



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

The 31st Legislature
Second Session

Standing Committee
on
Resource Stewardship

Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) Act Review

Tuesday, February 17, 2026
9 a.m.

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Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship

Dyck, Nolan B., Grande Prairie (UC), Chair
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP), Deputy Chair

Al-Guneid, Nagwan, Calgary-Glenmore (NDP)
Armstrong-Homeniuk, Jackie, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (UC)
Calahoo Stonehouse, Jodi, Edmonton-Rutherford (NDP)
Cyr, Scott J., Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul (UC)
Ip, Nathan, Edmonton-South West (NDP)
Petrovic, Chelsae, Livingstone-Macleod (UC)
Rowswell, Garth, Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright (UC)
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UC)

Also in Attendance

Sawyer, Tara, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UC)

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Rachel McGraw	Research Officer
Warren Huffman	Committee Clerk
Jody Rempel	Committee Clerk
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Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship

Participants

Ministry of Justice

Kelly Hillier, Barrister and Solicitor

Office of the Public Interest Commissioner

Kevin Brezinski, Public Interest Commissioner

Chris Ewaniuk, Manager of Investigations

Ioana Rosu, Legal Counsel

9 a.m.

Tuesday, February 17, 2026

[Mr. Dyck in the chair]

The Chair: Well, good morning, everyone. It's a pleasure to be here as we talk about the whistle-blower act. I would like to call this meeting of the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship to order and welcome everyone in attendance both here and online.

My name is Nolan Dyck, MLA for Grande Prairie and chair of this committee. I'd ask that members and those joining the committee at the table introduce themselves for the record, and then afterwards we will go to online as well. We'll begin to my right.

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

Mr. Brezinski: Kevin Brezinski, Public Interest Commissioner.

Mr. Rosu: Ioana Rosu, legal counsel for the Public Interest Commissioner.

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

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

Mr. Bhurgri: Good morning. Abdul Aziz Bhurgri, research officer.

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

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

Mr. Huffman: Good morning. Warren Huffman, committee clerk.

The Chair: Excellent. We're going to be going online now. I'm going to just say your names all at once, and then if we can introduce in that order for the record, that'd be great. On screen, first, we'll start off with Member Yao, and then Member Al-Guneid, and then Member Petrovic, Member Sawyer, Member Armstrong-Homeniuk, and then Member Cyr. Then we will go to Ms Hillier and then Chris Ewaniuk after that.

Please, Member Yao, start us off.

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

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

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

Mrs. Sawyer: Tara Sawyer, MLA for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

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

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

Ms Hillier: Kelly Hillier. I'm the legal counsel for Alberta Justice.

Mr. Ewaniuk: Chris Ewaniuk, manager of investigations for the office of the Public Interest Commissioner.

The Chair: Excellent. Thank you so very much.

For the record I will note the following substitutions. Member Sawyer will be substituting for Member Yao.

Now, we do have a couple of housekeeping items here, too. Please note that the microphones are operated by *Hansard* staff for those in

the room. For those online, please unmute when it is your time to speak. Committee proceedings are live streamed on the Internet and broadcast on Alberta Assembly TV. The audio and live stream and transcripts of meetings can be accessed via the Legislative Assembly website. Those participating by videoconference are encouraged to please turn on your camera while speaking and mute your microphone when not speaking. Members participating virtually who wish to be placed on a 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 set your cellphones and other devices to silent for the duration of the meeting. That's housekeeping.

Could we please have Member Calahoo Stonehouse introduce herself here for the record.

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

The Chair: Excellent. Thank you so very much for joining us here this morning.

We're going to move on to the approval of the agenda. Are there any changes or additions to the draft agenda? Excellent. If not, would someone like to move that the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship approve the proposed agenda as distributed for its February 17, 2026, meeting? I see Member Rowswell.

Okay. Any discussion? All in favour of the approved agenda, please say aye. Any opposed? Perfect. That is – sorry. Everybody online, all in favour, please say aye. Any opposed to the agenda? Excellent. That is carried.

Next we will do approval of minutes. We have the draft minutes of our January 19, 2026, meeting. Are there any errors or omissions to note? 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 January 19, 2026? Okay. We have Member Sweet willing to move that.

Any comments? Perfect. For today while we're here, we're just going to do everybody in the room and online when we say in favour or opposed. Everybody, if you would, all in favour – we're going to try this on this one. Everyone in favour of the approval of the minutes, both in the room and online, please say aye. Man, we're rocking it today. Okay. Any opposed? Perfect. Well, that is carried.

All right. Well, as everyone knows here, we are reviewing the Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) Act. The committee requested an issues and proposals summary to be prepared for our consideration of the Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) Act. This document compiles and summarizes the input received by the committee during its review process. The document itself does not make any recommendations, nor is it intended to limit the scope of our deliberations. However, it is a convenient reference tool often used by committees to organize their deliberations.

Before I open the floor to questions, I will ask Mr. Bhurgri to provide us with a brief overview of the document. The floor is yours, sir.

Mr. Bhurgri: Thank you very much, Chair. I'm happy to provide an overview of the issues and proposals document. This document was posted on the committee's internal website on February 5, 2026. Just something that I'd like to clarify at the start is that I'm not going to be talking a lot about the content of the document itself, but I will talk about what this document is, what its purpose is, and how we at research services decided to organize it.

This document itself is a summary of the issues and proposals that were brought to the committee's attention in written submissions as well as oral submissions. The document itself is not an exhaustive summary of all the comments and opinions that were made. However,

our intent was to extract the main proposals out of those opinions and put them in this document for the committee's deliberation process.

In terms of the purpose of the document, like I said, the purpose is to assist the committee in its deliberation process. However, it is entirely the committee's prerogative to decide in which order they'd like to consider these recommendations, whether the committee would like to consider other issues that are related to the Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) Act that were maybe not in this document or were brought forward by stakeholders or members of the public. That is the committee's prerogative.

Now, coming on to the organization of the document itself, the document is organized into six sections. Section 1 is the introduction. Section 2 explains how to use this document. Section 3 has the executive summary. The executive summary is all the main proposals that were sort of made.

And then section 4 is the real core of this document. I'm going to talk a little bit about it because it's a little bit different than our usual document. The issues and proposals document is in the table format. If you look at sort of section 4 on page 4, you'd see that section 4 itself has a really big table. There are four main rows, and I'm going to briefly talk about each row to explain what its purpose is as well as how the table itself is organized.

The table itself has four sort of main columns. The first column is talking about the scope of the act, the second column is strengthening protections for whistle-blowers and witnesses, the third one is about improving the functionality of the act, and the fourth one is other issues and proposals that were made.

In terms of the rows there are also four rows. The first row on page 4 is issues. That explains the main issue. I will very briefly explain what the main issue is. Then the second sort of row talks in a little bit more detail as to what the proposal is. In this we have quoted wherever relevant. If the submitter has made an extensive recommendation, then we have quoted that recommendation in that. The third row is the relevant sections row. In this row you will find that if there's a relevant section that was brought forward or that's connected to the proposal, we have tried highlighting and identifying that.

9:10

The fourth row is the notes row. In this we have expanded on the rationale of the submitters where relevant, and in cases where either the stakeholders or members of the public who made the recommendation have not expanded on the rationale, we have still tried to provide as much contextual information as we can. Yeah. So for any recommendation that's in the second row, the fourth row is always a good row to sort of look at to see the further explanations or rationale. After that, it's within the document itself.

Then there are the fifth and the sixth sections. The fifth section is the list of written submissions, and the sixth section is the list of oral presentations.

I do believe that is it for my part, but if there are any questions about the document itself, I'm more than happy to answer.

Thank you.

The Chair: Excellent. Well, thank you so very much for that overview. Greatly appreciate it.

Okay. Any questions on the document? Member Rowswell.

Mr. Rowswell: Okay. Great. Regarding proposals to extend reprisal protection to nonemployees or suspected whistle-blowers, did your research identify documented instances where individuals were unable to seek protection under the current framework?

Mr. Bhurgri: Through the chair, thank you, Member, for that question. I do not believe that we came through that in our research. I think our research was mainly sort of focused on crossjurisdiction, which the committee had requested. Within that, I do not believe that we came across an instance. I do think that, if my memory serves me correctly, the commissioner maybe brought it up in his submission, but I do not believe that in our research or through our research we came across any such cases.

The Chair: All right. It looks like that is it for questions, so thank you so very much just for your overview there, Mr. Bhurgri. Greatly appreciate the time and effort that went into that.

This is going to take us into our deliberations and recommendations section here now, which I anticipate will take up the rest of the majority of this committee. This does take us into the final stages of our review of the Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) Act as well. I will remind committee members that we began our review on June 27, 2025, and we were given 12 months to complete our review of the act and report back to the Assembly.

We have a full-day meeting scheduled today for deliberations. We will break for lunch around noon. There were a number of motions put on notice for potential consideration today.

I will now open the floor for considerations or for discussions. Yes, Member Rowswell. You're up first.

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

The Chair: Excellent. Go ahead.

Mr. Rowswell: I'd like to – are we going to display these?

Mr. Huffman: Yeah. Which one?

Mr. Rowswell: Motion 18. I'd like to move that the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship recommend that the Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) Act be amended to (a) explicitly require all persons to keep confidential the identity of whistle-blowers, witnesses, and persons subject to investigation and (b) make it an offence, except in prescribed circumstances, to disclose information that could reasonably reveal those identities.

The Chair: Excellent.

I will open that up for discussion. Yes. Member Sweet.

Ms Sweet: Yeah. Mr. Chair, I just want to clarify. Like, I'm happy to discuss the motion, but I'm wondering if I'm allowed to ask clarifying questions in relation to the motion.

The Chair: To the commissioner?

Ms Sweet: To the commissioner.

The Chair: Give me one sec.

Ms Sweet: I'm not asking opinion on the motion. I'm just asking for clarity on the motion.

The Chair: Yes. As long as it's technical, he is absolutely free to answer any questions here today. Go ahead. Ask your question, please.

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Because we're speaking specifically to the confidentiality components of this motion, I have a few questions just around how our legislation currently works. For alignment on best practices, can we confirm whether other Canadian jurisdictions include explicit offences for breaching whistle-blower confidentiality and how our framework compares to other jurisdictions?

Mr. Brezinski: I know that Chris Ewaniuk, our manager, has done the jurisdictional scan, so I'm going to refer to Chris to answer that question.

The Chair: Excellent. Thank you, Chris. Feel free to go ahead.

Mr. Ewaniuk: There are some jurisdictions internationally that do set out more strict provisions for protecting the confidentiality of whistle-blowers and witnesses. As it relates to offences, off the top of my head I can't recall the specific jurisdictions, but that's certainly something we can bring back to the committee.

Mr. Brezinski: Maybe just to add to that, under the Australia act they do have an offence provision.

Ms Sweet: There is an offence. Do we know what the offence provision is?

Mr. Brezinski: Go ahead, Ioana.

Ms Rosu: Yeah. Certainly. The act makes it an offence to reveal the identity or identifying information of a person who made a disclosure of wrongdoing unless it is for the purposes of the act, the disclosure is required by law, the discloser consents to the use of the information, or the information was previously lawfully published.

Ms Sweet: Great. Thank you.

The Chair: All right.

If there are no other questions, I guess I will call the question on this. All those in favour of this motion – sorry. In the room and online. We're going to try this once again. We're going to get good at this by the end of the day. Both in the room and online, if you are in favour of this motion, please say aye. Any opposed, please say nay. Perfect.

This motion is approved.

On to our next motion. Okay. Perfect. Member Sweet.

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Mr. Chair. If we could please pull up motion 3. The motion reads that

the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship recommend that the Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) Act be amended by expanding the wrongdoings to which the act applies to include unethical behaviour.

If I can just explain a little bit.

The Chair: Absolutely.

Ms Sweet: Thank you. The inclusion of this type of disclosure is important because unethical behaviour is usually what leads to and results in a disclosure being made. Constricting the scope of disclosure to exclude this can result in many disclosures that could arguably be beneficial from being made, I guess would be the way to say it. I don't know if I'd say it like that. I think we're just looking at ensuring that it's explicit within the act around the definition.

The Chair: Okay. Any others? Member Rowswell.

Mr. Rowswell: Yeah. I think we'd need a little more definition, some clear, comprehensive descriptions of those things, of the unethical behaviour and other things. I think there's another motion that might expand on it and be more inclusive coming forward.

9:20

Mr. Ip: If I may ask a clarifying question to the commissioner and his staff just on the scope and clarity of the term "unethical behaviour." Can officials clarify how unethical behaviour is currently

treated under the act and whether it is captured indirectly through existing categories of wrongdoing?

Mr. Brezinski: Thanks. Yes, it is considered. For example, if we have an allegation or a disclosure regarding the gross mismanagement of employees, we would certainly look at a number of different things: how far the person or the leader of the organization deviated from their policies and procedures, whether the person acted unethically in decision-making, the form of bullying and harassment in terms of the gross mismanagement of employees and the extent of it, and how that may impact the culture of the organization. All of that is taken into consideration when we're looking at wrongdoing. Keeping it broad allows us to look at different aspects of unethical behaviour.

Mr. Ip: Just a follow-up question if I may. Has the Public Interest Commissioner identified cases or known of cases where unethical conduct was reported but could not be acted upon because it did not meet the statutory definition of wrongdoing?

Mr. Brezinski: I may just defer to Chris, but I can speak generally. When we do get disclosures, if there's not specific information to meet the definition of wrongdoing, then potentially there are those circumstances where if it's simply just unethical behaviour, it wouldn't rise to the level of misconduct.

Chris, do you have anything further on that?

Mr. Ewaniuk: Yeah. I agree. Another thing to consider is that "unethical behaviour" is a very subjective term. What one individual might view as unethical might not rise to the level of wrongdoing, and that unethical behaviour is defined in that organization's policy. It may differ from organization to organization as well.

The Chair: Excellent. Well, thank you, Member Ip, for those questions.

Member Petrovic and then Member Calahoo Stonehouse.

Mrs. Petrovic: Thank you, Chair. I was just going to say that I agree with my colleague MLA Rowswell as well. I believe that Mr. Ewaniuk – I really apologize for the pronunciation of your last name if it was wrong. I was going to state further that "unethical" is a subjective term, and when we're looking at issues like this, we should be very objective. So at this time I am opposed to the motion that is currently on the floor mostly because I think we do need more precise language in this.

That's it, Chair. Thank you.

The Chair: Excellent. Thank you.

Member Calahoo Stonehouse.

Member Calahoo Stonehouse: Thank you, Chair. In support of the motion, you know, unethical behaviour is often the precursor to more serious wrongdoing, and if we want a system that catches the problems earlier, the act must allow people to report concerns before they actually escalate. Strengthening our accountability culture, the modern public-sector accountability framework, recognizes that ethical lapses, while not always illegal, can still undermine the public trust, including unethical behaviour, which strengthens, of course, the culture of accountability.

We want to encourage responsible reporting in governance. Employees are more likely to come forward when they see behaviour that feels wrong. It may not fit the definition of legally wrong, but it feels wrong. Broadening this definition empowers our staff, empowers citizens to report responsibly and safely, so reducing the ambiguity. Right now individuals may hesitate to report because they're unsure of whether or not their witness qualified as wrongdoing, therefore they

stay silent. Adding “unethical behaviour” provides clarity, and it reduces the hesitation. I think it’s really important that we’re supporting good governance, and ethical conduct, of course, is the foundational principle of public administration. Recognizing unethical behaviour is a reportable concern: that totally aligns with the act of widely accepted governance and integrity standards.

That’s all I have to put forward in support of my colleague’s motion. Thank you.

The Chair: Excellent. Thank you very much.

Is there anyone else who would like to speak to this motion?

Well, if not, I will call the vote. Once again in the room and online, for those that are in favour of this motion, please say aye. All right. Those opposed to this motion, please say nay. All right.

I’m going to call this defeated.

Only because we didn’t have everybody vote online, I think. I don’t know if I can say that, but I didn’t see some . . .

Ms Robert: It’s defeated. If someone wants a recorded vote, then that . . .

The Chair: Okay. If somebody wants a recorded vote, we can do so. Okay. Perfect. Excellent.

Member Rowswell, you’re next on my list.

Mr. Rowswell: I’ve got motion 12.

Mr. Huffman: Mr. Rowswell, if you wanted to start reading it, that might speed things up a little bit.

Mr. Rowswell: Okay. I’d like to move that the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship recommend that the Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) Act be amended to clarify and expand the scope of the definitions of key terms including disclosure, wrongdoing, and reprisal. In respect of the definition of wrongdoing, it includes systemic misconduct and institutional integrity failures that pose a substantial risk to the public interest.

Clear and comprehensive definitions are essential to the interpretation of the act, so we need very explicit and expanded words as opposed to what we just went through. That’s what I think we should look at.

The Chair: Excellent. Okay.

Member Petrovic, you have some comments?

Mrs. Petrovic: Thank you, Chair. I spoke to it earlier just in regard to pretty precise language, and I was hoping I could put an amendment on the floor in regard to this motion.

The Chair: Absolutely. What’s your amendment?

Mrs. Petrovic: My amendment is that the motion be amended (a) in clause A by striking out “wrongdoing, and reprisal” and substituting “wrongdoing, unethical behaviour, and reprisal” and (b) in clause B by striking out “systemic misconduct” and substituting “unethical behaviour and systemic misconduct.”

The Chair: Excellent. Are there any comments on this? Member Sweet.

Ms Sweet: I know we’re all shocked by that.

It’s interesting that I see this now come up that actually has all the language that my motion just had a few minutes ago around unethical behaviour. At some point the government agreed that those words were appropriate. I find it interesting now that the government has changed their mind and has decided to amend their own motion that literally just was motion 3. So I’m curious to know

from the government side why it is that it worked and it seemed to work, and we were all in agreement on language, to deciding now that the language that we all agreed on that made sense no longer makes sense. I’m just curious if someone on the government side can explain why it worked a couple of days ago and it doesn’t work now.

Mr. Rowswell: Yeah. I’m not sure about the couple of days ago. Anyway, I think this just expands on what you proposed, and I think it just makes a broader wording and defining more words within it. I think it’s just more complete. You know, it’s what you had plus, is kind of the logic behind it.

The Chair: Member Sweet, and then Member Petrovic had her hand up, but she took it down, so we’ll find out if she wants on the list.

9:30

Ms Sweet: Okay. Mr. Chair, I think all I’ll say is that I was fine with the initial amendment by the government side for motion 12 with the language as it was written. I am not okay with the amendment because it removes the intent of 12, so I would be encouraging all members to vote this down. I think that the original motion as it stood was fine, but I can’t understand – basically, the amendment just removes all of the language and makes the motion pretty much void. I’m actually curious if it doesn’t even change intent, but I would be fine to be corrected on that.

The Chair: Excellent. Thank you, Member Sweet. Member Petrovic.

Mrs. Petrovic: Thanks, Chair. Sorry. There are so many buttons to click online.

Just in regard to this amendment I think it really brings the balance and focused expansion by protecting individuals that are actively engaged in the workplace while also narrowing the scope to exclude some of the job applicants. Overall, I think the amendment promotes fairness, consistency, accountability within publicly funded environments while still maintaining a clear, workable legislative boundary, which is something that we need in keeping the objectiveness of the language. It’s pretty much all we’re doing. It doesn’t remove anything. It’s just adding unethical behaviour, which is what your motion was, but just adding the objective boundaries within it.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Member Petrovic.

Excellent. Okay. Is there anybody else that wants to speak to this motion? If not, we will call the question.

Mr. Huffman: This is on the amendment.

The Chair: Sorry. This is just on the amendment, and then we will have to go back to the motion.

So on the amendment all those in favour, both in the room and online, please say aye. Any opposed, both in the room and online, please say nay. All right.

That amendment motion passes.

Now we’re back on the main motion with that subamendment as part of the motion.

Ms Robert: The motion as amended.

The Chair: The motion as amended. Thank you. Perfect. We’re going to get this.

Back to this motion. Is there any further discussion on this motion?

I'm not seeing any in the room, so I will call the question. Those in favour of this motion, both in the room and online, please say aye. Okay. And any opposed, both in the room and online, please say nay.

That motion is carried as amended.

Perfect.

Member Sweet.

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Mr. Chair. If we could just go to motion 1, please. I can read it into the record while we're finding it. Okay.

Thank you, Mr. Chair. Motion 1 reads that

the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship recommend that the Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) Act be amended to (a) require all persons to keep confidential the identity of a person who makes a disclosure of wrongdoing unless otherwise required by law or necessity to carry out the purpose of the act and (b) make it an offence to disclose the identity of a person who makes a disclosure of wrongdoing except in the circumstance referred to in clause (a).

The Chair: We've got it coming up on the screen. All right. Little technicalities here. Thank you, Member Sweet, for your patience. Because main motion 18 was just passed and this has significant similarities and we can't pass two motions that are the same, can you explain to the committee how this might be different than motion 18?

Ms Sweet: Yeah. I think this is where we're going to start seeing – I will say that I just want to start with that I feel like the government and our side on motions: we're quite similar in a variety of them. I feel like as we move through the day, we're probably going to see some that may overlap significantly or whatever, so I'm okay with discussing with counsel when we start getting into, "Have we already addressed this issue?" because maybe we have just based on how they're written.

What I would say, though, is that I do feel that when we heard from stakeholders when they presented to the committee, confidentiality was the number one issue that repeatedly came up, the culture around workplace and people feeling confident enough to be able to come forward and be able to disclose that. The more confident we can be within the legislation that we are protecting front-line workers and being able to do that, I think, the better we can. I feel like this motion helps strengthen that. I do want to ensure the safeguards for people when they come forward, that they don't feel fearful, they don't feel that their name will be disclosed.

We did see, in a crossjurisdictional analysis that was presented on day 1 or day 2, a case that happened that ended up having a worker's name disclosed to the courts, so I guess my intent behind this motion is to ensure that the act is as strong as it possibly can be. I think that this does that. If there's a concern that maybe the past motion already deals with this issue, I'm open to that discussion, but I feel like this makes this very clear to the government that it is a number one priority for this committee.

The Chair: Excellent. Well, I saw Member Petrovic's hand up here, so we'll go to Member Petrovic.

Mrs. Petrovic: Thank you, Chair. I actually – you know, I understand the intent of this motion, and in principle I agree, but I think it does not ensure that confidentiality is applied equally to all parties involved in the investigation. Also, considering that we've passed motion 18, I do believe that this motion is redundant, and I'm just not seeing it there. If you don't rule this out of order, I'm hoping I can convince others to vote no to this because it is redundant, and I believe it's missing a key component to it as well.

The Chair: This is a tricky one because they do have significant similarities, and from recommendations from our clerks both motion 18 and this motion cannot live together at the same time. Based around that, I will just make the call to say that this motion itself is in conflict with the one that's already passed, and we will just carry on. We'll just call this one out of order because of the similarities and because they can't live together, so we will carry on.

Thank you, Member Sweet, for bringing this forward.

Ms Sweet: Can I do another one?

The Chair: You want to do another one? Look, sure. You know what? I'll do this for you this one time. Member Sweet, you're up.

Ms Sweet: Well, let's just go to motion 2, and I feel like the government is going to be okay with number 2. It may have an amendment – maybe not – but I think it's okay.

Main motion 2, that

the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship recommend that the Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) Act be amended to include contractors, temporary staff, interns, volunteers, and job applicants in the definition of an employee.

9:40

The Chair: Excellent. I see Member Al-Guneid's hand up first, and then I see Member Rowsell right after her.

Ms Al-Guneid: Yeah. I had a question more on the evidential burden to the whistle-blowers, and the question is for the Public Interest Commissioner here. If you can clarify what evidential burden currently rests on an employee alleging a reprisal and whether the burden is consistent with best practices, again, in the whistle-blower protection.

Mr. Brezinski: Thanks. Ioana will answer this question.

Ms Rosu: Thank you. Currently the complainant who brings a complaint of reprisal doesn't bear an evidentiary burden to prove a reprisal occurred. Because of the way our office conducts investigations, we collect evidence from both the complainant, so the employee, and the employer, and we use that to determine whether or not the employer has an alternate explanation other than reprisal for the job action that they took. There's no current legal burden on the complainant, which would bring us in line with best practices in practice even if that's not how the act is currently written.

Ms Al-Guneid: Just a quick follow-up here. Even, like, when the employer actually controls most of the relevant documentation and decision-making records?

Ms Rosu: That's correct, yes. Because we're requesting the evidence from both the complainant and the employer, we are able to collect all of the evidence the employer has as well. The complainant isn't required to bring that evidence to our attention.

Ms Al-Guneid: Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Rowsell: I'd like to bring forward an amendment.

The Chair: Excellent. Bring it forward, sir.

Mr. Rowsell: I would like to move that

the motion be amended by striking out "interns, volunteers, and job applicants" and substituting "interns and volunteers."

I think it's important that the definition of employee strengthens whistle-blower protections for individuals who work within an

organization or have worked there but not necessarily anyone that was applying for the job. I would like to make it work for people that are actively engaged in the workplace to be able to do this, and a job applicant might just: I didn't get hired; therefore, I'm going to complain about something. So I would just like to take job applicants out of the motion and keep the rest of it. The intent of the motion is great.

Mr. Ip: I just have some questions for the commissioner. Does removing job applicants leave individuals vulnerable to retaliation or discrimination if they raise concerns about irregularities in hiring practices?

Mr. Brezinski: Yes. The potential is certainly there. Our recommendation is to include everyone so that they have the protections available to them, including students, for example, which are not included in the amendment.

Mr. Ip: In terms of consistency with other jurisdictions my follow-up question is: do other provinces or federal legislation include job applicants in their whistle-blower definitions, and what has been their experience?

Mr. Brezinski: I may ask Chris again for the crossjurisdictional scan if you're aware.

Mr. Ewaniuk: Yeah. Specifically, the Nunavut act, which is sort of where our recommendation fell in line, protects any person who makes a disclosure of wrongdoing or gives evidence to assist in an investigation. So that wouldn't include students or, really, anybody in that category.

The Chair: Excellent. Thank you.

Any other comments on this? Member Sweet.

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Again, I just want to reinforce that we did receive a recommendation that included this, and I think removing job applicants creates a gap in protection at a stage where individuals may be particularly vulnerable and have less ability to speak up. We know hiring processes are a critical point of public trust, and if applicants cannot report safely, we undermine the integrity of those processes, especially in the public sector. And, of course, again, the purpose of the act is to encourage reporting of wrongdoing whenever it occurs, so I believe that excluding job applicants narrows that purpose unnecessarily.

The Chair: Excellent. Thank you, Member Sweet.

Anyone else who would like to speak to the amendment?

If not, we will try this once again. We will call the vote on the amendment of this. Once again we will do in the room and online at the same time. All in favour of adding this amendment, please say aye. All those opposed, please say nay.

That amendment is approved and is carried.

Now back on to the motion as amended. Any further discussion on this motion? Member Ip, was that hand up?

Mr. Ip: Yes. Mr. Chair, I'd like to actually make a few points supporting the main motion, now amended. Specifically, I just wanted to highlight the fact that public-sector workplaces increasingly rely on contractors, temporary staff, and interns and that our legislation should reflect that reality to avoid leaving accountability gaps. People in nonpermanent roles especially often see operational issues first, and I think protecting them encourages early reporting and reduces the risk of problems escalating. It's also important to note that protection should not depend on whether someone is on payroll, on contract, or in a

volunteer capacity. Wrongdoing, of course, is wrongdoing, and the act should recognize that.

I will be supporting the main motion and encourage others to do the same.

The Chair: Excellent. Any other comments on this motion?

If not, I will call the question. Both in the room and online, all in favour, please say aye. All right. Any opposed, both in the room and online, please say nay. Excellent.

That motion is carried.

Excellent. Member Rowswell.

Mr. Rowswell: Motion 13. I guess I'll just go ahead, then. I'd like to move that

the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship recommend that the Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) Act be amended to expand the application of the act to include the following service providers and any other prescribed service provider: (a) continuing care home operators, (b) supportive living accommodation operators, and (c) organizations delivering publicly funded services under contract with the government.

The Alberta health care system operates through a combination of subsidiaries, corporations, and prescribed service providers that deliver publicly funded services. Expanding the act's application serves that accountability mechanisms reflect the full scope of the modern health industry service delivery.

The Chair: Excellent. Thank you very much, Member Rowswell.

Okay. Member Sweet.

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have an amendment to this one.

The Chair: Feel free.

Ms Sweet: The amendment reads that

the motion be amended as the following: (a) by striking out "the following service providers and any other prescribed service provider" and substituting "the following"; (b) by striking out clause (c) and substituting the following: "(c) all contracted service providers of a department, public entity, or office, and (d) subsidiary health corporations within the meaning of the Provincial Health Agencies Act."

The reason I'm doing this amendment, Mr. Chair, is that striking the phrase "any other prescribed service provider" removes – I hate this word – ambiguity and ensures the act applies to clearly defined categories of service providers. I believe that replacing clause (c) with "all contracted service providers of a department, public entity, or office" ensures that protections apply consistently across the public sector. Adding subsidiary health corporations ensures that whistle-blower protection extends to all major components of Alberta Health Services delivery systems, not just those directly named. Although it does maintain the intent of the main motion, I do believe that it actually speaks to my private member's bill, which is expanding to ensure that any type of health agency that is either currently or soon to be developed by the current government – that all workers are protected no matter where they work.

9:50

The Chair: Excellent. Thank you, Member Sweet.

I'm going to go to Member Petrovic online here.

Mrs. Petrovic: Thank you, Chair. I want to do a subamendment as well to this if you're okay with that. I would like to include that the amendment be amended by striking out clause (d) and substituting the following: "(d) subsidiary health corporations

within the meaning of the Provincial Health Agencies Act, and
(e) any other prescribed service provider.”

Just like to add that last little bit onto there.

The Chair: Excellent. Okay. Any discussion on the subamendment of the amendment?

No discussion, so I will call the question on this subamendment for the amendment, and then we'll go to the amendment. I think that's correct, what is on the screen. Okay. I will call the question on the subamendment. All in favour, both in the room and online, please say aye. Any opposed, please say no or nay. Okay.

That subamendment is carried.

Now we're on to the amendment to the motion. Any discussion on the amendment to the motion?

I don't see any discussion on the amendment to the motion right now, so I'll call the question. All those in favour, both in the room and online, please say aye. Perfect. Any opposed to this, please say nay. Excellent.

That amendment is carried.

Now we're back on to the motion as amended. We're going to get there.

Ms Sweet: Mr. Chair, just because it was subamended and amended and then amended, is there a way for us to just get the current wording of what this motion says now, please?

The Chair: Absolutely. We will get that up on the screen momentarily.

Okay. This is the motion we are currently working on with both the amendment and the subamendment included. I'll give you a moment to read it.

Yes, Member Sweet.

Ms Sweet: I want to spend some time on this one as amended. I'm just wondering if we can get some clarity on whether or not – I believe your office just reviewed the impacts on Bill 11 and what this means for the whistle-blower piece, and it looked like people were covered. I'm just wanting to get clarity on if this will cover everybody working within, currently, service deliveries through Alberta Health Services and public delivery systems and then those who may be receiving or providing health care services and other service deliveries. Are we missing anything?

Mr. Brezinski: The way that I read this, it's comprehensive of everyone – that's the way I read it – which is significant.

Ms Sweet: Okay. That's all I needed. Good.

The Chair: Excellent. Any other comments? No.

Okay. I will call the question on this motion. All in favour, please say aye, both in the room and online. Any opposed, both online and in person?

That motion is carried as amended.

Member Ip, please go ahead.

Mr. Ip: I would like to put forward a motion, Mr. Chair, that the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship recommend that the Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) Act be amended to establish a process for employees to obtain interim relief from reprisals while an investigation into a complaint of a reprisal is ongoing.

This seems self-evident to me. Right now the lack of interim relief allows the implicated officials to continue working and therefore commit reprisals while the whistle-blower is waiting for the process to be completed. The fact is that proper redress can take years to achieve, and the whistle-blower, frankly, should not be left vulnerable within this timeline. This motion will address that.

The Chair: Excellent. Member Rowswell.

Mr. Rowswell: Yeah. I would agree that sometimes it could take time. Reprisal means that you've perceived that you have suffered some damage. So while that's trying to be figured out, you know, it's good that you have an option or an opportunity to get some relief. I would agree with this motion.

The Chair: Excellent.

I'm not seeing any other comments both in the room or online, so I will call the question. All in favour, both online and in the room, please say aye. Any opposed, both online and in the room, please say nay. Excellent.

That motion is carried.

Excellent. Member Rowswell.

Mr. Rowswell: Motion 14. I would like to move that the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship recommend that the Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) Act be amended to expand the application of the act to municipalities.

Extending the act to municipalities promotes consistency and fairness across the broader public sector by ensuring similar whistleblower protections apply to both the province and municipal levels. Municipal employees manage significant public funds and deliver essential services. They should have access to clear legislative protections when disclosing wrongdoing, including the municipality. It strengthens accountability and transparency in local government and reinforces the public confidence and aligning these to make sure that there are not two different rules. If they're all the same, then it helps out a lot where public dollars are involved.

The Chair: Excellent. Thank you, Member Rowswell.

Member Calahoo Stonehouse, please.

Member Calahoo Stonehouse: Thank you, Chair. You know, we're going to vote against this amendment essentially because municipalities have their own whistle-blower bylaws, so as an extension of this act it could be seen as government overreach. Those that do not have their own bylaws would likely benefit from the expansion of this act. We consulted with municipalities, and they believe it is their right to establish their own laws. Again, I want to reiterate that this is clearly government overreach.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Excellent. Thank you, Member.

Anyone else desire to speak to this motion? Okay. Excellent. Member Petrovic.

Mrs. Petrovic: Hi, Chair. I just would like to say that a lot of organizations that we're looking at also have their own policies in place in regard to this according to them. You know, should we be looking at all of those other places that have this? Like, I'm pretty sure many, many organizations that we're currently voting to protect have pathways forward for this. This is that extra pathway when things are not getting resolved. I'm going to be voting yes with my colleague. I'm rather confused by the wanting of voting no in this just considering this is the whole point, to be able to protect those people who are bringing this forward, reporting within an internal organization and not having any additional avenues after that.

Anyways, Chair, I'm just blown away by the voting of no with this one. That's it.

10:00

The Chair: Thank you, Member Petrovic.

Anyone else wanting to speak to this motion?

Excellent. Well, I will call the question, then. For those both online and in the room, all those in favour, please say aye. Any opposed to this motion both online and in the room, please say no or nay. All right.

This motion is carried.

On to the next motion. Do we have another?

Ms Sweet: Oh, that's me. Sorry. Number 5, please.

The Chair: Sure.

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship recommend that the Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) Act be amended to require the department, public entity, office, or prescribed service provider alleged to have committed a reprisal against an employee to prove that it did not commit that reprisal if the employee establishes a prima facie case of reprisal.

As it currently stands – oh, that's my argument. I'll just wait. I'm, like, raring to get this done.

The Chair: Well, we'll get it up here on the screen, and then we'll give you a moment just for your arguments here, Member Sweet. Then we'll open it to the floor after that.

Excellent. Member Sweet, just want to confirm that this is the motion that you have. Perfect.

I will open it up to the floor.

Ms Sweet: Can I argue my point now?

The Chair: You can argue your point. Sorry. I apologize. Absolutely.

Ms Sweet: Just real quick, as it currently stands, the act requires the whistle-blower to prove that any adverse actions were solely due to the individual's whistle-blowing. This can be incredibly difficult to actually prove as the actions may not always be overt and departments can be creative about how these reprisals are committed.

The Chair: Excellent. Thank you.

Member Rowswell.

Mr. Rowswell: Yeah. This would significantly shift the burden of proof on to the employer, potentially creating procedural imbalance in the investigation process. Reversing the burden may increase the risk of speculative or weak claims proceeding further than warranted, placing considerable legal and administrative strain on public entities. It's important that whistle-blowers are protected, but changes to evidentiary standards should be carefully balanced to preserve fairness, proportionality, and due process. You know, it's pretty standard, innocent until proven guilty, so I think this would be changing that basic standard.

The Chair: Excellent. Thank you, Member.

Anyone else want to speak to this motion? Nagwan, sorry I missed – if you would like to speak to it, feel free. Sorry; Member Al-Guneid.

Ms Al-Guneid: I did. Yes. I thought I had my – yeah. I mean, shifting that burden of proof after a prima facie case here is established: like, would it create a more balanced or a fair process here given the employer's greater access to information about the employment decisions? That's a question to the officials in the room.

Mr. Brezinski: Yeah. I think Ioana answered this question earlier in relation to the burden of proof, so I'll just turn it back over to Ioana.

Ms Rosu: Yeah. Just to reiterate a little bit, we don't just request the complainant to provide evidence; we always ask the employer to provide evidence about any job action they took as well. So a reverse onus wouldn't change the way these investigations unfold in practice.

Ms Al-Guneid: Say the last part again. Sorry.

Ms Rosu: A reverse onus would not change how the investigations currently unfold in practice because we request that information from the employer.

Ms Al-Guneid: Right. Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: Excellent.

Anyone else interested in speaking to this motion?

I see nobody, so I will call the question. All in favour of this motion both in the room and online, please say aye. Now, all opposed both in the room and online, please say nay. Excellent.

That motion is defeated.

On to the next motion. Member Rowswell.

Mr. Rowswell: Motion 16. I would like to move that the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship recommend that the Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) Act be amended to (a) expand its application to include all private postsecondary institutions that receive public funding, and (b) extend protection to students of postsecondary institutions to which the act applies who disclose wrongdoing in academic research and practicum settings.

As the commissioner suggested – you mentioned students earlier, and this is one specifically to that. Public funding carries public accountability. Even if a private postsecondary institution receives government funding, they should be open to this accountability. Of course, students are in even a more jeopardy situation relative to their studies, and the power imbalance is obvious, so I think this would help with that.

The Chair: Excellent. Any other comments? Yes, Member Al-Guneid.

Ms Al-Guneid: Yeah. This is an interesting one because the motion adds private postsecondary institutions, yet it fails to add the private health care facilities. You know, it's the same Bill 204 that requires this and recommends that to protect public interest. We have health care workers working in both facilities, the private and the public, so it's just surprising that this motion includes private postsecondary institutions yet fails to include the private health care facilities. Yeah. It's important to allow, for sure, students in postsecondary institutions to, you know, raise the alarm and whistle-blow, and equally it is important to do the same in health care facilities. It's a hard one here. I find it interesting to see it not including the private health care facilities.

The Chair: Excellent. Thank you, Member.

Is there anyone else interested in speaking to this motion? Excellent.

Okay. Sorry. I will go to the vote now.

Sorry, Member Al-Guneid. Is that a prior hand, or is this a new hand up? I apologize. It's a prior hand? Excellent. Thank you.

Okay, so we will go to the vote, then, on this one. All those in favour both in the room and online, please say aye. Excellent. Any opposed both in the room and online, please say nay. Excellent.

That motion is carried.

On to our next motion. Member Sweet.

Ms Sweet: Number 6, please. I'll read it into the record while we're waiting for number 6. The Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship recommend that the Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) Act be amended to expand the act's application to include all contracted service providers of a department, public entity, or office.

The Chair: Excellent. Member Rowswell.

Mr. Rowswell: Okay. I'd like to make an amendment or suggest an amendment.

The Chair: Excellent. Go ahead.

Mr. Rowswell: You know, it's great other than that the motion be amended by striking out "office" and substitute "office, as defined in the act."

10:10

The Chair: Thank you. We are just double-checking to make sure we haven't passed any other prior motions that might conflict with this one. Just give us a moment here.

All right. Once again I'm going to make a call. Member Sweet, thanks so very much for bringing this motion forward. With our prior passed motion 13 the wording is exactly the same. It's already in there. Once again, we can't have two motions in contradiction, so I'll make a call, but you have a comment quickly on this.

Ms Sweet: Yeah. I'm just wondering if I could get the will of the committee to maybe take a 10-minute break and go through my motions with counsel to find out if any more of them are too similar, and then we can just get through the ones that make sense while people don't have to wait.

The Chair: Yes. I'm very willing for that, but before that let's just deal with this motion on the floor, and then let's get the will of the committee right afterwards.

As we were, just on this motion, motion 6. We can't have two conflicting motions both approved by the committee. Motion 13 was already approved and already has this wording in it. That makes this motion redundant. So at the call of the chair, we will just say that this one is in conflict. Thank you for bringing this forward, Member.

There was a request for a 10-minute break for the member just to go through her motions with our counsel. I think that that's good. Let's meet back here at 10:25. That's 12 minutes. I'll give you an extra two for a nice, easy round number.

Is that at the call of the chair? Okay. Perfect.

I have the authority. At 10:25 please be back here so we can get back at it.

[The committee adjourned from 10:14 a.m. to 10:25 a.m.]

The Chair: Well, on the risk of being too early, I will call this meeting back – I guess we weren't out – to order.

We will turn it back over to Member Sweet. I believe she has another motion to put forward.

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Mr. Chair. We'll move on to 9. This one we can do. It reads that

the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship recommends that the Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) Act be amended to require the Public Interest Commissioner to identify and collect additional data on the operation of the act and prepare a report to be tabled in the Assembly prior to the review of the act under section 37.

The Chair: Excellent. Thank you.

Mr. Rowswell: I have an amendment that the motion be amended by striking out "prior to the review of the act under section 37" and substituting "annually."

You know, I think it would be good if we can just have a continuous data disclosure of what's happening. I think it would be a good thing.

The Chair: Great. Okay. Any comments on the amendment to the main motion?

Member Calahoo Stonehouse: My question is around the timeline. How will it impact the workload for the office of the Public Interest Commissioner? Following up, this change to the legislation will allow the committee to evaluate how effective the audits of this legislation have been and to determine how to improve the process if deemed necessary.

The Chair: All right. Well, Commissioner, you're free to go ahead.

Mr. Brezinski: Thanks. Thanks for the question. Obviously, with all the amendments thus far our jurisdiction has expanded exponentially, so the workload will certainly be an issue.

With respect to this amendment it's very similar to one of our recommendations that were made. I think getting data from all the different jurisdictional entities will give us a clear picture as to what's being done. It'll add a little more work, obviously, but I think it's valued.

Member Calahoo Stonehouse: Thank you.

The Chair: Excellent. Thank you very much, Commissioner.

Any other comments or questions by the committee?

Excellent. Well, in that case, I will call the question on the amendment. All those in favour both in the room and online, please say aye. Any opposed both online and in the room, please say nay.

That amendment is carried.

Now to the main motion as amended. Any comments from the committee on the motion as amended? No comments?

All right. Then I will call the question. All those in favour of this motion both online and in the room, please say aye. Any opposed, please say nay. Excellent.

That motion is carried.

Mr. Rowswell: Motion 17. I move that

the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship recommend that the Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) Act be amended to protect employees who make a disclosure from civil liability relating to that disclosure except if the disclosure is made in bad faith.

It's a significant barrier if people are afraid that they might have a financial loss or get sued civilly to people even venturing down this path. I think we do need the bad-faith component in there and not extend that to people that have made false or malicious claims. I think that's a balanced approach to this.

The Chair: Excellent. Any comments or any questions from any other members of the committee?

Member Ip: We speak in favour of this motion and the general premise of the motion. I believe that it protects whistle-blowers from unjustly being sued, and we support the increased protection for those whistle-blowers from experiencing reprisals.

The Chair: Excellent. Well, thank you very much.

Any others wanting to speak to this motion? I see nobody else.

Then I will call the question. All those in favour, both online and in the room, please say aye. Any opposed, both online and in the room, please say nay. All right.

That motion is carried.

On to our next motion of the day, motion 10, please.

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Motion 10 reads that the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship recommend that the amendments recommended by the committee come into force no later than two years from the date of this report.

The rationale, obviously, for this, Mr. Chair, is that we have seen over the years that recommendations have been made and those recommendations have not come into force, and we are actually reviewing some of the same recommendations that were made at the last committee review. So we would like stronger language to ensure that the government actually is able to bring into force the recommendations that this committee has made and the recommendations from the experts.

The Chair: Excellent.

Mr. Rowswell: I'd like to make an amendment that the motion be amended by striking out "two years" and substituting "three years."

I agree with the motivation behind this, how in the last review nothing happened. We want to put some teeth behind looking after that, but just the legislative schedule – I think three years would give a little more time to do it properly and make sure it's well researched out, so I just want to extend it by one year.

The Chair: Excellent. Member Stonehouse Calahoo.

Member Calahoo Stonehouse: Thank you, Mr. Chair. We're not going to support this amendment. We believe that two years is plenty of time to implement these recommendations, and we want to ensure that whistle-blowers are protected within that two years and that this legislation is implemented.

The Chair: Excellent. Anyone else? And I apologize for messing up your last name there, Member Calahoo Stonehouse.

Mrs. Petrovic: If I can, I would just like some clarification. I guess it's maybe not necessarily even on this moment of the motion at hand, but does this indicate a dictation to – like, when it states that the amendments recommended by the committee come into force, my understanding is that we are to provide recommendations. The language of this seems like we're dictating when this needs to be of the will of the Legislature. Am I able to just get some clarifying wording behind this, perhaps from someone smarter than me that's in the room?

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you so very much, Member Petrovic. This would be a recommendation to the government. It's not a requirement, but it is just a recommendation.

Okay. Member Sweet.

Ms Sweet: Sorry, Mr. Chair. I was just waiting to see if the member online had any more comments.

I appreciate that, like, it is a recommendation, for sure. It is past practice where we're able to at a committee level encourage and recommend to the government that the legislation be drafted for a review at the Legislature. Obviously, it will always be a vote at the will of the membership, so we can't determine an outcome of a vote, but giving a deadline of two years: I think when there is a will by the government to write legislation, it can be done. It can be done

very quickly when it's needed to be done. Although I appreciate the government member trying to give the government a little bit more time, my concern is that when we start saying three years, then we're already entering into the report and, like, starting to review again for the five-year sunset clause, so I think two years is fair.

Three years also pushes us past the next election, and my fear is that if we go past the next election, then there is potential for a loss of data, politely, which may not have the legislation be amended. It may end up going somewhere else, so I would like to see it done within this legislative period prior to the next election.

10:35

The Chair: Thank you for your comments, Member Sweet.

Any other comments by any members of the committee? I see none.

We are on the amendment right now, so I will call the question on the amendment. All those in favour, both in the room and online, of the amendment, please say aye. Any opposed, both in the room and online, please say nay. All right. I believe the amendment is carried.

That puts us back to the motion as amended if there are any comments or discussion by members of the committee.

I'm not seeing any discussion on the motion as amended, so I'll call the question. All those in favour of the motion as amended, both online and in the room, please say aye. Now, any opposed please say nay, both online and in the room. All right.

That motion is carried as amended.

Excellent.

Mr. Rowswell: Motion 19. I move that

the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship recommend that the Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) Act be amended to (a) extend protections against reprisals to any person, including former employees and persons suspected of being whistle-blowers or witnesses, and (b) expand the definition of reprisal to include retaliatory actions that are not employment related.

The Chair: Excellent. We'll wait just to get it up on the screen. Should be coming momentarily.

Excellent. Member Rowswell, that's what you read?

Mr. Rowswell: Yeah. You bet.

The Chair: Perfect.

Any discussion on motion 19? Member Ip.

Mr. Ip: I speak in favour of this motion. It's important because reprisal can take form in various ways and can be difficult to prove, especially if it happens outside of the workplace, and I believe this specific motion will help protect those who are experiencing retaliatory action outside of the workplace. So I speak in favour.

The Chair: Excellent. Do any others want to speak to this motion?

I see no hands, so I will call the question on motion 19. All those in favour, please say aye. Excellent. All those opposed, both in the room and online, please say nay.

That motion is carried.

On to our next motion.

Mr. Rowswell: Motion 20, that

the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship recommend that the Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) Act be amended to replace the standard of good faith in respect of disclosures of wrongdoing and requests for advice with a standard of reasonable belief.

Replacing a good-faith standard with a reasonable-belief standard provides greater clarity and objectivity in assessing disclosures. Reasonable belief focuses on whether a person had the objective defensibility basis for raising a concern rather than attempting to determine their subjective intent or motivation. Good-faith requirements may discourage disclosure by creating uncertainty about how intent will be interpreted. It's just their best guess, and they are saying, "I reasonably believe this, and I think it's worthwhile bringing it forward," so I think it is important that we deal with that.

The Chair: Excellent. Any members wanting to speak to this? Member Al-Guneid, go ahead, please.

Ms Al-Guneid: Yeah. I mean, good faith is a lower standard to meet for disclosures, but, you know, it should be just accessible for everyone if someone wants to whistle-blow if they feel they need to. Whistle-blowing should just be accessible as opposed to adding another thing to it, so I'm contributing with this.

The Chair: Excellent. Thank you, Member.

I'm not seeing anyone else wanting to speak to this, so I will call the question. All those in favour of this motion, both in the room and online, please say aye. All those opposed, please say nay, both online and in the room. All right.

That motion is carried.

On to our next motion.

Mr. Rowswell: Motion 21, that

the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship recommend that the Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) Act be amended to include provisions requiring education or training to be completed by designated officers and employees, including training on rights and reporting processes under the act.

We talked about this before, and in some of the submissions there were people who don't know how to go about it or just what their rights might be. I think it's important that we have some mandatory training for people to make sure that they know they can do this and what's the proper procedure on doing it. I think educating everyone on their rights and how to do things is a good thing.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Member Sweet.

Ms Sweet: Nothing, Mr. Chair. I think we all agree that this is very important. Again, I would just be curious. As we continue to ask to do more, would this be something that training or education would be within the purview that you would currently be able to do, or would you need more resources to be able to do this work?

Mr. Brezinski: Thanks for the question. Yes. Certainly, with enhanced responsibilities comes additional resources, so that would be something we would keep our eyes on, but with respect to training our office provides designated officer training yearly. It's online. We have a lot of resources online as well, but we certainly found significant gaps in awareness of our office when we did our public survey, so I think we would welcome ensuring that there is some sort of education for our designated officers and employees in addition to what we provide, but we would have to delegate that work back to the different jurisdictions.

Ms Sweet: Thank you.

The Chair: Excellent. Thank you.

Any other comments on this motion from the committee?

Seeing none, I will call the question on motion 21. All those in favour, both online and in the room, please say aye. Excellent. All those opposed, or any opposed, both in the room and online, please say nay. Excellent.

That motion is carried.

Are there any other motions to put forward?

Seeing none, that does take us into next steps, which is fantastic. Thank you, all, everyone, for your participation today. We do have a little bit more, but thank you for your participation.

In order to complete consideration of the act, we will need to report to the Assembly. As this is not the committee's first review for many members, members may be familiar with this reporting process, but just so that we're all on the same page, I'd like to ask Ms Robert to provide us with a quick overview of what is included in committee reports and what is required should any committee member wish to submit a minority report.

Ms Robert.

Ms Robert: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Okay. Yes. I think all of you have been through this before, so you are going to be quite familiar with what committee reports typically look like.

10:45

The committee typically will direct the Legislative Assembly Office to draft a draft report. The primary function of the draft report is to convey the recommendations that the committee has agreed to today. What the research officers will typically do is include any contextual information that supports the recommendation that the committee agreed to just to sort of add that context to the report. The report also includes the committee's activities, when it met, who it met with. It lists the written submissions that the committee received, the oral presentations that are received, all of that sort of information.

The draft report is then shared with the committee for the committee's review, and then the committee decides if it approves the report or wants it changed. With respect to minority reports, minority reports are permitted in Alberta, and any member of the committee can submit a minority report. It does not require the approval of the committee. It is just simply appended to the end of the committee's report, and the committee would set the deadline for when it would need to receive a report like that. The committee, I think, has until this summer to report – is that right? – so you have plenty of time. Once the report is approved, then you as chair would present it in the Assembly in the daily Routine.

If anybody has any questions, I'm happy to address them.

The Chair: Excellent. Any questions? I see no questions.

Thank you, Ms Robert, for that explanation.

A couple of notes here, just moving on. I would note that the potential wording of a pair of standard motions was provided along with the motions put on notice by committee members. The first motion was to direct the Legislative Assembly Office to prepare a draft report of the committee's review. The second motion was for the chair to be able to approve the report on the committee's behalf after the committee members have had a chance to review.

Is there a committee member prepared to move the following motion? We will wait for it to be up on the screen to see what the motion looks like. Someone needs to read this motion into the record. Member Sweet.

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Mr. Chair. That

the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship direct the Legislative Assembly Office to prepare a draft final report on the committee's review of the Public Interest Disclosure

(Whistleblower Protection) Act and distribute it to the committee members for their review.

The Chair: Excellent. Thank you for the motion, Member Sweet. Any discussion?

All right. Both online and in the room, all in favour, please say aye. Any opposed, both online and in the room? Excellent.

That motion is carried.

We also have a standard motion for the chair to approve the report after members have viewed and revised. This will show up on the screen here. Oh, we're good to go. Okay. Member Rowswell, please go ahead.

Mr. Rowswell: That

the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship authorize the chair to approve the draft final report on the committee's review of the Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) Act after committee members have had an opportunity to provide comments on the draft of that document.

The Chair: Excellent. Any discussion by any members of the committee on this?

Well, I will call the question. For both those online and in the room, all in favour, please say aye. Perfect. Any opposed, both in the room or online, please say nay. Excellent.

That motion is carried.

I believe that brings us to other business. Are there any other items for discussion at today's meeting?

Seeing none, we'll move on. The date of the next meeting will be at the call of the chair.

A quick comment from myself. Thank you, everyone, for the fantastic meeting and getting through this meeting. Very much appreciated to everyone, both here in person and online. It was a great meeting to chair.

Now, finally, we do need to call for adjournment. I will now call for a motion of adjournment. Would a member like to move – excellent, Member Rowswell – that this February 17, 2026, meeting of the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship be adjourned? Perfect. All in favour? Any opposed? Carried.

Thank you, everyone. The meeting is adjourned.

[The committee adjourned at 10:50 a.m.]

