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(Hansard)**

Thursday 29 November 2001

**Standing committee on
finance and economic affairs**

Subcommittee report

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Jeudi 29 novembre 2001

**Comité permanent des finances
et des affaires économiques**

Rapport du sous-comité

Chair: Marcel Beaubien
Clerk: Susan Sourial

Président : Marcel Beaubien
Greffière : Susan Sourial

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON
FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

Thursday 29 November 2001

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

COMITÉ PERMANENT DES FINANCES
ET DES AFFAIRES ÉCONOMIQUES

Jeudi 29 novembre 2001

The committee met at 1009 in room 228.

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT

The Chair (Mr Marcel Beaubien): Good morning, everyone. If I could get your attention—

Failure of sound system.

The Chair: —some type of decision today. So with that, as I said, the subcommittee report is in front of you.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): Mr Chair, I would now like to move adoption of the subcommittee report. Am I supposed to read it into the record or something?

The Chair: Yes, I think it should be read.

Mr O'Toole: Could you give me a copy? Mine has been all marked and scratched. OK.

If I may, with your indulgence, move the subcommittee report of the standing committee on finance and economic affairs:

Your subcommittee on committee business met on Monday, November 26, 2001, and recommends the following with respect to Bill 125, An Act to improve the identification, removal and prevention of barriers faced by persons with disabilities and to make related amendments to other Acts, 2001.

(1) That an advertisement be placed in the major paper of each of the cities to which the committee intends to travel. That advertisements be placed in both English and French papers, if possible.

(2) That 18 to 20 hits over one, two or three days be placed on radio stations with the greatest audience in each of the cities to which the committee intends to travel.

(3) That an advertisement be placed on the Ontario parliamentary channel and on the committee's Internet page.

(4) That the deadline for people to submit their requests to appear for Ottawa be 5 pm, Wednesday, November 28, 2001.

(5) That the advertisement that was placed in the Ottawa papers be changed to reflect the new deadline; if this is not possible, that a new ad be placed.

(6) That the advertisements include information that the witnesses may submit expenses for reimbursement.

(7) That the deadline for people to submit their requests to appear in all other locations be as follows: 12 noon, Thursday, November 29, 2001, for Windsor; 12 noon, Friday, November 30, 2001, for Toronto; 12 noon,

Tuesday, December 4, 2001, for Thunder Bay; 12 noon, Wednesday, December 5, 2001, for Sudbury.

(8) That, if needed, each party submit a prioritized list of witnesses for each location that the committee intends to hold hearings.

(9) That groups be offered 20 minutes in which to make a presentation, and individuals be offered 15 minutes in which to make a presentation, subject to their needs for assistance in making a presentation (to be determined by the committee clerk in consultation with the Chair).

(10) That any assistive devices that are needed be provided by the committee.

(11) That the committee meet from 9 am to 5 pm, subject to the number of presenters, in Ottawa, Windsor, Thunder Bay and Sudbury.

(12) That the committee meet from 9 am to 12 noon and from 4 pm to 6 pm in Toronto on December 4 and 5.

(13) That the deadline for amendments be 12 noon, Monday, December 10, 2001.

(14) That the deadline for written submissions be 5 pm, Friday, December 7, 2001.

(15) That the committee clerk can begin implementing these decisions as soon as Bill 125 is referred to the standing committee on finance and economic affairs and is authorized to release the information as soon as Bill 125 is referred to committee.

The Chair: Mr O'Toole has moved and read the subcommittee report. Is there any discussion?

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): Just a question; I'm certainly not challenging it, but a question on the item that refers to "if needed, each party submit a prioritized list of witnesses." I'm just wondering how that works technically, when we would have the names, for example, of who was taking an interest in Ottawa.

Clerk of the Committee (Ms Susan Sourial): The list for Ottawa was sent out last night, after the 5 o'clock deadline.

Mr Parsons: By e-mail?

Clerk of the Committee: I faxed it out.

The Chair: It's in this morning. I received mine and Mr Martin has his.

Mr Parsons: We're literally having troubles with our fax machine, so I will go back and confirm. I may need another copy from you, but thank you.

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): Just a couple of questions. I note that an advertisement will be placed in

the major paper of each of the cities to which the committee intends to travel. I guess I'm wondering how those people who aren't in those cities and who want to come and present will hear about this. For example, although it's not going to be a problem because we've put it out, there's a whole bunch of people in the Soo who want to present. I'm not sure what arrangements have been made to this point, but they've been in contact with the clerk. But if I wasn't organizing that and we weren't advertising in the Soo paper—certainly the Sudbury paper would not get to the Soo. They could get the parliamentary channel, although it's kind of hit and miss these days. It's a channel that doubles with the school boards to give out information, so sometimes it's on and sometimes it's not. I'm wondering if we've thought at all about how those communities that are far enough away from the centres we're going to that they wouldn't get their newspapers will find out about the committee hearings.

The Chair: Usually the newspapers in the larger centres have a distribution centre that covers probably, I don't know, a 50-mile, 60-mile, maybe a 30-mile radius around the city. There's no doubt you make a valid point that if you live in Dubreuilville, it probably would be very difficult, although they do get the Soo paper. But it would probably be difficult. There's a challenge, but there are always challenges.

Mr Martin: But it won't be advertised in the Soo paper, it will be advertised in the Sudbury paper, and the Sudbury paper doesn't go anywhere near—

The Chair: So it would be Sudbury and—

Mr Martin: Thunder Bay, yes. So there are a lot of communities out there that won't be touched.

The Chair: It's not a perfect system. That's all I can say. This is something we discussed, as you're aware, at the subcommittee, that we would try to reach as many people as we possibly could. It's posted on the site, it's advertised in the newspapers where we're travelling and, as you said, you're doing all you can as a member for your constituents in that area. I'm sure the other members are probably doing the same. I don't know what else we can do.

Mr Martin: I just want to mark it as a problem. I'm not sure what else you can do either, other than advertise across the province, although it's certainly too late for Ottawa. It's probably too late for Windsor, because you've probably already done your advertising for Windsor. Is it too late for Thunder Bay and Sudbury? That's the area where I think, in terms of circulation, the distance often precludes the Sudbury and Thunder Bay newspapers from going into big chunks of that part of the province. Is there anything we could do to make sure all of the communities in the north know that this is going on?

The Chair: As I pointed out, this is a subcommittee report. It probably should have been raised at that particular point in time. If we wanted to advertise in different newspapers, it probably should have been discussed by the subcommittee when we met—what date was it that we met?—on November 26.

Mr Martin: Could I make a motion, then, that particularly in the north, where communication isn't always at its best and the distances are so great, we advertise in the Sault Star, the Timmins newspaper and the North Bay newspaper? I think that would probably cover the rest of the province, because the north is hived up. The North Bay Nugget covers a certain area, the Sudbury Star covers a certain area, and the Sault Star covers a certain area—and Thunder Bay. Those are the other major centres.

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton Centre): You meant Timmins, Tony? You said Thunder Bay.

Mr Martin: Yes. What I meant was Sault Ste Marie, Timmins and North Bay. Those are the three major centres that have major papers, and that would hit everybody.

The Chair: Mr Martin has moved an amendment to the subcommittee report that we advertise in the Soo, Timmins and North Bay papers. Is there any further discussion? Do I have unanimous consent on it? Agreed? OK.

1020

Mr Martin: I appreciate that.

Another question on numbers 9 and 10 in terms of somebody who comes forward presenting with some challenges in terms of presentation, and the 15 minutes. That's the first question. I take it from here that we are going to be somewhat flexible, to make sure that somebody who needs to have interpretation—it may take twice as long, because in some instances there may be interpretation both ways.

The Chair: We don't have a problem so far with the presenters in Ottawa. I think we'll be able to stay on schedule because the clerk has already contacted these people. With regard to the other communities, you're correct. I think it was the intent that we would be flexible with the time we would allocate to some individuals if there's a problem or a challenge.

Mr Spina: Just to assist, I think item 10 in the subcommittee report indicates that assistive devices needed would be provided. Also, I think there was another element here that referred to assistance that would be required.

Mr Martin: For travel? Yes, there is.

Mr Spina: That they "may submit expenses for reimbursement." That's in number 6. I thought those pretty well covered or at least addressed those needs.

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I misunderstood, then. I thought Tony's question was more that if an individual came in and what normally would be a 15-minute presentation takes half an hour because of the devices and the process he has to use, we agreed we would be flexible on that time. I think in the discussion we also agreed we would then have to be flexible, as a committee, on shortening some of the other times for our questions in order to make sure that all those who had been scheduled to appear would get time to appear. Obviously if, for whatever reason, you extend one, you have to find that time somewhere else. Or if you extend

two or three, then all of a sudden you get to the end and there isn't time to get in those who have made application, have been accepted and were asked to come and present. My understanding was that we were going to try and be flexible to facilitate anyone who had a disability and required more time, and we would work together to work around that.

The Chair: For instance, in Ottawa there are a couple of individuals who will be presenting who do require some additional time. That has been implemented in the agenda that you have in front of you. The clerk has already discussed how much time they would need to make their presentation, so that's taken into consideration.

Mr Parsons: When I raised the issue, I felt that item 9, "offered 20 minutes ... subject to their needs for assistance in making a presentation," gave the Chair the flexibility to vary the time.

Mr Martin: I do have some difficulty with shortening somebody else's time. This is their opportunity to say their piece. If they're only getting 15 minutes to begin with and you shorten it to 10, and they've travelled the distance to do that, it will probably seem to them that we're not really interested in everything they have to say.

I make that point to make another point, which is one that Mr Parsons and I have been making since we found out we were going to be doing these hearings as quickly as we are and trying to get them in before Christmas. It just makes it really difficult, in the time we have, to hear from everybody and to make sure that we do provide that flexibility. I realize, Mr Hardeman, that we're going to try as best we can, and we'll co-operate with that, given the short timeline, but it's unfortunate that the timeline is so short.

Mr Hardeman: I was not inferring that we had agreed that the presenters would be cut short from their presentation; it would be the accommodation that if they have 15 minutes and they spend seven minutes making their presentation, the Chair would be able to recover some of the time taking away from us, not from the presenters. So I think it's to accommodate, to try and make sure that for those who need the extra time it will be there. If it's being arranged prior to the hearing to say, "I can't make my presentation in 15 minutes," then I think that can be timed in as it's being done in Ottawa. But if they come in at the last minute, they have 15 minutes and they can't get it done in 15 minutes, I think we should be considerate enough to let them go for 20 minutes or 25 minutes. But we'll have to find as best we can, to accommodate, that time in the rest of the day.

Mr Spina: I'm happy. This is at the discretion of the Chair and the clerk to discern whether more time is need. That's always been the case in most committees. I would trust the clerk, with the Chair, to use discretion, and if it's something beyond the usual amount of discretion, the Chair asks us for unanimous consent. Any of us would be stupid not to give consent if someone who needs more time. I agree with you, Tony. We shouldn't be restricting

other presenters if someone took a little more time. I'm happy to trust the Chair and the clerk on that.

The Chair: Any further discussion?

Mr Martin: Yes, just a couple of other questions. On the issue of assistive devices, have we been able to secure and tie down the devices that we need, the interpreters or whatever?

The Chair: I'll let the clerk explain to you, because she's been working very diligently on this issue.

Clerk of the Committee: For Ottawa we've got three sign-language interpreters arranged and one what is called an intervener because one of the presenters is deaf-blind. So far I have one sign-language interpreter for all the other locations and I'm working on getting two more for each location. In all the other locations, we will also have real-time captioning. Unfortunately, we don't have that for Ottawa, but we will have it for all the other locations.

Mr Martin: OK, and are we going to need the real-time captioning in Ottawa? Will that be a big problem for anybody?

Clerk of the Committee: It's hard to say. None of the presenters are hearing-impaired. However, I don't know who in the audience will be hearing-impaired. Although the signers are there, I think the captioning is just a back-up for the signers.

Mr Martin: And just the question of transportation. Have there been any problems there at all? Are we able to accommodate anybody who needs help getting to the—

Clerk of the Committee: So far in Ottawa that wasn't an issue. There was one presenter to whom I offered the transportation, and she said she had a volunteer driver. But other than that there hasn't been any issue.

Mr Martin: In terms of—and I'm becoming a bit parochial here—Sudbury and the fact that we're at Cambrian College, and I'm assuming, maybe wrongly, that the reason we're going there is because it has the facilities to accommodate a number of challenges, are we able to conference with other centres or other areas?

Clerk of the Committee: We're looking into that. Broadcast and Recording is looking into seeing if we can conference with Sault Ste Marie.

Mr Martin: Yes, because the group in the Soo were hoping, and there are a significant number of them, that they might be able to beam in and not have to travel to Sudbury but actually be present via that medium. So you're working on that. OK, that's great, because it would certainly be convenient that the whole whack of them not have to travel, given that it's snowing up there now and we're skiing—a little advertisement there.

Interjection.

Mr Martin: No, not yet. They're working on it. We will be, yes. There'll be big snow machine races this weekend out at Searchmont. Anyway, that's an aside; sorry.

They're hoping in the Soo to be able to beam in and participate in that way, and it would be great if that was

able to be accomplished, so thank you. Those are all my questions.

1030

The Chair: If there are no further comments or questions, I will call the vote on the amended subcommittee report. The amendment is that we advertise in the Sault Ste Marie, Timmins and North Bay newspapers.

All those in favour of the amended subcommittee report? Opposed? That's carried.

The other issue we have to deal with: as you're aware, on Friday, we're going to be in Ottawa, and the list has to be in by noon on Friday for the presenters in other communities. We need to fax that list somewhere. I'd like to get some direction as to who, and we also have to set a time limit to send it back to the clerk, because the clerks have to schedule these people. For the Toronto hearings, we need 10 names and 10 alternates to put on the schedule. In other words, there are more presenters in Toronto than we have spaces available. The deadline for Toronto is noon on Friday. We're coming back to Toronto on Tuesday and Wednesday. If the deadline is noon on Friday, we need to know the presenters that each party would like to have present to the committee on Tuesday and Wednesday. But we must give the clerk a period of time in order to schedule these people. I would suggest that if we fax or provide the list by noon, it probably should be back to the clerk's office by 4 o'clock or 5 o'clock so that they may schedule the presenters on Tuesday and Wednesday.

Mr Martin: When will we get it?

The Chair: We'll get it at noon on Friday.

Mr Martin: On Friday.

The Chair: Where do we send the list? Where would you like the list sent?

Mr Martin: For me, it would be two places. If you could give it to me in Ottawa, I could take a look at it, and if you would send one to our research department, probably Trish Hennessy—no, I'm sorry—if you could send it to my constituency office, care of Sarah Jordison, then I'll connect with them. You want the 10 names back by when?

The Chair: I'm asking for some direction, but I would say we should have it back by 4 in order to give the clerk some time to schedule these people.

Mr Martin: By 4 on Friday.

The Chair: On Friday. It should go back to the clerk's office in Toronto here. That's right. The clerk, Susan, will be travelling with us, so the list should go back to the clerk's office in Toronto here.

Mr Martin: For me, I'm going to be alone on the committee and it's going to be hard for me to take any time away from the committee itself, so I'll need to make sure I get it by noon. I'll do what I can over the noon hour to talk with my staff to get something back for 4. Is that going to work for you, Ernie?

Mr Parsons: That was the only thing that would work for me, I think.

The Chair: So where would we send your list? To your research department here?

Mr Parsons: I would like it to go to both Queen's Park and my constituency office, but it will only work, I think, if I can get a copy at noon.

The Chair: We'll provide you with a copy of it in Ottawa.

Mr Hardeman, where would you like this list?

Mr Hardeman: I won't be in Ottawa, so I would have it sent to my Woodstock office. I'll endeavour to get it to the other people who need it, and hopefully we can get it back to the clerk's office here by late Friday afternoon.

The Chair: You'll undertake to do that, OK. So we need 10 names and 10 alternates, on a priority basis.

Mr Martin: If I said my constituency office, I meant my Legislative Assembly office here at Queen's Park.

The Chair: OK. I think that's all I need. Anything else that members want to raise?

Mr O'Toole: I just want to bring up a question on the record. My itinerary for today is unsatisfactory. I'm not leaving at 11 o'clock tonight. I don't know how come I'm leaving at 11. I'm not sitting around here until 11 o'clock.

The Chair: Tonight, you mean?

Mr O'Toole: Yes.

The Chair: I don't know. We probably can make arrangements—

Mr O'Toole: I would not like to show up at the airport and then have to sit around there either. Is there nothing else, Susan?

Clerk of the Committee: No, it was in consultation with your office. They said that was the only time you were free.

Mr O'Toole: Jeez, 11 o'clock on Friday.

Mr Hardeman: Maybe you were supposed to be doing something else this evening.

Mr O'Toole: No, I've just got my schedule. I'll work with you, Susan, because I'd like to leave with everybody else.

The Chair: The committee is now adjourned.

The committee adjourned at 1035.

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