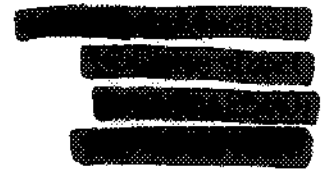


House of Representatives Standing Committee
on Family and Community Affairs

Submission No: 803

Date Received: 8-8-03

Secretary:



Dear Sir or Madam:

After having read the two page document relating to "Inquiry into child custody arrangements in the event of family separation" and the debilitating fear that the Government is considering to automatically pass a law allowing equal parenting time with their children has compelled me to write this letter.

Firstly, I strongly confer with the opinion and belief that the best interests of the children are paramount.

One would hope that both parents are mature enough to keep their emotions intact during the separation but the reality is just that, "hope". The reasons that prevent this hope from manifesting is because the separation of the family unit is emotionally debilitating, the impact is deep and painful.

It is extremely paramount to ensure that all parties maintain self-respect for themselves and especially that of the children.

Thus, Child counseling is far underrated, under funded and usually considered last and should be top priority for the children first.

As a mother of two children, I can speak first hand of the traumatic fatality that rocked my once thought of "happy family".

My children, a daughter ten years, and son seven years, have witnessed unthinkable acts of emotional, physical, violent, drug and alcohol abuse on the fathers part.

They have seen their father frivolously waste money (hundreds of thousands of dollars), use illegal substances such as, marijuana, speed, ecstasy, alcohol and other prescribed pain relievers. They have witnessed their father verbally abusing and assaulting their mother, openly pursued consummate relationships with several different women and has seen how he uses them then discards them.

Imagine being a ten year old girl and being told by daddy that he wants a new and younger family and that they can come and visit daddy and his new young family any time, and that the new lady in daddy's life whom they feel threatened by means more to daddy than his own children.

I can not stress the importance that the Government do not place on child counseling and with that the counseling should be as unquestionably as important of the parents to be assessed where the family is at emotionally and if there can be an immediate resolution before any harm comes especially to the children.

No! Each parent should not automatically have shared custody of equal time, in normal family situations where there is a quiet separation, both parents sit down and discuss what is happening and they have a mutual understanding and agreement.

Most other situations Counseling is absolutely paramount in deciding on a successful arrangement deemed appropriate by the family law court. Each situation, after considerable counseling, needs to have all of the facts delivered by a third party such as counselor or mediator.