



4th Session, 37th Parliament

REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS
(HANSARD)

SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON THE
CITIZENS' ASSEMBLY ON
ELECTORAL REFORM

Victoria

Thursday, May 1, 2003

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JOHN LES, MLA, CHAIR

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**SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON THE
CITIZENS' ASSEMBLY ON ELECTORAL REFORM**

Victoria
Thursday, May 1, 2003

Chair:

* John Les (Chilliwack-Sumas L)

Deputy Chair:

* Jeff Bray (Victoria-Beacon Hill L)

Members:

* Ida Chong (Oak Bay-Gordon Head L)

* Kevin Krueger (Kamloops-North Thompson L)

* Blair Lekstrom (Peace River South L)

* Rob Nijjar (Vancouver-Kingsway L)

* Joy MacPhail (Vancouver-Hastings NDP)

** denotes member present*

Clerk:

Craig James

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Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform

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MINUTES

SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON THE CITIZENS' ASSEMBLY ON ELECTORAL REFORM



Thursday, May 1, 2003
9:15 am
Douglas Fir Committee Room
Parliament Buildings, Victoria

Present: John Les, MLA (Convener); Jeff Bray, MLA; Ida Chong, MLA; Kevin Krueger, MLA; Blair Lekstrom, MLA; Joy MacPhail, MLA; Rob Nijjar, MLA.

1. **Resolved**, that Mr. John Les, MLA, be elected Chair of the Committee.
2. **Resolved**, that Mr. Jeff Bray, MLA, be elected Deputy Chair of the Committee.
3. The Committee considered its terms of reference and agreed to invite Dr. Blaney to appear before the committee at the earliest opportunity.
4. The Committee adjourned at 9:25 a.m. to the call of the Chair.

John Les, MLA
Chair

Craig James
Clerk Assistant and
Clerk of Committees

THURSDAY, MAY 1, 2003

The committee met at 9:18 a.m.

Election of Chair and Deputy Chair

C. James: This being the first meeting of the Special Committee on the Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform and there not being a chairperson, I call for nominations for the chair.

J. Bray: I nominate John Les.

C. James: Any further nominations? Any further nominations? Any further nominations? There being no further nominations, I presume you accept the nomination. I'll put, then, the question on the motion.

Motion approved.

[J. Les in the chair.]

J. Les (Chair): Thank you all.

The next item on the agenda is the election of a Deputy Chair. I'm open to nominations.

R. Nijjar: I would like to nominate Jeff Bray.

J. Les (Chair): Jeff Bray has been nominated.

Are there any further nominations? And for a third and final time, are there any further nominations? Seeing none, Jeff Bray will serve as Deputy Chair of this committee.

Committee Terms of Reference

J. Les (Chair): Under "Any other business," perhaps just a few comments. This committee, of course, and the citizens assembly came to life yesterday as a result of the passing of the two motions in the House. I don't perceive this committee as being particularly high profile. The constituent assembly is the body that will, in my view, have the high profile as it carries out its work across the province over the next year and a half or so.

[0920]

Our job, as laid out in the notice of motion, is to conduct a confirmation hearing with respect to the appointment of Jack Blaney to chair the constituent assembly and further to that, to conduct hearings to confirm the appointment of certain staff that will assist Blaney and the committee in their work — presuming Blaney is confirmed by this committee. Once those appointments are confirmed, this committee will simply receive interim reports as appropriate and act as a resource perhaps or as a touchstone for the committee should it require the assistance of this committee.

That, in short, is what I believe our role to be. I think the debate in the House yesterday was very indicative of the interest of members of the House, but also, I think, to a large degree, the non-partisan nature of the work that will be undertaken. If this committee

can fly somewhat beneath the radar screen, we will be accomplishing exactly what it is we should do, and I think in that way we will assist the process.

J. MacPhail: Who's on the committee?

J. Les (Chair): On this committee?

J. MacPhail: Is there anyone not here?

C. James: Everybody's here.

J. Les (Chair): Everyone's here.

J. MacPhail: Oh, okay.

J. Les (Chair): Okay. Is there any further discussion on general topics like that?

I should, as well, tell you that I spoke briefly a couple of days ago with Jack Blaney. He of course is very excited about the proposal that he be the chair of the citizens assembly. We talked about his potential availability for a confirmation hearing. He is wrapping up some work that he was involved in up to the present. He will be away for the first part of next week, but he is available to the committee, should the committee choose to hear him, next week — Thursday.

I would suggest to the committee that perhaps we conduct a confirmation hearing next week, on Thursday. Now, I'm mindful of the fact that the House is sitting, and that, particularly, the Leader of the Opposition is very busy, but I put that to you as something to think about.

Go ahead, Joy.

J. MacPhail: I'll have to get back to you on it. I mean, we are in the final 12 days of the Legislature, starting next week. Then everything is kaput as of May 30, so there are still some very important issues. But I'll take that proposal and get back to you on it.

I'm not sure I can carve out that much time — a whole day. We're not just doing Blaney; we're doing the chief staff.

J. Les (Chair): Yeah. For the purposes of next Thursday, if we meet then, it would be Blaney only, because there are no other staff to meet with at this point. Blaney will be selecting, through whatever process he sees fit, the staff that he needs to assist the citizens assembly...

J. MacPhail: And he'll recommend them to us?

J. Les (Chair): ...and he'll recommend them to us. Then we affirm those recommendations, or otherwise.

J. MacPhail: I'll have to take it under advisement.

J. Les (Chair): Okay. Would you let me know within a day or so?

J. MacPhail: Yeah.

K. Krueger: Why don't we consider Friday so that we don't interfere with the activities in the House and, particularly, Joy's schedule?

J. Les (Chair): That certainly is an alternative...

J. MacPhail: Okay. I'll get back to you.

J. Les (Chair): ...and I'd be happy to consider that as well. It's not too much of an imposition, I don't think, to stay one extra day to deal with that. It is important that we get Mr. Blaney underway as quickly as possible, if we confirm his nomination, and that we're not under time pressure in conducting the hearing. I think that's important as well.

Blair, do you have your hand up?

B. Lekstrom: Just a question on whether Thursday was available — and I have no idea of the time frame you think this meeting may take — prior to the sitting of the Legislature. I don't know if people have opposition to starting early, at eight, or something like that, and try and wrap it up before the House begins its sitting.

J. Les (Chair): All of those things are possible, but I'm showing some deference here, I guess, to the Leader of the Opposition, who I'm sure has got other things to do before 10 o'clock in the morning when she's up on her feet.

J. MacPhail: We'll discuss it, and I'll do my best to deal with this as quickly as possible.

J. Les (Chair): That would be fine.

Any other matters? Okay, what I will do, then, is, as soon as I hear from Joy, communicate to members of the committee whether we meet next Thursday or Friday. On your behalf, I will get in touch with Jack Blaney to make those arrangements.

J. MacPhail: Great.

J. Les (Chair): Okay, there being no other business, a motion to adjourn?

The committee adjourned at 9:25 a.m.