



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

The 27th Legislature
First Session

Standing Committee
on
Resources and Environment

Thursday, September 4, 2008
1:02 p.m.

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Standing Committee on Resources and Environment

Prins, Ray, Lacombe-Ponoka (PC), Chair
Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (L), Deputy Chair

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Boutilier, Guy C., Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (PC)
Calahasen, Pearl, Lesser Slave Lake (PC) *
Drysdale, Wayne, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (PC)
Elniski, Doug, Edmonton-Calder (PC) **
Griffiths, Doug, Battle River-Wainwright (PC)
Hehr, Kent, Calgary-Buffalo (L)
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McQueen, Diana, Drayton Valley-Calmar (PC)
Oberle, Frank, Peace River (PC)
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* substitution for Frank Oberle
** substitution for Diana McQueen

Bill 23 Sponsor

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[Mr. Prins in the chair]

The Chair: Well, good afternoon, everyone. I'd like to call the meeting of the Standing Committee on Resources and Environment to order, seeing that it's 1 o'clock. What I'll do is welcome everybody. It's good to see everybody back from the summer. I see that we have most people back, anyway. What I'll do is ask everyone to introduce themselves around the table, and for the ones that are substituting for regular members, just indicate that on the record. We'll start over on this side here with Pearl.

Ms Calahasen: Pearl Calahasen, MLA for Lesser Slave Lake. I'm here representing Frank Oberle.

Mr. Mason: Brian Mason, MLA for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Ms Dean: Shannon Dean, Senior Parliamentary Counsel.

Dr. Massolin: Good afternoon. I'm Philip Massolin. I'm the committee research co-ordinator, Legislative Assembly Office.

Ms Staley: Diana Staley, research officer, Legislative Assembly Office.

Ms LeBlanc: Stephanie LeBlanc, legal research officer, Legislative Assembly Office.

Mrs. Kamuchik: Louise Kamuchik, Clerk Assistant, director of House services.

Ms Sales: Tracey Sales, communications consultant with the Legislative Assembly Office.

Ms Friesacher: Melanie Friesacher, communications consultant with the Legislative Assembly Office.

Mr. Griffiths: Doug Griffiths, MLA for Battle River-Wainwright.

Mr. Berger: Evan Berger, MLA, Livingstone-Macleod.

Mr. Elniski: Doug Elniski, MLA, Edmonton-Calder, filling in for Diana McQueen.

Mrs. Sawchuk: Karen Sawchuk, committee clerk.

The Chair: Thank you. I'm Ray Prins, MLA for Lacombe-Ponoka.

The next thing on our agenda is Approval of Agenda. I think everyone has it in front of them. If it's okay or if it's not to be revised, we'll ask for a motion to approve that. That's made. All in favour? That's carried. Thank you.

Then we'll go to the meeting minutes from July 9, and everyone has them as well, I believe. Could we have a motion to adopt those minutes as circulated? Once again, there's a motion on the floor. Any comments or questions? All in favour? That's carried. Thank you.

That brings us all the way to number 4, Handling of Submissions. I believe that possibly Shannon Dean has some comments that she would like to make prior to moving into that topic. Go ahead, Shannon.

Ms Dean: Thank you, Mr. Chair. What I wanted to discuss today was the issue of how the committee wanted to handle the submissions it has received on Bill 23. It's entirely up to this committee as to how it decides to deal with these submissions and whether it decides to make them publicly available, and by publicly available I mean whether the submissions would be available on the committee's external website.

Now, we all have a general awareness of the principles in the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. I would like to point out that although the Legislative Assembly Office itself is a public body under that act, the Assembly and the committees, technically speaking, are not public bodies, so again it's up to the committee to determine how it wants to handle its documents. There are, however, relevant concerns from this legislation that we feel you should be apprised of and that should inform your consideration of what submissions or what parts of submissions should be made public.

I have to say that with respect to the subject matter before you, namely weed control, some of these issues aren't that relevant, but I would like to just walk you through the different categories of information that may be considered for severing. Last year the policy field committees approved resolutions that addressed how its submissions would be handled. Again, these aren't binding precedents, but we would like you to just be aware of what happened last year.

First, where there was personal information contained in a submission – and by personal information I mean something beyond the name of the author of the submission: identifiable information such as e-mail addresses, phone numbers, street addresses, and so on – it would be our recommendation that this information be severed from the submission before it's posted on our external site. The reason is that it would just be too readily available in the public domain.

The second category of information that should be given special consideration is identifiable information about a third party. Now, with respect to the submissions on Bill 23 I don't think that that is an issue. It has come up with some of the other committees where they're dealing with mental health issues or guardianship issues. Again, if the issue were to come up, we would recommend that the third-party information be severed because the third party, obviously, has privacy rights.

Another situation where information should be severed, in our view, is if the author of the submission has requested that the submission not be made public.

Finally, there are a few other categories. For example, sometimes there is potentially defamatory information in a submission. It would be prudent not to have this publicly available. It would be our position that the Assembly and the committee are likely protected with respect to any sort of lawsuit surrounding defamation, but it would not be prudent to make public or post potentially defamatory statements about an individual.

The last category would be material that may be considered offensive. This didn't come up last year. It is coming up with respect to one of the other committees. For example, a submission may contain profanity. Again, we're just looking for direction to sever those excerpts from the submission.

The overarching principle here is protection of personal information. I think that's the most relevant information that should be severed from your submissions. Again, the first question that you have to decide is whether the submissions should be made publicly available and then take it from there.

I'll turn it over to you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Before we go on, I believe there's a member on the telephone line. Is that correct?

Mr. Hehr: Yes. Good afternoon. It's Kent Hehr, Calgary-Buffalo.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Kent. Welcome.

Another member, Len Mitzel, just joined us. Welcome. Len is the sponsor of the bill, so you're most welcome to be at the table.

Mr. Mitzel: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Great to have you here.

Now, we've just heard some comments from Shannon about the submissions. Are there any questions or comments to her regarding these issues?

Mr. Mason: I have no difficulty with the personal information, but when it comes to drawing the line between, you know, things that are offensive and things that are not, it raises a question for me, and the question is: who makes the decision?

The Chair: I guess that's a good question. Do you have an answer for that?

Ms Dean: It's entirely up to the committee how they would want to handle that. For example, the committee could direct the chair in conjunction with the deputy chair to make decisions about what is flagged as potentially objectionable. Again, we would just take direction from the committee on that.

The Chair: Thanks.

You know, right now we have a large number of submissions on file. I've read most of this stuff, and I think there's nothing objectionable.

1:10

Ms Dean: I think the key issue here is the personal information with respect to the submissions that you have before you.

The Chair: Exactly. We covered off with the "objectionable" statement. You know, I think, then, we're safe. I don't see anything in there that's objectionable at this time.

Mr. Mason: It's weeds.

The Chair: Right.

Ms Calahasen: I don't have any problems relative to the personal information. I think that's really a good recommendation.

On the other issues, in terms of defamatory material, I think we have to look at that, if there's any such thing, on a general basis rather than on the specific that we have and at the offensive material as well. I would look on a general basis to decide who should be doing that, and then from there we can determine how it can be handled.

The Chair: Sure enough, but if we have a motion to cover all of this, then that enables us to do this.

Ms Calahasen: Right.

The Chair: Okay. Does somebody else want to comment on this issue?

Ms Dean: Mr. Chair, given the nature of the submissions that you have before you, I think that the motion that the committee needs to consider is simply giving direction with respect to severing the personal information, and I think that will cover what you need to cover.

The Chair: Pretty well everything, yeah. Okay. Is someone willing to make that motion? Pearl is making that motion.

Ms Calahasen: I make the motion that

we sever anything to do with personal information and anything to do with the privacy rights.

Ms Dean: Other than that, the submissions would be made public.

The Chair: Yes. Correct. That's agreeable to everybody? Everyone in favour? Opposed? I see none or hear none, so that is carried.

Another thing that came up during the time that we were receiving submissions is that there were a couple of stakeholders that have requested an extension to this deadline for the submissions because they missed the deadline, I guess. They're asking if we could extend that. My suggestion would be that we extend it to within – what? – five days of the next meeting so that the researchers and the staff people can actually process the information that's in there. If that would be agreeable, unless there are more comments or questions, maybe we could have just another motion to extend the deadline to within five days of the next meeting, and that will be set at the end of the meeting. Okay. We have that motion. Any more comments? All in favour? That's carried. So we have a new deadline.

I think we do have the submissions here, and there's a report on them. I'm going to ask Philip and Diana to maybe just take us through that report and what you have found and maybe make some suggestions for us going forward. Go ahead.

Dr. Massolin: Great. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I just want to take this opportunity to introduce to the committee Diana Staley, who is one of our new research officers. She's going to take us through the report, so I'll turn it over to you, Diana.

Ms Staley: Okay. Thank you. We've provided a summary of the written submissions for Bill 23. This report includes a summary of 28 submissions which were received by September 2, but a total of 29 have been received to date. In my presentation I'll highlight only some of the submissions, not all.

First, I'll start by explaining the organization of the report, which corresponds with the table of contents on page 2. The first section, the introduction, explains the structure of the report, addresses issues raised by the submitters, and provides an overall summary of the submissions. The second section, the summary of submissions, provides a complete summary of the submissions, which relates to specific provisions of the bill, and it summarizes the general comments relating to the bill. The third section provides statistical information, and the fourth section provides a list of all the submitters.

Now I'll comment on the most salient issues raised by the submitters as viewed by the research staff. The first corresponds to the clarification of definitions. In particular, several submitters suggested that a threshold for the definition of "control" and "destroy" be set because it is almost impossible to totally control or inhibit some weeds.

The second is regarding enforcement of notice. Bill 23 provides that an inspector may take action that the inspector determines is

necessary to fulfill a requirement of a notice that has not been complied with. Concerns were raised about further defining who the inspector is and if they could appoint someone and also defining the actions that those authorities could take.

The next is regarding review of provisions. The bill contains a review of provisions for an appellant, the owner or the occupier of the land, but not for the municipality.

Next is the power of inspectors and inspectors' notices. Bill 23 makes provisions that an inspector's notice must not require the destruction of more than 20 acres of growing crops unless written consent has been given by the local authority of the municipality. Some concerns were raised about destroying crops of more than 20 acres only through written consent of the municipality and the potential problems associated with large plots of land not being destroyed. The bill also states that the provision for destruction of more than 20 acres of a growing crop "does not apply if the growing crop . . . does not have a significant commercial value." A number of submitters are concerned about how the significant commercial value will be determined.

Bill 23 also provides means by which a local authority may recover debt due from a person who is given a debt recovery notice. This is found in section 21(4), which states that there are only three methods of collection and that the authority can take any or all of the following steps:

- (a) . . . property taxes against land to which the inspector's notice or local authority's notice relates;
- (b) by filing a certificate with the clerk of the Court of Queen's Bench at any judicial district certifying the amount owing;
- (c) by bringing an action in debt [or suing].

An exception is in the next section, which is 21(5), which states that if a chief administrative officer receives an objection, the first two forms of collection do not apply to the recovery of debt and the only form left is through suing. Several concerns were raised about the cost and the legal burden of litigation imposed on those who object to the notice. Therefore, most of the submitters suggested that 21(5) be removed.

Next is the service of notice. The bill defines the means by which a notice can be sent, including personal delivery or by regular mail. Some submitters suggested that regular mail be defined as registered mail to ensure delivery and receipt of a notice.

Next is regarding the notice provisions. Bill 23 provides a provision for a landowner to provide purchasers of land a copy of all notices given. Several submitters suggested that the words "active" or "current" should be referenced in this section for clarity.

Last is regarding general comments on the bill. Some of the general comments were regarding the weed designation categories as well as suggestions on regulatory issues and specific changes to the wording.

Lastly, I'm going to discuss the statistical section, which is found on page 17 of the report, starting with table 1. The first three columns give the opinion of Bill 23, and the opinions are categorized as for, against, and unknown or undecided. Note that the majority of submitters were categorized as unknown. This is because the majority did not explicitly indicate a clear preference in favour or against the bill. The last four columns describe the geographic origins of the submitters.

Next is table 2, which outlines the submitters who have requested to appear at a public hearing. There are four that indicated that they would like to come: Growing Alberta and the municipal districts of Pincher Creek, Big Lakes, and Taber. I'd like to point out that we've made a note that it is unclear if Growing Alberta wants to present on the bill itself or if they want to do a general presentation on their own organization. As mentioned before, the last page

provides a list of all the submitters included in this report.

That concludes my presentation. Thank you. We can take questions now.

The Chair: Thank you very much. Is there any member that would like to ask questions or make comments at this point on the information?

Ms Calahasen: Mr. Chairman, can I ask something specific? When we're looking at the list of submitters, I see that we have a number of them, and we don't know whether they're in favour or opposed. Can you tell me: of the submitters was it mostly just for the areas of concern or recommendation that you identified?

1:20

Dr. Massolin: I'll take that one, Mr. Chair. I think what the hon. member is referring to is just whether or not we can determine yes or no, opposed or in favour of the bill. In most cases we can't, but what we can say is that there are specific concerns with parts of the bill. That doesn't mean that the other parts of the bill that weren't commented on weren't approved. There was just no indication yes or no on that, right? We just wanted to focus in on the areas of concern.

Ms Calahasen: Thank you.

The Chair: Any other comments or questions?

Mr. Griffiths: On the list there are two for, one against, and 25 unknown. It has two in favour, but I don't see who was actually opposed. It has everybody listed as unknown except the two in favour, but which one was opposed?

Dr. Swann: I can't hear you here in Calgary-Mountain View.

Mr. Griffiths: What I'd asked: on the list on page 18 it shows that everybody is unknown whether or not they're in favour or opposed to the legislation. It lists two in favour, but it doesn't list who was actually opposed.

Dr. Massolin: Yeah. I'm sorry. We'll have to look into that, see exactly who it is. I mean, we must have put an extra unknown in.

Mr. Griffiths: Okay.

The Chair: Right. I think the ones that are in favour are saying that this is a good bill, but they're not saying they don't have any concerns with it.

Mr. Griffiths: Right.

The Chair: The other ones that have comments are not in favour or opposed. They're just saying, "We'd like clarification on this," or "We'd like this changed." I think generally they're in support of the concept of the bill but not quite exactly the way it is. They just want to draw our attention to their issues. I think that's why it's unknown if they support it or not. I think they're just making a comment.

Mr. Griffiths: I understand all of that, but on page 17 it says that there is one opposed, but there isn't on the next page. I'm just curious why they'd be opposed and what specific issues they have.

Dr. Massolin: Yeah. Right.

Mr. Griffiths: I do understand that most for or against have a few issues, but they're not sitting on one side of the fence or the other. They probably think it's decent, but they have some issues. I'm curious who would be completely opposed to that piece of legislation and why.

Dr. Massolin: Right.

The Chair: Well, you know, if we go into the next part of our meeting, we'll discuss that later. We're going to invite participants, possibly, to a public hearing, and then they can explain for themselves why they're opposed or in favour.

At any rate, I do believe that there is another member online. I believe the Member for Calgary-Mountain View is online. Is that correct?

Dr. Swann: That's correct, Ray. Sorry, I was a bit late arriving.

The Chair: Please introduce yourself for the record.

Dr. Swann: Yes. David Swann, Calgary-Mountain View.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.

Anybody else online that we haven't heard from yet? Okay. Then we'll carry on.

Any other questions to Diana or Philip on the analysis of the submissions?

Ms Calahasen: It's a comprehensive one, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Yeah, I think it's very comprehensive.

Ms Calahasen: Very comprehensive.

The Chair: There's good information here. As we go forward, it will help us to make decisions at the next meeting.

Are we done with all the analysis? There's one more section here, the WebTrends Summary Report. Did you want to talk about that as well? Somebody else is going to do that.

Okay. What we have to do is determine whether or not we want further public participation in this process and who we would like to invite to that public participation. I believe that we have scheduled a meeting for September 26, which is a Friday. I think we have the possibility of having teleconferencing or video conferencing as well for people that can't actually get here into this committee room. If the committee wants to go ahead with that meeting, we should maybe have a motion, I guess, to communicate back to the people that have submitted or the stakeholders that we have already heard from or the stakeholder list that we have sent out in the first place. I don't know if there is any clarification needed on that, who we should be talking to, but I don't think we should have mass advertising the way we did last time. I think that would be very expensive. Maybe target the people that are most interested. So if we could just communicate back to the people that have submitted or people that have not submitted but could be interested stakeholders.

You know what? Somebody else is online. Is there someone else just coming on?

Mr. Boutilier: Yeah. Good afternoon, Ray. Guy Boutilier, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I'm going to defer again to Philip. Go ahead.

Dr. Massolin: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just wanted to point out that in addition to the organizations that have indicated that they want to appear at a public hearing, the committee may want to consider inviting the AUMA and the AAMD and C as well. Those two organizations were on our stakeholder list. We did approach them to make written submissions, but they didn't have the opportunity to do so, so you may want to consider those two organizations and perhaps others.

The Chair: Okay. Can anybody think of others? Evan, go ahead.

Mr. Berger: No. I was just going to make a motion that we invite the AAMD and C, AUMA, and the submitters that were requesting to appear.

The Chair: Thank you very much. You're making a motion. Any comment on that motion?

Mr. Mason: I would suggest that we send it to everyone that's given us a submission as opposed to just those that have made a specific request to appear. I don't want to go beyond that, but I think if they've taken time, we may want to give them another chance to present.

The Chair: Okay. Any other comments?

Ms Calahasen: Not on this issue, Mr. Chair, but on the inclusion of others. I know that I see that the Métis settlements are on here, but I know that the First Nations also have land where there are weeds. I'm just wondering whether or not we should be able to incorporate maybe inviting the various treaties to be able to come and make a submission or even some of the Indian bands.

Mr. Mason: I just have a question. Does this act have jurisdiction?

Ms Calahasen: I don't know. Maybe that's a question we can ask. Do we have jurisdiction if this act does?

The Chair: On Indian reserve land?

Ms Calahasen: I know we probably do on Métis settlements. I see the Métis settlements have done that. I wonder if we do.

Mr. Mason: I don't think so.

The Chair: Who knows?

Ms Calahasen: Nobody knows. Okay. Can we have somebody find out for us, then, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: I think we could request that for information for the next meeting for sure.

Ms Calahasen: That'd be great.

The Chair: On the motion that we have, your motion says that you want

to invite AUMA, the AAMD and C, and the stakeholders that have requested a meeting.

Mr. Berger: That's what I was originally proposing.

The Chair: That was the intent and not to invite the entire list of stakeholders that we started with.

Mr. Berger: Well, I think the AAMD and C and the AUMA will represent, Brian, those that you're concerned with. They all will have made submissions to their parent bodies, so I think we will cover them. Those ones that we've specifically asked will be concise and represent as well.

The Chair: Okay. Any other comments?

Mr. Elniski: Should we also, then, be including Forest Products and CAPP? Should we be asking the AFPA and CAPP to participate as well in that same logic because of the number of people they represent?

The Chair: They were invited to submit in the first place. They had that opportunity. I'm not sure if they have or not, but if they haven't already, I see no reason why they should be invited back to a public hearing. I think that the intent of your motion, Evan, is just to invite those back that have requested a hearing with us.

Mr. Berger: Yeah, bring forward those who have made submissions if they have more to offer, and let's hear them out.

The Chair: Okay. Any more questions or comments?

Dr. Massolin: Just for clarification, Mr. Chair, the motion would simply ask the people that have made submissions to appear at an oral hearing or only those that have requested to appear.

The Chair: The ones that have requested to appear. But – you know what? – we also have just made a motion that we have extended our deadline to within five days of September 26 if that's the date that we're sticking with. There could be more requests to appear before us in those submissions. People could submit twice if they wanted to. I think it's still fairly open.

Any more comments on this motion? Then I'll call for the question. All in favour? Opposed? There is no opposition, so that's carried. Thank you.

The suggested date was September 26 starting at 9 a.m. to hold this meeting. Maybe we should wait till the end of the meeting before we set this date.

1:30

Mrs. Sawchuk: It is scheduled, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: It is scheduled already. So that's been done.

Then the next point that I want to make is that we'll go into this communications update, and maybe Tracey will speak to this WebTrends document that we have before us.

Ms Sales: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I believe you all received a copy of the WebTrends Summary Report for the Standing Committee on Resources and Environment website. Would you like me to walk them through the report, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: Go ahead, please. Yeah.

Ms Sales: Okay. I'm just going to give you the highlights. There were 1,046 user sessions on the site. That means that 1,046 people logged on to the site, used the site, went to various pages, looked at various items, and then logged off. It's a fairly accurate way of making sure that we only count people once. Basically, 1,834 different documents were viewed, so I would say most people looked at two pages or so on the site. Most people stayed about five minutes long on the site, which is actually a fairly decent length of

time. They were interested. There were 1,547 hits on the home page and 9,610 hits on the entire site. The most downloaded file was the ad, so people were looking to the ad for more information on how to submit.

The activity spikes did correlate with our advertising. As you can see by the chart, public interest in the site was fairly low, and then from the week of the 15th of July to the week beginning the 22nd of July, when the ads did run, is where most of the activity on the site is showing. So we definitely did attract people to the site based on the advertising.

I'm not sure if there are any other questions on the web trends at this time.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Any questions or comments? I think it's very interesting how you can track these things, that you can actually see that advertising works, doesn't it?

Okay. Any more comments? Philip, go ahead.

Dr. Massolin: Can I jump in here, Mr. Chair, just to indicate that of the 29 responses that we received, only five were from members of the public or nonsolicited stakeholders. All the rest were from solicited stakeholders. I thought that was fairly remarkable given the history last year.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I don't want to put you on the spot, Len, but you are the sponsor of the bill, and you've been listening to the discussion today. I'm just wondering if you have any comments or questions. Seeing that you're not a regular member of the committee but are here because you're very much interested in what's going on, I'll just give you this opportunity.

Mr. Mitzel: Well, thanks, Mr. Chairman. Yeah. Thanks for the opportunity, actually, to sit in on this. I was very interested in seeing just how this process was going to work with this bill because, maybe as a couple of my colleagues have been as well, I have been, I guess, actively a part of the weed inspection act when I was involved with the county because there were instances when the act had to be enforced.

I read a whole lot of the submissions, and I read the report that you gave with quite a bit of interest, looking at how various little intangible points of it actually play themselves out. For instance, the registered mail thing: there are people who just don't pick up anything that's registered. They just don't pick it up because they know what it is, you know? It's various things like this, how this was discussed, how they looked at coming up with a solution: well, after seven days it's deemed to have been picked up; okay, we've got it covered. Things like that.

Or even the question there on who is the appellant. Is it the municipal district, or is it the person who got the notice? In most cases that I have been familiar with, it's the person who actually is the one who considers appealing. He's appealing the fact that he got this notice to either clean up, or he's got notice that someone's going to take over the operation of his property or clean it up and then charge him for it. You know, things like this.

It's taking a common-sense bill that works, that was going to be tweaked, and actually making sure that it's going to be I guess adjusted or changed to a certain extent, amended, so that it comes through, and it's going to be a good bill in the end.

I think that other than that, like I've said, I did have an opportunity to be on, you might want to say, the council, the county end of actually having to direct the weed inspectors to look at land and actually present charges to them and, of course, the ensuing appeals

and everything else and the timelines that work back and forth on that. So this whole thing is quite interesting.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Len. I'm sure there are a few more of us here that have had that experience at the other end of the municipal stick, I would say. We had to deal with this from the not-so-pleasant side.

Anyway, any other items for discussion? Any questions to Len, possibly?

Ms Calahasen: Mr. Chair, I do. Len, with all the recommendations that you see here that are being provided from our communication with Albertans and the recommendations of changes that you're recommending, is there anything here that you don't agree with, that you think might cause you a problem on your simple bill?

Mr. Mitzel: I don't think so because it seemed to me most of it was clarification and just slight changes.

A point I just wanted to mention, too, Mr. Chair – and it was a good thing you brought it up – was with regard to any of the aboriginal lands. A very, very good example, of course, in south-western Alberta is Russian knapweed and leafy spurge. The Blood reserve goes right down to the border and across, and we're looking at the encroachment of those two extremely restricted weeds through the Blood reserve and then continuing on east. The only way to do Russian knapweed is to pick it by hand, and that's exactly what they do. I believe that they actually do that on the reserve as well. The county that's involved, whether it's Cardston county or whatever, is down there, and they actually go onto that land and try and contain it. You don't get rid of it. You don't spray it out; you pick it by hand.

Ms Calahasen: On that point, then, in terms of getting them to come and speak with us on that, is that something that we should be doing in terms of a co-operative way?

Mr. Mitzel: Well, I think it's important that they be a part of the process because, certainly, it is on their land and can, if not checked, go right through their land and continue on.

Ms Calahasen: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you. That's a good question, again. I don't have any personal experience with Indian reserves in a county. A county weed inspector does not cover the entire county, which might include Indian reserve as well. Can we get some clarification on that, Shannon, at the next meeting?

Ms Calahasen: Mr. Chair, once we get clarification, then you will bring it back in terms of how we can deal with it so that it's co-operative or whatever can be done to deal with that?

The Chair: Since the question has been brought up, I think we need to get some good answers on that. Maybe by the next meeting we should have that.

Ms Dean: Mr. Chair, we'd be happy to take a look at that. I mean, an unresearched response would be that the reserves would be outside the scope of this legislation, but we can get back to you with a more thorough response.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you very much.

Any other comments or questions for the good of this meeting?

Mr. Mason: Since we have the sponsor of the bill here, this is a question that came up when I was involved in municipal government. I would often get calls from people who were complaining that they'd been given a weed notice by the city and sometimes would go out to their property and so on, and they would often point to city land which was covered with weeds. I'm wondering if you've given any thought to putting in a requirement that municipalities need to police their own lands. I know it's a hot button thing, but I like to throw out, you know, little bombs now and again.

1:40

Mr. Mitzel: Thanks. I can only really speak from a rural perspective on this. I actually have seen this in an urban area as well, and I've heard that same comment that you've made. From a rural perspective it is absolutely a requirement that any lands that are the responsibility of the municipality must be kept clean of restricted weeds and certainly cleaned up of noxious weeds as well.

The Chair: Are you actually trying to use this committee as a messenger to the city council? Is that what you're doing?

Mr. Mason: No. It just came up. You know, every time I went out, they'd point to a city lot somewhere.

The Chair: Does somebody else want to comment on this?

Mr. Boutilier: Yeah. Mr. Chairman, I can say to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood: I'm sure you miss those days of the Edmonton city council and all those fun discussions relative to dealing with the province.

Mr. Mason: Well, I could actually win votes on city council.

The Chair: Okay.

Any other comments for the good of this meeting for Bill 23? Go ahead, please.

Ms Sales: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just wanted to clarify. I understand that the meeting is just to invite specific stakeholders, but did you also want us to distribute a news release or media advisory?

The Chair: I think a news release that we've had this meeting and some of the things that we've talked about wouldn't hurt. Then the public would know about it.

Ms Sales: Okay. So this is something that I could provide to you and the deputy chair for approval?

The Chair: Yes. That would be advisable. Thank you.

Ms Sales: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: Anything else for this meeting?

Then I just want to remind everyone again, those on the phone and here, that the next meeting is Friday, September 26, starting at 9 a.m.

If there's nothing else, then I'd look for a motion to adjourn.

Ms Calahasen: Motion to adjourn.

The Chair: All in favour? That's carried. Thank you very much.

[The committee adjourned at 1:42 p.m.]

