee has received 13 written submissions, and the Public Service Commission submission was received on Tuesday, November 4, which was two business days after the Friday, October 31, deadline. The committee should decide if it would like to accept the late submission, and I will open the floor to discussion and motions.

Now, on this the clerk has prepared a standard motion, which did not need to go on notice, which we can put up on the screen here as well, I believe, as well for you to review. Is there any discussion or interest in moving this forward? Ms Sweet.

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would move that the committee accept the late submission and we just move on.

The Chair: Great. Okay. Ms Sweet, since you moved it, can you please read the full motion here?

Ms Sweet: That

> all written submissions received by the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship by November 4, 2025, in regard to its review of the Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) Act be accepted and included in the review process.

The Chair: Excellent. Any discussion on this motion? Anybody online? I don't see any hands up.

First of all, we will say: all in favour? Any opposed? Excellent. All in favour online? Any opposed? All right.

> That motion is carried.

Now, typically at this stage the committee considers whether the written submissions received should be made public. I will highlight that all invitations sent to stakeholders stated that written submissions received may be made public.

At this time I would like to open the floor to any comments, questions, or motions related to this matter. Once again, the committee clerk did prepare a standard motion that did not need to go on notice prior to that that just states this. Now, if someone would like to potentially move such a motion, there is an opportunity to do so. Mr. Stephan.

Mr. Stephan: Excellent. I'd like to move that

> the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship direct the Legislative Assembly Office to make all written submissions accepted as part of its review of the Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) Act publicly available on the Assembly website except for portions of submissions that contain any of the following: personal contact information other than the name and municipality of the submitter, personal information of an identifiable third party, and, of course, profane and/or obscene language.

We don't want any of that.

The Chair: Excellent. Well, thank you, Mr. Stephan.

Any discussion on this motion? I see none in the room. Would anybody online like to step into this discussion? I don't see any hands up.

All in favour of this motion, please say aye. Any opposed? All right. Turning online, all in favour? Any opposed online? Excellent.

> That motion is carried.

Now we need to make a decision regarding oral presentations. Members, as we have now made our decisions regarding written submissions, we now move to consideration of inviting oral presentations as the next stage of our review. During comprehensive statute reviews it is common practice to invite oral presentations from key stakeholders and others so that the committee can collect additional information and pose questions to the presenters for clarification on written submissions that have been made.

At this time I would like to open the floor to any comments, questions, or motions in relation to hearing oral presentations.

Mr. Rowswell: I'd like to make a motion if we can get it up on the screen.

The Chair: Excellent.

Mr. Rowswell: I move that

> for the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship review of the Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) Act the committee invite a member from each of the government and Official Opposition caucuses to submit to the committee clerk no later than 12 p.m. on December 8, 2025, a list of up to two identified stakeholders who have made written submissions with respect to the act and that the committee invite those stakeholders to provide an oral presentation at an upcoming committee meeting.

9:20

The Chair: Excellent. Thank you, Member.

Any discussion on this motion?

Ms Sweet: Just a point of clarity, I guess, for myself is that I have other motions that are coming forward that would not be in relation to written submissions. Would this make those motions out of order?

The Chair: My understanding, chatting in preparation for this, Ms Sweet, is that they will be in order even after passing this one.

Ms Sweet: Okay.

The Chair: Okay.

Ms Sweet: Then I have nothing else to say.

The Chair: Okay. Excellent.

Any other discussion on this motion? No? Excellent.

In that case, all in favour here in the room, please say aye. Any opposed? Excellent. Online, all in favour, please say aye. Any online opposed to this motion?

> That motion is carried.

Are there any other motions? Ms Sweet.

Ms Sweet: Shocking. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would like to put up main motion ID 4, please, that

> the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship invite, as part of the committee review of the Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) Act, officials from the following ministries to provide an oral presentation at an upcoming committee meeting on the protection for employees under the respective ministries who have disclosure under the act: (a) Primary and Preventative Health Services, (b) Hospital and Surgical Health Services, (c) Mental Health and Addiction, and (d) Assisted Living and Social Services.

Can I provide rationale?

The Chair: Absolutely, Member Sweet.

Ms Sweet: The rationale behind this is that in our previous meetings we had a discussion about what the difference was between a stakeholder and a government official coming to the committee to provide information to the committee. In the previous meetings the government had determined that these four ministries would be considered stakeholders and would not be considered government officials and therefore needed to be invited under stakeholder relations. We are now at that stage, so I am moving forward with the recommendation of the government side during our last committee, which is to invite these four ministries to come and present about how this impacts their front-line workers.

The Chair: Excellent. Thank you, Member Sweet.

Is there any other discussion on this?

Mr. Rowswell: You know, we just passed that last motion relative to submissions coming from written submissions, and I don't want to expand it beyond into ministries. We're looking at the stakeholders that we're taking information from. I think it would be good to keep it from that list of people that bothered to make a written submission.

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

Anyone else?

Ms Sweet: Well, this is going to take a bit, I think. Just in fairness, I want to recognize that I've reached out to some of the people that we had requested written submissions from, and unfortunately, given the dynamic that was going on with bargaining and a whole bunch of other issues that were happening at the time, they did not receive an invitation to be able to do this, and if they did, it got lost in all of the other things that they've been dealing with, including bargaining and all of the other pieces.

Although I appreciate that the government thinks that two written submissions with two individuals on each side of this House is appropriate, this is the area of individuals that are the most represented and protected by whistle-blower protection. There are significant changes happening within the ministries at this time. There are now four when there used to be one, so it's important that we ensure that all areas of health care understand their responsibility. With the shifts to privatization that have very clearly been delivered by this government, we need to ensure that all front-line workers are protected.

The Chair: Excellent. Thank you, Ms Sweet, for that.

Just a point of clarity on that, too. All of these ministries did receive a written letter to them as well.

Is there any other further discussion on this? I am seeing none.

All right. Well, this is the motion on – oh, sorry. I apologize. Member Ip.

Mr. Ip: Sorry, Mr. Chair. I just want to echo MLA Sweet's rationale. We have to recognize that the restructuring of health care has left a lot of health care workers vulnerable, and given the current events and the challenging timelines I agree that it's important to ensure that those voices are heard and that we invite them to the committee for oral presentations.

Thank you.

The Chair: Excellent. Thank you, Member Ip.

Are there any other comments on this?

All right. I will call the question. All in favour of this motion, please say aye. Okay. Anyone opposed in the room, please say nay. All right. Then online, anybody in favour of this motion, please say aye. Okay. Any opposed online? All right.

> That motion is defeated.

Are there any other motions to be presented?

Ms Sweet: Well, let's try it again. Main motion ID 5 that

> the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship invite, as part of the committee review of the Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) Act, the following organizations to provide an oral presentation at an upcoming committee meeting on what protections exist for employees that they represent who make disclosure of wrongdoing: (a) Alberta Union of Provincial Employees, (b) United Nurses of Alberta, (c) Health Sciences Association of Alberta, and (d) Alberta Medical Association.

The Chair: Excellent. Thank you for that moving, Ms Sweet.

Is there any discussion on this?

Sorry. You want to provide rationale? I apologize, Ms Sweet. Go ahead.

Ms Sweet: The same rationale as before except that these are actually the organizations that represent these front-line workers, including physicians. It's not just union representatives; it's actually professional organizations, all of which are working in health care, all of which are being impacted by the moves of this government to move to privatization and dismantling of our health care system. So I would encourage us to have them come and be able to talk about how we can protect front-line workers.

The Chair: Excellent. Thank you, Ms Sweet.

Yeah.

Mrs. Petrovic: Thank you, Mr. Chair. You know, I understand this. My suggestion would be to invite the United Nurses of Alberta since they did a written submission. I think that from there we need to limit the oral presentations to those who have formally engaged with us, who have had these written submissions. So I'm going to vote no to this, and I'm going to recommend that the opposition invite the United Nurses of Alberta, who did do a written proposal, to come and do an oral proposal.

Thank you.

The Chair: Excellent. Anyone else? Ms Al-Guneid.

Ms Al-Guneid: Hi. Can you hear me okay?

The Chair: Absolutely. Go ahead.

Ms Al-Guneid: Okay. I would like just to say that I support this motion. I think when we have big policies and big overhaul happening in the health care system, just like what we're seeing right now, we need to hear as many diverse voices as possible, especially if they're impacted. The health care workers will be deeply impacted by whistle-blower legislation, and as I mentioned, there are massive changes right now happening to the health care

system, so it's important to have an intentional and thoughtful legislation and change based on hearing as many voices as possible.

Thank you.

The Chair: Excellent. Thank you very much for your passionate response there.

Is there anyone else looking to step into debate of this motion?

Seeing none, I will call the question. All in favour of this motion, please say aye. Excellent. All opposed in the room to this motion, please say nay. Okay. Then turning online, all in favour of this motion, please say aye. Any opposed online, please say nay. All right.

That motion is defeated.

Are there any other motions on notice that anybody wants to respond with? I see none. Excellent.

9:30

This moves us to next steps. As we continue information gathering for our review, our next step will be to hear oral presentations, which, I believe, is at the call of the chair for the dates, so we will do that.

Is there any other business at hand?

Ms Sweet: Just a point of clarity.

The Chair: Yes.

Ms Sweet: A point of clarity, Chair. You're setting the date, but we have to invite people first, so can you provide us process, please?

The Chair: You betcha. My understanding of process is that we will set a date here and then look for stakeholders to be invited, and that will be in working with the committee clerks. Maybe I'll let the committee clerk comment on this as well.

Mr. Huffman: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The motion stated that both caucuses submit a list of two stakeholders to present by I think it was December 8, two weeks from today. Once those names are received, we'll send the invitation out and the chair will set a date for the meeting.

The Chair: Excellent. Perfect. Any other business?

Not seeing any, the date of our next meeting will be at the call of the chair.

That moves us to the end of the meeting. I would call for a motion to adjourn. Okay. I see Member Petrovic, that she is moving to adjourn. All in favour? Excellent. Any opposed? Online, all in favour? Perfect. Any opposed? Hearing none, this meeting is adjourned.

Thank you, everyone.

[The committee adjourned at 9:32 a.m.]

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