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**Official Report
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Monday 18 August 2008

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Lundi 18 août 2008

**Select Committee on
Elections**

**Comité spécial des
élections**

Chair: Greg Sorbara
Clerk: Katch Koch

Président : Greg Sorbara
Greffier : Katch Koch

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

SELECT COMMITTEE ON ELECTIONS

COMITÉ SPÉCIAL DES ÉLECTIONS

Monday 18 August 2008

Lundi 18 août 2008

The committee met at 1035 in committee room 1.

ORGANIZATION

The Chair (Mr. Greg Sorbara): This is a momentous occasion for me. Oh, my God, and we're being broadcast as well. I'm in my 23rd year, on and off, in the Legislature and I've never had the opportunity to chair a committee, whether select or standing or specific or otherwise. So I am going to ask my colleagues on this committee to bear with me as I learn yet another task.

I want to begin by thanking all three of you for the indulgence of coming here on a beautiful August 18. I know there was some hope that we could put this off until September, but I just thought it would be best to get an organizational meeting under our belt so that by the time we get busier in September we'll have taken care of a number of details and can move more quickly into the actual business that we're here to conduct.

Can I just take a moment to introduce my assistant Sharon Laredo, who will be the best person to consult on making sure that I am discharging my functions and, when I'm not, if you complain to her she will have me in proper shape tout de suite. Sharon knows as much about what we are hoping to accomplish here as anyone. And I want to thank Katch for helping me out in my first instructions on chairing this committee.

There are six things that I would like to be able to do today. The first is just a general discussion of the terms of reference. On the question of appointing a subcommittee, which I think probably might be a good idea, of all the members of the committee, that simply is so that we can convene a meeting by way of telephone conference call. I don't think there's any other reason to appoint a subcommittee. The third is a request for some research from the folks in the Legislative Assembly. The fourth is a proposal to hire John Hollins—I was mentioning this, Norm, to Peter when you came in.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: John?

The Chair (Mr. Greg Sorbara): John Hollins is the former Chief Electoral Officer for the province—as a consultant to the committee.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: I don't want to do that.

The Chair (Mr. Greg Sorbara): You don't want to do that.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: No.

The Chair (Mr. Greg Sorbara): Well—

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: Let's have a discussion.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Chair, if I may, can we go in camera before we commence this meeting?

The Chair (Mr. Greg Sorbara): Sure.

Mr. Peter Kormos: I move that we move in camera.

The Chair (Mr. Greg Sorbara): I think that's acceptable, sure. Agreed.

The committee continued in closed session from 1040 to 1109.

The Chair (Mr. Greg Sorbara): Okay, we're back. A motion from David Zimmer.

Mr. David Zimmer: I move that a subcommittee on committee business be appointed to meet from time to time at the call of the Chair, or at the request of any member thereof, to consider and report to the committee on the business of the committee;

That the presence of all members of the subcommittee is necessary to constitute a meeting; and

That the subcommittee be composed of the following members: the Chair as Chair, Mr. Hampton, Mr. Sterling and Mr. Zimmer; and that substitution be permitted on the subcommittee.

The Chair (Mr. Greg Sorbara): Any discussion or comments? If none, I'll put the question. All those in favour? Opposed? Carried.

That's a great start.

We need a formal request of legislative research to begin a review of the three acts that are within our scope. David, could you do that?

Mr. David Zimmer: Yes, I move that legislative research begin the study of what the Chair has just referenced.

The Chair (Mr. Greg Sorbara): Is that agreed?

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: I just wanted to see if it's possible—I don't know whether Mr. Johnston has the time, but I'd like a quick review of other North American jurisdictions in terms of where they are, which jurisdictions are leading, which jurisdictions have a high voter turnout, which ones are making changes one way or the other, just so we have a picture of what's going on in North America. I'm talking not only about our other provinces, but some of the states in the United States.

The Chair (Mr. Greg Sorbara): Okay, so you're talking about a review of trends within North American jurisdictions on developments in the deployment of general elections.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: Right.

The Chair (Mr. Greg Sorbara): I think that's reasonable.

Mr. David Zimmer: May I just throw out this observation? Not only states in North America, but it might well be that states in Australia and perhaps New Zealand have similar—

The Chair (Mr. Greg Sorbara): Let us then include New Zealand and Australia, but no in-depth study of devolution in Scotland or in Wales.

Mr. David Zimmer: Absolutely. But I understand some of the Australian states have got some pretty leading—

The Chair (Mr. Greg Sorbara): A review of the research primarily in North America, Australia and New Zealand.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: One of the reasons that I said North America is that I think it's important from a political standpoint not only to look at what is happening technically from their particular election officers, but if it was close by, we could ask other political entities to come forward to the committee and talk to us about how it impacts on them and whether they agree with the direction that the election officers are going in. I think the politicians probably have the most practical feeling for these because they live through them during the electoral process. That's why I was interested to see if there were any close jurisdictions to us, so that we can invite those particular not only election officers, but—

The Chair (Mr. Greg Sorbara): We'll have a look at that after the work comes in.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: Sure.

The Chair (Mr. Greg Sorbara): Okay, what do we need to do about a budget?

Interjection.

The Chair (Mr. Greg Sorbara): The clerk will draft a budget and then we'll put that before a meeting of the subcommittee. We'll probably do that by phone sometime over the course of the next couple of weeks.

Mr. Larry Johnston: Can I ask about a deadline for the research?

The Chair (Mr. Greg Sorbara): A deadline for the research? Tomorrow afternoon at 3.

Well, a preliminary look by the time of our first meeting, which would be—how do we determine when we meet next?

Interjection.

The Chair (Mr. Greg Sorbara): I anticipate that we will have a meeting some time in mid-to-late September, so let's say mid-September would be fine.

Mr. Larry Johnston: Mid-September?

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: The Legislature is scheduled to come back when, the 22nd?

The Chair (Mr. Greg Sorbara): I think that's right, so it will be some time—you know what? Think in terms of some time after the recall of the Legislature. It may well be that we want to have a meeting before then if members are available, and in particular to have an opening elongated session with the former chief elections officer. Maybe the best thing to do is to have that session first and then decide whether or not you want to retain him to continue to work for the committee. But there's no place to start other than with a full, long meeting with the former elections officer.

Is that okay? Are we going to have a battle about that or do you feel good about that?

Okay. Just to conclude, I don't want to take the air out of the balloon, but I just want to reiterate that from my perspective, the mandate of the committee is to review and discuss key changes or additions that need to be made to each of the three acts from the perspective of consolidation, modernization and housekeeping, without any appetite to revisit major questions of policy on electoral democracy or election financing. That was my understanding of my mandate when I took on this job, and, given the time that we have, if we can do that well, I think we will serve the people of the province well, and its system of elections, the idea being that by the time 2011 comes by we have a system that serves all of us much better than the one that we will be leaving.

Any other questions or comments from members of the committee? Motion to adjourn?

Mr. David Zimmer: So moved.

The Chair (Mr. Greg Sorbara): Thank you. We'll see you all soon. Have a good rest of the summer.

The committee adjourned at 1117.

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Chair / Président

Mr. Gregory S. Sorbara (Vaughan L)

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River ND)

Mr. Gregory S. Sorbara (Vaughan L)

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Carleton–Mississippi Mills PC)

Mr. David Zimmer (Willowdale L)

Substitutions / Membres remplaçants

Mr. Peter Kormos (Welland ND)

Clerk / Greffier

Mr. Katch Koch

Staff / Personnel

Mr. Larry Johnston, research officer,
Research and Information Services