



Second Session, 38th Parliament

REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS
(HANSARD)

SELECT STANDING COMMITTEE ON
CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Victoria

Tuesday, October 24, 2006

Issue No. 2

KATHERINE WHITTRED, MLA, CHAIR

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**SELECT STANDING COMMITTEE ON
CHILDREN AND YOUTH**

Victoria
Tuesday, October 24, 2006

- Chair:* * Katherine Whittred (North Vancouver-Lonsdale L)
- Deputy Chair:* * Leonard Krog (Nanaimo NDP)
- Members:*
- * Iain Black (Port Moody-Westwood L)
 - * Ron Cantelon (Nanaimo-Parksville L)
 - * Kevin Krueger (Kamloops-North Thompson L)
 - * Dennis MacKay (Bulkley Valley-Stikine L)
 - * Mary Polak (Langley L)
 - * Jagrup Brar (Surrey-Panorama Ridge NDP)
 - * Maurine Karagianis (Esquimalt-Metchosin NDP)
 - * Nicholas Simons (Powell River-Sunshine Coast NDP)

**denotes member present*

Clerks: Craig James
Kate Ryan-Lloyd

Committee Staff: Wynne MacAlpine (Committee Research Analyst)

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MINUTES

SELECT STANDING COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN AND YOUTH



Tuesday, October 24, 2006

9:00 a.m.

**Douglas Fir Committee Room
Parliament Buildings, Victoria**

Present: Katherine Whittred, MLA (Chair); Leonard Krog, MLA (Deputy Chair); Iain Black, MLA; Jagrup Brar, MLA; Ron Cantelon, MLA; Maurine Karagianis, MLA; Kevin Krueger, MLA; Dennis MacKay, MLA; Mary Polak, MLA; Nicholas Simons, MLA

1. The meeting was called to order at 9:01 a.m.
2. **Resolved**, that Katherine Whittred, MLA be elected Chair of the Select Standing Committee on Children and Youth (Mary Polak, MLA)
3. **Resolved**, that the Committee meet in-camera to receive an update from Craig James, Clerk Assistant and Clerk of Committees, on the Special Committee to Appoint a Representative for Children and Youth (Mary Polak, MLA)
4. The Committee met in camera from 9:10 a.m. to 9:15 a.m.
5. The Committee discussed and reviewed its Terms of Reference.
6. The Committee adjourned to the call of the Chair at 9:23 a.m.

Katherine Whittred, MLA
Chair

Kate Ryan-Lloyd
Clerk Assistant and
Committee Clerk

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 24, 2006

The committee met at 9:01 a.m.

Election of Chair

K. Ryan-Lloyd (Clerk Assistant and Committee Clerk): Good morning, everybody, and welcome to the meeting of the Select Standing Committee on Children and Youth. Due to the recent vacancy in the position of Chair of this committee, and serving as your Clerk to this committee, I hereby open the call for nominations for the position of Chair.

M. Polak: I nominate Katherine Whittred.

K. Ryan-Lloyd (Committee Clerk): Katherine, do you accept the nomination?

K. Whittred: Yes, thank you.

K. Ryan-Lloyd (Committee Clerk): I will put the question out two more times. Any further nominations? Any further nominations? Hearing none, then I will put the question on the motion.

Motion approved.

[K. Whittred in the chair.]

K. Whittred (Chair): Thank you all for the confidence you've shown in me. This is certainly the most important legislative committee, in all probability. We will have some very serious issues to deal with.

I know that time is at a premium this morning for many of us because of other obligations, so I'm going to move along quickly. I'm going to start by asking Kate to explain what she has prepared for us this morning, and then we can determine what direction we want to take with this.

Committee Terms of Reference

K. Ryan-Lloyd (Committee Clerk): On each of your desks you'll see a number of documents. The first document — which of course would be the primary focus, I would presume — item 2 on your agenda this morning, is a copy of the terms of reference which were issued to this committee on May 18 by the Legislative Assembly. As we have had some membership changes since May 18, I've added the names of the current membership of the committee at the bottom, since the names of the committee members were originally embedded within the terms of reference.

In addition to that document, you will see some research notes prepared by your research analyst, Wynne MacAlpine. She has prepared this document, which contains key excerpts from the Hughes report as well as from the statute relating to the work of this committee — the Representative for Children and Youth Act — and has highlighted the key sections which may be of interest to you as you review the plans that you might have for your committee.

If anybody would like to see the full text of either the statute or the Hughes report, we do have reference copies up here. I'd be happy to pass those out, if those can assist in any way today.

K. Whittred (Chair): Thank you for preparing that material. This committee has mandates from three sources, as you've just heard. The main mandate of this committee is, of course, from the Legislature in reference to the charge that we are given as a committee. The other two sources are the statute and the Hughes report.

Interjection.

K. Whittred (Chair): Good morning, Iain.

I. Black: Good morning, my esteemed colleagues.

[0905]

K. Whittred (Chair): We're just reviewing the three sources of mandate for this committee — one of which is from the Legislature. The other is the responsibilities given to this committee by the Hughes report, and the third is the statute. We are in fact a committee that has directions from three different threads, if you like. So that's essentially where we're at.

I'm now going to call on the committee — we have several new members on the committee — to determine where we want to go with this. My feeling is that because of the time element this morning, perhaps there will be an appetite to digest this and then have a longer session where we can in fact discuss those three different threads of responsibility. Certainly, I want to hear from committee members if that is the direction they would be comfortable with.

R. Cantelon: Well, certainly I agree, Katherine. I think this is a weighty subject. We all have commitments and things to do. We need to digest it and come back and discuss it fully.

L. Krog (Deputy Chair): I'm just wondering if we are in a position to be advised by anyone here. What's the status of the process in a public way for the appointment of the child and youth representative?

K. Whittred (Chair): Thank you, Leonard. That is in a different committee, and I don't believe that is the role of this committee. The child and youth representative, once that person is chosen, will in fact report to that committee. Once that person is chosen, I would assume that one of the first orders of business for this committee would be to have a very comprehensive meeting with that person. At this time, however, it is really beyond our jurisdiction.

N. Simons: I was just wondering. I think my friend's question was whether or not we had any idea as to the time frame — not an explanation for the delay, which I think is a problem in itself, but maybe an explanation as to how long it will take the committee to make their selection, considering the fact that the foremost important functions of this committee, as de-

scribed in this terms of reference, have to do with the representative and the deputy representative. I'm just wondering if the committee can be informed somehow as to the potential time line for that appointment.

M. Polak: A suggestion perhaps, given that the Chair of the committee is the one to appropriately comment. Perhaps what we could do is ask if the Chair could provide — I understand what you're saying — a limited description that's available to the committee members subsequent to this meeting. The Chair of this committee could ask for that information. That would be my suggestion.

N. Simons: Yes. I think it's been quite a long time since Hughes said that was the most important thing to do as soon as possible. So maybe that can inform that time frame. Perhaps staff may have an idea as to when that process might be complete.

K. Whittred (Chair): Our Clerk has just advised me that perhaps it would be appropriate to invite Craig James, who is the Clerk for the other committee, to give us a time line in camera. I believe we would need a motion to go....

K. Ryan-Lloyd (Committee Clerk): I think he was waiting next door in case this came up, so let me just see if he's available. Can we just take a two-minute recess?

K. Whittred (Chair): All right. Yes, we'll take a one-minute recess.

The committee recessed from 9:09 a.m. to 9:10 a.m.

[K. Whittred in the chair.]

K. Whittred (Chair): I will need a motion to go in camera.

M. Polak: I move that we go in camera.

Motion approved.

The committee continued in camera from 9:10 a.m. to 9:15 a.m.

M. Karagianis: Just to clarify: at this point, has there been a consensus of the committee that we will discuss the terms of reference at the subsequent meeting? Has that been determined at this point? I think we were in discussion of that, but I'm not sure I got closure on that discussion.

K. Whittred (Chair): I think you are right. Is there any further discussion about the direction the committee wants to go on that?

L. Krog (Deputy Chair): I want to raise this now so I won't be surprising anyone. I met with Tracy Myers,

who is with Haven House in Nanaimo. They sponsor a program called Children Who Witness Abuse counselling program. Some of my friends opposite might know that Mike Hunter's spouse actually sits on the board of Haven.

There are interesting studies now that indicate that a number of disorders we see in children relating to violence and acting out in school do not in fact relate to some medical issue and do not require Ritalin and other drugs. There is some suggestion that it relates to children who are witnessing abuse.

I appreciate that the terms of reference for this committee are somewhat narrow, and they say "in particular to," but it talks about being empowered to foster greater awareness and understanding among legislators and the public.

It strikes me that if we really want to make this a non-partisan committee in the sense that Maureen Nicholls suggested when we first met and heard all of this, it behooves us as a committee to consider what creates the children who seem to end up with rather horrible regularity in the system being apprehended, who get moved from foster facilities, who act out in school, whose parents can't handle them.

I'd like to think that we might do something terribly useful with this committee other than simply hearing a report twice a year or hauling in the new child and youth representative and talking to them. I'd like us to consider — as much as we can, within the limits of the law and the legislation — hearing evidence from people like Tracy Myers who work in the field with children and doing something perhaps more useful that might actually result in something positive.

I throw that out in the most general of ways, hon. Chair, for consideration by the members for the next meeting and perhaps consideration by the Clerk as to the legality, if you will, of what I'm suggesting. I'd like to see this committee as an opportunity to bring in expert witnesses, people who work in the field, who can actually advise us.

Maybe it would be nice. At the end of the day, this committee might be able to make recommendations to the government that will produce a ministry that will not be the political football the Mr. Hughes so rightly and roundly criticized in his report. I throw that out for the members this morning.

K. Whittred (Chair): Thank you, Mr. Vice-Chair. In fact, I was going to suggest that at some point in the near future, you as vice-Chair and myself as Chair meet and perhaps do some preliminary discussion regarding the kind of business plan that we might recommend to the committee. This was a direction that the committee had just begun, I think, at our initial meeting under the former Chair.

I did think, with the time constraints this morning, that we might just get the context of this committee. The context is that we have, as I said before, the three threads. Then it's really going to be up to the committee to determine the scope of the business that we conduct.

I accept your remarks. I know they're given in good faith, and I do want to follow up in that general vein.

Seeing no further discussion, I think....

M. Karagianis: Sorry. If we could clarify whether or not we are actually.... The current discussion is going away and giving some thought to the terms of reference, and coming back and discussing this at the next meeting. I'd like closure of that before we move to any other business on the agenda.

K. Whittred (Chair): Thank you, Maurine, for summarizing that. That is indeed where we're at. I would like the committee to go away and digest the context of the reason for this committee existing. I would like people to think of the direction that they would like to go, in terms of the sort of witness that our vice-Chair was mentioning. There were some names, in fact, that had been suggested at our very first meeting. I don't think we need to stick to those, because we do have a new group of people here. But we might want to go back and have a look at what those were.

Those are two things. I'm hoping that at the next meeting we can schedule a much longer time frame, when we aren't under time constraint, and have a more fruitful discussion about those two very related ideas.

Does that satisfactorily sum up what we've done here this morning?

M. Karagianis: It does.

K. Whittred (Chair): Thank you. Is there any other business?

[0920]

M. Karagianis: I do have one other piece of business, and it actually relates very much to the conversation on the previous item. I would ask the committee at this point to either entertain a motion or accept a request

from me that the committee call a meeting with Jane Morley and Coroner Terry Smith.

In the absence of the children's representative in place at this point, I believe it would be incumbent upon this committee to meet with Ms. Morley and Coroner Smith to discuss the outcome of the recently released Morley report. It is of extreme significance to this committee and the business of this committee. In the absence of the children's representative, I think it's important that we play a key role in that. So I would ask the Chair to either entertain a motion to that effect or accept that as a request.

K. Whittred (Chair): I think what I as Chair would prefer at this juncture in the history of this committee — this is the founding meeting — is that we invite all of you to submit names of witnesses that you think would be useful to appear and speak to the committee. You've given two names that certainly are very appropriate.

I think that is where the vice-Chair and I, when we get together, can put this together and come back to the committee with some recommendations. That is the way I would rather do it.

M. Karagianis: Madam Chair, are you asking that I actually just submit a request in writing? Or how would you prefer that to be done? What's the appropriate method?

K. Whittred (Chair): The Clerk has suggested that she will send an e-mail to the committee, and if you could simply respond, then we can get that process in motion.

M. Karagianis: Great. Thank you very much.

K. Whittred (Chair): Hearing no further business, I will entertain a motion to adjourn.

The committee adjourned at 9:23 a.m.

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