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(Hansard)**

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**Standing Committee on
Justice Policy**

Committee business

1st Session
42nd Parliament
Thursday 6 May 2021

**Comité permanent
de la justice**

Travaux du comité

1^{re} session
42^e législature
Jeudi 6 mai 2021

Chair: Daryl Kramp
Clerk: Thushitha Kobikrishna

Président : Daryl Kramp
Greffière : Thushitha Kobikrishna

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ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON
JUSTICE POLICYCOMITÉ PERMANENT
DE LA JUSTICE

Thursday 6 May 2021

Jeudi 6 mai 2021

The committee met at 1301 in room 151 and by video conference.

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Thushitha Kobikrishna): Good afternoon, honourable members. In the absence of the Chair and the Vice-Chair, it is my duty to call upon you to elect an Acting Chair. Are there any nominations? Ms. Park.

Ms. Lindsey Park: I nominate MPP Mike Harris, Jr.

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Thushitha Kobikrishna): Are there any further nominations? Okay. Seeing none, does the member accept the nomination?

Mr. Mike Harris: I do; thank you.

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Thushitha Kobikrishna): There being no further nominations, I declare the nominations closed and MPP Harris elected Acting Chair of the committee.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Mike Harris): I make a wonderful Daryl Kramp, I have to say.

Good afternoon, everyone. I hope you're all well and that everyone is staying very safe and healthy. I'm going to do an attendance check and go over some of the guidelines for our new format of committee meetings that include remote participation and physical distancing. I will start with our attendance check, and will ask for everyone in attendance again at the end of our pre-meeting, just in case anyone else has joined and I've missed anyone.

So that everyone is aware, MPP Park is present here in the room. To confirm members' attendance on Zoom, I will ask the following questions: if they are present, and to confirm that they are in fact the honourable member and also to confirm that they are here in Ontario.

We will begin. MPP Bouma, can you please confirm that you are indeed MPP Bouma and that you are in Ontario?

Mr. Will Bouma: Yes, thank you, Chair. It's very good to see you this afternoon and good to see you in the Chair. I am indeed MPP Bouma and I'm in my home office in St. George, Brantford.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Mike Harris): Very good. Thank you, sir. Madame Collard?

M^{me} Lucille Collard: Oui, bonjour, Mr. Chair. I am MPP Collard and I am here in Ottawa-Vanier.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Mike Harris): Thank you very much. Is MPP Gill with us?

Mr. Parm Gill: Yes, Chair. It's MPP Gill here in Milton.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Mike Harris): Thank you, sir. MPP Kusendova, could you please confirm you are indeed MPP Kusendova and that you are here in Ontario?

Ms. Natalia Kusendova: Yes, hello, Chair. This is MPP Natalia Kusendova and I am at Queen's Park today. Thank you.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Mike Harris): MPP Morrison, please?

Ms. Suze Morrison: Hi. Yes, I'm here at Queen's Park.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Mike Harris): MPP Tangri?

Mrs. Nina Tangri: Good afternoon, Chair. I am MPP Tangri and I am at Queen's Park.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Mike Harris): MPP Triantafilopoulos?

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: Hi, Chair. I'm Effie Triantafilopoulos and I am here at Queen's Park as well.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Mike Harris): Thank you. And I believe, to round it out, MPP Yarde.

Mr. Kevin Yarde: Yes, it's MPP Yarde. I'm at my home office in Brampton.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Mike Harris): Did I miss anyone? No? Okay.

I know we've done this a few times before, but we'll go over it again. For Zoom participants, please be aware that broadcast and recording will be controlling your microphones, as they usually would in committee. Depending on the version of Zoom you are using, you may have had to grant permission to unmute when you joined. If you accepted, the broadcast operator will be able to activate your microphone once I recognize you. Participants using older versions of Zoom may still get a request to unmute your microphone before you are able to speak. Please wait a minute for the unmute notification before trying to unmute yourself.

For members who are calling in with audio only, to indicate to the Clerk that you would like to speak, please press *9. To mute and unmute yourself, please use the mute button on your device. If you are calling in, I believe it is *6 to mute or unmute.

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I will go over the voting process for clarity. Voting during today's meeting will be done through a show of hands. I will start by asking, "Are the members ready to vote?" Then I will ask, "All those in favour, please raise your hands," and the Clerk will count the raised hands. I will then ask all those opposed to raise their hand, and we'll go through the same process. Then, once those votes are tallied, I will go ahead and declare the vote. Unless someone specifically asks for a recorded vote after I have asked whether the members are ready to vote, the breakdown of the vote will not show up in Hansard.

Does anyone have any questions? No? Perfect.

We'll do one last call for anyone who may have joined late, but I think we have everybody. We're good to go?

COMMITTEE BUSINESS

The Acting Chair (Mr. Mike Harris): Good afternoon, everyone. I call this meeting of the justice policy committee to order. We are meeting today to consider committee process with respect to Bill 251, An Act to enact, amend and repeal various Acts in respect of human trafficking matters, which was referred to the committee pursuant to the order of the House on May 6, 2021.

Are there any questions before we begin? Seeing none, we'll move to anyone that has any motions. MPP Bouma.

Mr. Will Bouma: I move that the committee enter closed session for the purpose of organizing committee business and that the broadcasting staff be permitted to remain in the closed-session meeting for the purpose of operating the electronic meeting technology.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Mike Harris): A motion has been moved by MPP Bouma. Is there any debate? MPP Morrison.

Ms. Suze Morrison: I would like to formally object to this motion on the record. I think that it's incredibly disappointing that the government members are seeking to move us into closed session. The only business before the committee today is the business of organizing ourselves for hearings on a bill. We are not debating anything contentious. We are making decisions about scheduling and timelines and how many days of committee hearings we are going to allocate to an incredibly important bill related to human trafficking.

After the second reading debate that I know many of us sat through yesterday in the House—it was a very heavy debate. This is an incredibly important subject. I am deeply concerned that this isn't going to be a public process, to make the decision about how we allocate our time to the study of this bill at committee. I think it demonstrates an incredible lack of transparency from this government, and I think there's no need to hide from the public the conversation that we're about to have.

1310

Like I said, we are only here to discuss organization of the committee meeting. Moving us in camera serves the public no benefit. It only protects the government members from scrutiny about why, I suspect, this government

is about to truncate and shorten the amount of days and available debate for us to undertake on this really important bill.

The only other thing I would add to that is that when I first got involved in politics, I was living in London, Ontario, and was starting to get involved at the municipal level. I remember when I first started going to watch council meeting debates, any time city council moved in camera, they had a responsibility to weigh the benefit of going in camera versus the consequence of that to the public. The burden of proof and the standard that they had to hold themselves to, to remove themselves from public scrutiny and move in camera, was an immense burden.

The public should never be cut out from our conversations, especially ones as simple as this. I just don't understand. This isn't good process. This isn't how the Legislature has typically run under past governments. And so I would like to formally register my objections on the record that I do not think we should be moving these meetings in camera. Thank you so much.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Mike Harris): Is there any more debate? MPP Bouma.

Mr. Will Bouma: Mr. Chair, I just have to respond to that comment. As you know and as the opposition member knows, the opposition members have made subcommittee business, which is typically done in camera, practically unworkable through their actions, so we have no recourse but to do subcommittee business as committee business, which is why we need to go in camera, so that we can organize committee business and move on with it. Thank you, sir.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Mike Harris): I believe MPP Yarde had his hand up. I don't know if he wanted to go ahead and take part in further debate?

Mr. Kevin Yarde: Thank you, Chair. I certainly do. I just want to go on the record as well, along with my colleague. This might be standard process for the government, but it is a departure from the way things are normally done, and I'm sure MPP Bouma is aware of that as well.

Historically, we don't do it this way. So what I would like to ask of this government is an explanation from them as to why they've taken this unprecedented step to move these conversations behind closed doors. I would like to get an answer. I heard what he said, but it's not an appropriate answer. Maybe some of the other members from the government side would like to answer that. Thank you.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Mike Harris): MPP Morrison.

Ms. Suze Morrison: I would like to respond to my colleague opposite, Mr. Bouma. I think the concept that the opposition are making committee meetings unworkable is quite rich of a comment, actually. As government, you have a majority on committee. You have the voting power to do whatever you like. Even today, as I raise the objections, I know that we will be outvoted on this. You have a majority of committee. There is no committee or process in this House that is unworkable for you, because you have a majority.

I am still deeply concerned. This isn't, as you say, a standard process; it is a standard process of this government to shy away from public accountability and to shy away from open-door hearings. Anything that you can take out of the public view, you take out of the public view, even things as simple as scheduling.

We're not even debating policy today; we are scheduling. And you are so afraid of accountability—through you, Chair—that this government does not even want to let the public have a look behind the curtains to see committee business—

The Acting Chair (Mr. Mike Harris): Excuse me, MPP Morrison. I'm sorry, but I will have to ask you to just make sure that you're not impugning motive in your statements.

Ms. Suze Morrison: Apologies, Chair.

As I said, I'm deeply concerned. And this is not, historically, how this House has operated. So the suggestion that the opposition is to blame for why you have to move in camera is quite laughable, because you have a majority of the committee and there's no reason that, as the government of the day, you can't proceed however way you choose.

The problem that I'm trying to raise is that you're choosing to hide from the public over something as simple as scheduling, and I think it's incredibly inappropriate.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Mike Harris): Any further debate? MPP Bouma.

Mr. Will Bouma: Chair, through you: There you have it, and I hope the opposition members will take that back to their House leader's office so that we don't need to waste committee business doing subcommittee work, so that the subcommittees can do their job again, as they used to do routinely, and then we can not have these situations anymore. This is the second time I've gone through this this week. I look forward to the opposition resuming regular committee business and subcommittee business so that we don't need to do this and have these conversations.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Mike Harris): Any further debate? MPP Park.

Ms. Lindsey Park: I just wanted to chime in and say the position that MPP Bouma is putting forward seems reasonable to me and I'm ready to proceed with the vote.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Mike Harris): MPP Yarde.

Mr. Kevin Yarde: With regard to the vote, I would like to ask for a recorded vote.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Mike Harris): Are we ready to vote at this point? A recorded vote being requested by MPP Yarde—

Interjection.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Mike Harris): MPP Kusendova, are you able to vote by raising your hand, or will we need to do a roll call vote?

Failure of sound system.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Mike Harris): I'm going to take your silence as a no.

MPP Park, are you able to communicate with MPP Kusendova to see if there is potentially another way that she might be able to join us?

We're just having some technical difficulties. Bear with us for a second.

Interjection.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Mike Harris): MPP Kusendova, can you hear us?

Ms. Natalia Kusendova: Sorry. I just connected on my phone. I couldn't hear anything or see anything.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Mike Harris): Perfect. No, that's okay. We knew you were having some issues, so we've waited for you. If everyone is ready now, we'll have a recorded vote.

Ayes

Bouma, Gill, Kusendova, Park, Tangri, Triantafilopoulos.

Nays

Collard, Morrison, Yarde.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Mike Harris): The motion is carried.

We will give broadcast and recording and everyone just a quick minute to go in camera, and then we will continue with our business. We'll recess for a quick five minutes.

The committee recessed at 1319 and later continued in closed session.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE POLICY

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M^{me} Lucille Collard (Ottawa–Vanier L)

Mr. Parm Gill (Milton PC)

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Ms. Natalia Kusendova (Mississauga Centre / Mississauga-Centre PC)

Ms. Suze Morrison (Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre ND)

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