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Third Session - Thirty-Sixth Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
Standing Committee
on
Privileges and Elections

Chairperson
Mr. Peter Dyck
Constituency of Pembina



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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Sixth Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ASHTON, Steve	Thompson	N.D.P.
BARRETT, Becky	Wellington	N.D.P.
CERILLI, Marianne	Radisson	N.D.P.
CHOMIAK, Dave	Kildonan	N.D.P.
CUMMINGS, Glen, Hon.	Ste. Rose	P.C.
DACQUAY, Louise, Hon.	Seine River	P.C.
DERKACH, Leonard, Hon.	Roblin-Russell	P.C.
DEWAR, Gregory	Selkirk	N.D.P.
DOER, Gary	Concordia	N.D.P.
DOWNEY, James, Hon.	Arthur-Virden	P.C.
DRIEDGER, Albert	Steinbach	P.C.
DYCK, Peter	Pembina	P.C.
ENNS, Harry, Hon.	Lakeside	P.C.
ERNST, Jim	Charleswood	P.C.
EVANS, Clif	Interlake	N.D.P.
EVANS, Leonard S.	Brandon East	N.D.P.
FILMON, Gary, Hon.	Tuxedo	P.C.
FINDLAY, Glen, Hon.	Springfield	P.C.
FRIESEN, Jean	Wolseley	N.D.P.
GAUDRY, Neil	St. Boniface	Lib.
GILLESHAMMER, Harold, Hon.	Minnedosa	P.C.
HELWER, Edward	Gimli	P.C.
HICKES, George	Point Douglas	N.D.P.
JENNISSEN, Gerard	Flin Flon	N.D.P.
KOWALSKI, Gary	The Maples	Lib.
LAMOUREUX, Kevin	Inkster	Lib.
LATHLIN, Oscar	The Pas	N.D.P.
LAURENDEAU, Marcel	St. Norbert	P.C.
MACKINTOSH, Gord	St. Johns	N.D.P.
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	N.D.P.
MARTINDALE, Doug	Burrows	N.D.P.
McALPINE, Gerry	Sturgeon Creek	P.C.
McCRAE, James, Hon.	Brandon West	P.C.
McGIFFORD, Diane	Osborne	N.D.P.
McINTOSH, Linda, Hon.	Assiniboia	P.C.
MIHYCHUK, MaryAnn	St. James	N.D.P.
MITCHELSON, Bonnie, Hon.	River East	P.C.
NEWMAN, David, Hon.	Riel	P.C.
PALLISTER, Brian	Portage la Prairie	P.C.
PENNER, Jack	Emerson	P.C.
PITURA, Frank, Hon.	Morris	P.C.
PRAZNIK, Darren, Hon.	Lac du Bonnet	P.C.
RADCLIFFE, Mike, Hon.	River Heights	P.C.
REID, Daryl	Transcona	N.D.P.
REIMER, Jack, Hon.	Niakwa	P.C.
RENDER, Shirley	St. Vital	P.C.
ROBINSON, Eric	Rupertsland	N.D.P.
ROCAN, Denis	Gladstone	P.C.
SALE, Tim	Crescentwood	N.D.P.
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STRUTHERS, Stan	Dauphin	N.D.P.
SVEINSON, Ben	La Verendrye	P.C.
TOEWS, Vic, Hon.	Rossmere	P.C.
TWEED, Mervin	Turtle Mountain	P.C.
VODREY, Rosemary, Hon.	Fort Garry	P.C.
WOWCHUK, Rosann	Swan River	N.D.P.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON PRIVILEGES AND ELECTIONS

Thursday, March 20, 1997

TIME – 10 a.m.

LOCATION – Winnipeg, Manitoba

CHAIRPERSON – Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina)

VICE-CHAIRPERSON – Mr. Mervin Tweed (Turtle Mountain)

ATTENDANCE - 10 – QUORUM - 6

Members of the Committee present:

Hon. Mrs. Mitchelson, Hon. Messrs. Radcliffe, Reimer

Ms. Barrett, Messrs. Dyck, Helwer, Kowalski, Martindale, Ms. McGifford, Mr. Tweed

MATTERS UNDER DISCUSSION:

A Review of the Operation of the Children's Advocate section of The Child and Family Services Act

Clerk Assistant (Ms. Patricia Chaychuk): Order, please. Will the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections please come to order.

Before the committee can proceed with the business before it, it must elect a Chairperson. Are there any nominations?

Mr. Ed Helwer (Gimli): I would like to nominate Mr. Dyck.

Clerk Assistant: Mr. Dyck has been nominated. Are there any other nominations?

An Honourable Member: I move nominations close.

Clerk Assistant: You do not need to do that. Seeing as there are no other nominations, Mr. Dyck, you are elected Chairperson.

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. Before the committee can proceed with the business before it, it must elect a Vice-Chairperson. Are there any nominations?

Mr. Helwer: I would like to nominate Mr. Tweed.

Mr. Chairperson: Mr. Tweed has been nominated. Are there any further nominations? Seeing none, Mr. Tweed is elected as Vice-Chairperson of this committee.

This morning, the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections will be considering the matter of a review of the operations of the Children's Advocate section of The Child and Family Services Act. For the information of the committee, I will read Section 8.13 of The Child and Family Services Act, which states: Within three years of the coming into force of this section, a committee of the Legislative Assembly, designated or established for that purpose shall undertake a comprehensive review of the operation of this part and shall, within one year after that review is undertaken or within such further time as the Legislative Assembly may allow, submit to the Legislative Assembly a report on the operation of this part, including any amendments to the act which the committee recommends.

This matter was first referred to the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections on June 4, 1996, and at that meeting the committee passed a motion recommending to the House that the committee hold public hearings, including outside of the city of Winnipeg, and that the committee report to the Legislature no later than the last day of the fall sitting.

The matter has once again been referred to the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections. It would probably be appropriate to have a statement from the minister responsible followed by a statement from the official opposition critic regarding their thoughts and suggestions.

I should remind the committee, though, that it does not have the authority to travel or to spend money unless the authority is granted by the Legislative Assembly.

I would recognize the honourable Minister of Family Services for comments or an opening statement, please.

Hon. Bonnie Mitchelson (Minister of Family Services): Thank you, Mr. Chairperson, and good morning to all committee members.

As you know, given the undertakings I guess at the end of the last session, there was not the opportunity for the committee's recommendation to be concurred in in the Legislature, so therefore we are back today trying to get a process in place.

I do not think there should be too much disagreement around looking to the last resolution that was passed, but I would like to include several motions that I will put forward in a few minutes that will add a little more detail to the motion that was presented at the last committee. Given that we are making amendments and changes to The Child and Family Services Act in this session of the Legislature, it might put a pretty tight time frame on the review of the Children's Advocate office if in fact we are to have amendments introduced to this portion of the legislation in this session, but I would like to be able to accommodate that if we could.

So I am not going to say anything more except that I will try to add a little more detail for clarification so we can expeditiously get the review underway.

Mr. Chairperson: We thank the minister for those comments. Did the representative from the official opposition wish to make some comments or an opening statement?

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): It was nine months ago, June 1996, that this committee met, and it was due to the government failing to report the committee proceedings to the House that we have had to sit again. I guess I will not read too much significance into nine months. I guess that is a normal gestation period. In this case it is nine months overdue, that this committee has done nothing really for nine months in terms of reviewing the Children's Advocate section of The Child

and Family Services Act. We realize that there is a tight time frame if we are going to make recommendations about amending the Children's Advocate section of The Child and Family Services Act in time for the bill to be debated this session. However, we are quite willing to be co-operative. I have talked to the minister informally about some of the items that will be discussed today, and we look forward to co-operating with the government to carry out this as expeditiously as possible. Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: I thank the member for those comments, and I will now open up the floor to comments. I will ask the minister to start, please.

* (1010)

Mrs. Mitchelson: If I might, I would like to move several motions. I have copies for committee members, and I will hand out all of the motions that I am going to make right now. If you want to look through them, and we will go through them one by one as I move the motions and then have some debate and look for some resolution.

I move

THAT the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections establish a Sub-Committee in order to facilitate a review of the operation of the Children's Advocate Section of the Child and Family Services Act; and,

THAT the Sub-Committee consist of five (5) members, namely, Messrs. DYCK, HELWER, MARTINDALE, KOWALSKI and TWEED; and,

THAT Mr. Dyck be designated as the Chairperson of the Sub-Committee.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you for that motion. What is the wish of the committee? Is there any debate on that?

Ms. Becky Barrett (Wellington): Mr. Chair, while I have no concerns per se with the individuals who have been named, it does appear to me that there are no women on this subcommittee. I think that should be rectified.

Ms. Diane McGifford (Osborne): Mr. Chair, just to second what the member for Wellington has said, it would seem to me that it is a sad lack to not have a woman on this committee, especially in view of the fact that we all know that women continue to take more responsibility for children and for the health and welfare of children than the other sex. Thank you.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, we did note that. I guess the issue was selecting from the members that are presently sitting on this committee.

An Honourable Member: That does limit it.

Mrs. Mitchelson: No, on the government side, I have to indicate that the only female on the government side that could have been on this committee in fact is on the Hydro committee this morning. I will indicate that if it is the wish of the official opposition to substitute Mr. Martindale for one of the women, we have absolutely no problem with that.

Ms. Barrett: If there is one thing that is easily done and regularly done in this Legislature, it is substitutions on committees. I do not think that there is—the minister may prove me wrong, but it seems to me that there is no hard and fast rule that the subcommittee must be made up of people who have been placed on this committee for today's meeting. It seems to me that the government members, with three members, has the much better opportunity to deal with gender concerns than the official opposition or the independents in this committee who have only one member apiece, and our one member is the critic for Family Services. I think that if there is going to be a recognition of the need to have some gender balance, it must be done on the part of the government.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I take the comments from my honourable friend seriously and to heart. I will indicate then that we could possibly determine that Mr. Dyck would be the chairperson of the subcommittee and that members from parties could rotate or be appointed as necessary. We will look into the issue of asking Mrs. Render whether she would be available to sit on this committee.

Mr. Chairperson: Is that agreed then? [agreed] So is this motion then agreed to? [agreed]

Mrs. Mitchelson: I move

THAT the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections recommends to the House that the Sub-Committee established to review the operation of the Children's Advocate Section of the Child and Family Services Act be authorized to advertise this review in the local papers through the province; and,

THAT the advertisement should indicate that both written and oral presentations will be accepted by the Sub-Committee; and,

THAT the deadline for submitting names for oral presentations before the Sub-Committee be April 18, 1997; and,

THAT the deadline for submitting written presentations be April 30, 1997.

Mr. Chairperson: Any comments to that?

Ms. Barrett: Just a question. When would the ads be placed, i.e., how much time would individuals or groups have before those deadlines were achieved?

Mrs. Mitchelson: The process that has to take place from here is that once the committee finishes its work today, we will ask leave for the House to deal with this issue. Once it is concurred in by the House, we would ask the Clerk's office to start preparation right now of the ads so that the day it is concurred in, in the House, those ads can be provided to the newspapers.

Mr. Chairperson: Further comments? Is the motion carried? [agreed]

Mrs. Mitchelson: If I might just add, from time to time there have been people that have expressed an interest to make presentation around the office of the Children's Advocate and they are waiting for the announcement to be made. I would like to recommend, and I am not sure it needs to be by formal motion, but I think as the committee starts to meet and does its work that if any member of the committee has a name of an individual or an organization that they would like to see included in a mail-out, might I suggest that we look at a letter that goes out to individuals and to organizations that any of us believe might have an

interest in making a presentation, we will get that out as soon as the House deals with this issue.

Mr. Chairperson: By consensus is that agreed upon? [agreed]

Mrs. Mitchelson: I move

THAT the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections recommends to the House that the Subcommittee established to review the operation of the Children's Advocate Section of the Child and Family Services Act be authorized, based on the response from the general public, to travel and/or video conference, throughout the province.

Mr. Chairperson: Any comments to that?

Mr. Martindale: We have two concerns about this. First of all, we would like to make some recommendations and have discussion about which communities the committee would actually travel to and have an agreement on that I guess before the motion is passed. We think that we should decide which communities to go to and advertise in those communities. We expect that then the public would be more inclined to register and make a presentation knowing the committee was actually going to be in their community, rather than basing our plans on whoever phones in to register. So I guess I am trying to make two points. One is let us decide now where we travel; and I guess more specifically, we have some suggestions as to which communities we should go to. Maybe we can put that in the wider context of which communities we travel to and which ones we do video conferencing.

Mr. Gary Kowalski (The Maples): I could see also a benefit, though, that in those advertisements if there are not sufficient numbers in response that we could put in the advertisement that it is dependent upon interest shown and the committee should decide. If there is just one presentation for the amount of expense to bring staff there and to bring ourselves there and that, nowadays with video conferencing and the technology, it would be a waste of taxpayers' money to be going for one presentation to a community. I agree with what the member for Burrows just said, that people may not even show any interest if they do not know that we are

willing to come to their community. So I think we should agree upon which communities but with the understanding that if there is not sufficient interest, then we either go to a video conference as an alternative.

Hon. Jack Reimer (Minister of Housing): I just wanted to point out that in any type of response to travel, I think we have to take into consideration the fact that since there are three government House members and two so-called opposition members that any type of travel that there would have to be some sort of arrangement as for pairing. My understanding is that there is no pairing so that any type of travel would have to be looked at in the sense that if there was a willingness to travel—[interjection] There is pairing?

An Honourable Member: There is pairing.

An Honourable Member: Not for this.

Mr. Reimer: Not for this. I was just going to point out that would have to be clarified, because I know that for ministerial meetings there is, but this is a different situation. That would have to be looked at and understood.

Ms. McGifford: Mr. Chair, I think it is important, agreeing to some extent with the member for The Maples, that we determine what "sufficient interest" means. I quite agree with him, to visit one person to take a committee of five does not seem to be a financially viable option, but I think we need to determine then what is sufficient. Secondly, I think we need to be cognizant of the fact that it is very hard for some people to use video equipment, especially if it is not part of their culture, and that warm bodies are a lot better always, in my opinion, than video technology, although one acknowledges that it does serve a purpose. Still, I think we need to be aware that this kind of presentation would be very alien, and some cultures simply would not be able to cope with it and therefore would not do presentations.

Mr. Chairperson: Any further comments?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, I have listened to all of the comments made and, ideally, if we could travel to every community in the province of Manitoba, it would be wonderful. I think we have to recognize

also that over and above the five committee members that would have to travel, we will need Hansard staff, we will need committee staff, we will need simultaneous translation, because it is an all-party committee of the Legislature.

So we are looking at significant numbers of additional people besides the five committee members that would travel. So I think we have to keep that in mind when we are looking at where we will travel and the options around video conferencing, taking into account the comments that have been made by my honourable friend. I would hate to indicate that we are going to travel to certain communities and ignore other communities if in fact we find that a community that we have not chosen to travel to has 10 or 20 people that want to make representation

* (1020)

So I would again recommend that possibly looking to the comments made from the member from The Maples, the subcommittee could certainly get together and review after the calls come in. I think we could include in our advertisement, if significant numbers of people express a desire to make presentation, we will consider travelling to your community. This could go right into the ads. It could go right into the letter that goes out broadly throughout Manitoba. Then at that point in time, the subcommittee could sit down, review all of the calls that have come in requesting the ability to make oral representation, and then the subcommittee could make that determination on what communities we would travel to, whether there was the ability to do video conferencing for smaller numbers.

Ms. Barrett: I have a couple of concerns with that. One is just a logistical concern. In the earlier motion we agreed that the deadlines would be April 18 and April 30, and now going ahead a motion or two, the report to be submitted by the end of May, which in and of itself only allows for the month of May in order to do whatever outreach we are going to do, et cetera. If the committee waits until we have received all of those presentations and have a sense of where the numbers might warrant, then it is going to be very difficult for the committee to make those decisions for that information to be disseminated out into the community.

Another concern, there have been other examples, both in the government and in the opposition, where committees have gone throughout the province, have decided on a number of locations to attend—so if we set aside a number that we will plan to attend, and again, with the caveat that if there is one presentation, we may attend in a different format, like video conferencing or something rather than physically attending.

I do not see any reason why it is any less important to attend in person where possible the review of the Children's Advocate section than it was for the government committee that did the review of The Child and Family Services Act, the Render-Dyck committee, these kinds of things, and our committee that travelled throughout the province a couple of years ago on domestic violence.

I think there is precedence for establishing a number of communities ahead of time, and there are concerns logistically that if we do not we will not be able to effectively reach out to those communities in the month of May.

Mr. Martindale: I would like to support my colleague from Wellington and also to ask the minister if she could tell us how the review committee on The Child and Family Services Act decided where to schedule their hearings, because they did travel outside Winnipeg. Were they advertised, and did they go based on the number of presenters that were registered, or did they just have a hearing because the hearing was advertised?

Mr. Mervin Tweed (Turtle Mountain): Just further to the comment, I think that until we get the submissions or the numbers, it certainly is going to be hard to plan the locations that we are going to attend. I think the proper procedure would be to get the applications. We can certainly categorize them and maybe even pick locations that are central to that particular region or area. To start naming locations at this point in time I think would be pre-empting where we are going to get most of the application from. I think the idea, as the critic mentioned in his opening statement, that we recognize too that there is a time factor involved and we would like to, as a committee, I think move this forward as quickly as possible. I would certainly suggest that the minister's suggestion of

collecting the data first and making logical decisions from that point would be the best approach.

Mr. Chairperson: What is the wish of the committee then? We need to decide.

Mr. Martindale: I am wondering if the minister can answer my question about the review committee on The Child and Family Services Act.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Maybe I could defer that to my colleague the member for River Heights (Mr. Radcliffe) to explain the process that was undertaken giving that he started off as Chair of that committee.

Hon. Mike Radcliffe (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Mr. Chair, I can tell the committee that we had hearings in the city of Winnipeg, the city of Thompson, The Pas, Brandon, Portage, Steinbach and Morden. Those were the spots that were chosen. Did I say Selkirk? We went to Selkirk as well. We chose those centres arbitrarily. I chose those centres with the advice of staff as representing centres that had draw from different areas of the province, a population draw. I can tell the committee, for the benefit of the members present, that I sat, as did the Honourable Ms. Barrett, all day in Portage la Prairie, and nobody showed up. So I would not recommend wasting time or expense to go to Portage la Prairie, because the travelling to Winnipeg is half an hour. It is very short. [interjection] Yes, unless there is a large pickup on it. We had very good turnout in Winnipeg, and we had to extend the days of hearing in Winnipeg to cover all the interest around the different parts of the city.

Obviously because of the demographics of the province, you get more pickup in the city of Winnipeg. Thompson was very light; Brandon was good; Morden was not bad. I am not talking quality of presentations; I am just talking about numbers of people who appeared, in my recollection. It was a full-day hearing in Steinbach.

So there is some information as to process, as to how we chose them. We just chose them arbitrarily, based on the fact that they were representing centres of population which would draw people and my

recommendations as to where there was interest for this sort of activity.

Mr. Martindale: We believe that the Children's Advocate section of the act is very important. We believe that hearing the voices of children, making improvements to the act are very important. Therefore we think that this committee should agree to a number of locations outside of Winnipeg to travel to or, lacking a number of presentations, to do video conferencing for, and therefore we plan to vote against this motion because this committee will not agree to where we are going to travel to, or I should say, the government will not agree to travel to a number of places.

We have a very good precedent, the review committee on the entire act, and so we see no reason why we cannot discuss in detail which communities we should travel to with the exception that if no one shows up or an insufficient number of people register that we would do video conferencing instead.

Mr. Kowalski: What I am hearing are two views here. One view is that we should just wait until we get the applications to appear and judge where we will travel to as a result of that. The other view is that depending on where the committee is appearing, people may or may not present because, if I live up in Thompson, Manitoba, and I do not believe that there is a possibility of the committee coming there, I may not even apply. So those are the two views.

* (1030)

What I am going to suggest is maybe that we advertise a minimum number of locations with the advertisement saying that additional locations may be added if there is sufficient demand or these hearings could be substituted with video conferencing if there is not sufficient interest. Just by going by the driving time—I guess four directions is something we hear a lot about in the aboriginal community.

I look at one in the south, probably Morden; one in the west, being Brandon; at least one in the North, being Thompson; and one in the east. Steinbach seems awfully close to the city. I would like to go a little bit further east than that, but unless I hear a better recommendation than Steinbach, and that is our

minimum number of locations, with the advertisement being clearly stated that additional locations could be added if there was sufficient interest.

Mrs. Mitchelson: That sounds like a fairly good compromise to me. I think I would want to ensure in the ad that we will say we will travel, we will be in your community if there is enough interest expressed. We maybe should look at an arbitrary number of presentations and go from there, but if in fact it was a community like Steinbach or you say something a little further east, and in fact there were five presentations and all of the people that contacted indicating they wanted to make representation agreed to video conferencing as an option that we might look at that rather than travelling to the community. I have no problem with sending a minimum number of places, I think, recommendations on Brandon, Thompson, Morden—[interjection] Absolutely. We do not have to travel to those. Those can be fairly cost-effective and done right out of this building.

We can have more than one date if there are several people in Winnipeg, but I have no problem with a minimum number of locations, indicating again in the ad that if there is major expression of desire to make presentation outside of those communities, we will attempt to accommodate travel to those communities.

Ms. McGifford: Mr. Chair, I am still interested in what is considered sufficient interest. I know the minister mentioned we could set a number, so I am interested in what that number might be. Also, I think that travelling to Thompson in the North is not sufficient. The North is huge, and it would seem to me, at minimum, The Pas and Thompson, and/or Flin Flon and Thompson. As well, in the east, since Steinbach is relatively close to Winnipeg, to my mind, a better option would be Beausejour.

Mr. Tweed: I think we are getting right back to where we started. I think the idea of suggesting a minimum amount and adding as we go, if we start naming places, we are right back to square one, where we have 25 names on the list. I think Mr. Kowaski has come up with a good idea. I think the idea is, we are trying to get out to see people. If they express an interest that they want to make a representation to this committee, we are going to try and accommodate them as best we

can. I do not think you want to start naming locations until, again, we find out where the interest is coming from. We have named some specifics, which I think are suitable, but to get into such a large number, until you see what is going to happen, I think what we have done is good.

Mr. Chairperson: Any further comments, please.

Mr. Martindale: Well, I think the minister has agreed to travel to four locations outside Winnipeg, and we are recommending to add a fifth, either Flin Flon or The Pas. One of the reasons for doing that is that a very high percentage of children in care in Manitoba are aboriginal. The Pas is adjacent to a large First Nations community. There is certainly a lot of First Nations community in the Flin Flon constituency, and we think there is a good reason for adding a second community in the North. The two locations could be combined into one trip.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I hear the member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett) indicating that we do not really need to travel to Morden because it is only an hour away from the city of Winnipeg. We might consider that, certainly add The Pas into the mix, The Pas and Thompson, but state very clearly in the ads, if there are other communities or if those communities do not express an interest in presenting, that we will not be travelling to them. I think that we have to make it clear in the ads that if the numbers warrant, we will travel. If in fact video conferencing is an option in your community, we will look at that as an option.

The concern for me is that we hear Manitobans, and no matter what the vehicle is to hear them, whether it be through a visit to the community, through teleconferencing or through a written presentation, we want as many Manitobans as possible to make those representations. We can argue about whether we need to be there personally, but if all of the presenters that want to make oral presentations agree that video conferencing is an option for them, why would we travel? So I think that we have to use our common sense in our approach to the travelling around the province and ensuring that all Manitobans who want to make representation have that opportunity. We will try to accommodate, to the best of our ability, those people. I have no problem in indicating that we will go to

Thompson and to The Pas, but I do want to indicate to you, too, if in fact there is not a significant number of people, we are going to have to consider whether teleconferencing might be a better option.

Mr. Radcliffe: Another piece of advice that I would offer as a result of the last tour that I was involved in was that—and it is particularly with people of the North—many of the people in the North are not people of the written word but rather only the spoken word. I would ask that maybe some attention be given to some media releases over the radio as to advertising where this committee is going to sit, because I received advice, I was told at the outset of our committee, that if you just write to many of the people, they will not respond, but if they hear it on the radio, they will come. So I would suggest that that might be something that could be considered. I do not know that there needs to be a motion, but just a little bit of advice.

Mr. Martindale: I would like to just ask of the minister what she considers a sufficient response, since that is going to determine whether the committee will travel or whether we will do video conferencing.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I might recommend a number of around five people. I might also say, though, if all five of those presentations believe that video conferencing would be an option for them, that we look at the video conference. It is just a number I am picking out of my hat, and I guess I would ask members of the opposition for comments on whether they think that is fair.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay, I think the number of five, by consensus, is agreed upon.

Mr. Kowalski: We have made some assumptions about video conferencing costs, savings and cost. I think, before we make any final decisions, we should get actual costs for video conferencing. If it is for half a day of video conferencing, if it is close to what our costs would be for travelling, we should look at that. It may not be as cheap as we assume.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Absolutely, and I think that is something that the subcommittee can deal with. Certainly, we would want to make it the most cost-effective process if it accommodates the people that want to make presentation.

Mr. Chairperson: Just for clarity, could I then, on this motion—I know we have named a number of locations, but for clarity, if I could just have those, I think it would be advantageous to us. [interjection] And we need it for the ad.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Yes, we do. I think we talked about Thompson, The Pas, Brandon, Winnipeg. I am of mixed feelings. Do we want to go to the east or the south? Do we want to talk Morden or Beausejour, or do we want to wait to see what happens and include a community based in the south on where we get the majority of requests for representation? Can we leave it flexible in that respect, or do you want us specifically to name communities in the south and the east?

Mr. Kowalski: I am looking at driving times. I know many of the members on the government side drive in from their homes in those areas for session, so I am not that concerned because the driving time is not that much.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I think I hear a sense that let us put Morden and Beausejour on the list in the ad, and if in fact we do not get five requests for representation, we will—so we will put the five.

Mr. Chairperson: Then is the committee prepared to accept this motion with the addition of those locations? [interjection] That is agreed, thank you, and so ordered.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, I move

THAT the Sub-Committee established to review the operation of the Children's Advocate Section of the Child and Family Services Act call as its first presenter Mr. Wayne Govereau, the Children's Advocate .

Mr. Chairperson: Is that agreed?

* (1040)

Ms. Barrett: I am sure I know the answer to this, but this would mean we would hear from him before we travelled or heard from anybody else.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Yes, that is correct. I think he has expressed a desire to make representation to the committee. I think that that should happen, and we

should hear his point of view. Then that gives you information that you can take back out to other Manitobans. There has also been some information that he shared with me that he thought the committee members might appreciate having. So I think we will provide that for committee members. I might suggest that as soon as this is concurred in in the House—could meet with Mr. Govereau any time.

Mr. Chairperson: Any other comments? If not, is this motion then passed?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Mr. Chairperson: Agreed and so ordered. Moving on.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I move

THAT the Sub-Committee established to review the operation of the Children's Advocate Section of the Child and Family Services Act submit its report on or before May 30, 1997.

Mr. Chairperson: I think you missed one, if you could go back to the time limit.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Sorry, Mr. Chairperson. I move

THAT the presentations before the Sub-Committee established to review the operation of the Children's Advocate section of the Child and Family Services Act be limited to 20 minutes for presentation and 10 minutes for questions.

Mr. Radcliffe: I will defer to my honourable colleague. I would like to comment afterward.

Mr. Martindale: Thank you. Mr. Chairperson, we are opposed to this motion. We think it is quite unnecessary to impose time limits. After all, this is not the sale of MTS, with 286 presenters, or however many registered. We would be delighted if there were 500 presenters, but this time, we have no indication of what kind of interest there is, so it seems unnecessary to impose an arbitrary time limit. This government seems to want to do that more and more with committees. There may be children making presentations. We may

want to have a long discussion with them. We think that limiting questions and answers is quite unnecessary.

Mr. Radcliffe: Well, I guess, again, I can give you some benefit of the committee that I did serve on. What I did as Chair is we expressed that this was a guideline, and we urged people to conform to this. If people went over and if there was nobody else lined up ready to present, we certainly were very flexible and let people talk until their topic was finished. In order to ensure that in a given community, where you are there for half a day or a full day, that everybody gets an opportunity to present during that day, I think you need some sort of form and direction. If it is left to the skill of the Chair to sort of formulate that, with these limits as perhaps advisory, it could be valuable for the operation of the committee.

Ms. Barrett: I would agree with Mr. Radcliffe that the maximum would be that these would be advisory. I think if the committee is travelling to Thompson, we are scheduled there for a whole day, or the committee is scheduled for a whole day, there are five presenters, three of whom are children, there is no reason for something like this. I would not even put it in the ad. I think most people will probably be shorter, or due to the nature of the presentations, this is not a piece of legislation—it is a piece of legislation—but the kinds of the presentations are likely to be personal. Very hard to put into that kind of time constraint. You are not going to have the kinds of presentations that you do in a lot of our legislative committees. So I think that it can be determined at the beginning of each session and just common sense prevail, rather than putting this in as a constriction.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I appreciate the comments from all members. I think it is the common-sense approach again in that we are looking at guidelines. I think that if, in fact, we are scheduling meetings and we know we have 40 or 50 or 60 representations in the city of Winnipeg and we ask people to come out, if we maybe wanted to ask people ahead of time whether they would consider a 20-minute presentation in order to allow everyone to be heard. I think we can always make phone calls back from the Clerk's office, or whatever, based on the number of presentations that we have.

There could be guidelines, if in fact we have large numbers and we want to ensure that people are treated with respect and have the ability.

If we had a full day scheduled in Winnipeg, maybe if we looked at people and guidelines, we could tell people that they could come for the morning or the afternoon and could be heard if we had some sort of guidelines for people to follow and the committee respected that.

I would also hope that as the committee is going through the process of hearing recommendations that we try to ensure that the presentations are focused on the Advocate's portion of the legislation and the questions that are asked are focused on review of the Advocate's part of the legislation. We have had fairly extensive hearings throughout the province on other parts of the legislation. We will be getting a report and some recommendations on what amendments to make in that respect. If we get off onto other protection issues than individual case specifics, it will sort of muddy the waters, so to speak, and we would not be able to focus on what Manitobans really want on the Child Advocate's portion of the legislation.

Mr. Chairperson: The motion then, and I think we have had fair discussion on it, that there is going to be some flexibility in that, is the motion then carried? Agreed? Agreed and so ordered.

Thank you. We will move on.

Mrs. Mitchelson: The last thing I would like to bring back again is I move that the subcommittee established to review the operation of the Children's Advocate

section of The Child and Family Services Act submit its report on or before May 30, 1997.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you. Comments to that. That is agreed. Agreed and so ordered.

Before the committee rises, we should probably have an agreement as to who should look at and approve the ad before it goes into the papers and which newspapers it goes into, or do you have some advice on that, please? [interjection] Or do you want the subcommittee to look at it, Madam Minister?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Thanks, Mr. Chairperson. I think the subcommittee could look at that and also at a list of all of the people who we are intending to send a letter out to. I guess it would be through the chair of the subcommittee that that letter would go out indicating that we are travelling the province and hearing people, and that all committee members on the subcommittee indicate or provide a list of organizations or individuals in addition to that.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you. That completes the business this morning. Committee rise. [interjection] Oh, pardon me, we reconvene. Madam Minister, please.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Thank you, Mr. Chairperson. I just want to thank all members of the committee for their co-operation in getting to what I think is a good compromise and a good process. Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you. Committee rise.

COMMITTEE ROSE AT: 10:50 a.m.