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REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS
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SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON THE
CITIZENS' ASSEMBLY ON
ELECTORAL REFORM

Victoria

Wednesday, May 14, 2003

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

Victoria
Wednesday, May 14, 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

Witness: Dr. Jack Blaney (Chair, Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform)

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Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform

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MINUTES

SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON THE CITIZENS' ASSEMBLY ON ELECTORAL REFORM



Wednesday, May 14, 2003
9 a.m.
Douglas Fir Committee Room
Parliament Buildings, Victoria

Present: John Les, MLA (Chair); Blair Lekstrom, MLA; Kevin Krueger, MLA; Joy MacPhail, MLA; Rob Nijjar, MLA

Unavoidably Absent: Jeff Bray, MLA (Deputy Chair); Ida Chong, MLA

1. The Committee reviewed a senior staff selection process for the Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform.
Witness
Dr. Jack Blaney
2. The Committee met in camera regarding certain personnel for the Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform.
3. The Committee met in public session.
4. The Committee adjourned at 9:50 a.m. to the call of the Chair

John Les, MLA
Chair

Craig James
Clerk Assistant and
Clerk of Committees

WEDNESDAY, MAY 14, 2003

The committee met at 9:04 a.m.

[J. Les in the chair.]

J. Les (Chair): Good morning, everyone. Nine o'clock has come and gone, so I call the meeting to order. We have a quorum. I understand we're still looking for the Leader of the Opposition. Hopefully, she will arrive soon.

Dr. Blaney is here. Today he wants to discuss with us the prospective hirings of senior staff for the Citizens' Assembly.

Over to you, Dr. Blaney.

[0905]

Citizens' Assembly Staff Selection Process

J. Blaney: Thank you very much. Let me also thank you for your confidence in confirming me. I appreciate that very much. I take nothing in this world for granted, so thank you.

We are now in the position of confirming the three senior positions for the Citizens' Assembly. They are coordinators, or whatever we might call them, of administration, research and communication. As I indicated to you, I believe — certainly, I discussed it with the Chair — I would like to have a pretty good understanding of the criteria and qualifications you would have in mind in examining these three persons. It would be my hope that the three persons I bring to you, whether that's on paper or actually in person, are acceptable. I want to increase that probability to as close to 100 percent as possible. That's why I'm here today seeking your advice on this.

It seems to me that the Citizens' Assembly must itself pass three tests. This would then, I think, have a lot of influence on whom we hire. I think the three tests are, first of all, independence from government. After the two sets of confirmation, it must be seen to be, and in fact be, independent from government. The government, indeed, has written that right into the legislation rather clearly. The second test is that it must be fair. There must be the reality and the perception that the Citizens' Assembly is fair.

[Interruption.]

J. Blaney: For Ms. MacPhail, I was just indicating that the Citizens' Assembly itself must pass three tests. Those three tests, I think, must influence what we do in terms of hiring staff. The first test was it must be independent of government; the second was it must be fair. Fairness is a tough one that we're going to have to face all the time, but we must work extra hard to make sure it's fair. The third one, of course, is that it must be competent. It must organize meetings well, and things must be punctual.

I'm a great person for punctuality, so this morning I was almost embarrassed when the helijet was late.

Things must be done right, and the budget must be managed well. Whatever the budget is, it must come in

on budget. As my administrative assistant said to me yesterday: "Jack, we're going to come in under budget." It's got to be those three things. It's got to be independent, it's got to be fair, and it's got to be competent. Those are the kinds of qualifications I would look for in senior staff — all staff in fact.

In no particular order.... I have six, and if it's okay with you, I will go through my six. I'm happy to be interrupted at any time and will more than look forward to an interaction on these so that I can understand where we're at.

The first one is competence. They must have a clear track record. Whether I'm looking for someone in the communication field or administration or research — which is knowledge of the electoral systems plus can play a very major role in the education of the citizens of the assembly — we're looking for a track record of competence. I believe, by the way, that track records are more important than interviews. I want to know what a person has done. Past behaviour is the best predictor of future behaviour, so we'll be looking at track record.

The second major criterion is a proven record of being able to work without bias. Preferably, I think we would try to find someone who holds no strong position at all on any particular electoral system, which might be difficult to do — preferably with no strong position but absolutely, it would seem to me, no highly known public position on electoral reform. Certainly not a crusader. I'll tell you a little story about that in a minute. Not a crusader. The most important thing is that the person is a professional who can operate without bias.

Third, we must have a person of 100 percent integrity. There must be a clear record of that. A person who has never shaved the truth says, "Yeah, but that's not quite what I meant," and all that other kind of stuff. We must have a person of absolute 100 percent integrity.

[0910]

Fourth, we must have great people skills. Here I mean respect for diverse opinions, diverse backgrounds, and respectful of all persons. They must make every member of the Citizens' Assembly feel like they are the most important person in the world, and be able to deal with the public in the same way.

Fifth, I want somebody who's open to flexible and sometimes very long working hours. Sometimes that is difficult for people with families and things of this sort, but we have a very, very short time to work. It's going to be very intense, and it's not going to be regular working hours. Someone has to be open to that.

Lastly, somebody with huge energy — period — just like you must have if you are going to run for public office. The person must have huge energy.

Those are my criteria. In the three major positions — four positions with mine included — I will look for some diversity, with not all four men, but with only four positions, you're not going to be able to reflect the total diversity of the province. The criteria I have listed above are most important, but I will still look for diversity in those positions, particularly diversity of gender.

We will need some flexibility in contracts. That gets into discussions with other departments, perhaps. I

want to let you know that my intention at this time, right now, is that I might try to hire some person — a part-timer — as a recruiter or something of that sort to assist me.

I don't think this is something you put an ad in the paper for and say you want all these positions. I have already received about 100 applications. I don't even know how they get my e-mail address, but they're there.

I'll tell you a little story that's kind of interesting. I have received a lot of phone calls. I have a tendency to answer my own phone, by the way; I always have, even when I was a university president. I answer my own phone, and I make my callbacks as fast as I can. People seem to be kind of surprised.

I get a person on the phone, and he says: "Oh, this is the thing I've been looking for all my life. We need electoral reform. I've been working at it for 20 or 30 years. I've published ten books on it. We've got to have it." This person has a particular system. "I want to get in there. I want to be a staff person, so I can make sure this happens." That's a common call.

The other call, though, is much more endearing. I've had 14 or 15 such calls. These are from citizens at large who want to be on the assembly. They say: "Is there any way at all? Aren't you going to have a small number that's not going to be chosen at random, so that I can be on it?" I don't think they have any particular cause. They just think it's such a neat idea. They don't want to leave their name at random. They don't want to take that chance. The probability is too low. Those are very endearing calls.

Sorry to meander. Those are my criteria for looking at staff. When I bring people to you, I would like them to pass this test. My hunch is that the one that's going to be the more difficult one — we all agree on all of them, I hope, more or less — is the matter of whether or not they show or have ever shown any bias toward any particular electoral system. It's very hard to find people out there who are kind of informed about things, and who have zero opinion on the matter. I have to look to ensure that they have been able to serve in professional capacities without bias.

I'd like to get a response to that, then I'm going to try to give you two or three profiles of the kinds of persons that have shown some interest, to see how it might fit.

J. Les (Chair): Kevin, you had a question.

K. Krueger: I like your criteria. I was a little worried about the way you defined integrity, because you actually said that you wouldn't want anyone who'd ever had to say publicly: "That's not what I meant." I think that's the way you phrased it.

Anyone who's ever been misquoted and done anything about that would fail your integrity test, if that's what it is. I'm sure you didn't mean it quite as broadly as it sounded, but maybe you could flesh that out a little. Most people who have been in any kind of public service in the public eye and have been subject to me-

dia reporting have probably found themselves in that position.

[0915]

J. Blaney: I have found myself in that position with the media a hundred times. You're right. That's a good question. What I meant more precisely was somebody who works with you in a professional capacity, and they say to you, "No, that's not quite what I meant when I did that," if you know what I mean. Frankly, they didn't quite have the courage to do it or didn't want to do it or something, and they say, "Well, that's not quite what I meant," when I think the understanding was fairly clear. This was more of a kind of one-on-one or in a working relationship. In the public, being misquoted in the press is quite common. I'm not being critical of the press, by the way. That just happens.

K. Krueger: The other question I had is probably in your competence category. I wondered what academic credentials you were looking for.

J. Blaney: In terms of these three positions.... For the research position one would expect to have at least a graduate degree — maybe, probably even preferably, a PhD degree — somebody who really has demonstrated research skills. In terms of the communications administration one would assume they would have a university degree — one would assume maybe a graduate degree — but I have encountered many people who were actually very, very good at administration and really understand accounting systems and finance and everything else quite well, and they may have equivalent experience. It's not likely these days, but I think one has to be open to the fact that it's possible that they may not have a degree. There are a lot of people working in the communications field who do not have a degree but are very good. Again, it's not as likely these days, but it does happen.

J. Les (Chair): Any other questions?

J. MacPhail: I just wanted to say that I'm familiar with the phrase — I've often had to use it myself: "What the Premier meant to say...." I'm not naming any names, I want to make it clear.

Dr. Blaney, thanks. That's a good list. I'm interested in — and I may have missed this at the beginning — a time frame for decision-making. Do you have a budget that you're allocating staff by staff? I don't necessarily need to know what the budget is, but have you thought about that?

J. Blaney: Yeah, actually, in the Gordon Gibson report there's a budget. I am actually meeting with members of the Attorney General's department this afternoon about budget matters and budget administration. There are approximate levels for these.

I don't think the salaries are high, by the way. Indeed, hiring could be somewhat difficult in the sense that these are for 16-month appointments, roughly. A

lot of "good" people are employed out there and may not want to leave a secure job for a 16-month appointment. Perhaps secondments are possible. What is going in favour of this, of course, is that this is a pretty exciting job. This kind of job only comes around once in a while. Some people might be encouraged to take leave or maybe even take the chance of getting back to their organization if that's the case.

In terms of timing, I would believe a month would be required to find all four. I wish they were here today. One week would be lovely; two weeks would be wonderful. I need them soon. Time is going by, but you've got to make sure you get the right person, because there's not much time for finding another person if they don't work out. I tend to hire reasonably well, actually, but I don't keep people who don't work out either. I am going to try very hard to get the right people.

I have to speak to the Attorney General's department people this afternoon, but I think I might like to hire someone to help me do this — a recruiter, but on a much reduced rate, nothing like half of the salary for a year or something like that. If I could get somebody who could do it on a kind of very, very low budget rate, I think that would be very helpful.

I would like to have all three in a month. Some of the junior positions might be filled earlier. There are only seven or eight altogether. I would like to have the administrator as early as possible. I've been advised by people who have set up commissions before that the first two or three weeks is when you really have to get the essentials in place and not make any mistakes. Right now there's a staff of one.

I want to go in camera, by the way, later for about two or three minutes to talk about some administrative support position I wish to fill.

That's a long answer. I'm sorry. I could almost become a politician.

J. Les (Chair): Around here we call that a filibuster. Go ahead, Joy.

J. MacPhail: How wide, geographically, will you search?

[0920]

J. Blaney: Good question, as they say. I would like to get at least one person from the interior. Now that's difficult.

I want diversity. In the top four positions I'd like to have two men and two women. That's what I'd like to have. If there is other diversity possible, I'd like to get it. I wouldn't mind getting one of those persons from another part of.... Not just the greater Vancouver area. The office will be in greater Vancouver.

I don't know if it's possible, but I'm going to try. I'm going to try it with a recruiter. I'm going to phone friends I've got in the interior, such as at the colleges and universities — maybe someone in the communications field who might be able to move for 16 months.

If not, they have to understand the province. Like many of us, they have to have been around this province, all over the place, and know it. When you look at the electoral map — this great big map, which I now have in my bedroom — they must know those places and have been there, hopefully.

J. MacPhail: In your bedroom, Dr. Blaney?

J. Blaney: You see? I'm in love with the job.

J. MacPhail: Do you anticipate limiting it to British Columbia if at all possible? Have you thought about beyond our borders?

J. Blaney: I have an application from somebody already who looks quite credible, actually, who now lives in Toronto but grew up in B.C.

B. Lekstrom: The criteria you've laid out are very well thought out. I think it's ideal. It sounds to me like you have an open mind. You're going to look at the people that are interested, take the best person for the job, and weigh that out.

When you talk about looking around to fill these positions, you talk about the interior, and I'm assuming you're talking about the north, as well — up in our area.

When we do this, the kind of criteria.... I guess just to give me a sense, are we talking a five-day-a-week type scenario? Is that your plan to work this system through? I'm just kind of curious as to your vision, as to how you see this unfolding as the process begins.

J. Blaney: The positions would be roughly five days a week, I guess, but available seven days a week. I would like to be able to call these people anytime, as they should be able to call me. There will be a lot of weekend work. As proposed in the Gibson report.... So far it seems to make sense to me, but everything is testable. The meetings of the assembly are in the spring for the purposes of learning about what systems are around and then again later in the fall, in the deliberative phase, where they think about what, if anything, they're going to recommend to the government. They'll have to recommend something. They will meet on weekends. Alternate weekends is what Gordon Gibson suggested, because he feels that more citizens would be able to find that time free.

There's no perfect time. A lot of citizens work weekends. That's discriminatory against people who work on weekends, who can't take the time off. But in all probability the weekends would accommodate more people than not. More likely, in terms of families, there might be a spouse that would look after children and things of this sort if that's the case.

I kind of like weekends to myself, quite frankly. I think weekends are a great family time. My weekends are very precious to me. My Saturdays are very precious as the one day a week that I really protect like heck. I must admit, I'd be happy for advice on this.

Right now it seems to me that Gordon Gibson has probably got it right. Weekends would probably work best.

When we go to recruit people in the fall, when we have 20 people per constituency and we talk to them about the requirements and obligations, we will be quite explicit about having to attend and that there will be weekends. A lot of them will say: "Well, I have a job at the IGA on the weekends. I can't do it." I don't think there's much we can do about that. I don't think we can do replacement salaries. It's just simply not in the budget.

B. Lekstrom: One following question. In the criteria you're looking for, I think probably one of the more difficult ones will be "no known position on electoral reform." I think everybody probably has some type of position. You're talking about a person that's drafted papers on it, or something.

J. Blaney: Highly public.

B. Lekstrom: Okay.

J. Blaney: The reason for that is not because that person can't work objectively.

I'm going to talk about one person whom I know quite well. That person has no problem at all working objectively, but they are known to have a particular position. This is a question to you: does that affect the perception of fairness in the commissioner?

[0925]

B. Lekstrom: Yeah, I would think certainly in the public's eye it would. I think we're going to have to be very cautious there. You're very correct in saying we want to find people that are interested in the subject but aren't out there pushing one over another already. This whole process, the way I see it, is to go out and listen to British Columbians and try and see if there's a better way.

J. Blaney: There is one — particularly the research position. It seems to me inconceivable that you would find a person who really knows and understands electoral systems that does not have a point of view. It depends on just how public that is. There are ways to check a person's track record as to whether they can work professionally, holding that view.

I've got three profiles. I'm going to go through the one.... This person doesn't even know I'm profiling this person, but I'm going to profile it and kind of test it and see what you think.

K. Krueger: I also like your three fundamental tests for the Citizens' Assembly, but I want to make it clear that I don't think any of us expect you to have to get our approval for the support staff you've referred to. Nor would I expect that we would know the names of anyone you're considering until you've actually made your choices and you bring in the three key people to

us for confirmation interviews, such as we had with you.

You have impeccable credentials. You were unanimously selected for the job. You ran a very large university. British Columbia is tremendously proud of the results that you got and the way the university was rated nationally under your leadership. I don't think any of us feel any need to have you come to us for approval of administrative decisions that you're making.

J. Blaney: I appreciate that. I assume from your comments that I will bring to you.... Maybe they won't all come together, by the way. It's a good question. I indicated that I hoped to have all three in a month, but they might be staggered. If I could find the administrative position within ten days, I would like to bring that position to you and not wait until I have the other two.

K. Krueger: By all means bring them on in. We'll schedule meetings, I'm sure — subject to the Chair's decision, obviously. We want to help you get started. We know you're under a tight time line.

J. Blaney: Presumably, this would mean sending the resume with my covering letter, and then you would like to meet this person and interview this person?

J. Les (Chair): That's something I wanted to poll the committee on. I don't particularly have a bias either way whether we should or should not.

What I was going to suggest is that if you are bringing forward, for example, the name of someone you nominate for the administrative position, we would call a meeting of this committee to review that. Several days prior to that, you would forward us the information with respect to that individual. Then we would convene a committee meeting to discuss that nomination with you. I'm not sure that we need to actually see these people in person. I would turn that over to committee members for consideration as well.

Do you have a comment on that, Rob?

R. Nijjar: I agree that I don't think there is a need for us to interview them or to meet them. I think it's important that we leave the perception and the reality that we are hands-off from this. We've entrusted you to choose your staff that you need, as you see fit, to carry out your duties. So long as there is no outstanding issue with your choice, the particulars of your reasoning for choosing them, based on your six criteria, I think is up to you. It's a basis upon which you choose that's important to us, but who you choose is really immaterial to us in our duties.

J. Les (Chair): Are there any other comments on that particular point — whether or not we ought to interview those nominees? Kevin?

[0930]

K. Krueger: I had expected we would. The reason is that I think it's important to the integrity of the process

to have these people answer the same questions on the record that Dr. Blaney answered with regard to an absence of bias. Clearly, Dr. Blaney will have screened for that. I just think it would be good as a part of the public record of this whole process that those people answer those questions on the record and reassure everyone of the absolute integrity of the process and absence of bias going in. Clearly, Dr. Blaney is providing the leadership, but he has very few people to rely on to help him deliver on a very major goal.

J. MacPhail: It's a useful discussion. When I proposed this to the Attorney General, I had in mind, actually, that we would interview the candidates after Dr. Blaney had done the.... They would be confirmation hearings, not selection hearings. That's where I started from in this matter. I do accept Mr. Nijjar's point, though, that we're not here to micromanage, and we also must be seen to be as independent — or allow for as much independence — as is possible.

Maybe there's a physical way we can expedite that kind of confirmation hearing through teleconference or something. I don't know, but I actually had anticipated meeting the persons.

J. Les (Chair): There's another way to maybe sort of subdivide this a little bit. Perhaps we're more interested specifically in the director of research, for example, in terms of addressing the question of bias, than the director of administration or the director of communications.

J. MacPhail: No, I would be interested in the director of communications.

J. Les (Chair): You would be? Okay.

Well, I see an emerging consensus that we want to see these people for a confirmation hearing. That's agreeable all around?

J. Blaney: Presumably, this is done with some anonymity. It is in camera. It could be of some embarrassment to people to be an applicant and then be a failed applicant.

J. MacPhail: I'm fine to even do it by teleconference, literally. When I said I want to see them, I want to chat with them is what I meant.

J. Blaney: I'm very happy, by the way. I like open processes. I'd be very happy for you to see them. The main reason I'm here is to ensure that we understand the criteria and qualifications, but this is what I'm going to apply.

I do want to come back to the matter of bias again. The director of research will have bias. It's just impossible to find somebody — at least, I haven't found anyone yet — who has studied the various electoral systems and who won't say: "On balance, I really prefer one or the other." This person has maybe studied it for 20 years. The question is whether that person has made

that a major public kind of thing and whether or not this person can explain these various alternate systems without bias and never show bias.

I think I've done that in other aspects, not in this. I have indicated that I really do not have a preference for any particular.... I will keep it that way as I learn about them. I have chaired university senates where there have been issues on the floor where I have definitely had an opinion, but I think I've been able to exercise my chairship in such a way that it does not influence the outcome or however the discussion goes.

I think that if, for example, I try to second somebody from the University of Northern B.C., just to take an example, who would be the director of research for a year, this person must have an opinion, I would think, about one system over another. Whether or not that opinion would be.... I would do various tests to find out whether or not that person can act with integrity and without bias for this particular job.

To find someone who has no opinion on this at all is to find someone who doesn't know anything about these systems.

J. Les (Chair): Okay. We've agreed, then, that as you select these people, you will forward them to us, perhaps in a staggered way, and we'll try to be as flexible as possible in convening these meetings to accommodate your finding the appropriate people, and you'll endeavour to get us the information on these nominees several days before such meetings so that we'll be as well prepared as possible for each of those confirmation meetings.

You next wanted to move on to some hypothetical profiles.

J. Blaney: Three, if I might. I'll try and do them very briefly. I'm going to change a few facts, like the gender or something like that — okay?

[0935]

A person whom I know, a top administrator, has worked many years; knows procedure, *Robert's Rules of Order*, committee procedures and everything else extremely well; is an excellent administrator; has absolute integrity; and for the last four years worked very hard on the initiative for proportional representation and is known to have worked that way.

J. MacPhail: What position would that be?

J. Blaney: The administration position.

K. Krueger: I would have a concern right off the bat that somebody who felt that strongly about one of the options that's also being heavily pushed by a political party in British Columbia would cause a lot of people to think that we built in a bias from the beginning if the assembly ends up recommending proportional representation.

I think you start with a handicap as soon as you start with someone who has worked so hard for one option.

J. Blaney: Let me give you, then, a second profile. This is for a person who has probably one of the best understandings of electoral systems in British Columbia and writes very clearly — that means this person can make them well understood to the public at large. The person has clearly spoken about it quite a bit. The person has been a senior member of organizations promoting electoral reform — not one particular system, but electoral reform — and is known publicly both for his competence and as a person who advocates and works for electoral reform. This person would apply for the researcher position.

K. Krueger: I see that as less of a problem, but the first-past-the-post system remains one of the candidates at the end of the day for this process. It sounds like you're speaking of a person who's already made up their mind that first-past-the-post shouldn't be the outcome of this, and that's up to your assembly to determine. I'm less concerned about that than the first scenario but a little concerned about it.

R. Nijjar: I'm probably just as concerned as in the first scenario. I have a hard time believing that someone who researches that very topic — who by choice has spent time researching that out of sheer interest and obviously has developed knowledge on it — wouldn't have very strong opinions, not just on one, probably, but on every possibility of electoral reform.

Like I said in my earlier comment, I still think it's very important, as we all know in politics, that it's not just what you do; it's the perception of what you do. It's very important that we give the public the real security of knowing that this is a new and completely open process — open to the minds. It has to be open to the minds of the people involved.

Out of the wealth of people we have in British Columbia, I would like to see us not narrow down on someone that has spent so much of their time on this topic.

J. MacPhail: I certainly am with Mr. Krueger. I have much less difficulty with those circumstances.

Let me tell you what. If that kind of person were to present here, Dr. Blaney, what I would be interested in is: what are the roots of the person? Here's where I'm going to say the nicest things I've ever said about academia. I have a lot of trouble about ivory tower spokespeople, but having said that, there are people who work in academia who have a lifelong interest in certain topics and can adequately, because of the nature of academia — I'm speaking as a non-academic — present in a way that is balanced and neutral.

[0940]

The person I'm thinking of is particularly in the area of forestry. It was an appointee by this government. I couldn't object to the appointee, because while it was his work, both inside and outside the job he was balanced and fair and informed, so I couldn't object to his appointment.

That would be what I would be interested in. Is the person steeped in academia? — which would be a plus.

J. Blaney: The third person, who is more steeped in academia than the previous two, is a person — who I have not contacted at all, by the way — who has been recommended to me by five or six people already. This person is an academic and is a scholar of electoral systems and aboriginal government and is highly regarded for his work in aboriginal affairs. The aboriginal community thinks he is just absolutely wonderful.

He understands B.C. very well and understands electoral systems. He has not held a public position with any organization on electoral reform but has had some political activity in years past, though not with a known political party.

I have heard that in his classes and everything else, he has pure integrity and is very fair, but he does hold an opinion. I don't know what that opinion is, by the way. When I talked to the department chair there, he said that he can't help but have an opinion. You can't study this stuff all your life and not have an opinion on it, but I don't know what it is. He doesn't proselytize any particular opinion.

K. Krueger: That person sounds really good to me.

J. Blaney: I've tried to show some gradations of this whole matter.

K. Krueger: These people are so fundamental to your success that you don't want any perception of taint in any way. In the first two scenarios, I think it would be really hard not to have people throw that up at the end of the process, when we could head it off at the beginning. Undoubtedly these three people will have the opportunity, if they want it, to influence the Citizens' Assembly in its thinking in all sorts of ways. They might not even be doing it deliberately. If they have a strong position, no matter how they try to hide it.... It can be as simple as body language, but it can be a whole lot of different ways that they can subtly or otherwise influence the process, deliberately or not.

We have conflict-of-interest guidelines that are legislated. We have to avoid even the perception of a conflict of interest. I think, obviously, you're going to want to avoid any negative perceptions about these people who are so integral to the success of this process.

Number three sounded great, but numbers one and two.... You might want to shop on.

J. Blaney: I tried to show a gradation, just to test it. I couldn't agree more. Perception is critical — perception and reality, but perception is just as important.

I have completed what I have to say about this. I'd be happy to get any other advice. I know it's a very junior position, but I would still appreciate having a very brief in-camera meeting with the committee on a point.

J. MacPhail: One of the positions that I think will be equally as important as the researcher is the person

who does the communications, and here's why: 158 people who are chosen at random will lead to communications challenges. I think those communications challenges can be very positive and result in positive outcomes, but I think there will be challenges, just by virtue of lack of experience among some of them, anyway, in terms of public presentation — the rules that the great citizenry puts upon those who have a public position. Whether that position be for three days and foisted upon them, there are still views on that matter.

[0945]

I just want to put on record that I think there has to be a very sensitive person who understands the need to assist the assembly — not only the chair and the senior staff but also the assembly members — to present a public face.

J. Les (Chair): Any other comments from committee members at this point?

Have you got the feedback you need, Dr. Blaney, to help you in the next few weeks?

J. Blaney: It's been very helpful.

J. Les (Chair): What we will do, then, at this point is recess and convene in a minute or two in camera.

The committee recessed at 9:46 a.m.

The committee continued in camera from 9:47 a.m. to 9:50 a.m.

[J. Les in the chair.]

J. Les (Chair): Is there any other business that anybody wants to discuss this morning?
Seeing none, motion to adjourn.

The committee adjourned at 9:50 a.m.