

October 9th, 2020

VIA EMAIL

The Standing Committee of Justice Policy
Thushitha Kobikrishna (Committee Clerk)
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Toronto, ON

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To Whom It May Concern:

RE: Request to Appear/Make written submissions
Committee Business: *Moving Ontario Family Law Forward Act, 2020*
Public Hearing Dates: October 12, 14, and 15th, 2020 (Virtual)

My name is Scott Graham. I currently live in Orillia, Ontario and I am writing this letter to the Standing Committee to make either in-person and/or written submissions regarding the inclusion of a presumption of equal shared parenting in family law disputes.

After becoming a father for the first time nearly a decade ago, my spouse and I turned to the Family Courts in order to address custody and access issues relating to our now 12 year old daughter. While it is no surprise that family law matters are an extremely emotional endeavor, I found it somewhat frustrating that the Court did not presume that equal shared parenting (i.e. 50/50 and two primary parents) was in the best interests of the child. In my view, this resulted in what must have been hundreds of hours of time spent preparing and litigating interim custody/access issues. This led to a substantial emotional and financial burden on both myself and my former spouse that almost certainly could have been avoided, leaving us to better focus on raising our daughter.

While cases involving allegations of child abuse, substance abuse, neglect, and/or the Children's Aid Society are obvious exceptions to such a presumption, my view is that incorporating same into the Canadian family law regime would lead to better outcomes. More specifically:

- costs would decrease for both parties, due to avoiding needless litigation
- less litigation results in less acrimony between parents, which almost certainly must be in the best interests of children
- less emotional and financial strain on parents and children
- support payment issues that are correlated to the % of time each parent cares for the child become far less contentious
- children will benefit from the opportunity to develop and maintain meaningful relationships with both parents, as oppose to creating 'weekend' parents; and
- any concerns regarding perceived bias in the Family Court system when addressing traditional custody/access issues will be assuaged, increasing public confidence in the administration of justice

As someone who went through the strain of a Family Court proceeding, I appreciate that further discussions are being made regarding how this process can create better outcomes for families. In furtherance of same, I am requesting the opportunity to discuss my experiences as a parent at the upcoming hearing concerning the *Moving Ontario Family Law Forward Act, 2020*.

Thank you,

Scott Graham