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Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Thursday 23 March 2017

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Jeudi 23 mars 2017

**Standing Committee on
Justice Policy**

Committee business

**Comité permanent
de la justice**

Travaux du comité

Chair: Shafiq Qadri
Clerk: Christopher Tyrell

Président : Shafiq Qadri
Greffier : Christopher Tyrell

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE POLICY

Thursday 23 March 2017

COMITÉ PERMANENT DE LA JUSTICE

Jeudi 23 mars 2017

The committee met at 0903 in committee room 1.

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Christopher Tyrell): Good morning, honourable members. It is my duty to call upon you to elect an Acting Chair. Are there any nominations? Mr. Potts.

Mr. Arthur Potts: It would give me great honour to nominate MPP Vernile as the Acting Chair. I do hope she'll accept.

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Christopher Tyrell): Does the member accept the nomination?

Ms. Daiene Vernile: I would be delighted. I will grab my tasty coffee and I will join you.

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Christopher Tyrell): Are there any further nominations?

There being no further nominations, I declare the nominations closed and Ms. Vernile elected Acting Chair of the committee.

The Acting Chair (Ms. Daiene Vernile): Thank you kindly, Clerk.

Applause.

The Acting Chair (Ms. Daiene Vernile): Wow, the day hasn't even started and I've already had an ovation.

SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

The Acting Chair (Ms. Daiene Vernile): Good morning, committee members.

We have only one item of business this morning in our committee, and that is to appoint to the subcommittee on committee business. Are there any nominations? Yes, Mr. Colle.

Mr. Mike Colle: I would like to nominate and move that the member from Beaches–East York, Arthur Potts, replace Mr. Bob Delaney on the subcommittee on committee business.

The Acting Chair (Ms. Daiene Vernile): Are there any comments? All in favour?

Interjections.

The Acting Chair (Ms. Daiene Vernile): Too late. Any opposed? Mr. Potts is nominated.

And we have one more: Mr. McDonnell?

Mr. Jim McDonnell: I move that Miss Monique Taylor replace Mr. Michael Mantha on the subcommittee on committee business.

The Acting Chair (Ms. Daiene Vernile): Do we have any comments? All in favour? Opposed?

You're now part of the team.

COMMITTEE BUSINESS

The Acting Chair (Ms. Daiene Vernile): Members, is there any other business?

Mr. Arthur Potts: Yes.

The Acting Chair (Ms. Daiene Vernile): Yes, Mr. Potts?

Mr. Arthur Potts: I would like to propose that we recess committee until 2 o'clock this afternoon and, if my chairs would agree, I would like the vice-chairs to meet for the purpose of organizing business on Bill 68.

The Acting Chair (Ms. Daiene Vernile): Subcommittee members.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Subcommittee members, yes.

The Acting Chair (Ms. Daiene Vernile): Any commentary on this?

Mr. Jim McDonnell: What bill?

Mr. Arthur Potts: Bill 68—sorry, 89. Dyslexic—I was reading it upside down.

The Acting Chair (Ms. Daiene Vernile): Any commentary?

Mr. Bill Walker: No comments.

The Acting Chair (Ms. Daiene Vernile): All in favour? Opposed—oh, sorry?

Mr. Arthur Potts: If we could just meet here, if you guys are comfortable with that.

The Acting Chair (Ms. Daiene Vernile): Can we all agree that we shall recess?

Mr. Mike Colle: Agreed.

The Acting Chair (Ms. Daiene Vernile): Thank you.

The committee recessed from 0906 to 1401.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): Thank you, colleagues. I reconvene the Standing Committee—

Failure of sound system.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): —MPP for Beaches–East York. I yield the floor to you.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Chair, that is fantastic. I much appreciate the yielding. I would like to move the subcommittee report into the record. Also, with your indulgence, I'd like to distribute some amendments.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): I need the subcommittee report read into the record.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Oh, I have to read it into the record? Good. I'll get my glasses. Oof.

Mrs. Gila Martow: Krechtz.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Krechtz. Grazie.

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: What does it mean?

Mrs. Gila Martow: “Oooooof.”

Mr. Arthur Potts: But painfully.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): We are on the record.

I would invite you to do as requested, Mr. Potts.

Mr. Arthur Potts: I would like to move the following subcommittee report into the record:

Your subcommittee on committee business met on Thursday, March 23, 2017, to consider the method of proceeding on Bill 89, An Act to enact the Child, Youth and Family Services Act, 2016, to amend and repeal the Child and Family Services Act and to make related amendments to other Acts, and recommends the following:

(1) That the committee meet in Toronto on Thursday, March 30, 2017; Thursday, April 6, 2017; and Thursday, April 13, 2017, for the purpose of holding public hearings.

(2) That the committee Clerk, in consultation with the Chair, post information regarding public hearings on the Ontario Parliamentary Channel, the Legislative Assembly website and on CNW NewsWire service; and that the Clerk of the Committee identify the various media outlets or other vehicles of communication that would inform indigenous communities of the hearings.

(3) That interested parties who wish to be considered to make an oral presentation on Thursday, March 30, 2017, contact the Clerk of the Committee by 11 a.m. on Monday, March 27, 2017.

(4) That interested parties who wish to be considered to make an oral presentation on Thursday, April 6, 2017, or Thursday, April 13, 2017, contact the Clerk of the Committee by 11 a.m. on Monday, April 3, 2017.

(5) That, should the hearings be oversubscribed, the Clerk of the Committee provide a list of all interested presenters to the subcommittee by 12 noon following each deadline for requests to appear.

(6) That each subcommittee member, or their delegate, provide a prioritized list of witness selections based on the list of interested presenters received from the Clerk of the Committee by 2 p.m. on each day designated as a deadline to appear.

(7) That any presenters not selected to appear on Thursday, March 30, 2017, be added to the list to be provided to the subcommittee on March, April 3, 2017.

(8) That witnesses be offered five minutes for their presentation followed by up to nine minutes of questions by committee, with three minutes per caucus.

(9) That both the Information and Privacy Commissioner and the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth be offered 30 minutes for their presentations, followed by 30 minutes of questions by committee members, with 10 minutes per caucus.

(10) That the deadline for written submissions be 6 p.m. on Thursday, April 13, 2017.

(11) That amendments to the bill be filed with the Clerk of the Committee by 2 p.m. on Tuesday, April 25, 2017.

(12) That the research officer provide the committee with a summary of presentations.

(13) That the committee meet on Thursday, April 27, for clause-by-clause consideration of the bill.

(14) That the committee Clerk, in consultation with the Chair, be authorized prior to the adoption of the report of the subcommittee to commence making any preliminary arrangements necessary to facilitate the committee's proceedings.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): Two things, Mr. Potts.

In item number 7, which is written as "Monday, April 3, 2017," you apparently said "March, April 3," so I presume you meant Monday.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Monday, April 3, 2017.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): Fine. Now, procedurally, just for the committee's purposes, the subcommittee report is now available for commentary of a general nature from all sides. We'll start with you, Mr. Potts.

As well, we've received so far four amendments. At some point you may obviously read them individually. Is it four or five?

Interjection.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): Five amendments. We'll read them individually and the voting will be individualized. If they fall or are carried, then we'll vote on the subcommittee report, as amended or not.

The floor is now open. Mr. Potts, I give it to you.

I should also mention to my colleagues that if there are any other motions, amendments, etc., we'll need those in writing, which I believe is being executed immediately.

Mr. Potts.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Well, thank you, Chair. I appreciate very much the expeditious manner in which the subcommittee was able to meet following this morning's meeting, and the input back and forth we had regarding what we were hoping we could do with this.

At the time, I noted very clearly that I thought that us going down the route that we were going of an extra day on the 13th was going to be very difficult from a scheduling perspective for the government and cautioned that we were hoping that it might be possible to find maybe a date in the first two weeks of the hearings. But that also seems to be impossible to arrange, to be staffed appropriately.

I want to maybe go back now. The motions you'll see basically reflect what we initially talked about, which was having two days of hearings and then starting clause-by-clause on the 13th with all the related amendments we need to do administratively to make that happen. That gives us a lot of time on the back end of the bill, anticipating, as we all were, that there will be a lot of amendments to this. So I would hope we could give consideration to that. That's the purpose of the five amendments: that we get back to the notion of two days of hearings and then start the clause-by-clause on the 13th.

I would note in passing reference that this bill did first come before us on December 8. It is a weighty bill, it is a long bill, but it has been around almost four months now. I know that we have been working with the stakeholders that entire time. Through the course of second reading debate particularly, members had a chance to read in detail and no doubt were out for consultation with your stakeholders on it. I'm hoping that people will reflect on

that fact, that it has been around for a while, and we will be able to do two days and prioritize the people that we particularly want to have reference when they come here in those hours of debate.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): Thank you, Mr. Potts. Further comments? Miss Taylor, go ahead.

Miss Monique Taylor: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I am terribly disappointed that we are only going to allow two days for people to be able to come and speak to this bill. This is a large bill. This is changing our entire Child and Family Services Act. This is not a small task to be taken. People should have a right to be able to come before this committee to have their say, to voice their concerns, and to be on record of the changes that need to be coming forward. To say I'm highly disappointed is an understatement, Mr. Chair. I really suggest that we go back to three days of hearings.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): Thank you, Miss Taylor. Ms. Martow.

Mrs. Gila Martow: I just want to say that I'm disappointed as well. There are a lot of different levels of democracy that we need to address in this place. One is that we have a subcommittee meeting and we come to an agreement, and then that agreement gets changed afterwards.

The other is, as I said in the subcommittee meeting this morning, this is not a bill to just have a heritage day that basically nobody is saying anything negative about. I always draw on the Christmas Tree Day Act. This is serious. This has repercussions. This is people's lives. This is families. We've seen horrific stories in the newspapers, and these are changes we want to implement because of the horrific stories.

1410

For instance, my colleague from the NDP had Kate-lynn's Principle, a private member's bill. We could have two days of hearings just on that. So the fact that we're rolling that into this bill, and Jordan River Anderson's story, as well as addressing the fact that there's a new CPIN data collection system—I think we could have just a day or two of hearings from IT specialists and e-health people who are involved or have concerns about what went on with e-health. We could have two days of hearings just on some of the topics that this bill is addressing. So to suggest that we're going to have only two days of hearings for all of it all together I think is very dangerous—not just to democracy, but I think it's dangerous in terms of people's lives.

I'm reminded of the Motherisk fiasco. People just assume that regulations and people are following the rules and things are getting done, but in actual fact, if we don't get every piece of regulation done correctly, to the best of our ability—and we all know that there are sometimes limitations. If we don't listen to the experts, if we don't listen to the kids who have been in care, if we don't listen to the foster parents, if we don't listen to the people from the non-profits and the IT specialists and so on and so forth, and even first responders—if we don't

listen to all these people, we're going to miss some very important considerations, I believe.

We have been spending a lot of time in committee just redoing things that were thrown out because of this government proroguing. We had to go back and redo committees because bills had to be presented again for second reading and come back to committee again. As far as I'm concerned, it's not exactly our responsibility on this side of the room if the government doesn't have time to pass government bills. I think that maybe they should have thought of that before they prorogued.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): Mr. McDonell.

Mr. Jim McDonell: I think, when we look at the reason why we asked for the extra day, it's because we're already oversubscribed and we haven't even advertised yet. It shows that there are a lot of issues. The bill is quite lengthy. You're making major changes to a ministry or to an organization that has experienced a lot of problems over the last 10 years. We have a report that's now five, six years old, and this is the response. I think if we look at the problems we've had over the years—Motherisk—we're trying to finally follow through on my private member's bill and look after the 16- and 17-year-olds. There's a lot in this bill, and Ontarians believe so, too.

We are going to go back and already tell people who have asked to be heard that they can't be heard—and also a large group from the rest, because when we go out to advertise, we are arguing that we probably would have more than three days. We sawed it off at three days because we thought that was fair.

You talk about it being out since December; well, it's coming before committee now. This is the public's opportunity to bring issues, and it is very important. You hear the government talk about how important the children are, that they're our future, but when it comes to legislation that's going to drastically affect many of them, we don't seem to have the willingness to actually listen to the public, to listen to the different experts in the field. You don't have to go very far to find out where we haven't listened to the experts in the past and it's caused big trouble.

Why even advertise? You've got now more than 30-some people who are already waiting for this, who have already put in their request, not knowing when this bill is going to be called before committee. It just makes no sense.

As I say, it has been a huge issue. It's been an embarrassment for the government of Ontario—the issues we have with children's aid, the different ministry agencies—and now to just push this through without proper consultation is not really doing the people of Ontario any justice.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): The floor is open for general questions, if any. We have, by the way, six motions now, which we'll deal with sequentially. But if there's any general comments—Miss Taylor?

Miss Monique Taylor: Chair, just sitting back and listening—this hit us very quickly, so I really wasn't prepared with all of the thoughts that are happening, of only

having two days of consultations and the people who are going to miss out.

We're talking about changes to our child mental health system. All of the legislation has to come into place for lead agencies, for children's aid societies, for corrections. There are so many people who are involved with this process. The minister is the first person to say that we need to get this right, and I believe him when he says that. So for the committee to now change what just happened this morning and coming through—we were going to have three days of consultations and now, hours later, this has all been thrown up for naught and taken down to two because the government now believes that it has a legislative agenda that is more important than getting our child and youth act correct. It is mind-blowing.

I have a motion that's being sent around right now, which I was planning on reading into the record, to be able to travel the bill for one of the three days to our northern communities, to allow indigenous communities, on their turf, to have the opportunity to talk to us, because this bill highly specifies things that have to do with them. And it's almost not even worth being able to put it forward because we're now down to only two days. We haven't even put the notification out to the public and we already have too many people wanting to attend.

This is definitely not the spirit that I believe this legislation was being changed under. This is not something that we should be rushing through. This is something where we should be taking our time and ensuring that public consultation happens and that the legislation can be created to really reflect where we're going in Ontario and how we're treating our children and youth in this province. To be rushing this bill through just because the Liberals have an agenda is disgraceful to the people of this province and, quite frankly, disrespectful to our children who deserve for us to get this right.

We're not changing this bill because things have been going well in the province of Ontario. We are changing this bill because things have been flawed; children are dying. We are not getting it right as it sits right now. This legislation was brought forward in that spirit, so to rush it forward now because you believe that you have a legislative agenda of other things that need to come before the House is disgraceful. It's disgraceful, it's disrespectful to our children and families, and I really hope that you will reconsider.

Maybe we need to take a break and you need to go back to the people who make these decisions and reconsider this, because this is not something that we're going to let go lightly, not allowing people of this province to have the opportunity—it's bad enough that we're not going to travel it; that we're only going to keep it Toronto-centric is already sad, in my mind. This is something that we would have wished to have travelled across the entire province, through several communities, to make sure that this legislation is correct.

I know the government likes to say that pre-consultation was done throughout the winter break, but that wasn't with legislation put before them; that was on, "Please tell

us how you're feeling." Then they came back with a bill that is bare bones, really doesn't have much to say about anything, has missed the tune on several notes, and now they want to rush through the legislation. It's completely disrespectful to our children and to our future and to making sure that we get this bill right. This isn't something that is going to be reopened again in two years' time or in a year's time, when the government decides that it made a mistake. This is something that is going to last within our system for quite some time.

So if I could respectfully ask that the member take this back to the House leaders and plead—

Mr. Arthur Potts: That's not going to happen so—

Miss Monique Taylor: I still have the floor.

I think it's unfortunate that the member does not believe that he can take that back, that their legislative agenda is more important than the children of this province, because that is exactly what is happening.

1420

We've put bills through this committee and through other committees in this House that talk about creating a day because the sun is shining, and we give a two-day agenda, two days' time for people to come and present. We are changing our entire Child and Family Services Act, and they are only going to allow the same time.

We have already allotted two hours of that time specifically for PACY and for the freedom-of-information officer, and now we are going to limit more people—more people than who have already submitted. More people have already submitted than the actual time we have allotted for this entire, huge bill, this entire act—not just a small bill, but an entire act is to be changed, and the government does not see the need in allowing the people of this province the opportunity to do that.

I'm going to say it again: This is completely disrespectful to the children of this province and to the families, and to the kids who are suffering with mental health, the kids who are in our corrections services, and our kids who are in children's aid services, who are not going to get what they need because we won't have the time to listen to what they need.

I'm absolutely against these amendments. I'm disheartened by the agreement that we had made this morning being changed a couple of hours later, and striking all of that out. I'm disheartened by this government, which believes that their other legislative agenda is more important than the children of our province.

I guess I'll just leave it at that. I want my remarks to be very much noted. They're creating a farce out of our entire Child and Family Services Act. It's disgraceful.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qadri): Thank you, Miss Taylor. First Mr. Potts, then Ms. Martow and then on.

Mr. Potts.

Mr. Arthur Potts: It should not have come as a complete surprise, despite the member's words. I was very clear in our subcommittee that moving forward was unlikely, but I was prepared to take that forward. We did just that. Now we're coming back to a place.

An extra day would give us about five extra hours and about 20 more speakers. There is probably a way we could move forward to get a few extra hours, if the members were interested. We could start this committee a bit earlier on Thursday and add an extra maybe three hours to the process, which would add another 12. We'd be willing to consider that, if the members were interested in coming in at 8:30 on the Thursday to start the committee process.

I think it's a testament to the widespread consultation on this bill that we do have so many people already lined up. Those are the people who have been following, who have been engaged with our government and with members of the opposition, and stakeholder groups who have expressed their interest to come. There are a lot of people who are engaged who are already on the record. I'm quite confident that if we advertise, we'll get some more, but a lot of them will be in the same vein of the same stakeholder groups.

I think the time we have allotted at this point would be more than adequate to hear from all of the stakeholders we need to hear from, but I'm prepared to, if the members are interested—if we opened a half-hour earlier and started at 1 o'clock instead of 2, that would add three hours and an additional 12 speakers. We would entertain that. From where we were this morning, that's just two hours missed, and that's, what, eight deputants. So if the members were—

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qadri): I offer the floor to Ms. Martow. But just before that, just to be clear, a decision on the extension of hours is from House leaders. That cannot be done here by the committee.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Correct. I appreciate that.
Ms. Martow.

Mrs. Gila Martow: First of all, I want to say that this is the first time, as far as I'm aware, that the child welfare system is facing an overhaul in more than three decades. A lot has changed in three decades in terms of technology and in terms of other legislation as well. Just looking at that has got to be pretty overwhelming for people who have to actually sit down and write the bill, write the amendments and consider how to implement some of our suggestions here.

When we met this morning, it was proposed by Miss Taylor from the NDP to have a day of travel. The only time it seemed that the day of travel would really work for all of us is if we did it during the constituency week, which would delay even further. I think it was already a bit of a compromise by agreeing to have the last day of deputations on the 13th of April. So I think we've already abbreviated the time frame of when we were going to have public discussions, and then when we would have time to work on amendments and then book the clause-by-clause.

I can understand, certainly, the disappointment from this side of the room, from my colleagues. We are willing to travel the bill, and we are willing to take a day during that constituency week to go to some indigenous communities, perhaps in northern Ontario, or maybe there are

a lot of stakeholders who are asking to speak to the committee by phone from the Ottawa area or things like that. Maybe we could be considering another part of the province.

I think it's disappointing if we already kind of, in a way, backed down this morning on a day of travel, and now we're seeing further backtracking in terms of the amount of hours. I think it's a pretty long day, to start at 8:30 and then start at 1 o'clock, as the member opposite is suggesting. I don't think it's really necessary, in my opinion, and I think that we should stick by the schedule we had this morning. I think it was a reasonable schedule.

I think that parts of this bill are addressing things that overlap with people who work with kids in other sectors, such as people who have to work with children in day-care types of programming, in educational settings.

Just this morning, the Minister of Education was on AM radio, talking about a program where 85 schools in our province are on a wait-list to have training for their staff to learn how to de-escalate violent outbursts by children. Supposedly the program, the training, only costs \$300 a person and includes the ability to train other staff members.

Something I'm hearing when I speak to people who work with children in the child welfare system is that a huge issue is that children are on wait-lists for mental health problems, for mental health supports—especially for in-hospital, overnight mental health crises. There's a huge, huge lack of beds for our children and youth. These are kids who didn't have the best start to their lives in many circumstances, in many instances. That overlaps with the Ministry of Health.

Then this morning, on the radio, all I could think about was Bill 89, and how difficult this is for kids who are in care to be yanked out of not just their home but out of their community, out of their school, to be put in a new school. They already possibly have physical problems themselves, because their mother may have taken drugs when she was pregnant and they have fetal alcohol syndrome or other problems. These are kids who are already facing huge, huge obstacles, and then they're put in a new school, and then they have a physical outburst.

How do we convince people to foster-parent? And we do have a need for more foster parents. There are many kids who should be in foster care, and they're in group homes because there's a lack of foster care. How do you get people to want to take in foster children when the school says, "We don't have the resources. We don't have the ability. This kid has 'problems'"—I hate to use that word—or "This kid needs extra support that we don't have." Well, who is able to foster a kid who is not their child, and the school can't even manage to de-escalate the situation? The kid can't go to school; the school is on a waiting list—we're seeing this huge spiral.

I could envision a day or two of hearings just to discuss the overlap of this bill with what the other ministries can do to better support our foster parents and our kids in foster care: better support for these kids in the school setting, better support for these kids medically.

What I'm hearing out there is that the government passes rules and regulations without thinking of the consequences. There's a rule in place right now in many agencies—possibly across the province; this is a new portfolio for me—that says that children in care have to be seen for a physical checkup exactly a year—like, practically to within a week or something—and now that there are proposals in this legislation, the foster parents are going to be fined if they don't do it.

1430

In the meantime, there are a lot of areas where there is a lack of family doctors. In North York, they want to close the Urgent Care Centre at Branson. The lease is up. We're hearing that there are a lot of people who use that for care, and that could be for many foster children. How is a foster parent going to be fined by this government and this ministry for not getting an appointment when they can't physically get an appointment? Is there going to be somebody who is going to magically find a family doctor for this child?

We have a lot to discuss, I think, in terms of this bill. I'm very concerned. To me, it's not about playing partisan politics or that the government wants to move forward with that agenda. There's that part of it. But, honestly, I'm concerned that we're going to look back on this time, this year, 2017, and the overhaul of the child welfare act, and we're going to see reports a few years from now: "How did they miss this? How did they miss that?"

I can tell you, I'm going to remember this point where we tried to rush through things, and we didn't give ourselves the time to hear from all the experts and community people.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): Ms. Kiwala.

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: I do want to just make sure that we read into the record that we have done considerable community engagement with 11 locations across the province—

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): Ms. Kiwala, could you just aim yourself at the mike a bit?

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: Sorry. We have done considerable community engagement with 11 locations across the province. We have been in Kingston, Sudbury, Windsor, London, Timmins, Thunder Bay, Scarborough, Brampton, Toronto and Ottawa. We had two sessions in each of those places. Some of the sessions had 400 people, roughly, at them. There were sessions which were francophone sessions and sessions which were bilingual in Sudbury, Timmins and Ottawa. There were quite a number of submissions from different special-interest groups, particularly related to health, mental health, child welfare, youth justice, special needs, residential services, adoption and youth support services.

I'm pleased that everybody is on the same page about the need for very focused and very dedicated care for children. We agree with the same principles. They have been very much a part of this process.

I just wanted to make sure that that was read into the record. It's important to me, being the parliamentary as-

sistant to the Minister of Children and Youth Services, that that gets mentioned.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): Mr. McDonell.

Mr. Jim McDonell: Hearing from the parliamentary assistant, I would think that you'd have a keen interest in what the consultation will be about this bill. It's fine to say you go around and you supposedly listen to—when you have audiences of 400 people, it shows the interest. I know that at these meetings, you can't listen to all of these people. You're talking about taking deputation hearings at that point.

But now we have the bill in front of us; the people have the bill in front of them. We've had some huge issues, if you go back over—I think the last report was issued in the 2012 time frame. If you look at some of the issues, there are huge software issues. We're looking at one of the major problems, and this government thinks it's solving it, but it's taking forever. In such a case, there's all kinds of problems with the deployment.

But now it's important that people have a chance to look at this bill. Obviously, there's a lot of concern, because we've already had enough requests to fill up our time completely. I don't have any problem starting early on the Thursday. I have a bit of a problem in the afternoon, because it is business on Thursday afternoons that we generally are involved in. That takes away the ability to be part of that, after 1 o'clock.

But you look at the foster care, the mental health issues—I know we have a new centre in Cornwall. It was heralded as a great new type of facility, but when we went out there that morning, people were asking about the issues and the problems they were having, and would it mean that they would be able to get a psychologist? The director of care said, "Sadly, no. We have no resources."

I think, further on with Ms. Martow's comments, you're asking people and trying to place them when you haven't got the facilities available to look after them generally. I think a good percentage of these foster children are there because there are problems. They either have learning disabilities or they have some other issues that really are beyond their control, and there's no help for them.

I think we need to look at what the problems are. Why are we having so much trouble placing children? Why is there so much trouble within the system? There are constant issues of abuse—and no solutions by this government.

I think that this is important. We're seeing much-greater-than-usual deputation requests. The last couple of bills I've been on have been a day, open-ended, and that's all the people that we had to come in. It's different this time. We already have more than we have time for. I think we can extend it earlier in the morning, but we would fill up the next day. We already talked about what we're going to do when we get over-subscribed for the third day.

It's the government that talks about the importance, talked about the issues around some of the First Nations children we have, but you're not taking any steps to

address it. You're just pushing something through. You talk about accepting amendments from the opposition party. Most bills, you accept zero—not some, but zero. The working relationship is not great.

But we think that these people should be heard. They're asking to be heard. They're asking to comment on the bill.

I sat here not that long ago and listened to the child advocate, who is an independent officer of the Legislature, saying how he is being stonewalled by this government. He was, at that time, receiving calls from children in the school system who had issues, and he wasn't allowed to contact them—if you can imagine that, in this province—because it was outside his jurisdiction, and the province supported that roadblock. We haven't seen any changes. I'll be very interested to see what he's here to say.

But there are many other children in the system. I have friends back home who work in the system. I think it's important that we hear from anybody who has the experience and the knowledge first-hand, who would like to come out.

Obviously, this bill did not get it completely right, or we wouldn't have all these people. I'm sure they're not coming in to clap you on the back and say what a great job you did. These are people who have issues with the bill and need to talk to somebody and have some impact, and are hoping that the government will actually listen for a change.

Clearly, if you're not willing to even let them speak, the question is, will you listen to them anyway?

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): Thank you, Mr. McDonell.

To Miss Taylor.

Miss Monique Taylor: I just want to go back to MPP Kiwala and her statement about the 11 communities that were visited. Some of those meetings had 400 people in them. Yet we see a bill being brought forward that is very bare-bones. I believe your government is bringing—

Interjection.

Miss Monique Taylor: Well, it is. That's why your government is bringing forward, I believe, 100 to 150 amendments yourself towards this bill, to make sure that you get it right. Now to stifle the communication going forward is really not in the spirit of what this bill was supposed to do. If they figure that they got it right the first time, why are so many amendments coming forward? Why is the government bringing so many amendments towards their own bill if they figure that their consultation got it right?

Obviously, we know there's room for improvement. I believe the minister when he tells me that he wants to get it right and that he wants to make sure that everybody has an opportunity to have their voice heard. By stifling committee, by not allowing the extra day—quite personally, Chair, as I've stated previously, I would have liked to have travelled this bill right across Ontario and give people many opportunities to be able to come before committee and to have their say regarding the change to the entire Child and Family Services Act. It's a great

encompassment. We're talking about children's mental health. We're talking about child welfare. We're talking about youth corrections. We're talking about residential placements. We're talking about the adoption process. We're talking about CPIN. We're talking about data information.

1440

Just one of those pieces could be brought forward for two days of hearings, and yet we have a multitude of legislation that is being changed in front of us. To not allow people the opportunity to come and speak is really not in the spirit of what I believe this bill was to be.

A few years ago, the Premier herself talked about blowing up child welfare, the children's aid agencies. This is kind of blowing up the process, Chair, and I don't believe that's what we should be doing. My understanding was that we were all going to work together to ensure that this was done correctly.

This is not a small task; this is a very large task with a lot of pieces to it. By not allowing the people of this province to have the opportunity to have their say—it was also said on the government side that it showed that the process had been going well if so many people had already put their names on the list to come and speak as a delegate. But quite frankly, when I speak to people, people are waiting to hear when the dates are being announced before they put their names on the list. I think that if we look back into previous committee times, often when we put out notifications for delegates, the majority of the delegates probably come after the advertising has been done.

And we've now included our indigenous communities on top of the typical advertisement. I know they have quite a bit to say about this bill. Making sure that they have the opportunity would have been really respectful of the process that we're moving towards.

This is all being stifled now. I just cannot believe that from this morning to this afternoon, things have changed this greatly. It's a good thing that the Clerk didn't go and put out his advertisement already—because that was part of the conversation this morning, that the Clerk was just going to go ahead and put out the advertising. I believe MPP Potts said, “Yes, that's fine. Go ahead. It's going to be fine.” And now he comes forward with all of these amendments to change that entire process. So it's a good thing you waited, Mr. Clerk, because that really would have put a pickle into the situation that we're now finding ourselves in.

There are so many people who are going to need to come to speak to this. We have a lot of time for two specific officers of the Legislature, but we are going to have people in mental health who want to come to speak to us, people in corrections who are going to want to speak to us, and people from OPSEU and CUPE representing workers who are going to want to speak to us. We are going to have residential placement folks wanting to come and have a say about the changes that are coming forward.

People in adoption: We know that they are struggling in the province, making sure that we have enough families for adoption. We're struggling already. That's why it's in this bill, because we're not getting it right. But hopefully we have time to hear from them in two days, because we already have 36 people who want to fill 34 spaces.

And then we need to hear from the youth. Making sure that we hear from youth throughout this process is absolutely—

Mr. Arthur Potts: Point of order.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qadri): Mr. Potts: A point of order.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Would it be in order for me to call a recess for half an hour?

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qadri): You may ask if there's the unanimous will of the committee.

Miss Monique Taylor: After I'm done speaking.

Mr. Arthur Potts: I have to speak to this bill right now. I wasn't anticipating this taking this long. If you wouldn't mind, I've got a private member's bill—

Miss Monique Taylor: But we have a bill in front of us. We have a legislative agenda too.

Mr. Arthur Potts: I appreciate that. If you want to be that way, that's fine, but—

Miss Monique Taylor: Well, that's fine. I'd like to continue.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qadri): Certainly it's within his jurisdiction to ask for the recess, but it needs to be agreed upon by the will of the committee.

Mr. Arthur Potts: You can continue when we get back. That's fine.

Miss Monique Taylor: Go ahead.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qadri): Fair enough. I think what I'll do right now is allow Miss Taylor to conclude. Once she's finished, then I'll offer the floor to you, Mr. Potts.

Miss Monique Taylor: May I have the floor when we come back from the break?

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qadri): Again, it's up to the will of the committee. Ms. Martow would also like to speak at some point in there as well.

Mr. Arthur Potts: I'd agree to that.

Miss Monique Taylor: Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qadri): May I take it as the will that we are now recessed for 30 minutes, colleagues?

Miss Monique Taylor: Okay.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qadri): Any objection? All right: in recess, 30 minutes.

The committee recessed from 1445 to 1515.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qadri): Colleagues, we are now back in session: 3:15 on the dot. I believe, Miss Taylor, by agreement you have the floor. Go ahead.

Miss Monique Taylor: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I was stating earlier my disappointment of the government withdrawing our previous agreement that we had agreed to in subcommittee: to allow three days for hearings for people to be able to be deputants to this very important act that will completely repeal the Child and

Family Services Act and enact the Child, Youth and Family Services Act.

This is no small challenge. This is a 300-page document that has a lot of work to be done to ensure we get it right. This is not something that happens often. It's the first time this act has been changed. It's not something that we want to rush through quickly. We want to make sure that we get it right, moving forward, to ensure that when children, youth and families are entering our system, their concerns are met, that they are getting services when they need it and that they are respected in that process—something that, quite frankly, Ontario has failed at since this children and youth ministry was enacted in 2003, I believe it was.

Here we are now going to rewrite the act, and the Liberals think that they should just rush it through and not give people across Ontario the opportunity to come before the committee to have their say of what they feel is good or bad about the bill, and allow them the opportunity to give their opinion of what could make the bill better. I'm sure that is the goal, at the end of the day: to make sure we have an act that meets the needs of families across this province.

There are a lot of changes that are going to happen within children's mental health, within youth corrections, with special-needs children, within residential facilities, with the adoption process, with the way data is collected, with the ways data is shared and that information is shared. To rush this through and not give people the opportunity is disrespectful, quite frankly, to children and youth in this province.

I know that there will be several people who want to come forward to speak to this bill. Currently, before the advertisement is even out on the ground and out in the community so that people know when this is happening, we already have 36 deputations who are on a list already, waiting to come and speak to us. I believe that we only have 34 spaces available, with only two days of deputations. Putting in the third day would allow a broader community to be able to come forward to have their say and to make sure this bill is done correctly. I believe that was the spirit in which this whole process began in the first place.

If the government travelled to 11 communities and they heard from hundreds of people and they still brought forward a bill on which they feel they need to bring 100-plus amendments to the floor of the Legislature, then there is obviously a flaw in the process. Ensuring that we get it right—that only happens with consultation. Yes, a lot of consultation happened previously, but that was before the bill was written. That was before the document that is before the House was tabled—before it was written, quite frankly—and there is not going to be a makeover opportunity.

We have had so many flaws in our system that have put children in jeopardy, that have, quite frankly, seen the death of children because of the flaws in the system. These are the things that are meant to be corrected, I believe, with this new bill that is before us, but it's not

perfect; it's not perfect. It's not what Ontarians deserve. It's not what people want to see going forward. It's still a very vague bill with many things left to regulation where there should be teeth in the bill.

1520

We talked about Katelynn's Principle, and we know very well the story of Katelynn Sampson and the horrific life that she lived. That led to an inquest into her death. The number one recommendation that came out of that inquest was Katelynn's Principle. I brought that bill forward, and it passed second reading. We were hoping that we would get it through. It was the number one recommendation from the inquest jury that was written, in part, largely by youth who spent a lot of time on that inquest to ensure that a child is the centre of every decision. Yes, we see small pieces of that reflected in this legislation, but it's not the intent of what the recommendation was. It still misses a lot of pieces, and the teeth that are needed to ensure a child-centred focus are not seen in this legislation. There are no teeth. There are no measurements of if it's going right, if it's not going right, if a child really was heard—there are no penalties. There's no real legislation to tell people that they really do have to listen to a child, and quite frankly, a judge could open the legislation, and if they don't read the preamble, they have no idea what the actual content of the bill is supposed to do.

There are many things that need to be fixed within this legislation, and by not giving the people the opportunity to come forward and to have their say, we're missing the boat again—well, not me; the Liberals, the government, are missing the boat. They're worried now about their legislative agenda and how fast this can get through, and they're going to do it on the backs of children, and not respecting the fact that, quite frankly, it totally goes against Katelynn's Principle of making sure that our children are seen, heard and listened to. Because if we already have 36 deputations—and we talk about corrections, we talk about mental health, we talk about adoption; we're talking about special needs.

We have so many groups of people that need to come and speak to us. How much room does that leave for a child's voice, for a youth's voice, for their perspective on this? We're really muffling those voices that need to be heard and that have the right to be heard, about a bill that is supposed to be on the basis and the guidelines of Katelynn's Principle. It goes totally in the face of, quite frankly, what the bill was supposed to do in the first place. This is far from blowing up the process—the system of what the Premier had said that she wished and wanted to do. This is really blowing up the process of making sure that we get it right. It's really disrespectful to children and families, and to the workers in the system. There are a lot of them who wish to have their say.

We talk about youth corrections, and the difference between OPS and BPS and how there are two completely different systems within our youth corrections dealing with the exact same children. Who's going to have time to listen to those deputations? Are they going to be able to get on the list? Everybody's going to have their hand-

picked selections, and, quite frankly, it's probably the youth who are going to fall through the cracks and not have the opportunity to be heard at this committee.

That is the whole point of having this process: to make sure that we're hearing from Ontarians. Quite frankly, right through debate on second reading, New Democrats were very clear about wishing that we could travel the bill through the entire province, and allowing people in all corners of Ontario to have an opportunity to say something and to have an opinion about the legislation that's now before them—not just the pre-consultations, because they didn't know what they were speaking to. Now it's a different story, because if they spoke to something directly and they don't see it reflected in this bill, they probably want to have the opportunity to be able to come in and to challenge that, and to say how things could be different and how it could be better. That's the key to making sure that we get this right: by listening to people.

Quite frankly, politicians are better politicians when they do more listening instead of talking. It doesn't do much in the sense right now of what I have to do—but I have to do what I have to do, because I have to stand up for the people of Ontario who don't have the opportunity to sit in my seat, who don't have the opportunity to stand in the Legislature and speak to legislation, who don't have the opportunity to sit in this chair that I'm sitting in right now. I have the fortune of having this position, and I must use that right to stand up for the people whose voices are being taken away.

When I'm told that the government is bringing forward 100 to 150 amendments on a bill that they wrote—

Mrs. Gila Martow: There's something wrong.

Miss Monique Taylor: There's something concerning about that. And then you want to say that people don't have the opportunity to come in and be vocal to that? That's very concerning.

We know that we need to get it right. This is not a small piece of legislation. We could have how many government bills, how many private members' bills, to change this huge piece—there could be so many different small pieces that would be brought forward to this House and brought forward to this committee. There could be hundreds of pieces of legislation that could be brought forward, that are being brought forward in one piece.

Typically, we have two days of hearings on very small pieces that open an act and change a very small piece of an act, and we get two days of delegations. Now we're changing the entire act, which is hundreds and hundreds of pieces, and we're still only allowing the same two days.

I lost track of where I was going with the fact that we wanted to travel this bill across Ontario, to give people the opportunity to be able to come to it. Going to indigenous communities on their turf and allowing them to speak freely about the concerns that they see in this bill and the things that they feel could make this bill better is really part of what this whole change is supposed to be. That's why it was very clearly set out in the preamble of

the purpose of this act and what it's supposed to mean. And yet, we're throwing out the whole purpose of the preamble by stifling it right off the bat, and it's not even through committee. To say that you want to get it right and that you know you need to do everything that you can to ensure that it's right, so that it's best suited to families and children across this province, is disingenuous when it comes to what we're actually doing right now by stifling Ontarians' voices.

Quite frankly, Chair, that's exactly what these amendments are doing compared to the subcommittee report. When I agreed to the subcommittee report this morning, it was, "Okay, I will agree to certain dates, and I will agree not to travel the bill and take it to Ontarians in their communities. I will agree to all of that." But I agreed to that on the fact that we had three days of hearings, which at least allowed people the opportunity to be able to come before us. But now, this afternoon, this being taken away is absolutely shocking. It's not something that I expected to walk into on this committee this afternoon.

I feel for the people of Ontario and the people who want to be able to be heard to ensure that we get this act correctly. I just feel that these amendments go exactly against the spirit and the face of what this bill was supposed to do—it really, I'll say it again, goes against Katelynn's Principle, in the whole fact that we're stifling the voices, that we're not going to be able to hear from enough youth, we're not going to be able to hear from enough workers, we're not going to be able to hear from families who are struggling within the foster system, families who are struggling with adoption. The complete changes to freedom of information and how information is shared—those are critical pieces. They are something that I could bring forward in one private member's bill, on one piece, and two days still wouldn't be enough to deal with them. Yet we're going to change the entire act, with only two days of deputations from people. It's disrespectful to the people of this province.

1530

I would hope that the government will change their mind, in the same spirit in which they tell me that they will do anything to make sure that they get this correct. This is not a step forward to making that happen. This is exactly the opposite of working together, of listening to each other. We don't just need to listen to each other; we need to listen to the people of Ontario. It is our job to make sure that we give them that opportunity to come forward to this committee and have their say.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qadri): Mr. McDonell, then Ms. Kiwala, then Mr. Potts and then Ms. Martow.

Mr. McDonell, you have the floor.

Mr. Jim McDonell: It's disturbing—and I understand now that there's over a hundred amendments. You'd think that this bill, as big as it is, is going to now—there are deputations; obviously, the government itself realizes that there are a lot of problems with the bill. After taking so long to put this bill together, I have a hard time believing that if they did so much in the way of consultations, there could be that many amendments. Now we're

going to deprive the community, which is somewhat concerned about the legislation, from having the opportunity to come forward. We saw this with the cap-and-trade bill, where there were over a hundred amendments to a bill that was put out. It really doesn't give us a lot of confidence—

Mrs. Gila Martow: It's 173 amendments.

Mr. Jim McDonell: That's even more than the other. I thought the other was a record; it was about 130 and we heard that that was unheard of.

Are they doing this up on the back of an envelope as they go through—

Mrs. Gila Martow: A napkin.

Mr. Jim McDonell: Yes, the back of a napkin.

Obviously, there are some parts being missed, something like the cap-and-trade or the election financing, where the Premier said that that's how it originated.

This is a pretty important bill. We've talked about the need for it. We've seen a report that's now getting old that talked about the abuses, the systems, the problems, and the need to take the proper action. If you're not going to listen to the public, listen to the experts.

Miss Monique Taylor: They'll want to come too.

Mr. Jim McDonell: Well, we sat through the cap-and-trade, where all the legislative officers came through and talked about the issues that the changes that were made would be removing oversight. That's a problem, when there's no oversight. That's one of the issues we've had with child services: no oversight by the advocate. These officers are put there for a reason: They're put there to protect people. When you look at legislation by this government that actually removes that oversight, it removes the value of these expensive departments that we've put together, with many people who are trained and able to help people. And now their ability to actually sit and make meaningful changes or suggestions is being removed. I know, just in my circle of friends, people who work in the industry, people whose comments I would value—they won't have an opportunity, first of all, because we're not travelling and, second of all, because we're cutting off the number of people who are speaking.

Anyway, it's unfortunate.

I'll sit back to hear what some of the other people have to say.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qadri): Ms. Kiwala.

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: It seems there are a lot of contradictory statements that have been made with respect to the bill. The member from the third party—

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qadri): Ms. Kiwala, once more: aiming at the microphone.

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: Sorry.

There are a lot of contradictory comments that have been mentioned by the member of the third party with respect to flaws in the system. I just want to reiterate that the bill is very comprehensive. It has been viewed and called "hefty" and "weighty," even by members from your own party. I've heard words even here today calling the bill "substantial," but at the same time "vague" and "bare bones." It is a very comprehensive bill and, as I mentioned

previously, 11 jurisdictions were visited. There has been a lot of positive feedback regarding this bill.

I do want to acknowledge at the same time the member of the third party for her work on Katelynn's Principle, Bill 57. I know that you feel very strongly about it, and so do we. We are not creating this legislation on the backs of children. Children are at the focal point of this legislation. You know that and everybody here knows that. I think, considering the work that has been done, the discussions that have already happened all across this province, some of the favourable comments that have been made—I'm just going to read a few into the record.

Bruce Rivers, the executive director of Covenant House, said, "We welcome the positive changes the province has announced today to modernize Ontario's child and youth service system."

Mary Ballantyne, the CEO of the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies, amongst other things, says, "This legislation will allow for stronger services, improved outcomes and place an emphasis on prevention." What's at the core of prevention? It's Katelynn's Principle.

Kike Ojo, the project lead from One Vision One Voice, Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies: "News of the minister's intention to fully fund the development of the One Vision One Voice practice framework is very exciting for the field of child welfare, and for the African Canadian community."

Margaret Froh, the president of the Métis Nation Ontario: "The Ontario government's commitment to strengthening communities is important to improving outcomes for Métis children and families across this province. Child and family services in Ontario are in need of significant reform, including legislation that replaces offensive terminology with current and more appropriate language and ensures that Métis children, families and communities are recognized, respected and included along with other indigenous peoples."

There has been a lot of support from the sector on this bill. Considering everything that has already been discussed, I move that clause 1 of the report be amended by striking out "Thursday, April 12, 2013."

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qadri): Thank you, Ms. Kiwala. You have moved—

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: Sorry, "2017."

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qadri): You have moved motion 1 from the government side, so from this point onward, discussion will be on this particular motion.

I will invite the floor for comments on the amendment that was just read.

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm confused. I'd just like clarification—

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: We're moving to the motions.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qadri): Government motion 1 has just been read into the record and has now been proposed to the floor.

Miss Monique Taylor: We're going to do the three days?

Interjection: No, no.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qadri): Ms. Kiwala, would you mind just reading it again for the benefit of Miss Taylor?

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: I move that clause 1 of the report be amended by striking out "Thursday, April 13, 2017."

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qadri): That is motion 1 presented by the government of five, I believe, coming— or four, to give five total.

Miss Monique Taylor: Can I speak on that?

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qadri): Ms. Martow has the floor.

Mrs. Gila Martow: Thank you. As we heard from the government, this bill was introduced way back in December and this committee has been meeting several times since then. In fact, today we're spending quite a bit of time just discussing when to have the meetings, and that's what this motion is about. It's taking away one day of public consultations. I would just mention that if this would have been presented sooner—the bill was written, as the member opposite said, in December—today could have been a day that we had consultations. This could have been our third day of the three days of consultations, which is what we had agreed to this morning. Instead, we're not hearing consultations today because it wasn't organized in that way.

1540

So the government—I assume that they knew what bills they had coming ahead. The member opposite, Mr. Potts, said that they have a tight agenda they want to get through, I guess, before the summer. That's why they want to take out one day of consultations and move things up by a week. So I'm left to sort of sit here and say, "Well, jeez, they knew in December that this bill was coming forward." Today could have been a day scheduled—we already had over two days' worth of people in communities across Ontario who wanted to speak on this bill, so it's not like we didn't know that there was going to be interest. We haven't even advertised the days and we already have more than two days' worth of speakers, and we only, according to the government, want to have two days of speakers because they're putting forward this motion that says that we're taking away the third day that was agreed to this morning.

I sit here and I think about, "Gee, we have a lot of people we want to hear from." As we heard from Ms. Kiwala, there were 11 meetings that went around the province. That was before people actually had the bill in their hands and could speak to the actual bill. That's the difference between travelling the province, community consultations, meeting with stakeholders—which we do as well in our offices in the communities. But when you have the bill in your hand and people actually read the bill, they raise concerns. People are concerned with certain terminology that's being changed. At a meeting that I had this week with one of the stakeholders, they used the term "measly terms" because they felt that it was very ambiguous, some of the terminology in the bill. We could see how we could spend a day or two just talking about

the actual terminology, the actual wording, in the bill, which we all know.

We've sat through amendments. A lot of times—it's not about the actual—as Ms. Kiwala said, the bill is “substantial and comprehensive,” so she is insulted by the term “bare bones.” Bare bones, if I can address that terminology, meant that the consultation, the expectations, and what the bill is trying to cover is absolutely substantial and comprehensive. But then when the bill is actually printed, if it's a bit ambiguous in places or doesn't address things strongly enough, and says things like “thou shall” and things like that instead of “thou should,” we could spend how many days of consultations with experts and lawyers who say that the terminologies should be different in the bill. We could have that third day that's being removed on the 13th just to address that.

CPIN: I've heard from people who say it should have voice recognition because our social workers aren't hired for their typing skills. Instead of being with children, they're wasting a lot of time typing. Since there is that voice-input technology out there, why isn't it there? Lawyers in the community tell me, “Why doesn't CPIN documentation have better searchability?”

On our side of the room, we're worried about children being searched across the province, in the data system, just by their name. We know that the spelling—my goodness, I was at a Tamil event recently, and it's like 10 syllables for the name. You leave out one vowel, and their name isn't going to pop up in the system. I'm wondering if we could hear from some experts in the field. I was hoping people would come up with a better way. Obviously, we're not going to start with fingerprinting or iris technology, but maybe there's a way to take pictures of children and have them inputted and have facial recognition features as a technology out there.

I'm just throwing things out there, but I was really hoping that we were going to have people from the community to come and say to us, “How can we better protect children so that we don't have cases in the newspaper which say that, ‘Oh well, yes, this child was involved in an investigation with a family member, and now the family member moved to another jurisdiction and the child moved with them, and the child comes to the attention of the children's aid society in another jurisdiction. But because of a slight name change—now they're using the middle name, or a spelling difference in the first or last name—it didn't come up because there are so many?’” We can't rely on birthdates to flag children. There are hundreds of children with the same birthdate in care—even with the same year, unfortunately.

I'm a little concerned that we're not focusing on what we are really supposed to be doing. I'm a little disturbed that we're spending today not accomplishing what I would have liked to have accomplished. I wonder, as I've said before, if the government knew in December that the bill was ready to go to deputations, why we are spending today not having deputations. Today could have been that day.

All I'm going to say to end off is this: Because the government didn't know that they were in a rush to get finished in the next coming weeks or months, even though it had all those bills—all I'm left to say is that there is something else on the government's agenda that has nothing to do with bills that they want to bring forward to committee, that the government is perhaps looking at an entire leadership race on their side of the room, and that's why they want to rush this through. That's not a proper excuse for rushing through an important piece of legislation. If you're busy with partisan activities and you want to rush this through, then just put it all on hold. Put it on hold rather than do something and make mistakes.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): Just to be clear, I'll offer the floor to Miss Taylor. We're basically considering motion 1 as read by Ms. Kiwala. At the conclusion of the discussion on this motion, we'll be voting on this motion. Go ahead, Miss Taylor.

Miss Monique Taylor: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I'm more than happy to speak to striking out “Thursday, April 13” from this motion that was brought forward, as per earlier conversation today. I would like to respond to the comments that were made by MPP Kiwala in response to what she believed I was saying.

We know that it's a very substantial piece of legislation. We think it's a very important piece of legislation. I welcome the legislation, but I also welcome the fact of getting it right, and by getting it right, that means that we listen to people and that we hear from them about what is right and what is wrong. She named off several people who have put their support towards this bill. I wonder if all of those people who have said those things, whose quotes she read into the record, will have the opportunity to even come before us through deputations.

If we do hand-pick all of these folks who can come before us, will that leave room for the average Ontarian who has concerns? No matter which side of the bill you're on—because there are people who are on opposite sides of some of this bill—everybody has the right to be heard. That's why we live in a democracy. The whole form of our democracy is people having the right to be heard. No matter which side of the coin they're on, they have the right to voice their concerns: if there are things that they don't like about the bill, if there are things that they like about the bill, or if they think that there are things that could be better about the bill. Removing “Thursday, April 13” is stifling those voices that just won't have the opportunity to come before us in the two previous days. What if people are working? We're not really giving them much of an opportunity by only allotting them two days.

Again, I'll be very clear about the fact that this is a very large piece of legislation. There are multiple pieces of legislation that are enacted into one act. When we change an entire act, this is something that should be taking time, not something that should be rushed through because they have a legislative agenda or they have a personal agenda or whatever it may be that are the

reasons why they think that they need to rush this through and not allow one more week.

Honestly, Chair, one more week in the lives of families shouldn't really make that much of a difference. We should be able to allow for a week. We should have been able to allow for two weeks. We should be able to have deputations if it's over the Easter week, constit week. I'd be happy to come to Toronto or I'd be happy to go to another place in the province to give people the opportunity to have their say, to voice their concerns. That is completely being taken away from them, and disrespectfully so. People should have the opportunity. Not allowing them to do that is completely in the face of the spirit of what this bill was written on, and that would be Katelynn's Principle.

1550

We are not giving people ample time—child-centred—for the opportunity to come before us. Because, yes, it will be the OACAS; it will OACRS, the children's residential; it will be the workers through OPSEU, through CUPE—all of those kinds of people are going to get that opportunity to come here.

We are going to be missing the opportunity of hearing from youth. We're going to be missing the opportunity to hear from families who are just going to see it for the first time when the advertisement goes out. They're going to want to come here to speak to this and they are going to want to have their chance and their opportunity to have their say, which is their right to do so.

That's why we have this process. That's why this process has been part of our legislative history. Why even do it? That's the whole point. It's to hear from people, right? That's why we do it. That's why we hold these deputations, so that we can hear from people, so that they have the opportunity to say what they think is good and what is bad about the bill that's before us. By stifling that voice, it's just going against everything in our democracy; it's not giving people the right to voice their concerns about what they think is good or what they think is bad about this bill. I think it's a real opportunity that has been missed.

This is the first time in this process that I actually feel that the Liberals are doing an injustice to this bill, and that's the truth. Through the entire process, since the bill has been tabled through the first bit, I have been happy to be part of the process, to work with the minister, to have those discussions, and for him to very clearly talk about how he wanted to work together, how he wanted to make sure he got it right—and this is the first time in this whole process that I actually feel let down.

I feel let down that now, again, the Liberals are being Liberals and just pushing their agenda forward and doing it on their time frame, instead of the time frame of the people of this province. Quite frankly, we were sent here for them, not for our own agendas. We were sent here to represent people. When we represent people, we give them the opportunity to have a voice.

Taking away this day that we had agreed to just goes against all of that. It's the day that I'm going to remem-

ber when we discuss Bill 89 going forward, and it's the day that I will be apologizing to the people of this province for, that I wasn't able to fight hard enough to convince the government to change their mind and to allow them the opportunity to speak to this bill.

I think that's about it for me on this amendment here before us, Chair.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qadri): The floor is open on motion 1, this amendment. Mr. McDonell—

Miss Monique Taylor: Recorded vote.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qadri): We're not moving to the vote just yet.

Mr. McDonell.

Mr. Jim McDonell: I hear what's going on here. I'm sorry; I had to run off to speak on a bill on the failed promise on the gas tax.

But we look at CPIN here. It's an action the government has taken. We've been at it six years and we've got a couple of years left. We went through a huge inquiry in my area to do with the children's aid. They spent about three years. I think they spent something well over \$50 million on it, and we saw nothing come out of it.

Lots of issues, lots of problems—I think if I was to see anything from this, I guess we'd see that the problems are being replicated right across the province. This was not a problem of this sector of eastern Ontario. It was a problem that exists right through the whole child services industry in Ontario.

I think we saw a need for people to come out and speak. Unfortunately, with so many amendments, there will be a lot of surprises in those amendments that people won't have the ability to see, even to provide any notes on or any advice on. We went through election financing where we had those surprise amendments at the end. We had asked some of the deputants to come, but they couldn't comment on those parts of the bill because there were amendments that were not released yet. You've got to wonder why. Why is the government holding back all this information? It's like they're putting through a skeleton bill, hoping people would speak.

I don't believe it's because they're looking to actually listen to the deputations. When they have 170 amendments before the deputations start, and then when the last one is done the amendments are due, it's obvious to me, anyway, that they're not listening to what's actually being said by the communities out there, the very people who are working there.

We have a huge mental health issue right across this province. We don't have the practitioners that are needed. We have a child suicide rate that's extremely high. A very good friend of mine lost their son last year. In that same high school, four or five children have committed suicide since. This is an issue with a lack of people to help. There's a community that's hit very hard.

As I said, with the opening of our new community mental health facility in Cornwall, the doctors are saying that there are zero professionals to help. How could that be? The sad part was, he was bragging about how everything would be available there. He said that if

anybody needs the psychologist, we'll have one. One of the parents in the audience that had been fighting for years for help raised his hand and said, "Do you mean that if you tell me that I need a psychologist, that I can actually see one now?" He had to stop and say, "I can't say that. We don't have anybody." In a province like Ontario, how could that be? I know there's a shortage, but this government has had 13 years to fix this.

There are places around the world where there are people trained with these capabilities. We have one in eastern Ontario who doesn't practise because her services aren't covered under OHIP. She actually practises a half-day a week on pay for service. That's the best we have in the five counties of Stormont, Dundas, Glengarry, Prescott and Russell. It's a sad state, what's here.

Does the government want to hear people coming in and telling us that? Maybe not, but maybe those are stories they have to hear. There is still time; the bill is not complete. There is time to put together some amendments. We see 173 amendments, not counting any that we might put forth. It's a huge issue.

I think that, instead of us sitting here and arguing about whether we get this extra day, let's just put it in there. I think those are really the only complaints that the opposition has, is to hear—not everybody; we're just asking for the third day. That was the agreement that we thought we were leaving with this morning when we were at the subcommittee. We were happy with that. We were happy to entertain all the points in the subcommittee report, which was lengthy. We didn't agree on them all, but we said that we would live with them; it wasn't exactly what we wanted. Now we come back this afternoon, and you're going to cut off debate essentially from anybody who will want to be heard, who will be picked up from this advertising, who didn't know about the bill.

The current stakeholders who have been following this and knew what might possibly happen with this government spoke up and put their name in early, but the rest of the people who didn't know when this would come to committee—because there's nothing saying that it ever had to come to committee—are going to be left out in the cold or at least may get chosen by a lottery system. We're not even making an effort to hear any of them. We're not providing enough slots, really, to cover what's already come forth.

We even cut back our two legislative officers in the interest of trying to hear more people. Now a lot of that is being undone—well, it is being undone; one full day of deputations are being cancelled. So I think it's important. If this bill is as important as the government is trying to tell us, then I would hope that they would have an interest in listening to the many experts we have out there, people who are working in the industry and know the problems.

1600

Somebody I know, his comment is, "I don't even want to hear about them, because with some of the stories I hear, I can't sleep at night." Those are the stories that are out there. When things get that bad for an adult, you can

imagine the person or the child that is going through this. If the adults don't want to hear the stories about what's actually happening out there and can't sleep at night, what about the children that—you know, the stories that are there.

It just speaks to—they're not deliberate. People are trying to help. They're handcuffed in a lot of ways. We have good people who would like to help that aren't able to, yet the people who are causing a lot of these issues are protected by some of the same legislation that's in place. It really is not allowing them to make the difference that they would like to make. Funding is being cut. There are just so many issues there.

It may be an embarrassment, I'm sure. We've had three governments that have sat in the last 30 years, and none of them have done things perfectly. But it's time for something, when we're talking about our youth—that we sit down and we actually listen to the people who are trying to work with them and trying to help them. From what we hear, the problems are right across the province: It's downtown Toronto, it's eastern Ontario, it's northern Ontario, and it's our First Nations communities.

There's a bit of a ray of hope. In a First Nations community in my riding, in Akwesasne, they received acknowledgement for being the only children's aid society to place 100% of their children in homes on their own reserve. We aren't even, as a neighbouring community, able to place all our children, yet they're doing it amongst themselves. There are some lessons to be learned there. I don't think that we're necessarily going to get them up here to speak, and it's too bad, because they're doing a great job. Whatever they're putting in place to make it work, I think that this whole community would benefit from that.

I'm still hoping and holding out that we can convince this government to reconsider this idea of not allowing for three short days of deputations on something that is as far ranging as—I mean, every corner of this province has children it's trying to protect. This legislation is huge in nature and complicated enough that, even after sober second thought, the government is bringing ahead 173 amendments. Maybe they might be open-minded enough to let the communities that they're trying to help have a look at them and see if they might have some suggestions that may lead to some further amendments, not only by us, but by the government itself, because I see there's a willingness to amend this legislation.

So if you're going to make some changes, let's do the right thing. Let's do it properly. You'll never get anything perfect, but you can get it to that next point, and then successive governments will try to improve on it. But obviously, the bar that we've set seems to be quite low. I think it's time that we try to raise that a little bit. And actually, in some ways, it would be nice to see what these amendments inside the bill would look like, so we can get deputations that are talking about something that's close to the final legislation. We're seeing a lot of amendments, and a lot of them, each amendment, can touch a number of spots in the bill. We haven't seen

those. We won't see them until, likely, the day before the day we're actually considering them. It doesn't give us a chance to go back and talk to some of these experts that have come through and say, "Oh, I see the bill has changed, but I didn't know that." With this new revised section we're talking about—these are the other problems it's going to create, because obviously it's going to create some problems.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Point of order, Speaker: Are we on the motion or are we talking about the bill again?

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qadri): Mr. Potts, there's some leeway. It is technically on the motion, but it's all related.

Go ahead, Mr. McDonell.

Mr. Jim McDonell: I think that there's a lot of effort being put into this to try to convince the government to make this change. It's a small change; it's an extra day. You know, I don't enjoy being here any more than anybody else, when I think that our time could be much more productive.

Interjections.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qadri): Colleagues, if we could focus on the speaker, please.

Go ahead, Mr. McDonell.

Mr. Jim McDonell: As I say, I think that we're looking at trying to bring out of this government a little bit of a concession that would allow the people of Ontario to speak and to be heard. We don't think it's a huge concession. I know that a lot of people in my riding would like to see the election called early, but we're not asking that. We're just asking for a little extra reason here that would allow the many people—for many bills, we usually try to see how many people are interested. But this is a bill where we've seen a large number of people already speak up before we've even gone to advertise. So we know, before we even start, that there will be people we'll be turning away—actually, it looks like lots of people. We're just saying, can we not at least show that we're willing to sit here, knowing that we have 30-some people who have already spoken up, and when we advertise, we're expecting probably double that? We would say that we would make at least an effort to hear as many as possible in three days.

I don't think that's a big request. I think that's a reasonable request, and I think it's something that this committee should certainly entertain. As I say, normally when I go through, we have zero up front.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qadri): Mr. McDonell, just before we continue, we're going to likely recess for a vote. You still have the floor, but once the bells start ringing, I'm going to recess for probably 15 minutes or so, and then we will return.

Mr. Jim McDonell: Okay.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qadri): But go ahead; you still have the floor.

Mr. Jim McDonell: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I think that this is an opportunity. This is a bill that has more interest than any bill I've seen here. I think it's a bill where we should actually listen to what the public is

trying to tell us. The public is trying to tell us that they're worried about this legislation. I'm sure people aren't giving deputations to come and say what a great job we've done as legislators. They're here because they have concerns. They're here because they are experts in their industry. I think they have concerns, and, I think, rightly so.

I have two daughters who teach and a wife who teaches. These problems are big problems. My daughter talks about a young boy whom she's teaching. His comment was, "You'll never see me not in school on Friday." She said, "Why not?" "Because I don't eat on the weekend." That's a child who, because he was 16 years old, gets no help and has no place to go. He's going from couch to couch trying to get by. This is a child who is also trying to get through school, but he's only getting to school about every second day because he's got to go somewhere and work to try to provide some food for himself because his parents are no longer with him. That's just one whom the system has failed.

Many of the children that we see aren't there trying to help themselves, but there are many out there who are trying to help themselves.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qadri): Thank you, Mr. McDonell. You still have the floor. We are now in recess for that vote. We'll reconvene, please, at about 4:23, which is 15 minutes from now—4:23.

The committee recessed from 1609 to 1626.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qadri): Thank you, colleagues. Committee is now back in session. As you will recall, we were still deboning the amendment to the main subcommittee report, which is still before the committee, motion 1 on the government side.

The floor is now open for comments.

Miss Monique Taylor: I believe it was my floor, but I would just like to say I'm done. Thank you. I'm done. I'm good.

Mrs. Gila Martow: I think it was Mr. McDonell's.

Miss Monique Taylor: Oh, it was his; that's right. It was me last time.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qadri): I will not embellish, but it was in fact Mr. McDonell's.

Miss Monique Taylor: You could have corrected me. I would have been all right with it.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qadri): Statistically, it might have been yours, but it was his.

Mr. Jim McDonell: No, I'm fine. I think we have an agreement here, and we're interested in hearing it. Did we chase Mr. Potts out?

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qadri): We're technically still on this motion. If we need to dispense with this motion because an agreement has been reached which nullifies it, then we need to do that.

Interjections.

Mrs. Gila Martow: Let's go ahead and vote on everything.

Interjections.

Miss Monique Taylor: We have to vote all of these through first and then—

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): No, technically, we actually have to vote only the one that has been presented, which is motion 1 only.

Miss Monique Taylor: No.

Mr. Jim McDonell: Yes, we have to vote on this one.

Miss Monique Taylor: No, because this is our actual motion. These are amendments—

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): Yes, I'm talking about the—

Miss Monique Taylor:—so these amendments have to clarify this.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): This is a subcommittee report. It's not a motion. These are motions that I have in my hand.

Mrs. Gila Martow: We don't have to vote on those.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): We only have motion 1 before us.

Interjection.

Miss Monique Taylor: No, that doesn't make sense.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): You're very quick, Miss Taylor, to jump to not making sense of things. I might just respectfully say—

Miss Monique Taylor: To me, it didn't make sense.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri):—that we have five motions presented by the government, only one of which has been read into the record. Correct?

Mr. Arthur Potts: Correct.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): Therefore, only one is currently before the floor. These are the motions.

Miss Monique Taylor: But these—

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): The subcommittee report is something separate, in addition.

Miss Monique Taylor: Okay, whatever you say.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): The floor is now open, whether it's for comments or a vote on amendment 1, or this motion presented by the government—in fact, by you, Ms. Kiwala. If you are prepared to either comment on it or call the vote, as is the will of the committee.

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: The government will move all tabled motions, as per the agreement with all three parties.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): We need to do that. It's fine, what you wish to do, but they still need to be done individually, read individually and voted on individually.

Mrs. Gila Martow: All right. Let's get started.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): So motion 1 is already before the floor. If we are ready to vote, may we proceed on the vote for motion 1? Fine. All those in favour of motion 1? All opposed? Motion 1 carries.

Motion 2 is now to be presented and read into the record. Mr. Potts.

Mr. Arthur Potts: I move that clause 4 of the report be amended by striking out "Thursday, April 13, 2017".

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): Are there any comments? Seeing none, we'll proceed to the vote. Those in favour? Those opposed? Motion 2 carries.

Motion 3: Mr. Potts, go ahead.

Mr. Arthur Potts: I move that clause 10 of the report be amended by striking out "Thursday, April 13, 2017" and replacing it with "Thursday, April 6, 2017."

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): Any comments? If none, we'll proceed to the vote. Those in favour of motion 3? Those opposed? Motion 3 carries.

Motion 4: Mr. Potts.

Mr. Arthur Potts: I move that clause 11 of the report be amended by striking out "2 p.m. on Tuesday, April 25, 2017" and replacing it with "10 a.m. on Monday, April 10, 2017".

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): Comments? Mr. McDonell.

Mr. Jim McDonell: We're agreeing with this based on the amendment that the government is promising to put through. So we'll agree with it.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): Thank you, Mr. McDonell. If there are any further comments? Seeing none, those in favour of government motion 4? Those opposed? Government motion 4 carries.

Government motion 5: Mr. Potts.

Mr. Arthur Potts: I move that clause 13 of the report be amended by striking out "Thursday, April 27" and replacing it with "Thursday, April 13, 2017".

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): Comments? Seeing none, we'll proceed to the vote. Those in favour of government motion 5? Those opposed? Government motion 5 carries.

I would also clarify. I understand that what was happening—Miss Taylor, I believe you had an agreement elsewhere. Procedurally, we just have to go in sequence, so that's fine.

The floor is now open, either for further amendments, or we move to the main subcommittee report, as amended.

Mr. Arthur Potts: I think we have another motion coming.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): I see. We'll wait for the photocopies to arrive.

Mr. Arthur Potts: If I had a moment, Chair?

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): Yes, go ahead, Mr. Potts.

Mr. Arthur Potts: I would love to take this opportunity to introduce a very good friend, Brian Hamm, who has come here to view these proceedings. Mr. Hamm, welcome to Queen's Park.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): Welcome.

All right, colleagues. We're still in session. We have received a motion. I think it has been distributed. Miss Taylor, I believe you'll be presenting this?

Miss Monique Taylor: No.

Mr. Arthur Potts: If you want to, go ahead.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): As you like. Whoever.

Miss Monique Taylor: No, go ahead. It's yours.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): Ms. Kiwala, who wrote it.

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: I move that the Chair, on behalf of the committee, request the House leaders to authorize the committee to meet from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. on Wednesday, March 29, 2017, and from 8:30 a.m. to 10:15 a.m. and from 1 p.m. to 6 p.m. on Thursday, March 30, 2017, and Thursday, April 6, 2017, for the purpose of public hearings on the bill.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): Are there comments? Miss Taylor.

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm pleased that we were able to come to an agreement, and that we were able to add more time to allow people to come and to be heard at this committee. I would still like it on the record that it would have been the New Democrat choice to travel the prov-

ince to ensure that indigenous communities and others from other parts of the province—not just Toronto—had the opportunity to speak in their own backyard. But I'm pleased that we were able to add some time and ensure that more people had the opportunity to speak to our committee.

The Chair (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): Are there any further comments before we vote? All right, colleagues. If there are any further comments? Seeing none, we'll proceed to the vote. Those in favour of the most recently read motion by the government side? Those opposed? The motion carries.

I congratulate you for your patience and endurance, and I believe the committee is now adjourned—oh, just a moment. Ah, yes. Sorry.

Shall the subcommittee report, as amended, carry? The subcommittee report, as amended, carries.

Thank you. The committee is adjourned.

The committee adjourned at 1640.

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