



Committee for Health

OFFICIAL REPORT (Hansard)

Organ and Tissue Donation (Deemed
Consent) Bill: Consideration of Timetable

7 October 2021

NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

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Members present for all or part of the proceedings:

Mr Colm Gildernew (Chairperson)
Mrs Pam Cameron (Deputy Chairperson)
Ms Paula Bradshaw
Mr Jonathan Buckley
Mr Gerry Carroll
Mr Alan Chambers
Ms Órlaithí Flynn
Ms Cara Hunter
Ms Carál Ní Chuilín

The Chairperson (Mr Gildernew): Members, the call for evidence on the Bill closed on 24 September. We now need to decide whom we wish to invite to give oral evidence to assist our consideration of the Bill. We should also decide on whether we wish to request an extension of the 30-day Committee Stage period. Will the Clerk give a brief overview on the responses? I will then go to members to seek your views. Clerk, please go ahead.

The Committee Clerk: Thank you very much, Chair. I will provide an outline on the Organ and Tissue Donation (Deemed Consent) Bill. We received a total of 11 responses from organisations, all of which are in favour of the Bill. We received around 19 responses from individuals, the vast majority of which are not in favour of the Bill. There were about 16 against the Bill and three in favour of the Bill. All of those responses are available in your Bill packs, so you can have a read through them for the Committee's consideration of evidence. I have had a look, and I am happy to make recommendations on who we should invite for oral evidence. I am happy to do that now or by email. If members have any other suggestions in addition, we can look at scheduling those. As the Chair said, this is one of many Bills, and we do need to be as tight as we can while making sure that we get the evidence that is required. Chair, I am happy to mention those that I recommend that we invite and, then, members can make their suggestions.

The Chairperson (Mr Gildernew): Yes, please go ahead, Clerk, and outline those that you think we should invite from the evidence received.

The Committee Clerk: From the evidence that we have received, we are keen to get the trusts, the British Medical Association, NHS Blood and Transplant, the Public Health Agency (PHA) and Kidney Care UK up to give evidence. We also want to invite the Donate4Dáithí campaign, which has been very central in bringing this forward. Again, the recommendations are based on there being some information in those submissions that suggests possible recommendations. The likes of the trusts and the PHA will be instrumental on the promotion side of it, so we will be keen to hear from them. I am certainly happy to take views from members if there are any other organisations that you wish to hear from.

The Chairperson (Mr Gildernew): All of those are relevant. I agree that Donate4Dáithí should attend. The British Heart Foundation (BHF) was centrally involved in that campaign and worked alongside it, so, perhaps, it should also be considered. I am happy to hear members' views on what the Clerk has outlined, or on any others that should be invited. Are members content with those outlined by the Clerk?

Members indicated assent.

The Chairperson (Mr Gildernew): In view of the Committee's workload, it is proposed that we seek an extension to 21 January 2022. Apologies, Gerry.

Mr Carroll: The organisations are fine. I was just going to ask about the dates.

The Chairperson (Mr Gildernew): I suggest an extension to 21 January 2022, but that we aim to report before that date if possible.

Mr Carroll: I would like clarity on that. The Committee wants to see the Bill go through as quickly as possible; that is a given. Currently, if I have read it correctly, we have to report on 8 November. The proposition is to extend that. Chair, I appreciate that you have said that we can aim to report before 21 January, but where would the extension leave us with regard to the Bill going through to Consideration Stage and Further Consideration Stage? Will it give time for the Bill to pass? In theory, I am not opposed to the extension, but I would like clarity.

The Committee Clerk: I have had a discussion with the Bill Office on extensions, because we have a number of Bills. The Bill Office indicated that the end of January would be the latest date that would allow all of the Bills to get through their Consideration Stages. We will, perhaps, have four or five reports on the go in January. Rather than push all of those to as late as possible, I suggest a staging process for this Bill. I am hopeful that we will be able to report on this Bill and the Autism Bill early — before Christmas — but that extra couple of weeks in January will give us a bit of leeway in case some issues come up. I have been advised that, if we report by the end of January, there will be enough time for the Bill to go through the next stages.

Mrs Cameron: I do not have any issue with the proposed extension. That is fine. I just want to declare an interest as the sponsor of the private Member's Bill on autism. Given my Committee role, I want to be clear about my role as Bill sponsor.

Mr Chambers: I have a quick question, Chairman. We are saying that we might be able to report earlier than that date in January. Will that have any knock-on effect? I presume that the Bill Office will be planning its schedule of work for January, and trying to expedite things and make sure that everything goes through before the end of the mandate. Would it present any problems for the Bill Office's timing and work programme if we came back early?

The Committee Clerk: No, Alan. Once the Committee reports and signs off its report, it is down to the Department to schedule the Consideration Stage. It will be down to the Department to liaise with the Business Office to find a date. My discussions with the Bill Office have just been on the latest date for our report that would allow us to get the Bill through its stages.

The Chairperson (Mr Gildernew): It is proposed that we seek an extension to 21 January 2022 but aim to report before that date if possible. Are members content?

Members indicated assent.