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**Standing Committee on
Justice Policy**

Selection of estimates

1st Session
43rd Parliament

Thursday 27 October 2022

**Comité permanent
de la justice**

Sélection des budgets
des dépenses

1^{re} session
43^e législature

Jeudi 27 octobre 2022

Chair: Lorne Coe
Clerk: Thushitha Kobikrishna

Président : Lorne Coe
Greffière : Thushitha Kobikrishna

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE POLICY

Thursday 27 October 2022

COMITÉ PERMANENT DE LA JUSTICE

Jeudi 27 octobre 2022

The committee met at 0900 in committee room 2.

SELECTION OF ESTIMATES

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Good morning, everyone. I call this meeting of the Standing Committee on Justice Policy to order. Thank you all for your promptness and being here on time.

On September 8, 2022, the Lieutenant Governor transmitted to the Legislative Assembly the estimates of certain sums required for the services of the province for the year ending March 31, 2023. Pursuant to standing order 62(b), these estimates, upon tabling, are deemed to be referred to the standing committees to which the respective ministries and offices were assigned pursuant to standing order 113(b).

All committee members should have received an electronic copy of the 2022-23 estimates from the Clerk.

The objective of today's meeting is to select the estimates of certain ministries or offices for review by the committee. Standing order 63 sets out the process by which the committee makes its selections. Each of the recognized parties on the committee shall select the estimates of up to one ministry or office in each turn. The official opposition selects first, followed by the government. If members of one party decline to make a selection, the selection then passes to the next party in the rotation. The process concludes when either there are no further ministries or offices available to select, or if both recognized parties decline to make any further selections.

Pursuant to standing order 63(c), these selections are to be reviewed in the order that they were chosen; however, this order may be altered by unanimous agreement of the subcommittee on committee business or by order of the House.

Pursuant to standing order 63(d), the time for the consideration of the estimates of each ministry or office shall be determined by the respective committee.

The estimates of those ministries or offices not selected for consideration will be deemed to have been passed by the committee. As Chair, I will report those unselected estimates back to the House, and they will be deemed to be adopted and concurred in by the House.

In accordance with standing order 66(a), the committee must present a report to the House with respect to the estimates it selected and considered by the third Thursday of November of this year. That is November 17, 2022. If the

committee fails to report by the third Thursday in November, the estimates and supplementary estimates before the committee will be deemed to be passed by the committee and deemed to be reported to and received by the House.

When making your selections, I would also like to add that if members could please look at the list of ministries and offices in the estimates book, or as displayed on the screen in front of you here in the committee room—the media screens right here—and give the correct names of the ministries or offices when they select them for consideration.

Do committee members have any questions before we begin? I see none, Madam Clerk.

I'll start now with the official opposition, please, for their first selection. Yes, MPP Mamakwa.

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Meegwetch, Chair.

Remarks in Oji-Cree.

Good morning, committee. As part of the outline of the process—thank you for that. I move that consideration of estimates for the Ministry of the Attorney General be—

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Excuse me, you can't move a motion right now. The business before us is selecting a ministry or office. You can't move a motion right now.

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Okay.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Could one of the members of the official opposition please select one of the ministries and offices? MPP Stevens, please.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: I move that consideration of estimates for the Ministry of the Attorney General be in total 10 hours.

Interjections.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Chair, pardon me. Is everything okay?

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Stand by, please.

Just for clarification: just a selection of the ministry, not the time. Okay?

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Not the time? Okay.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you. We've noted now that one of the selections that you've recommended is the Ministry of the Attorney General.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: That is correct, Chair. Thank you. Apologies.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you.

Next is the government for their first selection. MPP Hogarth, please.

Ms. Christine Hogarth: There are no further government selections.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Noted.

We'll go back to the official opposition. Your next selection, please, MPP Mamakwa.

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: The Ministry of Indigenous Affairs.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you. We'll continue with the official opposition.

You don't have any selections, MPP Hogarth? Thank you. Noted.

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: The Ministry of Public and Business Service Delivery.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): The name is the Ministry of Government and Consumer Services.

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: The Ministry of Government and Consumer Services.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you.

I'll go back to the official opposition. Your next selection?

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: The Ministry of Francophone Affairs.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you very much, MPP Stevens.

Back to the official opposition. Yes, MPP Wong-Tam.

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Good morning, everyone. I'm very excited; it's my very first committee meeting. I'd like to move that we submit the Ministry of the Solicitor General.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Noted.

Thank you all for your selections. Is there any other business which members may wish to raise? I'll take it now. Yes, MPP Hogarth?

Ms. Christine Hogarth: I move that the committee now recess until 2 p.m.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Any discussion on the motion? Yes, MPP Stevens?

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Can I have a date on that?

Ms. Christine Hogarth: Today.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Thank you.

Ms. Christine Hogarth: Sorry about that.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): I've just asked the Clerk to put the motion on the screen so that we all understand exactly what is being moved. MPP Hogarth has moved that the committee now recess until 2 p.m. Discussion? MPP Stevens, please.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Due to the fact of the short notice of the 2 p.m., for travel time on Thursday, when the House rises today, I will not be able to attend, so I'm hoping that we could carry on this morning until 10:15.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Discussion?

Ms. Christine Hogarth: We would prefer to come back at 2. I'll let the motion stand.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Further discussion? MPP Wong-Tam.

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Chair, through you, if there can be some indulgence and perhaps some flexibility on the timing? Because I wasn't notified, and perhaps it was just by time constraints—I'm sure it wasn't necessarily on purpose—but 2 o'clock is very difficult. Some of us have House duties; some of us have prior appointments. I've got

a very important meeting with some trial lawyers that I have to attend, and it's just very difficult to reschedule on short notice. If we can continue, unless there's some pressing matter that allows us not to, most of us don't have to be in the House until question period. I would suggest that we just carry on.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you very much, MPP Wong-Tam.

I go now to MPP Hogarth, please.

Ms. Christine Hogarth: We also have scheduling on our side, as well, so 2 o'clock. I'm going to let the motion stand. Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Further discussion? Are members ready to vote on the motion? All those in favour, please raise your hands. All those opposed? The motion is carried.

The committee is recessed until 2:00 today.

The committee recessed from 0911 to 1400.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Good afternoon. I'd like to resume the meeting of the Standing Committee on Justice Policy. Earlier today, I reported the selections that the committee made to the Legislative Assembly, as required under the statutes, so that you know.

Is there any other business which members may wish to raise? MPP Hogarth.

Ms. Christine Hogarth: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and welcome back, everybody.

I move that, pursuant to standing order 63(d), the following time be allotted to the consideration of the estimates of the ministries by the committee:

—the Ministry of the Attorney General for two hours;

—the Ministry of Government and Consumer Services for two hours;

—the Ministry of the Solicitor General for two hours;

—the Ministry of Indigenous Affairs for one hour;

—the Ministry of Francophone Affairs for one hour; and

That the ministers responsible for those respective ministries be invited to appear before the committee; and

That for the Ministry of Government and Consumer Services, the Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery be invited to appear before the committee; and

That for each ministry, the minister be allotted 20 minutes to make an opening statement, followed by question and answer in rotations of 20 minutes for the official opposition members of the committee, 10 minutes for the independent members of the committee and 20 minutes for the government members of the committee for the remainder of the allotted time; and

That the committee meet for the purpose of considering the estimates of the selected ministries at the following times:

—on Wednesday, November 16, from 9:00 a.m. until 10:15 a.m. and from 3:00 p.m. until 6:00 p.m.; and

—on Thursday, November 17, from 9:00 a.m. until 10:15 a.m.; and

That if any invited minister is unavailable to appear before the committee, the committee requires their parliamentary assistant or parliamentary assistants to appear before the committee in their place.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): MPP Hogarth has moved a motion regarding the time allocation. Is there any debate or discussion on the motion? It's on the screen; take some time to read it.

Yes, MPP Mamakwa?

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Meegwetch, Chair. For some consideration, I know the times allotted are very minimal. I wish to make an amendment that consideration be taken for estimates for the Ministry of Attorney General to be 10 hours in total; and

That the consideration of estimates for the Ministry of Indigenous Affairs be 10 hours in total; and

That the consideration of estimates for the Ministry of Government and Consumer Services to be 10 hours in total; and also, furthermore

That the committee shall meet from 9 a.m. to 10:15 a.m. and 2 p.m. to 6 p.m. on Mondays and Thursdays, 9 a.m. to 10:15 a.m. and 3:45 p.m. to 6 p.m. on Tuesdays and Wednesdays, and from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. and 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. on Fridays during weeks when the House is sitting, and from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. and 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. on Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays during weeks the House is not scheduled to meet.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): All right. That's your amendment?

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Yes.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): So we have an amendment to the main motion. We're going to have to recess for approximately 10 minutes so that we get this particular amendment in a paper form, but also I want to put it on the screen so that anyone viewing can see it as well.

So we'll recess for 10 minutes. Thank you.

The committee recessed from 1404 to 1413.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): The Standing Committee on Justice Policy has resumed.

MPP Mamakwa, please take us through your amendment to the main motion.

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: I move that the motion be amended by striking out "two hours" in paragraph 1, point 1, and replacing it with "10 hours"; and

That "two hours" in paragraph 1, point 2, be struck out and replaced with "10 hours"; and

That "one hour" in paragraph 1, point 4, be struck out and replaced with "10 hours"; and

That paragraph 5 be struck out and replaced with the following:

"That the committee shall meet from 9 a.m. to 10:15 a.m. and from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m. on Mondays and Thursdays; from 9 a.m. to 10:15 a.m. and from 3:45 p.m. to 6 p.m. on Tuesdays and Wednesdays; and from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. and from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. on Fridays during the weeks the House is sitting, and from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. and from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. on Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays during the weeks the House is not scheduled to meet; and

"That the committee shall continue to meet until consideration of these ministries has concluded or the time allotted for consideration of estimates has expired."

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Is there any debate or discussion on the motion? MPP Dave Smith.

Mr. Dave Smith: I'm going to vote against the amendment to the motion. I did a fair bit of research on what was happening at the federal level. Yesterday, I introduced a motion at SCOFEA that was very similar to what my colleague has introduced today.

Let's take a look at some of the stuff that's happening at the federal level. I don't think anyone is going to say to you that the federal government has less complex challenges than the province of Ontario has. In fact, when you look at the federal budget, their deficit is actually greater than our entire budget is. When we look at the time that has been allocated, then, for estimates at the federal level, if a budget as complicated as the federal budget—if you can go through the estimates and determine what the actual spending is in an appropriate manner there, where we already recognize and admit that it is a more complicated process because it's at the federal level—I don't think anyone is going to say to you that the Ministry of Health is something that is very, very small. Yet at the federal level, they were able to go through it on a budget that—I have to emphasize, their deficit was greater than our entire budget. They were able to go through the Ministry of Health in two hours—two hours for it. They can do that at the federal level. Why? Because they're focusing on the actual spending of it, and this is what we're trying to do here.

We recognize that this is a process about the amount of money that has been spent. We've already gone through the process of debating what the policy is. That has already been done; it has already been decided by vote. In the chamber, all of the members had the opportunity to debate that, had the opportunity to vote on that. So we're not discussing policy anymore when we're here at estimates. What we're talking about is, did the government spend the money that they said that they were going to spend the way that they said that they were going to spend it? Not, over here, "Was this a good policy? Was that a good policy? Was there something else policy-related?" We're not talking about the politics of it; what we're talking about here is we're trying to narrow down, drill down to the actual spending. It's about estimates.

If we need to have 10 hours to talk about something for one specific ministry and yet, at the federal level, they can do something as complicated as the Ministry of Health in two hours, they can do something like environment and climate change—and I don't think anyone is going to suggest that environment and climate change is not important. Not a single person in Canada is going to say that, and yet, at the federal level, it was an hour, one hour, because what they're doing is they're focusing on the money that has been spent, the money that is going to be spent, and is it being spent the way that the government said that it was going to be spent? If you can't drill down to that, I'm not sure why we would be sitting here wasting the public's time that way.

Now, it's possible that, perhaps, the NDP is suggesting that they want to relitigate everything that was already decided by the House, that was already decided in that democratic process. They want to go through policy one more time and just delay, delay, delay and not actually

accomplish anything. Our government has said repeatedly that status quo is not appropriate. We have to do things and get things done.

I applaud the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore for coming up with the original motion, because it is succinct. It gets to the point. It is getting down to what money has been spent and how it has been spent. It's not about filibustering. It's not about wasting time. It's about making sure that the people of Ontario understand that the money that has been allocated is actually being spent appropriately. So, for those reasons, I cannot support the amendment that has been put forward.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you, MPP Smith. I have MPP Wong-Tam, please.

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Thank you very much, Chair. I do want to speak on this particular matter and specifically in support of the motion that my colleague has just provided as an amendment. I'm a little bit shocked to hear there is not a desire to spend time to do the goodwill and do the work of government. We're here acting on behalf of Ontarians, and Ontarians all know that we just had a six-week recess. The House wasn't sitting for six weeks; committees weren't meeting for six weeks. What you did with your time—obviously, it's up to us at that time, but we just got back. And for us to limit the debate on a matter as important as specific spending of ministries—and these are not insignificant ministries; they're significant—to two hours and two hours only, where the minister would have a 20-minute lead, and then reducing all debate to one hour and 40 minutes left over seems rather—I'm trying to choose my words very carefully. But I would imagine that, if any of us clocked in for work and said, "We're going to work for one hour and 40 minutes over multi-million-dollar ministries, and that's all the time we're going to allocate to it"—I really think that Ontarians would look very poorly upon all of us, especially those who vote to restrict the debate time or perhaps the review time of the committee.

1420

The Ministries of the Attorney General, Francophone Affairs, Indigenous Affairs, and Government and Consumer Services, as well as the Solicitor General—these are significant ministries. We've heard, throughout the time now, that there are a number of reports about how access to justice—fair, timely access to justice—is currently being denied to many people, whether it's the tribunal systems that are clogged up for months and now sometimes years, or people who are awaiting civil litigation hearings, and also jury trials, for months and into years now. Hearing about them being delayed by five to six years is not uncommon.

We need to find out whether or not we are actually spending the money on behalf of Ontarians to make sure that our judicial system, the tribunal system and access to services are going out to Ontarians in a timely fashion, as they would expect. I would hate to tell them that we were able to reduce the debate or perhaps the review of the expenditures and estimates to just one hour and 40 minutes, giving the minister 20 minutes to speak. That doesn't seem like a very good use of our time.

If we don't need the full 10 hours, that's fine. I'm very busy, like everybody else. I'd love to get back to my community, to serve my community. But if we need the time, we've given ourselves the time to not rush it and to do a diligent job in ensuring that we are managing the people's money properly.

I'm very happy if the 10-hour amendment is adopted, but we only spend two hours, three hours at the committee—that's great. But if we need the time, we are not rushed, and then we won't be short-circuiting what we already know are challenges within the judicial system.

We have a responsibility, especially in the justice committee, to make sure that coordinated court services, tribunal services, are working for Ontarians. I'm hearing from trial lawyers and civil litigators, from those who are trying to get access to justice that there is a gap and problem in how the access is being administered. This is not going to go away just because we want to shrink the time for the committee to review, because we know that this information is already out there. People with lived experiences who are interfacing with the judicial system and the tribunal system are already saying their access to justice is limited.

So let's find a way to work together, even if it's a compromise. Let's say we broker it. Maybe it's not 10 hours; maybe it's eight hours; maybe it's six hours. We can find a way to give ourselves the ability to work together, but two hours with a 20-minute lead time for the minister just doesn't seem quite right. I would really appeal to all the members here: Let's do the very best we can to work together to modernize the judicial system, to make sure that our services, the courts and tribunal system, are accessible to Ontarians, the way they need us to for the system to work. Let's make sure that we deliver that for them, and let's not shortchange them or short-cut them at any time, in any way.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you very much. I have MPP Smith, followed by MPP Blais.

Mr. Dave Smith: Thank you, Chair. This is exactly what I was talking about. The member for Toronto Centre has just come out and said that they want to relitigate the policy that was already debated on. We had, in some cases, six and a half hours of debate at second reading for it, for all of the legislation—

Interjection.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Yes.

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: On a point of personal privilege, I did not say that. I ask the member to withdraw those comments. That is not what I said. I never said I wanted to relitigate, and for him to suggest that I said that—it's just not true. I said that we should work together to find a time allocation—

Interjection.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Hold on. We're not going to have cross-debate. Thank you.

I accept the point you've made. Thank you very much.

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Thank you, Chair.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): All right. Carry on, please.

Mr. Dave Smith: What was said was that we needed to drill down into what was being done. What estimates is

supposed to be about is, was the money spent the way that we said it was going to be spent when we put the policies forward, when we debated those bills, when we went through that entire process as members of provincial Parliament and did our jobs to debate the policy, vote on the policy? This is now, was the money spent the way that we said it was going to be spent? And that is what we are trying to do in estimates.

I take exception to one of the comments that was made, that we took a break for six weeks. Perhaps the member for Toronto Centre was on a break; however, I did significant work in my riding the entire time, and, in fact, I read the estimates. Perhaps if she had taken the six weeks to go through the estimates themselves, she wouldn't require 10 hours to do that work—because you should be going through to find out, was the money spent or is the money being allocated the way that we have said that it's going to be? That is the purpose of estimates.

That's why, when you take a look from the perspective of, "Was the money spent? Is the money being spent?" you get down to those succinct lines. Where was the money allocated? How was it being spent? You do not need to re-debate what has already been decided on these bills. The debate on that policy has already occurred.

I think the people of Ontario expect that we will get down to business and do our jobs, and if we have a break of six weeks where we're not in the Legislature, we're actually doing the work we need to do to be prepared to come into committee, to make sure that we're doing what the people of the province of Ontario have asked us to do—that is, to represent them. That means we are not here at Queen's Park; we're actually back in our ridings doing the work and doing the research.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Before I go to MPP Saunderson, I just want to have an understanding together here on the committee. If you have particular issues with some of the narrative that you're hearing, you do it through me. I don't want any cross-debate in committee; I don't think that's going to be productive. All right? Any comments are coming to me directly. The speakers are coming to me directly. So if you have an issue, again, please come to me on it and then I will provide an opinion on it. I just think it will be a productive session as we move forward. Okay?

I'm going to MPP Saunderson, then I'll move over to MPP Blais and then Stevens. MPP Saunderson?

Mr. Brian Saunderson: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chair. As the parliamentary assistant for the AG's office, I just wanted to address some of the comments from my colleague opposite.

The ministry has a very aggressive program. We have a road map: justice accelerated. We've worked hard on the various tribunals. We've combined five tribunals into the Ontario Land Tribunal. We're working very hard with the Landlord and Tenant Tribunal. There were backlogs in the system before the pandemic, and we all know the pandemic has had a massive impact on how we've conducted business over the last two years. The government invested heavily in making sure that we were getting online access

to justice, that we were dealing with the significant cases up front. So there have been backlogs.

We have put forward a plan, and the purpose of the estimates process, as I understand it, is to take a surgical look at how we invested those monies and whether we lived up to what we said we were going to do. In my submission, I agree with my colleague that two hours is enough. We need to be focused. This is a large project. We're all very busy, and we have a timeline of three weeks to get this done—or to the third week of November—and we need to be focused on matching the estimates with the results. I don't believe it's going to take longer than two hours to do that.

I completely concur with my friend that if the federal government, with a budget that is light years more than ours, can do it in the timelines that have been submitted, then there is no reason that we can't do it and do it well in the two-hour allotment and do justice to the situation. So I am supporting the original motion. I will not be supporting the motion from the members opposite. I believe two hours is an efficient focus, a surgical examination of what we need to do here.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you very much, MPP Saunderson. I have next, please, MPP Blais. MPP?

Mr. Stephen Blais: I think reasonable people can agree that two hours to look at a ministry as large as the Attorney General's or MGCS is not sufficient. I think reasonable people can also agree that 10 hours is perhaps overkill and the reality is somewhere in the middle. Something that is balanced to move things forward in an equitable way is the more reasonable approach.

My challenge with both motions, however, is that neither the government nor the opposition New Democrats have recognized the importance of the francophone community in Ontario. They're allocating half the time to francophone needs as they are to other ministries.

Et comme fier francophile de la région de la province avec le plus grand nombre de francophones à l'extérieur du Québec, je pense que c'est ridicule qu'on n'offre pas le même montant de temps pour discuter les enjeux importants à la communauté francophone qu'ont tous les autres ministères. On la responsabilité pour notre communauté.

1430

Donc j'espère que le gouvernement va considérer un changement à leur position qu'une heure est assez de temps pour regarder et discuter les dépenses nécessaires pour la communauté francophone, et que le NPD peut faire le même changement à leur position.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you very much, MPP Blais.

I have next, please, MPP Stevens.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, I'm going to be in support of the amendment to the first motion that was put on the floor. I just find that even though it has been discussed here around this table that 10 hours might be too long, we feel that two hours just is not acceptable to be able to focus in on matching the estimates with the results, as has been stated. We need that little bit more time to be able to debate it thoroughly, right here in this room with each other.

So if it's not 10 hours that you want to see and you can meet halfway, we are more than willing—I would like to maybe see the government find a balance with the opposition's amendment and come to a six-hour timeline. And if it doesn't end up where we debate these important ministries for the full amount of time allotted, then so be it.

I always say good decisions are made in a timely fashion but also given considerable thought. So if we hesitantly just throw in two hours with a 20-minute lead, and that leaves us with very minimal time to hear statements from the ministries, I feel that a decision might not be made with complete thought and consideration of such important ministries as the Attorney General, government and consumer services or the Solicitor General—also, the Ministry of Indigenous Affairs, I believe. Sorry; I jumped over to a different page.

Mr. Chair, I think that we are seen on these committees, are watched by the general public, and I think that the general public wants to hear not only the government side but our side. What should be done at a committee level is so the public can hear, understand and get to the point. But two hours? I just don't think that's enough.

I heard earlier that—I believe it was something to the effect that the federal government moved and was finished. We should be better than the federal government. We should be better than the federal government, and we should give more time to consider what is in front of us here. We should give more time so that the general public, the ministries and everyone have the right to be able to make this democratic process a key part of this committee.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): MPP Stevens, I'm hearing an amendment to the amendment. Is that what you just put forward?

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: I can probably take that on in my—

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): I'm sorry. I can't hear you. Your mike's not working.

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Sorry, Chair. I can take that on in my remarks, if I'm acknowledged next. I can move the amendment.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): So what you're going to be doing, MPP Wong-Tam, is speaking to the amendment to the amendment?

Interjections.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): We'll put it up on the screen, and we're going to have to recess for that to be done. That will take at least 10 minutes. The committee is recessed for 10 minutes.

The committee recessed from 1434 to 1440.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): I would like to reconvene the Standing Committee on Justice Policy. MPP Stevens, you had an amendment to the amendment. If you would speak to it first of all, please.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: I move that the amendment be amended by striking out "10 hours" wherever it appears and replacing it with "five hours."

The reason why—Mr. Chair, may I explain why?

Interjection.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): MPP Blais?

Mr. Stephen Blais: I think there's an error in the—

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: I can explain my narrative.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): All right. Just let MPP Stevens—sorry.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I can explain my amendment to the amendment. The reason is because, as stated before, I understand that 10 hours is a lengthy time, but I still think it's very justified why we ask for 10 hours. However, working together on both sides of this committee, I think that we should be able to find a happy balance with the government side as well as the opposition.

Working together in committees is a very crucial part of making sure that the democratic process is seen, that it's not leaned on one way or the other, so I think a five-hour timeline—halfway—is justifiable. It gives a little bit more for the ministries to come and be able to plead their case or for us to ask questions—and good questions, so we're not looking like we're making decisions hesitantly under a two-hour curfew, where we can sit at for five hours.

That's basically it. Let's come halfway and show that we can work together to the general public.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you very much, MPP Stevens.

MPP Blais, please. S'il vous plaît. Merci beaucoup.

Mr. Stephen Blais: I think the intent of this most recent amendment was to have equal time for all the ministries. As written, I believe it leaves out the equal time for the francophone ministry, because the original amendment, Mr. Mamakwa's amendment, had not referenced the francophone affairs ministry. If the intent is to have equal time for all ministries, I believe the amendment to the amendment needs to be amended to reflect that appropriately.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Any further discussion on the amendment to the amendment? MPP Saunderson, please.

Mr. Brian Saunderson: Yes, thank you, Mr. Chair. My comments really go to where we are in this process. My understanding is that this year it's a new process for the estimates, and that it used to be an entirely separate committee, and that that committee handled all estimates across all ministries and had a total of 30 hours. So, in fact, if we go with our two-hour estimates, each ministry will be getting more airtime than would have happened under the previous system, and so I guess my comment really goes to—I think that 10 hours is excessive.

This is an exercise in making sure that the money that was estimated to be invested in a ministry was actually invested and, if not, why not. It's an exercise in looking at the budget estimates and the money spent, and I think going beyond that is not the purpose of this committee. In fact, the time allotments that are being proposed under the main motion are more than would have been allotted for each ministry under the previous system.

To me, this new system is accountable. It's providing more airtime, more focus on each ministry, and to me it's a vast improvement on the old system. But again, it's about a surgical look and making sure that the estimates correspond with the money spent.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you very much, MPP Saunderson.

Are the members ready to vote on the amendment to the amendment? MPP Wong-Tam, please.

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Yes, thank you very much, Chair. I just wanted to, number one, support the observation of my colleague here regarding making sure that all the ministries have an equally proportioned amount of time for the review.

Also, with respect to Indigenous affairs, as well as francophone affairs: These are two particular communities in Ontario that are already at a disadvantage, so we don't want to necessarily further that disadvantage by reducing their time here. Those are very important ministries. Although they don't have a lot of money attached to them, the money that is attached should be well spent wherever possible, and we need to get those dollars out the door.

I think also, Chair, this process, although new to me—because I'm a brand new MPP and a rookie, this process is new to me, but I also recognize that the process regarding the estimates selection process is now new and revised as of March 2022. So it's new to everyone else in this room as well. Although we are having some, I think, hearty discussion about how to land and make sure that this is right, I do want to recognize that this is not necessarily the order of business that you have assumed from the prior term.

Everything is now in front of us and the rules are written in such a way that there is no longer a cap on the amount of time available to review a ministry. That is specifically coming from, I guess, your House leader, and so your House leader is suggesting that there's no cap on the time. How we choose to negotiate the cap on the time, which is what we're doing now, is really left open-ended for us. If the government members choose two hours and perhaps some of the opposition members, plus independent members, are choosing five hours as a broker compromise, this is part of the review and discussion today. I don't want it to appear to members of the public or even members, other MPPs, who are watching that this is how it's done, because as far as I can tell, this is the first time that it's being done this way.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you very much.

I have MPP Hogarth, please.

Ms. Christine Hogarth: Thank you, Chair. Since I brought the original motion forward, I just wanted to say I will not be supporting the amendment to the amendment.

Some things my colleagues MPP Saunderson and MPP Smith said, when we look at what we're doing here—and something that MPP Wong-Tam said, that the general public wants to watch committee—well, the general public was able to watch the committee, as we are watching it right now on the side, on TV. They were able to watch debates unfold. They were able to participate by contacting the MPPs' offices. These debates have been happening throughout the years to make sure that we get our policies correct, so that's not what this is about. We're about moving forward to the estimates process.

Of course, people can watch committee, and they can watch two hours of committee, but 10 hours of committee

is a lot to watch, and I'm not sure what that will accomplish. I believe that two hours is a fair time, and if you look at what the federal government is doing, their estimates are between an hour and two hours. So we are putting forward two hours for some of the larger ministries and an hour for the smaller ministries—no less important, very important ministries, all of them, but I do believe that is enough time to continue on to debate. So I will agree with my colleagues there, and I thank you for supporting my motion.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you very much, MPP Hogarth.

I have MPP Stevens, please.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Thank you, Mr. Chair. At this time, I would like to move a withdrawal of the amendment to the amendment and replace this amendment, including to add on the equal amount of hours for francophone affairs as well as Indigenous affairs, so all of the ministries would have a five-hour time allotted to them for debate. As stated, as of March 2022, in the standing orders, there will no longer be a cap amount on the time available to review a ministry or an office. So five hours, I think, is a fair debate, and every ministry is just as important as any ministry. No matter what size it is, no matter what it holds, they're all worth listening to and having the fair amount of time to debate or to be heard.

The Chair (Mr. Lorne Coe): Thank you, MPP Stevens. We'll recess for 10 minutes so that we can get the amendment onto the screen so that everyone has an opportunity to review it and prepare themselves for any subsequent discussion. We'll recess for 10 minutes.

The committee recessed from 1449 to 1501.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Brian Saunderson): All right. I will call the committee back to session. Chairman MPP Coe had a commitment he left for, as well as MPP Mamakwa, who is the Vice-Chair. He had a flight to catch. So I am in this seat for the duration.

We were dealing, then, with the amendment to the amendment to the amendment—is that our third amendment?

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Thushitha Kobikrishna): It's just the amendment to the amendment.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Brian Saunderson): Okay, because we withdrew the second amendment. So is there further debate on the amendment—

Interjection.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Brian Saunderson): All right. MPP Stevens, I'll let you read in your new amendment.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I move that the amendment be amended by striking out “10 hours” wherever it appears and replacing it with “five hours”; and

That the following be added after the third paragraph of the amendment:

“That ‘two hours’ in paragraph 1.3 be struck out and replaced with ‘five hours’; and

“That ‘one hour’ in paragraph 1.5 be struck out and replaced with ‘five hours.’”

The reason for this amendment has already been further explained prior to withdrawing the amendment. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Brian Saunderson): Thank you, MPP Stevens. Is there further debate on the amendment to the amendment? Are we ready to vote, then?

All right, I will call the vote. All in favour of the amendment to the amendment—

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Mr. Chair?

The Acting Chair (Mr. Brian Saunderson): Yes?

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Can I have a recorded vote, please?

The Acting Chair (Mr. Brian Saunderson): Okay, so we've got a request for a recorded vote. In my old world, that meant I passed it off to the Clerk. Is that what we do here?

Interjection.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Brian Saunderson): All right, then. So we're going to have a recorded vote on the amendment to the amendment.

Ayes

Blais, Stevens, Wong-Tam.

Nays

Bailey, Bresee, Hogarth, Trevor Jones, Ke, Dave Smith.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Brian Saunderson): The motion is lost. That brings us, then, to our initial amendment. Further discussion on that? MPP Wong-Tam.

MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam: Thank you very much, Chair. No further discussion, just a request for a recorded vote.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Brian Saunderson): Okay. Is there further discussion on the first amendment? Seeing none, are we ready to vote?

Interjection.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Brian Saunderson): All right. So that's the initial amendment on the screens. Are we ready to vote? We had a request for a recorded vote.

Ayes

Stevens, Wong-Tam.

Nays

Bailey, Blais, Bresee, Hogarth, Trevor Jones, Ke, Dave Smith.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Brian Saunderson): All right. That brings us back, then, to our original motion, moved by MPP Hogarth.

Interjection.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Brian Saunderson): Oh, sorry. The motion was lost.

Back to the original motion of MPP Hogarth: Any further discussion? Seeing no further debate, are we ready to vote?

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Recorded vote, please.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Brian Saunderson): All right, then. We have a recorded vote.

Ayes

Bailey, Bresee, Hogarth, Trevor Jones, Ke, Dave Smith.

Nays

Blais, Stevens, Wong-Tam.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Brian Saunderson): That motion is carried.

Are there any further motions? MPP Hogarth.

Ms. Christine Hogarth: I move to adjourn.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Brian Saunderson): All right. There's no debate on a motion to adjourn, so I will just call the vote, then. All in favour? Opposed? Motion carried. We will adjourn now. Thank you very much, everyone. Great job.

The committee adjourned at 1507.

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