



Second Session, 38th Parliament

REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS
(HANSARD)

SELECT STANDING COMMITTEE ON

FINANCE AND
GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Victoria

Wednesday, May 17, 2006

Issue No. 20

BLAIR LEKSTROM, MLA, CHAIR

ISSN 1499-416X

**SELECT STANDING COMMITTEE ON
FINANCE AND GOVERNMENT SERVICES**

Victoria
Wednesday, May 17, 2006

- Chair:* * Blair Lekstrom (Peace River South L)
- Deputy Chair:* * Maurine Karagianis (Esquimalt-Metchosin NDP)
- Members:*
- * Harry Bloy (Burquitlam L)
 - * Dave S. Hayer (Surrey-Tynehead L)
 - * Gordon Hogg (Surrey-White Rock L)
 - * Richard T. Lee (Burnaby North L)
 - * John Yap (Richmond-Steveston L)
 - * Leonard Krog (Nanaimo NDP)
 - * Jenny Wai Ching Kwan (Vancouver-Mount Pleasant NDP)
 - * Nicholas Simons (Powell River-Sunshine Coast NDP)

**denotes member present*

Clerk: Kate Ryan-Lloyd

Committee Staff: Jonathan Fershau (Committee Research Analyst)

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SELECT STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND GOVERNMENT SERVICES



Wednesday, May 17, 2006
12 p.m.
Douglas Fir Committee Room
Parliament Buildings, Victoria

Present: Blair Lekstrom, MLA (Chair); Maurine Karagianis, MLA (Deputy Chair); Harry Bloy, MLA; Dave S. Hayer, MLA; Gordon Hogg, MLA; Leonard Krog, MLA; Jenny Wai Ching Kwan, MLA; Richard T. Lee, MLA; Nicholas Simons, MLA; John Yap, MLA

1. The Chair called the Committee meeting to order at 12:16 p.m.
2. The Committee reviewed and discussed preliminary planning documents relating to the 2007 Budget Consultation process.
3. The Committee adjourned to the call of the Chair at 12:56 p.m.

Blair Lekstrom, MLA
Chair

Kate Ryan-Lloyd
Clerk Assistant and
Committee Clerk

WEDNESDAY, MAY 17, 2006

The committee met at 12:16 p.m.

[B. Lekstrom in the chair.]

B. Lekstrom (Chair): Good afternoon, everyone. Our agenda is not that lengthy, but there are some important issues that I thought we would begin discussions on for the tour coming up, as well as what we have just completed over the last year as far as our tour, the visits and the report that we put together.

Prebudget Consultation Process

B. Lekstrom (Chair): Item one on our agenda this afternoon is our proposed budget consultation meeting schedule and locations, of which you all have a copy. This year certainly gives us an allotment of time that will let us travel to more locations around the province. Last year's time frame was extremely tight. I think this puts us back on par with what we've traditionally done, when we had the time.

What I've put together is a tentative schedule, trying to cover the different areas of the province. There are certainly some that we are repeat visitors to, just because of the geographic location and the population base. There are a couple of areas that we had talked about trying to get to.

In this, you will see — I believe it is the second and third from the bottom — two areas that I would like the committee to have some discussion on. If we need, then I could ask the Clerk to look at issues of availability for those areas as well — travel time and so on. If we open it up, what I'd like to do is get your input on the issue of what I've put down on paper here to see if there are any discussions, down to the point where we have some decisions to make on that.

G. Hogg: On September 14 and 15 we have a caucus meeting, if I remember the dates correctly. You may want to just reference that and be sure of that.

Secondly, just with respect to selecting places, do we have a set of criteria and/or principles that we utilize in determining where we're going to go? Is it hitting big places, little places, combinations over a two-year period — trying to hit more places? Are there any criteria that are implied?

For instance, should we go to a very small community, which is not represented in any of these? We always make the assumption that small rural communities will make a trek to somewhere else, but I assume that none of them ever do that — whether or not there's much interest in that.

It would be nice over the course of three or four years to be able to have a set of criteria or principles that said: "Here's what we're trying to do. Over the course of whatever that cycle may be, we're going to hit that range of communities."

B. Lekstrom (Chair): That's a very good question. We don't have written criteria in that sense. What

we've tried to do is vary it. As I indicated, some locations — such as Victoria, Vancouver, the interior with Kelowna, Kamloops, Prince George — have been traditional areas that we have gone to for ease of access and access to major population bases.

To give you an example.... Traditionally, we have alternated between Dawson Creek and Fort St. John. There are other areas there, such as Fort Nelson, Chetwynd, Tumbler. We try and pick some service centres for ease of access. My concern would be that although I would like to get to some small communities, we may limit the access for others as well. That's the balance. But I'm open as Chair to that kind of discussion.

[1220]

M. Karagianis (Deputy Chair): Actually, you do have one other choice here as well. On week two you've got Nelson or Cranbrook. You mentioned that there were only a couple of places, but in fact you've.... That's earlier in the process.

I think the idea of drafting some kind of terms of reference for a several-year span is a really good idea. I'm not sure we necessarily need to do that now, but I think that's really an excellent idea so that at all times that's unilateral and fairly reliable. Communities will then begin to anticipate that every second year there will be representation in their sector of the province, which would be good.

Basically, there are about 12 locations here. If we choose one where we've got options, we choose one of those two places. In the question of Surrey or Coquitlam.... We've had some discussion back and forth just this morning about locations, making sure that everybody felt their representation had been heard here at the committee.

We may want to do both of those rather than just one, in which case I think a dozen locations is still very doable in the time frame that we've been given. It's less than what has been done habitually in the past. I think there have been as many as 17 locations in some previous years, which seems like a daunting task. I would say that from our perspective, we're happy with a dozen locations. In all, that actually seems fair and reasonable.

L. Krog: As the Chair knows from my comments last year, I'm a great believer in going into the smaller communities. So I second what Maurine had to say. If we do it on an alternating basis, so be it.

With respect to the comments around Surrey or Coquitlam, they are very different communities. Contrary to popular belief, those of us on the Island do not see the lower mainland as just one big amorphous mass of people. They are distinct communities, and it's appropriate to do that. I certainly recall Parliamentary Reform. We were in Surrey and Richmond, as a matter of fact.... Surrey and Port Coquitlam and Poco — that whole area is growing quite dramatically.

With respect to Nelson or Cranbrook. Cranbrook last year; I'd suggest Nelson this year. Again, there is a fair bit of distance between them. Also, in Nelson it would allow Castlegar and Trail — folks in that area — to have reasonable access.

I think the concept of working out some kind of schedule where these communities could expect a committee — keeping in mind that nothing can bind what the committee does — just might prove useful.

Fort St. John is a service centre, but maybe the folks in Fort St. James deserve a visit. Certainly the Parliamentary Reform Committee.... I remember we went to Burns Lake. Accommodation was a bit problematic, but nevertheless — and I'm speaking entirely on my own here — I'm certainly prepared to.

Last time we had a fairly rushed schedule. We did a couple of communities in a day on occasion. Frankly, I think this is government that people pay for, and they're entitled to have some opportunity to speak to it. We may be the only opportunity for them to do it. If we end up doing, say, Terrace and Burns Lake in one day, so be it. I don't have a problem with having a little rushed life once in a while. This is only a few days out of our entire year.

B. Lekstrom (Chair): All right. If I could, maybe what I will comment on is the issue of Surrey or Coquitlam. If we pick one, whether its Surrey or Coquitlam, rather than do both of those, I'll throw this out for consideration.

What I do notice on here is that from an outside perspective looking at the lower mainland, most British Columbians look and say: "Oh, it's Vancouver." Possibly one of Surrey or Coquitlam and maybe the Fraser Valley — Chilliwack or Abbotsford. Is that a sensible...? To try and move further out so you would have Vancouver, Surrey, and progressively go out.... I'll throw that out maybe for consideration on that one.

Part of our discussion in trying to put this together, we go back over — and I believe there are copies being put together now — where we've been in the previous years, where the places were that we had gone. Fort St. John, for instance. Traditionally, those have been the major centres. Fort Nelson would be extremely difficult for the far reaches of the ridings of the northeast to get to. It's probably five or six hours. If we're doing this in late September or October, it makes it somewhat more difficult. I think it's probably centralized.

Again, I concur with you, Leonard. Our job is to go out and give people the opportunity to address their issues on the prebudget paper.

[1225]

G. Hogg: Consistent with that, I wonder whether there is some value in also looking at targeting some communities that we don't traditionally get any input from. Would it be worthwhile, for instance, to go to Bella Bella, the Nisga'a — some of the first nations places that we don't traditionally get much input from? I think that's a good and important message, and we may well receive some valuable comment from some of those organizations.

We don't get much representation from the downtown east side. What if we went down to the downtown east side and actually focused and did some inviting of people to come forward, rather than just ad-

vertise broadly — but sort of target somewhere? I think it all falls into what we decide our terms of reference might be and how we might want to do that.

If we want to look at this ten years down the road and say that we actually did make some inroads and were reaching out.... We might have some targeted areas that we also invite outside of the traditional broad-based newspaper advertisement that a lot of people never look at or see or know about.

R. Lee: I think it's a good idea to go to a broad base of area. Say in the next three or four years, probably, you can go to different locations even in the lower mainland. Burnaby is the third-largest city in B.C. Yet sometimes we don't get any share of the attention. Probably do some planning — at least one city in the lower mainland that we will go to once in the next three years.

J. Kwan: I really liked what Gordie Hogg said, not because he mentioned my riding. But I think the point is trying to reach out to the communities who have not been able to get access to the Finance Committee for a presentation. There are a number of communities which we know face barriers — the aboriginal community. We received something like two presentations last year. I think a special effort in trying to reach out to the aboriginal community is really important for the work that we're doing here.

Reaching out to the marginalized community, many of whom are located in the downtown east side, is very worthwhile. A lot of them would like to contribute, I would imagine, but don't have the access to do so — physically or by e-mail or otherwise. If we actually went to where the community is, that would perhaps facilitate it.

I would further add for the committee's consideration.... I think it would be a huge advancement if we did something like this. In some communities with language barriers, we provide for translation. We actually go to those communities and advertise in those media outlets to invite people. We could easily hire someone through the committee to come in and provide translation service. MOSAIC, for example, has lots of people who speak a variety of languages.

I just think that would add so much to the work that this committee is doing and to the work of government in terms of sending out a message to the multicultural mosaic of our province about wanting their participation as well. I would put that forward for consideration.

N. Simons: We have to recognize that most submissions to this committee come in the form of e-mail and written submissions. We do see quite a number of groups, but most of the submissions we get are from people who choose not to present or are unable to get a space to present.

I'm just going to say that there are some places where we get the same presentation from the same group in different locations. I'm wondering if there's an ability to somehow give space to.... Let's say we do go to Fort Nelson, and they've got a tourism board or

something like that. It's a big issue, but we're never going to get any submissions from Fort Nelson's tourism association if we're in other communities. There are some submissions that are specific to the small communities.

I'm just wondering: if we go to some of the smaller communities, can we make sure that our agenda isn't taken up by groups who are already presenting everywhere else? They have a right to do that. I'm just wondering if we are in the process of choosing who will be given an opportunity to submit in person. Do we have an opportunity to be somewhat selective in an attempt to be fair, if we do it as a committee? It's mostly a question.

[1230]

B. Lekstrom (Chair): Well, we have kind of touched on that over the last year, certainly. It's very difficult, I think. For instance, an organization presents to us in Vancouver, and the same organization, although different representatives, will present possibly in Kelowna or Prince George or Dawson Creek. Finding that balance of actually coming out and saying, "Gosh, no, you can't present...."

I think we have to be very cautious as an open committee on that. If we see a trend towards the very same presentation time after time after time, it would be reasonable that either I as the Chair or someone could contact the organization and speak with them. I would have no problem doing that.

N. Simons: Could I just follow up? I appreciate those points. In some way, it's almost like if you've submitted already in the last such-and-such a time.... If it's first come, first served, we have to expect that the most organized people with the most resources will be the most likely to be getting in first. That's fair; that's understandable. The little tiny gallery in Penticton is going to want to speak, but they've been usurped by the organization that has administrative staff that can get them in right away. So maybe what we're really talking about is the process with which we choose those who are able to submit in person.

B. Lekstrom (Chair): On that, I think part of our attempt to help offset that is the open-mike session that we hold at the end of each session, which has gone a long way.

Possibly to move our discussion forward, I have an idea on this. If we look at what we've agreed to so far — I'll step through it, and correct me if I'm wrong — Vancouver, Prince Rupert, Fort St. John, Prince George, Nelson, Kelowna, Williams Lake, Kamloops and Victoria seem to be ones that we will go to. We have two choices to make.

Then possibly what we could do either as a sub-committee.... I as the Chair can work with Kate to look at possibly two, three or four other locations from the smaller venues — a first nations possibly — and set that up and a couple of others that we could get to. I can bring that back at the next meeting. That would

probably bump us up to about 15 or 16. If that's acceptable, I can do that and come with a recommendation of four others.

H. Bloy: One small point. I don't want to call it "marginalized," but smaller communities that may not be as well organized. I believe that we should invite some people to speak, instead of just the advertisement, because some people may know the community better than I would and say: "Well, here are three groups that should come." I think if we invite them, it's a little different, because if you go into a smaller community and you run the same ad and don't get any response.... Because we're going to be there, we want to make it worthwhile.

I see the point that Richard Lee mentioned about being in Burnaby but working around to the different cities, even the lower mainland — even if our hon. member for Nanaimo thinks that we're uniquely different at every boundary crossing. But I think it would be good to move through the lower mainland and all the different areas.

B. Lekstrom (Chair): Just before I go to the next speaker, I think I'll caution our committee as far as the invitation portion of it. This is an open process, and I go back to that. What we do traditionally, once we begin our site selection, is complete that, begin advertising.... If we do not have groups that are coming forward for a certain area, we then go back to the community and try and move it forward, and we do make some calls.

I want to be very cautious on extending an invitation to somebody that I'm sure would give a great presentation.... But if we miss a group or an organization, and for some reason they wanted that invitation, I think we would probably not be doing the work that this committee should be so proud they've done in the years gone by.

G. Hogg: I'm comfortable with you and Kate doing that and bringing back the list. If you had time, it would also be helpful if you had some draft terms of reference that you might bring back to us, which talked about maybe a four-year cycle. Maybe there are some communities we hit each of those four years and some others that we don't — and having some sense of what the communities of interest might be as well. It's not just a geographic sense of areas, but the communities of interest, as well, that we could then target and go to as a community of interest — the aboriginal community being one of those, and some of the other ethnic communities as well.

[1235]

B. Lekstrom (Chair): All right. Very good idea.

M. Karagianis (Deputy Chair): I know you stepped over the Courtenay-Comox and Sunshine Coast option here. One thing I would say that I did learn from the Small Business Roundtable is that if we were to choose Courtenay-Comox over the Sunshine Coast, we would

need to make sure we structured the meetings late enough in the day that Sunshine Coast travellers could actually make it over there.

The Small Business Roundtable ran into a bit of a problem in that they had scheduled the round table from nine till noon. There was no physical way for participants from Powell River and the Sunshine Coast to participate without coming over the night before and staying in a hotel room. It only took a little bit of minor adjustment for them to hold the meeting from one till four in the afternoon. They, therefore, opened it up and satisfactorily met with representatives from Powell River–Sunshine Coast.

In fact, if that's going to be one of the choices, we should bear in mind the travel times, ferries and logistics around some of that, making sure we include options for that community to participate.

B. Lekstrom (Chair): All right. Thank you.

N. Simons: I just have a suggestion in terms of how the committee might consider how it accepts presentations in person. That is by having a deadline for people to apply to speak to the committee, and then randomly choosing — I mean picking out of a hat, essentially, which is a fair way of doing it — those groups which will have an opportunity to do so. Everybody has the same amount of time to apply. It's not like TicketMaster, where your seats are gone by the time you get to the front of the line.

This is the bracelet system for the standing committee, in that everybody gets a chance until a certain time to put in their request. When that deadline is reached for, let's say, the community of Prince George, then those are selected, so that we have a better opportunity of getting small groups that might have found out later. We'll probably get the same number of large groups, because they'll apply in every community as they usually do, and we're likely to hit on them. I can't see any sort of negative to that.

As to the other comment about Powell River — we should really say it's the upper Sunshine Coast — I think they'd be pleased with that accommodation. Of course, with four ferries, increases in.... We won't get into that, but it's also an expense for people to have to go — as it is anywhere — to submit to the select standing committee. I appreciate the concern for the people of Powell River. I'm sure they'll take full advantage if we were to meet in Courtenay.

J. Kwan: I was just going to suggest, Mr. Chair, that perhaps you and the Deputy Chair can sit down along with the Clerk and work out all of these details — given the comments that the committee has given to date — and then come back with recommendations for the committee to adopt. Perhaps that's the most efficient way of having this matter dealt with in a timely fashion.

B. Lekstrom (Chair): All right. Thank you.

L. Krog: I actually really like what Nicholas has suggested. It seems to me, based on one kick at the cat

last year, that we're going to get submissions from every chamber of commerce, from every labour council, from every new car dealer association representative, etc.

Interjection.

B. Lekstrom (Chair): Harry, through the Chair, please.

L. Krog: I mean, I don't know what the numbers are. If in fact we've got 300 people who wanted to speak in Prince George, is it fair that the first ten who get in and fill the spots do it? I suspect the numbers aren't that big.

I don't know that we'd be doing a disservice to organizations that I think the committee would want to hear from. If they're highly organized and have administrative staff, like Nicholas says, they're going to make written submissions. But if they're drawn from a hat, we're more likely to pick up, perhaps, some of the smaller folks. The people who have the organization and the money — be it the labour council, the chamber of commerce or whatever — will have the staff. They'll be making a written submission of some substance in any event.

You know, when you hire people you don't say: "The first five of you who apply for the five spots get the jobs." You go through a process, because it has to be fair.

[1240]

I just don't know that it's arguably a fair process, because there are some organizations and people who are very conscious of this and who are in there year after year. With great respect, we heard an awful lot around the issue of tax along the border — social services tax. I understand the issue in a way I haven't understood it before. I'm very conscious of it. I don't necessarily need to hear five organizations tell me that when.... As Nicholas points out, maybe it's a local arts group or the tourism association or somebody else or just Joe's Jewelry who says: "You know, look...."

Here endeth my whine.

B. Lekstrom (Chair): Certainly, Jenny, your idea was good. We will take what we've heard, and I will do the same with what I've heard about the process of how presenters get access. We'll bring that back. There may be other ideas, and we'll put some thought into it and do that.

At this time with the list we have, I think there's concurrence on most of the areas. If we could determine.... I would put this forward — that Courtenay would be our location for this year. Moving down, Surrey would be the location on this list, and then we will look at something in the Fraser Valley for first nations. If there are other areas, we can bring those forward as a final document, but this would be one to build on as it presently sits.

N. Simons: Good point. I think we would like to encourage first nations and aboriginal organizations —

we should make the distinction — to submit. Possibly we could even locate one of our meetings in our regular travel season on Indian band land. Perhaps Kamloops is a good example. The Kamloops band has quite large facilities there, and we'd see if that would work.

H. Bloy: You know, when I look at the list, there are three cities that have gotten the tours every time. I assume they get them from all select standing committees. Vancouver and Victoria get it, even though Victoria is a much smaller area than within the city or the Tri-Cities of Coquitlam and Burnaby and the whole northeast sector. Surrey has had it three years out of the last three years or three out of the last four years. When you look back, Langley had it — and Chilliwack. As you go back, I would still like to see one in the Tri-City areas into Coquitlam-Burnaby. I'm somewhat biased. I might be.

B. Lekstrom (Chair): I have no problem with that. I will actually adjust this schedule to reflect that. We'll be in the Tri-Cities area somewhere, and we'll move forward on that. The first nations issues that have been discussed are excellent, and aboriginal communities as well. We may very well have Métis, and so on, that want to come.

I just want to throw this out as well. Although I think that on occasion there have been tours associated with these meetings when we go to areas, tours were scheduled. I have got some caution with that. We are probably going to do in the range of 16 public hearings. The prebudget consultation paper will be out.... I think by September 15 it has to be submitted. That leaves us only about two months to visit 16 locations to hold the public hearings.

If the opportunity avails itself, due to flight patterns or schedules and so on, we can bring that back. But as much as I would like to, I think the first priority of our committee is to meet with British Columbians on this issue. With the acceptance of the committee, I'll proceed with our planning on that basis. Okay?

H. Bloy: I agree for you to proceed on that basis, but I think it's helpful for us to be out in the communities when we're in different places. Some people say it's the same group giving the same message at a number of different stops, but the area is totally different. The economy is totally different in each of these areas. I think it's worthwhile going out to see — whether it's a government office or, for some of us, a tract of land for forest — wherever we are, to better educate us when we're making our recommendations.

B. Lekstrom (Chair): Okay. As I indicated, I will bring that back, if the possibility is there. I've participated in this for a number of years — 16 locations, if that's the number we end up with. The report we have to put together and all of the written submissions we receive are going to be a significant task. As I've indicated, should we have completed a meeting in the day and our flight schedule allows us to take in a tour before we move on, we'll endeavour to do that.

M. Karagianis (Deputy Chair): Chair, if you could just remind us: what is our last date for doing the consultation process? Do we have a target of the last week of October or the first week of November? I think there was some discussion previously about the 25th of October or something being a proposed cut-off date.

[1245]

B. Lekstrom (Chair): Our report has to be submitted by the 15th of November, by statute, I believe. Now, if we need a month to compile all of the data once we've completed our hearings, the last one would be Friday, October 13. That puts us in a range from probably about September 20.... It is not very long to hit 16 locations. There will be many days when we hit two, so....

Interjection.

B. Lekstrom (Chair): Okay. Also, yes, the UBCM falls within this time frame as well, which I know most members try to attend to meet with their municipal representatives.

I will try and bring back a tentative schedule, as well, for our next meeting. We may very well stretch this out to one week later than the 12th.

Jonathan, I know that puts a lot of work on you, but we will fit this in. I will certainly come back with a further detailed agenda for our next meeting, now that we've had this discussion.

B. Lekstrom (Chair): If that's acceptable, we will move on to item two on our agenda, which we've alluded to briefly. That is the discussion on the 2007 prebudget consultation paper — September 14 or 15. I believe those dates — now that you've mentioned it, Gordie — are booked. We will quickly, following the release of that prebudget paper, schedule a meeting. So if it is the 17th or 18th — whatever day fits — the Minister of Finance will come and present to our committee.

In the past, we have not begun a tour for roughly one week so that people have the opportunity to have access to the document to read it, understand it and have discussions with their organizations as well. I think that's probably somewhat appropriate.

N. Simons: The prebudget consultation paper generated a bit of discussion in our last go-round. I'm wondering if any of the observations we had with regard to its data collection system — research methods, really — have been given to the Minister of Finance, and whether or not we should consider perhaps, if we can, influencing the design of that consultation paper.

B. Lekstrom (Chair): That's an excellent question. I have taken the liberty of speaking to the Minister of Finance on that very issue, indicating that the committee would like to have some discussion with her prior to her development of the paper — fully understanding that it is not our paper. It is our job to go out and receive comment on it. She was very receptive to that.

Hopefully, at our next meeting, when we bring these issues back, I will try to coordinate the Minister of Finance coming to hear some of the issues that we thought about — how we could improve that process — so she could take that into consideration in the development of that paper.

N. Simons: As a follow-up, could we make a formal request, or is that going over the top?

B. Lekstrom (Chair): To invite the...?

N. Simons: Yeah.

B. Lekstrom (Chair): Certainly. I will formalize that via letter. That's traditionally how we do that — through the Clerk's office.

N. Simons: Thank you.

G. Hogg: Can I make a random comment about the letter for the participant survey? Just in the second paragraph, which says: "You were randomly chosen to participate...." Could that maybe just be changed to...?

B. Lekstrom (Chair): Okay, I guess we could move on to item three on our agenda now.

G. Hogg: I'm leaving now, so I'll quickly say it. If that phrase could just be shifted to say, "You were randomly chosen from those who participated in last year's...." Rather than saying: "You were randomly chosen...."

B. Lekstrom (Chair): Okay.

G. Hogg: Okay, thanks. Bye.

B. Lekstrom (Chair): If you have to leave, were there any further comments on the question?

G. Hogg: No.

M. Karagianis (Deputy Chair): Before Gord leaves, so he knows what direction I'm going to take this in.... I think this is actually a little bit premature. I think we've talked several times about doing a bit of a post-mortem on the process from our experience last year. I'd like us to actually have that discussion before we send a questionnaire out. There may be something coming from that discussion that would be very germane to the questionnaire we're sending out and maybe the process that we're sending it out by.

There are a number of things within the questionnaire that I think could be broadened and perhaps a number of constraints here, including the time frame of two days from now to respond.

K. Ryan-Lloyd (Clerk Assistant and Committee Clerk): We've changed that.

[1250]

M. Karagianis (Deputy Chair): Yeah. I assumed that was a filler date, but just the idea of the random selection — all of those things.... There are a number of things that could come out of a discussion on post-mortem. I'd like to have that discussion first, before we then move into sending out any kind of questionnaire or contact with past participants.

I'm not sure we've all had a chance to say what else we thought might enhance the process, might add to it or might make the process better. We've had some discussion here around locations and some of the things that have come out of this, discussing the downtown east side and other locations where we may not have the same kind of success in eliciting participation in this process.

That's one of the other aspects of this that I'd like to talk about — the areas we're missing, and how we may be able to further improve the process. First nations contact is obviously one area. We've already touched a little bit on those things, discussing location. But I'd like us to have that discussion and use that as input for the questionnaire, rather than kind of scoot right to that point.

B. Lekstrom (Chair): All right. Thank you for your comments. I think that certainly makes an incredible amount of sense.

What we could do at our next meeting, which we will hopefully have the minister at.... We will go through the finalization of some of our destinations and so on. We can also schedule some time for that....

It doesn't mean we have to send this out this year. It may very well be that we build upon what we've learned over the last year, and this process begins following our tour of this year. If that is acceptable — it certainly is to me — I think that makes a great deal of sense.

M. Karagianis (Deputy Chair): In fact, what that does is then allow us on the tour to think about it in the context of how we want to encourage more participation and how we might think about that.

In fact, if that's one of the things we have in our minds, as well, coming out of this consultation process, I think we'll analyze it differently. It seemed to me that in the last process, many of us were new at that, and it was more just an experience that we've had time to reflect on. But had we gone into it thinking, "Let's do a critique of this and say where we could improve on it and where we see that we've maybe not succeeded as well as we wanted to," that would have actually changed it a lot for all of us, rather than sitting here six or eight months later and trying to say: "What worked and what didn't? What did we all agree was a weakness in the process?"

I know there were many that we discussed afterwards at dinners and things. We'd say: "This would have worked better. And what about this? Oh, we didn't hear from that group." First nations is one very obvious one that we all discussed in the last process.

J. Kwan: In part, I think some of the concerns around participation and trying to broaden participa-

tion were addressed in the early part of the agenda, in terms of trying to facilitate location.

I think it's worthwhile to really give more thought to this, to see how we can enhance the process. There's part of me that was hoping in some ways, speaking from my point of view, that we not delay it until after the next round. I just want to flag that as much as we can.

If we are identifying issues now that we would like to try and address with this next round of consultation, perhaps we should be having the Chair and the Deputy Chair discuss those to see if we can accommodate and facilitate that for this upcoming round of consultations — ultimately, with a longer-term goal of trying to come forward with something that's more comprehensive.

B. Lekstrom (Chair): I think that may be possible after our discussions at the meeting. If we can, I would certainly be encouraged to be able to move forward on that if it's at all possible. I think all of us would like that.

Having been involved with government now for five years and watching it for a number of years, I think this committee should be very proud of the process it's taken in communicating with the people — being as open as we are. Also, at times each year, should we have too many people applying for the areas, we try and accommodate overflows as well. I think what we're looking at doing is fine-tuning a process to make it even better than it is.

To all the members: you've done a great job.

J. Kwan: Just one final comment. From my perspective, which was again addressed earlier today, it was really trying to reach out to the people who have actually not made it into the process. For the people who've actually sent in submissions, even though they don't make a presentation to us face-to-face, there's a submission on record.

[1255]

Obviously, people who've made the meetings make a difference, but there are a whole lot of people who somehow have not connected up. My biggest concern is: how do we reach into that population base and draw them in? That was really what I was getting at. I fully appreciate the fine-tuning and adjustments that need to take place over time.

B. Lekstrom (Chair): All right. That has concluded the items on our agenda. Is there anything pressing that has to be brought before the committee today? If not, what I will do is deal with Kate through the Clerk's office. Maurine will be in touch to fine-tune the issues we've spoken about here today.

We will try and put together a meeting within the next month, if that's possible — pending the Minister of Finance's schedule — and hopefully get our process put together and firmed up so that we can move forward in the fall very easily.

I thank you. I would look for a motion to adjourn.

The committee adjourned at 12:56 p.m.

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