



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for the Economy

OFFICIAL REPORT (Hansard)

Domestic Abuse (Safe Leave) Bill

8 December 2021

NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

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Members present for all or part of the proceedings:

Mr Matthew O'Toole (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Keith Buchanan
Mr Stewart Dickson
Mr Stephen Dunne
Mr Mike Nesbitt
Ms Claire Sugden
Mr Peter Weir

The Deputy Chairperson (Mr O'Toole): Members, there is a draft motion to extend Committee Stage of the Bill in your tabled packs. If you are content, the motion extends Committee Stage of the Bill to 11 February 2022. However, the Committee will report before that date should that be possible. If members are content, let us seek agreement on the following motion:

"That, in accordance with Standing Order 33(4), the period referred to in Standing Order 33(2) be extended to 11 February 2022, in relation to the Committee Stage of the Domestic Abuse (Safe Leave) Bill (NIA Bill 41/17-22)"?

Are members content?

Members indicated assent.

Mr K Buchanan: I am content with the motion, but, obviously, we will not be back here until 14 or 15 January.

The Committee Clerk: Our first meeting will be the week beginning 10 January, so our first meeting will be on 12 January. We are seeking an extension even though our timeline still allows us, theoretically, to complete the Committee Stage by the end of January. We are building in a bit of contingency, because it is an extremely tight turnaround time. We do not intend to use that week and a half, if we can help it.

There had been an indication that the end of January was largely the advised date by which the Committee stage would need to be completed in order for legislation to proceed. The Bill Office has advised us that there is a glut — if that is an appropriate term — of Bills that will finish their Committee Stage at the end of January. So, even if we were finishing at the end of January, because it is a private Member's Bill (PMB), it would not be scheduled first anyway. The allowance of a week and a half has been advised, and it is still workable. Executive Bills will get priority for further stages over PMBs, but we are still working on the basis that this will still be able to be completed. We will finish early if we can.

The Deputy Chairperson (Mr O'Toole): Women's Aid will provide an oral briefing on the Bill at next week's meeting. The Men's Advisory Project has also been invited to give evidence at the same time. RaISe will present its paper on the Bill next week. Members, it is also worth being aware that the Citizen Space survey on the Bill was published on Friday 3 December. The public call for evidence will be published on Wednesday 8 December.