

**Submission to the Standing Committee on Justice Policy by Joyce Hall
regarding Bill 161**

June 12, 2020

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Submission on behalf of Joyce Hall regarding Bill 161

Dear Mr. Baber and members of the Standing Committee on Justice Policy,

As a citizen of Ontario, I have always been proud of the fact that all citizens in the province can receive justice no matter their level of income. Therefore, I am concerned about the defunding of legal aid which shoots an arrow at the heart of justice in Ontario and agree with the opinion of Parkdale Community and Legal Services who recommend the following:

1. Reverse the cuts to legal aid. Ontarians living in poverty deserve a well-funded legal aid system that supports Ontario's commitment to equality.
2. Scrap Schedules 15 and 16 of Bill 161. Maintain the current Legal Aid Services Act. We need a legal aid services act that holds the government accountable to the people of Ontario and values a robust system including individual case work, systemic work, community organizing, test cases, law reform, community development and policy work.

Also, as a member of Fair Vote Canada, I am concerned that this legislation, which would remove the obligation of the government to provide legal services, was drafted without the participation of representatives from all parties.

Asked in a federal government survey in 2017, 70% of Canadians want a government where several parties agree before a decision is made.

Do you not agree that Bill 161 would look very different if it had been arrived at with representatives of all parties collaborating around the policy table? It is particularly imperative in Ontario, because of our first-past-the-post electoral system, where governments "win" elections with 40% or less of the vote, to ensure that legislation is drafted with the participation of representatives of the majority of voters.

I would add as well, that it is a waste of talent to ignore the expertise and goodwill of elected MPPs because they belong to a different party. And that legislation is more likely to endure for more than 4 years if it is arrived at co-operatively, avoiding expensive "policy lurch."

There is a new and burgeoning awareness among citizens in the era of COVID 19 of ourselves as interconnected and interdependent, called upon in our everyday behavior, to protect not just our immediate group but others, strangers. We are particularly dependent on workers we have taken for granted to perform their duties, made now more dangerous and onerous. Ordinary people are being called to high levels of ethics

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and responsibility. So, if every citizen is important in a time of crisis, should not each one have their representative at the table as social policy and planning take place.

So I finish by calling for the input of all MPPs and interested stakeholders in reviewing Bill 161 and in the formulation of all legislation. Ontarians long to see the government to which they have no choice but to give their trust and their tax dollars employ collaborative, inclusive, evidence-based, and most of all, democratic decision making.

Thank you.

Yours truly,

Joyce Hall

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