



First Session, 38th Parliament

REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS
(HANSARD)

SELECT STANDING COMMITTEE ON

HEALTH

Victoria

Tuesday, December 6, 2005

Issue No. 1

RALPH SULTAN, MLA, CHAIR

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**SELECT STANDING COMMITTEE ON
HEALTH**

Victoria
Tuesday, December 6, 2005

- Chair:* * Ralph Sultan (West Vancouver–Capilano L)
- Deputy Chair:* * David Cubberley (Saanich South NDP)
- Members:*
- * Dave S. Hayer (Surrey–Tynehead L)
 - Daniel Jarvis (North Vancouver–Seymour L)
 - * John Nuraney (Burnaby–Willingdon L)
 - * Valerie Roddick (Delta South L)
 - Katherine Whittred (North Vancouver–Lonsdale L)
 - * Katrine Conroy (West Kootenay–Boundary NDP)
 - * Michael Sather (Maple Ridge–Pitt Meadows NDP)
 - * Charlie Wyse (Cariboo South NDP)

**denotes member present*

Clerk: Kate Ryan-Lloyd

Committee Staff: Jonathan Fershau (Committee Research Analyst)

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MINUTES

SELECT STANDING COMMITTEE ON HEALTH



Tuesday, December 6, 2005
2 p.m.
Douglas Fir Committee Room
Parliament Buildings, Victoria

Present: Ralph Sultan, MLA (Convener); Katrine Conroy, MLA; David Cubberley, MLA; Dave S. Hayer, MLA; John Nuraney, MLA; Valerie Roddick, MLA; Michael Sather, MLA; Charlie Wyse, MLA

Unavoidably Absent: Daniel Jarvis, MLA; Katherine Whittred, MLA

1. As there was not yet a Chair elected to the Committee, the Clerk Assistant and Committee Clerk called the meeting to order at 2:13 p.m.
2. **Resolved**, that Ralph Sultan, MLA, be appointed Chair of the Select Standing Committee on Health. (Dave S. Hayer, MLA)
3. **Resolved**, that David Cubberley, MLA, be appointed Deputy Chair of the Select Standing Committee on Health. (Charlie Wyse, MLA)
4. The Committee reviewed its terms of reference and discussed the preparation of a preliminary business plan and meeting schedule.
5. The Committee adjourned to the call of the Chair at 2:42 p.m.

Ralph Sultan, MLA
Chair

Kate Ryan-Lloyd
Clerk Assistant and
Committee Clerk

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 6, 2005

The committee met at 2:13 p.m.

Election of Chair and Deputy Chair

K. Ryan-Lloyd (Clerk Assistant and Committee Clerk): Good afternoon, everyone. I'd like to welcome you to the first meeting of the Select Standing Committee on Health for the first session of the 38th parliament. As there has not yet been a Chair elected to serve this committee, I'd like to open the floor to nominations.

D. Hayer: I nominate Ralph Sultan.

K. Ryan-Lloyd (Committee Clerk): Okay, and Mr. Nuraney seconds.

Mr. Sultan, would you accept nomination?

R. Sultan (Convener): Yes, I would.

K. Ryan-Lloyd (Committee Clerk): I will open the floor to any further nominations, and I'll call the question three times. Any further nominations? Any further nominations? Any further nominations? Seeing none, I will put the question.

Motion approved.

[R. Sultan in the chair.]

K. Ryan-Lloyd (Committee Clerk): Congratulations.

R. Sultan (Chair): Thank you for electing me as Chair. I pledge to conduct this select standing committee with dispatch, fairness, impartiality and a great deal of success.

I think the next order of business is the election of a Deputy Chair. Do we have any nominations for the position of Deputy Chair?

C. Wyse: I would nominate David Cubberley.

R. Sultan (Chair): Mr. Cubberley, are you willing to accept this responsibility?

D. Cubberley: I am, thank you.

R. Sultan (Chair): It has been moved and seconded, and Mr. Cubberley has accepted this nomination. Are there any other nominations? Are there any other nominations? And for the third time, are there any other nominations?

[1415]

Hearing no other nominations, I congratulate Mr. Cubberley on his.... Oh, I have to put the question.

Motion approved.

R. Sultan (Chair): Mr. Cubberley, you have been elected unanimously. Congratulations.

Committee Terms of Reference

R. Sultan (Chair): The Select Standing Committee on Health, of course, is a committee of the Legislature with representatives from both sides of the House. I think we welcome this bipartisan obligation to consider matters on behalf of the Legislature. I would remind all members that we are not the government. We are not members of any particular party here. We are here to represent the Legislature.

It has been suggested under the terms of the charge given to us by the Legislature that we have a particular assignment, and I suppose we should turn to considering the terms of reference that have been given to us. To summarize — and I assume all of you have a copy of this document — on November 24 the Legislative Assembly agreed to empower this select standing committee to examine certain issues relating to the health of British Columbians.

Specifically, we are empowered to find effective strategies to change the behaviour of and encourage children and youth to adopt lifelong health habits that will improve their health and curb the growing rate of obesity — to achieve the great goal of leading the way in North America in healthy living and physical fitness.

Specifically, we are empowered to report on, first of all, the recommendations from the Select Standing Committee on Health from 2004 titled *The Path to Health and Wellness: Making British Columbians Healthier by 2010*. We are fortunate to have on our committee Ms. Roddick, the Chair of the former Select Standing Committee on Health who produced this important document. I would look to the Clerk to make sure that all members of the committee have a copy of that document to take home and read before they go to bed tonight.

We are empowered, secondly, to conduct research to look into other successful childhood health and wellness promotion campaigns in other jurisdictions to analyze their potential effectiveness in B.C.; thirdly, to undertake discussions on how to promote childhood health and wellness including the appropriate use of incentives and disincentives to help influence behaviour, particularly as it relates to healthy nutrition and physical activity; fourthly and finally, to undertake discussions with experts and, if necessary, undertake research into factors contributing to unhealthy eating and physical inactivity in the youth of today.

That is our charge, and in order to do that, we are empowered to appoint subcommittees and refer any matters to those subcommittees. We can sit during a period in which the House is adjourned as well as during any sitting of the House. We can adjourn from place to place as may be convenient, and we can retain such personnel as required to assist us.

We have a deadline. We are required to report to the House no later than November 30, 2006. We deposit our report, which we presume will be a physical

document, with the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly and in due course present the report to the Legislative Assembly as a whole. Those are our terms of reference, and this is the charge of the Legislature. I think it would be appropriate if perhaps the committee members offered any views they may have on our terms of reference on the charge given to us.

[1420]

C. Wyse: I have no comment at this time.

R. Sultan (Chair): Okay, Mr. Wyse has no comment. Mr. Deputy Chair, do you have any comments?

D. Cubberley (Deputy Chair): Some very general comments, and not deeply considered — more on the fly.

It's a very exciting possibility to be charged with looking into these matters. It's obviously very timely because of the kinds of things that are happening today with young people and with adults generally in society — where physical activity is not on the increase but, if anything, has plateaued and may even be decreasing — and in which we're seeing indications, well documented in the report done by the Roddick committee, of increased sedentary behaviour.

There are obviously some larger forces at work that are causing this to happen, and it's going to be challenging to try to discover the ways to begin to reverse the trend line, but I'm very enthusiastic about having the opportunity to participate. The only thing I would say — which in a sense, I think, is implicit — is that in looking at how children form their habits, I don't think we can discount the role that parental role models play in setting the horizons for what they can aspire to.

Therefore, just in my own approach to this, while seeing a focus on how children and youth deal with these various things, I would still want to maintain an ability to look at how adults deal with these things and what role changing the behaviour of adults may have in influencing the way that children behave. Those are some initial comments.

R. Sultan (Chair): Well said.

V. Roddick: I'd just like to bring up the healthy nutrition part of our terms of reference. It's very timely that this should be brought forward. With my role in agriculture and forming a provincial plan, which is encompassing the province and its food production, I think we could tie this in very, very well with what we're about to embark upon.

R. Sultan (Chair): Thank you, Val.

D. Hayer: I think they're very good terms of reference. The only other thing I want to add to this is that sometimes our kids are probably doing more exercise than the parents. I can tell you I have four kids. They regularly find time to go — almost five or six days a week — for exercise. I've been working at this job for 12 to 16 or 18 hours a day, and my doctor asked: "Did

you exercise yet?" I said: "I didn't get a chance." So I have to find the time too — something that we've learned from our kids.

In the meantime, I think eating nutritious and healthy food is important. I can tell you that ever since the Premier talked about eating vegetables and fruits, I always try to make sure of that every day. I try to eat some fruits and vegetables, regardless of what meal I'm having — whether it's breakfast, lunch or dinner.

So I'm looking forward to working on this committee. I think it's a very important committee and has very good terms of reference. They are very broad terms of reference that allow us to do lots in there.

R. Sultan (Chair): Now, could I ask if Katrine or Michael have any comments?

K. Conroy: No, I don't really have anything more to add. I was concerned about the focus on children, and I think that former comments have been made that in order for children to change habits, you need to look at parents also. So that is a bit of a concern, but other than that, I don't have anything further to add. Also, I don't think I can get the book and read it by tonight, though. I'm sorry Mr. Chair.

[Laughter.]

D. Cubberley (Deputy Chair): Where's your commitment?

K. Conroy: I would like to get their former report. I looked at it on the Internet and didn't want to print off 81 pages, so I would appreciate a copy of it for when I'm in Victoria next.

[1425]

Interjection.

R. Sultan (Chair): Michael? You're seconding that, I presume. Is that correct?

M. Sather: Basically, I would second a lot of the comments that have been made with regard to the subject at hand. Certainly, illnesses that tend to go along with obesity.... Childhood diabetes is a problem. Also in terms of productivity, we know that as the population ages, we're having an issue with regard to the workforce and that obesity is one of the factors, I think, that lowers productivity in the workforce, so that's another issue to consider — the whole mix of things.

J. Nuraney: I just want to echo the feelings of the other members around this table. I think it's a really timely thing that we are undertaking. Childhood eating habits and childhood wellness, I think, are very important aspects of what this government is trying to achieve, tied to the other initiatives like the ActNow B.C., the healthy schools, the dietary requirements and the food offerings in the schools which are being reviewed — and, hopefully, new recommendations made.

So I think, over all, it is a very timely, very topical subject that we are undertaking. It reminds me that eating well and with a lot of physical exercise.... It also promotes the wellness of health. It reminds me of this little proverb that I remember in my childhood, which said: "A stitch in time saves nine." If the children are kept healthy and eating well, they can avoid a lot of problems afterward that could ensue. I think it is a very important and, hopefully, very useful exercise that this committee will undertake.

C. Wyse: Sorry. My apologies, but I will have to ring off at this moment. I have another meeting....

R. Sultan (Chair): Thank you for being able to participate, and we will look forward to continuing with you in the future, Charlie.

C. Wyse: Thanks very much, Ralph. Best of the season to everybody, if I don't see you between now and the third.

M. Sather: I couldn't hear anything that John said. I don't know, Katrine, if you're having any problem. I couldn't hear John at all.

J. Nuraney: You missed some great words of wisdom, my friend.

M. Sather: I can hear you now.

K. Conroy: That's difficult to hear.

R. Sultan (Chair): The Clerk has advised that she will consult our electronic experts so we will have remarkable fidelity next time. But you have missed some very precious words, I assure you.

J. Nuraney: Only in terms of electronics, Mr. Chair.

R. Sultan (Chair): Just to add a few words of my own, I view this as a great assignment in the sense that it is fundamental to the future health of our population. I'm sure most of you have read the catastrophic statistics on what is going on out there and their health impacts, but I'm sure we'll have the experts come and inform us in greater detail of the consequences of this disquieting trend in our society, as we go along as a committee.

[1430]

As I look at the charge, I'd initially presumed, when it was suggested we would be looking at childhood obesity, that we would first of all be measuring it and then trying to figure out the consequences medically of it. I think we have cut to the chase. The raw facts are well known, and the consequences, I believe, are accepted and understood. Now the question and our obligation on the task we've taken upon ourselves is to figure out what to do about it. That's the important question — by no means an easy question. Words such as "persuasion," "education" and "marketing" spring to

mind. This is what we're asked to contemplate and make our recommendations upon.

I have been remiss in perhaps not explaining a little bit more, briefly, the people who will help us conduct this examination, starting with Clerk Assistant and Committee Clerk Kate Ryan-Lloyd, who is on my left and who will point out when I've left out important parliamentary steps along the way and all other matters relevant to our assignment. We also have given a committee research analyst, Jonathan Fershau, who is sitting here feverishly taking notes. We will rely heavily upon him to do the research role of the committee, as well as others that we commission. Thank you for your assistance. I'm sure we will not be able to function properly without both of you.

My understanding of how this is going to work is roughly as follows. This committee really, at the end of the day, runs itself. There are no rules set in concrete, but there are some practical realities.

One is that it is presumed that we will conduct our affairs by holding hearings and listening to experts and other opinionated people about what is to be done about this important issue. We will not merely sit here and discuss it among ourselves. We must prepare, and I seek input to me or to the Clerk on some of the persons and institutions and organizations we should be hearing from and consulting.

Secondly, there is the matter of logistics and meeting places. I presume we're going to have several meetings. Ms. Roddick can tell us the format of the Select Standing Committee on Health under her chairing in the past. But I presume we will be holding a series of meetings. Perhaps some of those meetings would be here in Victoria. Perhaps some of them would be in Vancouver. Again, this is, I suppose, our own decision at the end of the day.

Some may argue — and I think we should entertain those possibilities — that we should be going up to Atlin or Golden or some other places, particularly since the ski season is approaching. I think we have to consider those possibilities as well. However, we must keep in mind that budgets are not unlimited, and there is a certain prudence expected on the expenditure and travel side. Then we, of course, have the sheer problem of getting everybody corralled and off to some remote place in this very large province of British Columbia.

I think you should think about these things in terms of what sort of logistical format you would like to see for this committee, keeping in mind that we must report in by the assigned deadline and, presumably, have a draft report long before that particular date. I suppose that in practical terms, in my mind, we should really have figured out where we want to go by the end of the spring, but perhaps that's pushing things a little too much. I presume it has to go through writing, rewriting, editing, printing and all of that stuff. We cannot just come up with our final thoughts on deadline day. It has to be, in practical terms, completed before then.

Are there other questions of a procedural matter that you'd like to raise just to clarify what it is we're about to do?

D. Cubberley (Deputy Chair): Just thinking towards the next meeting of the committee. Obviously, we need a long-term plan for what we're going to do. Would it be helpful to have some discussion of what we might do next so that we begin to set those wheels in motion?

R. Sultan (Chair): Well, that's a nice introduction to a point that the Clerk has proposed. Our Clerk, Kate Ryan-Lloyd, is prepared, for the next meeting, to present a business plan for our conduct, for our proceedings, for our mission, if I understand. Perhaps the Clerk will expand.

[1435]

K. Ryan-Lloyd (Committee Clerk): As the Chair has explained, I have been assigned to serve as your Clerk. In doing so, I will be pleased to provide any administrative or procedural support you would require throughout the course of your work.

Jonathan has been assigned as your lead researcher, so he will be coordinating any research into the topic you have been given. In addition, he will assist you with the drafting of your report.

This afternoon, in addition to circulating copies of the committee's previous report to you all, Jonathan has prepared a backgrounder on this issue. If I may do so, Mr. Chair, we'll ask Jonathan to distribute that now.

To those who are listening on the conference call: we will also be providing you with a copy of this electronically later today.

In essence, we felt that we would like to offer our assistance to you in terms of giving you a snapshot of the issue that you have been tasked with and to seek your input, particularly from the Chair and Deputy Chair and all members, to enable us to prepare, for your review at your next meeting, a preliminary plan based on your interests in terms of meeting either with expert witnesses, as the Chair has outlined, or potentially with other interested groups and stakeholders.

In the past our office has coordinated extensive public consultation processes. I'm not sure if that's necessarily where this committee may go, but we certainly do have experience in making travel arrangements if there are to be meetings in Vancouver, for example. I would envision that you may be interested in meeting with experts here in Victoria, and for those located in the lower mainland, as well, we can set up meetings over there.

At the next meeting, if it's agreeable to you all, I'd be delighted to prepare a preliminary document for your review. Perhaps in the interim I would suggest that we would also seek specific input from your Chair and Deputy Chair.

R. Sultan (Chair): Any comments?

D. Cubberley (Deputy Chair): I respond favourably to the suggestion that that be undertaken. One of the things in the back of my mind.... I have had the benefit of quickly canvassing the report done by your

committee, which I think gives a fairly comprehensive statement of the dimensions of the problem.

I think that you, Mr. Chairman, hit the nail on the head early on in saying that our committee needs to be solutions-oriented. One of the big challenges we're going to face is to keep at bay the tsunami of people that will want to tell us how bad it is — so that we don't go through another iteration of the scale of the problem — and to begin to be selective about finding the people who have engaged in an intervention of some kind which has had a measure of success. That's a very much smaller group of people. Many of the experts are on the side of those who are very involved in mapping the problem and, in my experience with them, often come to the same place, which is recommending that more information be made available to people.

My own sense is that there's a wealth of information. The challenge is going to be to find interventions that will have a measurable impact on behaviour. I think that if we can begin to shape the workplan with that clearly in view, then that would help us to move forward.

R. Sultan (Chair): Well put, Deputy Chair.

J. Nuraney: While you are considering the possibilities of how we want to proceed, may I suggest that... In the last standing committee that I also had the honour of sitting on, we had engaged an expert to help us through the process.

Her name was Anne Mullens, and she was of tremendous assistance to the committee in terms of research and ideas that she was able to bring forth after having heard different groups that came before us and virtually crystallized the thinking process of the committee. So may I suggest that we may perhaps want to consider an expert of that calibre with relation to this particular assignment, who would guide us and help us through the real critical thinking process.

[1440]

R. Sultan (Chair): Very good advice.

The Clerk has pointed out that the background paper that has been distributed, and will be distributed electronically, has on the last page a list of recommendations arising from the Roddick report in 2004 — 11 recommendations — pertaining to childhood health and wellness promotion. I commend this set of recommendations from the previous committee to you.

Could I suggest that the committee entrust to the Deputy Chair, the Chair and the Clerk, with input from our researcher, the drawing up of a plan for the affairs of this committee to be presented at the next meeting of this committee. Of course, you are all encouraged — and expected, I would even say — to make input to one or another of us as part of that planning exercise.

Interjection.

R. Sultan (Chair): Everybody nods.

Next Committee Meeting

R. Sultan (Chair): I guess the final piece of business would be: are we going to have another meeting, and when and where?

K. Ryan-Lloyd (Committee Clerk): If I may, we would be open to any suggestions that you may have in terms of your availability. I think the Chair had envisioned, perhaps, the next meeting occurring in early 2006. So perhaps, with the indulgence of the Chair and the Deputy Chair, I will check availability of both caucuses to be here in the precincts, primarily, in the early new year — with the option, of course, for those who reside outside of Victoria and Vancouver to connect by conference call if that's most convenient.

Would you agree, Mr. Chair, that we should undertake that?

R. Sultan (Chair): I think that's an excellent suggestion.

Is there any other new business? Hearing none, I would entertain a motion to adjourn.

Motion approved.

R. Sultan (Chair): The meeting is adjourned. Thank you, and compliments of the season.

The committee adjourned at 2:42 p.m.

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