

Third Session - Thirty-Ninth Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
Special Committee
on
Senate Reform

Chairperson
Ms. Erna Braun
Constituency of Rossmere

Vol. LXI No. 2 - 1 p.m., Friday, March 27, 2009

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Ninth Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ALLAN, Nancy, Hon.	St. Vital	N.D.P.
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	N.D.P.
ASHTON, Steve, Hon.	Thompson	N.D.P.
BJORNSON, Peter, Hon.	Gimli	N.D.P.
BLADY, Sharon	Kirkfield Park	N.D.P.
BOROTSIK, Rick	Brandon West	P.C.
BRAUN, Erna	Rossmere	N.D.P.
BRICK, Marilyn	St. Norbert	N.D.P.
BRIESE, Stuart	Ste. Rose	P.C.
CALDWELL, Drew	Brandon East	N.D.P.
CHOMIAK, Dave, Hon.	Kildonan	N.D.P.
CULLEN, Cliff	Turtle Mountain	P.C.
DERKACH, Leonard	Russell	P.C.
DEWAR, Gregory	Selkirk	N.D.P.
DOER, Gary, Hon.	Concordia	N.D.P.
DRIEDGER, Myrna	Charleswood	P.C.
DYCK, Peter	Pembina	P.C.
EICHLER, Ralph	Lakeside	P.C.
FAURSCHOU, David	Portage la Prairie	P.C.
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Lib.
GOERTZEN, Kelvin	Steinbach	P.C.
GRAYDON, Cliff	Emerson	P.C.
HAWRANIK, Gerald	Lac du Bonnet	P.C.
HICKES, George, Hon.	Point Douglas	N.D.P.
HOWARD, Jennifer	Fort Rouge	N.D.P.
IRVIN-ROSS, Kerri, Hon.	Fort Garry	N.D.P.
JENNISSSEN, Gerard	Flin Flon	N.D.P.
JHA, Bidhu	Radisson	N.D.P.
KORZENIOWSKI, Bonnie	St. James	N.D.P.
LAMOUREUX, Kevin	Inkster	Lib.
LEMIEUX, Ron, Hon.	La Verendrye	N.D.P.
MACKINTOSH, Gord, Hon.	St. Johns	N.D.P.
MAGUIRE, Larry	Arthur-Virden	P.C.
MARCELINO, Flor	Wellington	N.D.P.
MARTINDALE, Doug	Burrows	N.D.P.
McFADYEN, Hugh	Fort Whyte	P.C.
McGIFFORD, Diane, Hon.	Lord Roberts	N.D.P.
MELNICK, Christine, Hon.	Riel	N.D.P.
MITCHELSON, Bonnie	River East	P.C.
NEVAKSHONOFF, Tom	Interlake	N.D.P.
OSWALD, Theresa, Hon.	Seine River	N.D.P.
PEDERSEN, Blaine	Carman	P.C.
REID, Daryl	Transcona	N.D.P.
ROBINSON, Eric, Hon.	Rupertsland	N.D.P.
RONDEAU, Jim, Hon.	Assiniboia	N.D.P.
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SARAN, Mohinder	The Maples	N.D.P.
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SWAN, Andrew, Hon.	Minto	N.D.P.
TAILLIEU, Mavis	Morris	P.C.
WOWCHUK, Rosann, Hon.	Swan River	N.D.P.
<i>Vacant</i>	Elmwood	
<i>Vacant</i>	The Pas	

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA
SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON SENATE REFORM**

Friday, March 27, 2009

TIME – 1 p.m.

LOCATION – Winnipeg, Manitoba

CHAIRPERSON – Ms. Erna Braun (Rossmere)

VICE-CHAIRPERSON – Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside)

ATTENDANCE – 12 QUORUM – 7

Members of the Committee present:

Ms. Braun, Messrs. Dewar, Eichler, Faurschou, Ms. Howard, Messrs. Jennissen, Lamoureux, Ms. Marcelino, Messrs. Martindale, Nevakshonoff, Pedersen, Mrs. Taillieu

Substitutions:

Mr. Goertzen for Mrs. Taillieu

MATTERS UNDER CONSIDERATION:

To consider further arrangements for consultations with Manitobans on Senate reform.

* * *

Madam Chairperson: Good afternoon. Will the Special Committee on Senate Reform please come to order.

This meeting has been called to consider further arrangements for consultations with Manitobans on Senate Reform.

Committee Substitutions

Madam Chairperson: We have a substitution to announce. I would like to make the following membership substitutions, effective immediately for the standing Committee on Senate Reform meeting on March 27, '09: in the PC caucus, Mr. Goertzen for Mrs. Taillieu. Thank you.

* * *

Madam Chairperson: Before we proceed, how long does the committee wish to sit this afternoon?

Ms. Jennifer Howard (Fort Rouge): I would suggest we sit till we conclude our business, but certainly no longer than an hour.

Madam Chairperson: Is that agreed? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): Yes, I'll agree to that provided we get through the business. Hopefully, we will. We'll look at it then if we have to have a vote on extension.

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Since we're here to consider further arrangements for consultations, I have a motion that I'd like to read. I have a written copy of it for the Clerk.

I move

THAT the previously established Subcommittee on Senate elections hold meetings in Flin Flon and Norway House to make up for previous weather related cancellations; and

THAT these meetings take place on the afternoons of Saturday, April 25, and Saturday, May 2, in whichever order works best logistically, with the specific meeting times to be determined by the Chair and Vice-Chair; and

THAT the advertisements that were used for the previously scheduled meetings in Flin Flon and Norway House be used again with the details regarding date, time and location amended to reflect the new meeting arrangements; and

THAT, if necessary, the Chair and Vice-Chair be authorized to amend arrangements for these meetings; and

THAT written submissions on Senate elections may be accepted by the subcommittee until the consultation meetings are concluded.

Madam Chairperson: We have a motion moved by Mr. Martindale

THAT the previously established Subcommittee on Senate elections—

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Madam Chairperson: Dispense? Dispense. The motion is in order. The floor is now open for questions.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Chair, this is the first that I heard anything of the motion. I think that, given that it's an all-party committee trying to come up with some recommendations, in

good faith, there should have been some dialogue prior to walking in before introducing a motion, saying, here's where we're going and these are the days that we're going.

I, fortunately, brought my calendar with me in anticipation that we would be having some dialogue as to when we could possibly be making an *[inaudible]* But to arbitrarily move a motion at the first opportunity for the committee, I think, is not a good-faith way of dealing with what we need to do.

I would ask if the Member for Burrows would just withdraw the motion. Let's see if we can have some dialogue before we move any motions so that everyone's, hopefully, on the same page.

Mr. Martindale: Well, there were discussions about going back up north that I was a part of, so I don't know who was consulted. Also, the motion says that we're open to consultation and, also, I would offer that we would make May 2 the latest date that we go, which would therefore give us a little bit of flexibility.

Mr. Eichler: Madam Chair, I would have liked to have had a little bit of insight into this as well, before it was presented, because we did talk about alternative sites as well. The other alternative site was Thompson. I know the Clerk's office went to an awful lot of work to check out the feasibility and the cost of that. I think that that, you know, was going to be part of the discussion that we were going to talk about here today.

So, having said that, I think we should deal with that motion. Then we'll bring another motion forward to have Thompson as part of that consultation process.

Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon): Madam Chair, that was an issue I had raised right at the beginning at the very first meeting. I'm sure that I talked, at least, with Mr. Derkach and, I think, others as well. The sense I had then was we wanted to go to several northern places, but not too many; we can't be everywhere. We know that time is really pressing on us, particularly in view of the fact that that report has to be in, I believe it is, June.

All I know is that in Flin Flon—and I can't speak for other places—on the airwaves, when the last meeting was cancelled, the statement was made that the meeting was cancelled, but another meeting would take place. So that's what I'm looking for. I think we just want to get back to what we agreed on

right at the beginning. So I don't know why we want to add things at this stage of the game.

Mr. Eichler: Madam Chair, we were pretty relaxed at that point. In fact, if you read the *Hansard* report of the December 4 meeting, the subcommittee had the authority to amend the list of locations, if necessary. We didn't have to bring it back. We agreed at the last meeting to do that, but the subcommittee did have the authority to do that, according to *Hansard*, and we agreed to that. So I would move that we include Thompson and amend the motion to include Thompson in that resolution.

Madam Chairperson: Mr. Eichler, would you put that into writing, please.

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Chair, while the member's writing the amendment, I just want to express in terms of what my understanding of the situation was. When there was last any form of, I guess it would have been informal discussion, there was some thought back then that—I believe there was one registered presenter when we were looking at making the trip up north and, because of the weather, the trip ultimately had to be cancelled. There was some dialogue that occurred in regard to the value of making a trip and, at the time, it was felt that yes, it would be good for us at least to try to make one more attempt to go to Thompson. That was my understanding, at least in terms of what other members were saying. In regard to the other two destinations, I think that there was some openness as to whether or not it would be necessary. In fact, we had, I believe, asked the one presenter that I think was going to be presenting in Flin Flon. I could be wrong on that, but there was one presenter, and that presenter, I believe, had sent in their information and had indicated that it would be okay not to present before committee.

* (13:10)

There is a substantial cost for the committee to be able to make the trip, and if the concern was had that trip taken place, I suspect there might have been a couple of people that would have registered at the last minute. I would have been surprised in total if there would have been 10 based on the previous committee meetings. There was one committee meeting in Russell where there was a lot larger number of presenters than we had anticipated, but I can recall other committee meetings where there was concern expressed in terms of, well, we didn't know about the Senate committee. There was Steinbach, as an example, where one presenter came. I suspect that

had we done a better job in terms of advertising and promoting, there would have been more presentations made.

I think that we're opening up a different type of can of worms, and my preference is to having a motion of this nature would be that you enable the Chair and the co-chair to be able to sit down, find out what sort of interest there really is, and maybe, you know, just to conclude my remarks, I think the motion is ready, the amendment. But I would ask, what would have the cost been had we gone to Thompson, the original rural trip? I do believe, and please confirm it if I'm right or wrong, there was one presenter at the time when we were looking at departure.

Madam Chairperson: Mr. Lamoureux, are you referring to Flin Flon, the one presenter?

Mr. Lamoureux: The cost of that northern trip that we had scheduled to make.

Madam Chairperson: May I pass that question on to the Clerk? Is there leave? *[Agreed]*

Clerk Assistant (Mr. Rick Yarish): The estimate that I had on the cost—this would have been for Flin Flon and Norway House because it was scheduled as two subsequent days—would have been approximately \$18,000. That would have been for both of those things; so that includes flying everyone up. We were going to get a charter aircraft for that, accommodations in both places, bringing along the gear we needed to rent, all of those things. That is what I was budgeting, about \$18,000 for Flin Flon and Norway House.

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Chair, it's not to take anything away from the importance of getting feedback from the north. Rather, it's to try to enable the Chair and the Vice-Chair to be able make a good decision as to whether the committee, you as the Chair just fly or a subcommittee of the committee fly out.

I think that we need to find out what the numbers are as opposed to mandating the subcommittee to fly out there. In this particular case, we would have been far better off to offer the person a return airfare to come to Winnipeg and give him \$5,000 to do so. I just pull that number out. I think that Manitobans expect us to be reasonable, use some common sense in terms of how we're spending their dollars. I'm all game. Let's, you know, re-advertise it, see how many people register, but enable you as the

Chair and the Vice-Chair power to make the decisions.

Mr. Jennissen: I understand what my honourable colleague is saying, but it still concerns me because we did advertise and we did say postponement. In other words, the committee's on the hook for a commitment. It would reflect badly on this Senate hearing committee if all of a sudden we arbitrarily started using cost as a major factor because that's not what we agreed to in the beginning. If I were a listener in Flin Flon and said, well, I can't come to this Senate hearing tonight, but it's going to come back in the early spring, hopefully, and prepare for it, well, I may not have that chance. So I think the credibility of the committee is at stake too. We said postponement. We didn't say we'd never come back.

I don't know if one person's going to show up or zero people or 10 or 50 people, but I don't think we should be using that criterion three-quarters of the way through the game. We made commitments. We have to honour those commitments. That's my point of view.

Mr. Eichler: I move,

THAT the following be added at the end of the motion:

And that a meeting of the Senate committee be scheduled for Thompson to be held no later than May 9th, 2009, with appropriate advertising—

An Honourable Member: You have to get closer to the mike, Ralph, or have Kelvin read it. It's one or the other.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): In consultation with my esteemed friend from Lakeside, we have decided that I will move,

THAT the following be added at the end of the motion:

And that a meeting of the Senate committee be scheduled for Thompson to be held no later than May 9th, 2009, with appropriate advertising and notice of the meeting to be determined by the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee.

Madam Chairperson: Okay. It has been moved by Mr. Goertzen,

THAT the following be added at the end of the motion:

And that a meeting—

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Madam Chairperson: Dispense.

The motion is in order. The floor is open.

Mr. Eichler: I thank the Member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) for the amendment and the good wording there.

I do think this will be the opportunity, that we're going to be in that area anyway, to include the city of Thompson and certainly hear what those people have to say. So we're very much in support of the motion.

Mr. Lamoureux: I do have just a couple of questions. It's saying that these meetings take place on the afternoons of April 25 and Saturday, May 2. Is that, then, to imply that we would be flying to one place on Friday and then coming back on the Saturday? Do you envision two or three separate trips?

Madam Chairperson: It is my understanding, from a logistical standpoint, that that's how it would have to be. We would be flying in and out to each one individually. Part of the issue is that we are in session, and it is, from the Clerk's office point of view, that setting things up and taking it down and moving it to the next that creates an issue. So we would be doing each location on a separate day.

Mr. Lamoureux: So I'm to put into my calendar that at least two of the meetings will be set—April 25 and May 2—where I'll be flying from Winnipeg going to either Flin Flon on one of those Saturdays or Norway House. Then the following week it would be again to the one that we didn't go to, and then whatever arrangements we make for Thompson. So I could be looking at—the taxpayer could be looking at three separate trips.

Madam Chairperson: Correct.

* (13:20)

Mr. Lamoureux: So, in all likelihood, this venture is probably going to cost somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$40,000-plus. We cancelled a trip due to weather, where there was one person that was registered. Ultimately, if we did proper advertising and promotion, I would have suggested to you that there probably would have been more people in some of those other communities that would have participated.

I'll put it in my calendar and we'll go, but I would like the record to show that, when the trip was initially cancelled, I did express concern and suggest that we should, at the very least, go to Thompson

because I thought that was the responsible thing to do and that we should have accommodated the one presenter that was, in fact, registered.

I don't know how Manitobans would respond as a whole to the type of money that we're proposing, given the issue, given the time, the economics. I haven't been convinced by the person who made the motion at this.

Ms. Howard: Yes, I certainly hear what the member is saying.

I guess the thing that we're struggling with is that we've operated kind of with one set of rules and expectations up to now for the southern part of the province where we did, indeed, travel to locations where there was nobody on the list to present. We arrived there, and there was one person that wanted to present. We've travelled to locations like Russell where there were one or two people registered; we got there and there were eight people registered.

So I agree, it is expensive to travel in the north, but I don't know how we say to the people in the north that somehow we were prepared to go to places in the south where we had no guarantee that anyone was going to show up, and yet in the north there's a new threshold of X number of people that have to be registered.

The motion does allow, I think, for some flexibility in one of the clauses that, if necessary, the Chair and the Vice-Chair be authorized to amend arrangements for these meetings. So I think there's some ability there to take some of your concerns into consideration.

But, you know, if we had at the beginning said that the threshold is 10 presenters and below that we'll make other arrangements to hear them, that would have been one thing. We didn't do that, so I'm not sure we can treat northern Manitoba differently than we treated southern Manitoba.

Mr. Goertzen: Just a question, and I apologize having been fairly new to this committee and maybe some of the discussions that have happened leading up to this point.

I take the Member for Fort Rouge's comments well. I think we do want to ensure that the voices of the people of the north are heard on this important issue because they are as affected by the Senate as those in the south or Winnipeg or any other part of Manitoba, so those are good comments.

Is there a way, through modern technology, to have a meeting in one location in the north and have a video link to other locations? I know that it maybe isn't quite as good as being in person, but people do a lot of different things through video and teleconferencing, so that you might be able to have a meeting at one of the locations and teleconference to the other ones on the same day, which, hopefully, would mitigate some of the concerns about a lack of a voice but also understanding that there's a cost consideration.

Madam Chairperson: Is there leave for the Clerk to respond? *[Agreed]*

Clerk Assistant: I did look into that because, when we were talking about Thompson a month or so ago, questions were asked whether or not we could—if a meeting was arranged for Thompson and not many people signed up, could we transform it into video conference? So I did make some preliminary arrangements for that. I didn't get a lot of specific quotes because things were still very tentative at the time.

The way it would have to work is—I don't think we could do it from, say, Flin Flon to Norway House, but let's say, for instance, we wanted to video-conference someone from Flin Flon. What we would do is we would convene a meeting here in Winnipeg, not at the Legislature, but at another facility in town that has the technology in place. Then they would broadcast in presenters from wherever they were in Flin Flon or Thompson, wherever it happened to be.

Now there are a lot of ifs in how that works out, whether or not each of those communities has all of the equipment that's required there, and it's also not cheap. You have to rent a room there. You have to rent their tech—you have to rent their equipment and all that. So it's not as expensive as going there, but it will be in the thousands of dollars as opposed to the hundreds of dollars.

So it is possible. I haven't made specific arrangements for it yet because the request hadn't come from the committee to specifically do that. It is possible, but there are a lot of ifs.

Mr. Jennissen: I have another concern, it's, I suppose, the symbolism of it. It's sort of like saying, once again, northerners have this feeling about, what do they call it, Perimeteritis, or something like this. It's difficult going up north. It is for all of us, and it's expensive, I understand that. But it would be just one

more example of while the politicians are not willing to come to our towns, that second best is good enough for us. They're sick and tired of second best. I just don't think, on a symbolic level, that we can do that. I think we have to be there. It's part of the province.

Madam Chairperson: Is the committee ready for the question? Sorry, Mr. Lamoureux.

Mr. Lamoureux: On the two dates, I want clarification in terms of if there is going to be any change in dates, because I don't want to be surprised, that it would be based on a consensus of the three political entities participating. So, in other words, I'm not going to be told two weeks from now that the Flin Flon meeting is going to be on May 9. It's April 25 and May 2; those are two of the definite dates. Any change or variation, there would be a consensus from all the parties participating.

Madam Chairperson: My understanding would be—I and the Vice-Chair would be speaking to you about that. The motion indicates in whichever order works best logistically, so we would, as Vice-Chair and Chair, talk to you about that.

Mr. Lamoureux: My concern is that it gives a deadline, and I just don't want to be told that it will be this date. I'm going to set aside those two dates, and I don't want to see a change in dates: Well, here's when we're going to go. That's the concern that I have. If you're comfortable with what I'm saying, then we'll leave it at that.

Mr. Martindale: Well, as long as it's understood that Mr. Lamoureux is being consulted, and that it's not a consensus of the three parties. The decision will be made by the Chair and Vice-Chair in consultation with Mr. Lamoureux.

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Chair, we're in session. It's a very busy time for all of us. I think that we're really starting to change the dynamics of what it is the public consultation was supposed to be about. We all agreed for the north, too, and the irony here is that, at one time, I was the one that was saying, along with the Conservatives, that we should be going to northern Manitoba. It was the New Democrats that were demonstrating the reluctance to reschedule. *[interjection]*

That was the case. So I don't want to get too much in terms of the politics of it, but I don't also want to be walked over on this particular issue. If we're agreeing, as the motion states, and then we're saying, well, then the Chair and the Vice-Chair can

go ahead and change the date. As the Member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) just pointed out, all I have to do is just be told. I'm not comfortable with that.

Ms. Howard: I think it's important that the record reflect reality, so I'm going to try and do that. At the beginning of the discussions of where we were going to go, Flin Flon and Norway House were always on the list. That was always agreed to by all parties on this committee. So there was always a desire by all parties on this committee to visit northern Manitoba, and to suggest something else than that, I think, is, frankly, unfair. So I want that to be very clear on the record.

I think that both the Chair and the Vice-Chair have shown a high degree of co-operation, and I think they have taken into consideration all the members of this committee and our availability. I'm sure they will continue to do that when they set the future dates.

The desire of the motion is to give members of the committee some certainty as to their schedules because we are in session and there are lots of demands on our time. I have every confidence in the Chair and Vice-Chair to continue to do that.

Mr. Jennissen: Well, I would like to be clear again. The Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) suggests that we were reluctant to go to Thompson. I point out again, and it's in *Hansard* and you can read it, the very first meeting, I suggested that we should go to Thompson. We then called a little hiatus. We had a meeting in the back and I remember talking to Mr. Derkach. I don't think I'm telling tales out of school, but, basically, it was I had to make a choice. I chose my own constituency. That shouldn't be any secret that I was putting Flin Flon ahead of Thompson in that particular case.

That's what we all agreed on. So I think it's unfair now to start changing things around. We had an agenda. I was hoping we could have been in Flin Flon and Norway House. It didn't work out because of weather, although I was there at the airport waiting and watching a few planes land. I thought you guys should have been a little bolder and come in anyway, but, look, it didn't happen. I'm willing to live with that.

An Honourable Member: We don't have guts like you do.

Mr. Jennissen: Maybe you're wiser than we were. We risk our lives on occasion. But I just thought,

along with my other colleague, that I wanted to keep the record straight.

* (13:30)

Mr. Lamoureux: In the name of keeping the record straight, I do believe and I do applaud the Member for Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen) because I think that he's true in terms of what it is that he's saying. He does have passion in making sure that the committee does go out to Flin Flon and Thompson as he has pointed out. But I do believe since the cancellation of the meeting that there has been a bit of a change of heart from the New Democrats. All you have to do is just read the motion itself. Thompson wasn't a part of the motion.

I suspect the Member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) is being sympathetic, as I and others, to what it is that the Member for Flin Flon is articulating. The community of Thompson wasn't identified in the original motion. The community of Thompson is something in which the Conservatives, along with us, have said that something should be taking place there virtually immediately after the cancellation. That's the actual record.

Madam Chairperson: Is the committee ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Madam Chairperson: The question before the committee is as follows:

THAT the following be added at the end of the motion:

And that a meeting of the Senate committee be scheduled for Thompson to be held no later than May 9th, 2009, with appropriate advertising and notice of the meeting to be determined by the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee.

Shall the motion pass?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

Voice Vote

Madam Chairperson: All those in favour of the motion, please say yea.

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Madam Chairperson: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Madam Chairperson: In my opinion, the Nays have it. The motion is accordingly defeated. My apologies, the amendment is defeated.

* * *

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Chair, I thought it was just like an oversight. The Member for Burrows just forgot to include Thompson. That's what I honestly and genuinely believed. I don't know how you can go to northern Manitoba and exclude Thompson.

Point of Order

Madam Chairperson: Mr. Nevakshonoff, you have a point of order. State your point.

Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff (Interlake): Well, first of all, there are a lot of other communities in the north that we could consider as well. We have to be realistic. We have two that we committed to. People are waiting for us there. We promised we'd come back, so that's where we're going.

But I believe we just voted on the amendment to the amendment. Did we not? Now the Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) wants to debate it again. He had ample opportunity to continue debate before the vote. Called a vote on it. We voted. So that the amendment to the amendment has been defeated, and my point of order is that it's beyond debate at this point.

Madam Chairperson: Mr. Lamoureux, do you wish to speak to the same point?

Mr. Lamoureux: No.

Madam Chairperson: In my opinion, the member does not have a point of order. This is a dispute over the facts.

* * *

Madam Chairperson: We are now debating the motion moved by Mr. Martindale.

Mr. Lamoureux: You know, when I was in the military boot camp, I can remember my NCO writing on the board about the word "assume" and if you break it into syllables—and I do feel that I might have made a mistake here. I made the assumption that the Member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) was wanting to go to Thompson, and it was just an oversight. I don't understand, and I would ask the Member for Burrows, did he talk to the Member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton)? Why has he excluded Thompson? Does the same principle not apply for Norway House, as for Flin Flon, as it would for the

community of Thompson? Even when I was talking earlier, I said that now we have to make three trips. I was assuming that Thompson was the given.

Mr. Goertzen: I was tempted to make comments during the point of order raised by the Member for the Interlake, but that might have been an affront to *Beauchesne's* because there was clearly not an issue of order. This is something that we fundamentally disagree on. Even though this is an all-party committee, there is fundamental disagreement on the different sides in that the Conservatives and the Liberal member are looking to have fuller representation and a voice for the north and the NDP, who are sometimes described to be a voice of the north, in this case, are not putting that slogan into action. It concerns me, just observing how this decision was made, that it seems, with all due respect to my friend from Flin Flon, that this was made on a basis of not where the appropriate places were to go and where there may be the keenest interest, or where there might be the number of presenters, but just somebody lobbying for their constituency which, of course, as a member, he should be doing.

I applaud him for lobbying for his constituency, but I would hope that the government doesn't routinely make decisions that are based on who is representing what constituency. There must have been a thorough—more thorough—sort of conversation about where the appropriate places to go were.

So I don't anticipate that we'll be able to change the minds of the members who voted against Thompson and voted against giving those individuals in that northern community a voice. But, certainly, I'm sure that there will be some disappointment from the good people of Thompson to not have their voice heard in what is certainly a critical area. I think that, if I went back and looked at the words that the MLA for Thompson has put on the record, he has often referred to Thompson, sort of, as not the capital of the north, but certainly one of the main centres. I'm sure he'll be disappointed, though he'll be reluctant to put it in public, but disappointed that his own colleagues don't view the wishes of the people of Thompson the same way that he does.

Mr. Martindale: The comments of the Member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) are tempting me to become political.

If anyone is a voice of the north, certainly it's the New Democratic Party, since not only do we hold all the seats there, but we just got a new member elected from The Pas with an increased majority.

However, I think I would like to just reduce it to the simplest terms, and that is that we had agreed to go to Flin Flon and Norway House. It was cancelled because of weather. There was never agreement to go to Thompson, and we said that we would reschedule them. We now have a motion on the floor to reschedule them. We're keeping our commitment to go to the north, and I would hope that now all members would support this, the main motion.

Ms. Howard: I just wanted, for the benefit of the Member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen), to reflect that certainly all Manitobans had a chance to have their voices heard and to put forward written presentations. That's how we chose to handle the fact that we were not going to be in every town in the province. So the folks living in Thompson have had that opportunity. I think it will be good for the committee to go to other centres in the north, to Norway House and Flin Flon, and hear what those people have to say as well. But, certainly, there's been no attempt to not hear from people in Thompson as they have had the right, as every other Manitoban, to submit written submissions to this committee.

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Chair, I'm just going to ask before we actually vote on the resolution, for the Member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) to really think about northern Manitoba and the community of Thompson in the role that it plays in the province of Manitoba, as all communities no doubt do. But let's recognize that Thompson is second to no other community in northern Manitoba in terms of population, of economic activity and generation of economic activity.

An Honourable Member: Taking it for granted.

Mr. Lamoureux: I think that we might be taking it for granted.

You know, I look at the Member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) and the types of things that he has said inside the Legislative Chamber, and it surprises me. I don't know, and I asked the question to the member opposite, has he consulted with the Member for Thompson? I'm amazed that the New Democrats would not want to go to the community of Thompson. If we're going to be flying up north, I would think that that would have been one that we'd want to go to, that the government would want to go to.

Mr. Eichler: We're certainly going to support the motion that's been brought forward by Mr. Martindale.

We are very disappointed of the fact that he didn't want to include Thompson in that selection of meeting locations. As I pointed out at the very beginning of this meeting, the old subcommittee had the authority to do that. The committee has authority to do that. You decided not to do that. So we're certainly prepared to support the motion that was brought forward, but with regret, unfortunately, that Thompson has been left out once again.

* (13:40)

Madam Chairperson: Is the committee ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Madam Chairperson: The question before the committee is as follows:

THAT the previously established Subcommittee on Senate Elections hold meetings in—

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Madam Chairperson: Dispense? Thank you.

—Flin Flon and Norway House to make up for previous weather related cancellations; and

THAT these meetings take place on the afternoons of Saturday, April 25, and Saturday, May 2, in whichever order works best logistically, with the specific meeting times to be determined by the Chair and Vice-Chair; and

THAT the advertisements that were used for the previously scheduled meetings in Flin Flon and Norway House be used again with the details regarding date, time and location amended to reflect the new meeting arrangements; and

THAT, if necessary, the Chair and Vice-Chair be authorized to amend arrangements for these meetings; and

THAT written submissions on Senate elections may be accepted by the subcommittee until the consultation meetings are concluded.

Shall the motion pass?

Motion agreed to.

Mr. David Faurshou (Portage la Prairie): In light of the passage of the motion to continue with public

meetings, I would like to move a motion that reads: I move

THAT the opportunity for written submissions to the Special Committee on Senate Reform be allowed to continue until after the last scheduled public meeting is—[interjection]

Thank you, Madam Chairperson. It was a rather lengthy motion. I guess I was so in tune with the member's comments from—

An Honourable Member: Fort Rouge.

Mr. Faurschou:—Fort Rouge, that I wanted to absolutely make certain that persons were able to once again provide for written submissions, but I withdraw my motion in light of the inclusion of the revision.

Madam Chairperson: We need unanimous consent if we withdraw. Is that agreed? *[Agreed]*

Thank you. It's withdrawn.

Mr. Eichler: There is another item of business. We need to deal with it. That's in regard to our meeting December 4, where I pointed out the research needed to be done, should be noted from March 2 to April 9. Obviously, that's not going to be accomplished with the change in the dates for the meeting if we're going to be going north.

I would suggest for the committee to amend that to have the research done by May 15. The date that we still have to be in the House for our report is

June 4. That would give us three weeks in order to try and accomplish some type of a consensus at that point in time, and it would give research staff enough time to get that report ready for us by the 15th, instead of April 9.

Madam Chairperson: Just for clarification, Mr. Eichler, it's the collection of the research required for the writing of the report?

Mr. Eichler: That is correct.

Madam Chairperson, I don't think we need a resolution. It was not in the form of a resolution when we talked about it, but I certainly think that we should have leave of the committee, or agreement of the committee, that the deadline be extended to May 15, if that would have leave of the committee to do that.

Madam Chairperson: Is that the will of the committee? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Eichler: May 15.

Madam Chairperson: May 15. Thank you.

Having reached the end of our issue that we were going to deal with today, the time being 1:43 p.m., what is the will of the committee?

Some Honourable Members: Committee rise.

Madam Chairperson: Rise? Thank you.

COMMITTEE ROSE AT: 1:44 p.m.

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