

Secrecy bill: 'Why the rush?'

THE Right2Know (R2K) campaign has called on the ad hoc committee of the National Council of Province (NCOP) on the Protection of State Information Bill to request an extension of its deadline.

The committee had been scheduled to hold meetings over seven days to finalise the bill.

However, the committee is now scheduled to meet once today and again on May 11 to adopt the bill and forward it to the house for a vote.

Murray Hunter, national co-ordinator of the R2K campaign, wrote to the chairperson of the NCOP's ad hoc committee yesterday to ask why the schedule had been collapsed to just two days.

"We would like to ask what circumstances have motivated the committee to attempt to deal with all the proposed amendments in all the submissions made, and consider the draft proposed by the state law advisers, and vote for them in just two days" asked Hunter.

Speaking at an event commemorating World Media Freedom Day held at the Durban University of Technology yesterday, Hunter said that without press freedom the media would become the voice of the government.

"In recent years the print media have come under attack from elements of the ruling party wanting to introduce statutory regulation via a media appeals tribunal accountable to parliament."

He said the campaign had welcomed the final report released by the Press Freedom Commission on April 25. — Witness Reporter.