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Chair

Mr. Dean Allison

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• (1530)

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Ruby Dhalla (Brampton—Springdale, Lib.)): Good afternoon to everyone.

My apologies for the delay in starting. We needed to have a quorum and get all of the paperwork in order, which is now done.

Pursuant to the order of reference of Wednesday, November 22, the committee will now be resuming its study on Bill C-284. We have to go through a number of amendments clause by clause. Hopefully we can get through them expeditiously. If anyone has any questions, please let me know.

We will be starting with clause 1.

Mr. Lessard.

(On clause 1)

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Lessard (Chambly—Borduas, BQ): With your permission, Madam Chair, I humbly suggest that we would like first to deal with our amendment that allows provinces that so desire to opt out, but with the right to compensation. I have two amendments in this regard.

This is the reason for my request: last time, we made it clear that we could not support Bill C-284 as drafted unless we introduced an amendment that would allow us to amend sections 14.1 and 14.3 in order to overcome the obstacle in section 14.7.

With your permission, Madam Chair, we could begin with my amendments. That would allow us to vote for the amendments that follow.

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Ruby Dhalla): Mr. Lessard would like to start with an amendment that is later. The amendments are placed in the order they appear in the particular bill, so you would require unanimous consent for that. Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Mike Lake (Edmonton—Mill Woods—Beaumont, CPC): Which amendment does he want to go to?

Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.): I think he wants to go to amendment BQ-3.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Ruby Dhalla): Mr. Lessard would like to start.... It should say page 10, which is amendment BQ-3, on your top right-hand corner.

Is that correct, Mr. Lessard?

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Lessard: Yes.

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Ruby Dhalla): For us, as a committee, to be able to start with amendment BQ-3, we require unanimous consent; otherwise, we will proceed in the order they've been placed in your package.

• (1535)

Mrs. Lynne Yelich (Blackstrap, CPC): It would be nice if we could do everything in order, but if that's the way we have to do it, I guess we could proceed and start with amendment BQ-3, if you want. Go ahead. I think you have our consent.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Ruby Dhalla): So there's unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Ruby Dhalla): Mr. Lessard, we shall start with page 10, amendment BQ-3.

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Lessard: Madam Chair, I remind the committee that Bill C-284 does not deal with section 14.7 which grants provinces and Quebec, of course, the right to opt out and receive compensation. Given that Bill C-284 deals with the regulations that allow...

[English]

Mr. Mike Lake: I have a point of order.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Ruby Dhalla): I'm sorry, Mr. Lessard, but there seem to be some technical difficulties. A number of the members are having very faint voices, in terms of translation. Can we arrange for the volume to be increased?

Mr. Lessard, sorry about that. Could you please continue?

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Lessard: Madam Chair, let us remember that, if I am not mistaken, Bill C-284 does not deal with section 14.7 where the regulations are referred to. These are the regulations that give the provinces, and therefore Quebec, the right to opt out of this program with compensation.

In effect, when this provision about the regulations is included in Bill C-284, the provision allowing opting-out with compensation can no longer be found.

From the discussion we had at our meeting, I did not get the impression that the members of this committee intended to remove the provision; they wanted to keep it. We therefore had a procedural problem that prevented us from looking at section 14.7 as such, because the bill did not deal with it.

In order to correct this, we therefore began with the clauses already in Bill C-284. This is why our amendment proposes that Bill C-284, in clause 1, be amended by adding after line 24 on page 3 the following:

14.4 Where a government of a province has, at least 12 months before the beginning of a loan year, notified the Minister in writing that it does not wish, or no longer wishes, to participate in the plan established by sections 14.1 to 14.3, the Minister shall pay to the province, not later than six months after the end of the loan year, and each following loan year in which it does not participate in the plan, the amount that the Minister would have paid to students in the province for the loan year if the province had participated in the plan.

In that way, Madam Chair, we correct the omission that we noticed the last time.

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Ruby Dhalla): We will now start debate on the amendment for BQ-3.

Does anyone wish to speak?

Mrs. Lynne Yelich: I would actually like to just get some clarification from the officials on exactly what this means, as far as implications go.

Mr. Luc Leduc (Senior Counsel and Group Head, Legal Services, Department of Human Resources and Social Development): I'll give what we understand the provision to do and I'll let Ms. Frith talk about the impacts.

[Translation]

I am going to answer in English.

[English]

This amendment creates a separate opting-out formula with a separate compensation package for the provinces. It does not amend or purport to amend section 14, whether it's 14(7) or the other provision. It creates a completely new and separate provision.

My understanding of the provision, its effect—and then Ms. Frith will discuss the operation—is that any province, whether they have a similar type of grant or whether they haven't got a program like that, can simply opt out of the program. The way this provision is drafted, they do not have to have a similar type of program. All they have to indicate is that they no longer want to participate, so that they can opt out. Automatically, the federal government has to let them opt out.

Then there's a formula, and the formula is not that clear about how it would function. I can go into more details and Ms. Frith can go into more detail. That's my understanding.

• (1540)

Ms. Rosaline Frith (Director General, Canada Student Loans Program, Department of Human Resources and Social Development): Essentially, I would add that under the amendment a non-participating jurisdiction would receive an alternative payment without having to deliver any type of access grant. There's nothing in the clause that would require the jurisdiction to report to the program on a similar grant program.

In terms of actually calculating the alternative payment, it isn't clear how we would calculate that alternative payment. It could be something that's based on past experience or it could be a calculation based on all students who would have been eligible for such a grant. Essentially, it would leave the department in a state of uncertainty on how to proceed with the delivery of that. If in fact all jurisdictions chose to opt out of that particular element, the grant element, then we would not have any basis on which to calculate the alternative payments.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Ruby Dhalla): Thank you very much.

Mr. Lake.

Mr. Mike Lake: I find it interesting looking at this. Right off the bat it says toward the end that they are paying the amount the minister would have paid to students, but at the beginning it doesn't attach any kind of condition whatsoever to that. It seems as though it basically becomes a blanket transfer of cash to provinces with absolutely no conditions—nothing to do with post-secondary education even. Am I correct in that?

Ms. Rosaline Frith: That is correct.

Mr. Mike Lake: If you take the money and use it for something specific, that's obviously set out in the act. But if you say you don't want that, you can basically take it and give it to whomever you want for whatever you want.

Ms. Rosaline Frith: That is correct.

Mr. Mike Lake: You can build a highway with it if you want. You can do whatever you want with it.

We have a legislative clerk here, and I'd like to ask her advice on whether this is in order.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Ruby Dhalla): We can proceed with debate and get back to Mr. Lake on that. The chair can rule it out of order.

Mr. Mike Lake: Okay, but as we proceed with the debate, it's kind of important to understand right off the bat whether it is in order or not.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Ruby Dhalla): We'll let Mr. Lessard speak, and then the chair will make a ruling.

Mr. Mike Lake: Okay, but what if more people want to speak after Mr. Lessard? Are you going to wait until after debate is done before you make a ruling?

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Ruby Dhalla): I think after Mr. Lessard speaks we'll have a discussion by all parliamentarians.

Does anyone else wish to speak, in addition to Mr. Lessard?

Mr. Mike Lake: We won't know until after Mr. Lessard speaks because we don't know what he's going to speak about. But you can put me on the list if you want.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Ruby Dhalla): Mr. Lessard.

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Lessard: Madam Chair, I assumed that our amendment was admissible. This will perhaps give the clerk some time to look at the matter. In our view, it is totally admissible.

My question is for Mr. Leduc and Ms. Frith.

You have just told us that, with the present wording, provinces would be under no obligation to have a similar scholarship program. At the moment, the act provides for a similar formula.

Is it correct to say that the effect of our amendment is to reflect the situation that is provided for in the act?

• (1545)

Mr. Luc Leduc: Section 14(7) of the act that you refer to is very specific. Let me read you a short extract. This is what it says:

The following amounts shall be included in the calculations described in the definitions "net costs" and "total program net costs" in subsection (6) only if the government of the province satisfies the Minister, by written notice received by the Minister before the beginning of the loan year in question, that, in relation to the matter in question, the provincial student financial assistance plan has substantially the same effect as the plan established by this Act and the regulations:

Amendment BQ-3 goes beyond this provision. It simply says this:

14.4 Where a government of a province has, at least 12 months before the beginning of a loan year, notified the Minister in writing that it does not wish, or no longer wishes, to participate in the plan [...]

The minister must then—and I see it as an obligation—pay the money to the province according to the formula. There are no preconditions.

Mr. Yves Lessard: Yes.

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Ruby Dhalla): Thank you very much.

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Lessard: Madam Chair, I am going to continue.

In Quebec, our understanding has always been this. First, education is a provincial responsibility. Most provinces have their own loans and grants programs—at least this is the case in Quebec—and reciprocity or equivalencies are already established. The regulations do not say that the federal program takes precedence because this is a provincial domain.

So we cannot give an amendment a meaning that would take away provincial powers. With all due respect, Mr. Leduc, I think that the way in which you are drafting things changes the tone of the regulations.

Ms. Rosaline Frith: Let me give you a current example. The province of Quebec provides some grants for which there is no compensatory payment because the grants are not...How shall I say?

[English]

They're not significantly similar to the federal program.

[Translation]

Where the essence of the program is not really similar to the federal program, there is no compensatory payment under the current system.

This gives us a control mechanism to make sure that a grant access program is established by the province.

In this case, the amendment completely removes this precondition.

Mr. Yves Lessard: Madam Chair, I just have one question, to make sure that I really understand.

Which present grant program in Quebec would not meet these conditions, since they are student grants?

Ms. Rosaline Frith: The program for students from low-income families does not exist in Quebec in the same way as in the federal program. Part of the program is for people with disabilities. That part corresponds, but the other does not.

Some Quebec programs do not match the federal program.

• (1550)

Mr. Yves Lessard: Over the years, has the federal government refused to pay compensation because a program was not similar?

Ms. Rosaline Frith: Yes, absolutely.

Quebec makes a request each year. Their agencies give us information and we analyze it. We go through all the information available.

In some years, we may have to ask for more information. We do the analysis as the act requires and, at the end of the financial year, we decide on the amount we are going to pay to Quebec.

In some cases, we do not pay.

Mr. Yves Lessard: Have you ever refused to make payments?

Ms. Rosaline Frith: Refused? At the end of the financial year, we send a statement in which we highlight the parts of the program that conform to the act and we show the payment.

Mr. Yves Lessard: Relatively speaking, in terms of the amount due, have you ever refused to make payments to Quebec?

[English]

Ms. Rosaline Frith: Quebec receives the proportion of payments for all similar programs that they are required to received under the law.

It has to be a significantly similar program in order for us to make the alternative payment to any jurisdiction that is a non-participating jurisdiction.

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Lessard: I will yield the floor to others, Madam Chair, but I am not convinced.

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Ruby Dhalla): Thank you, Mr. Lessard.

You may not be satisfied with the response I'm about to give, but Mr. Lake has raised a point of order in regard to admissibility.

Since the amendment is focused on the opting-out provision, it is not a part of Bill C-284; hence I'm going to have to rule it inadmissible, as it is beyond the scope of the bill.

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Lessard: With all respect, Madam Chair, please understand that we believe it is admissible because it deals with the amendments to Bill C-284.

If by chance we had affected section 14.7, I would have understood your refusal. But the provisions of Bill C-284 already give us room to submit the amendment. This is why we sincerely believe that this amendment must be considered admissible, Madam Chair.

I would like the amendment to be looked at in the light of the arguments that I have put forward. I say again that we have not affected section 14.7.

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Ruby Dhalla): Mr. Lessard, the authority on which I based my ruling is found on page 654 of the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*. It's also going to apply to the subsequent amendment BQ-4.

If anyone would like to challenge the chair's ruling, we can definitely do that, as this is not a debatable matter.

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Lessard: [Editor's note: inaudible] your permission.

[English]

Mr. Michael Savage (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Madam Chair, I have a point of order.

Can we be told if there are any other amendments that are out of order?

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Ruby Dhalla): I have ruled both amendments BQ-3 and BQ-4 out of order.

Mr. Michael Savage: What about the Liberal amendments? What about amendment L-1 on page 9?

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Ruby Dhalla): Prior to the commencement of debate on any of the other amendments that are brought forward, nothing has been deemed to this point inadmissible.

Mr. Michael Savage: Were the Bloc ones inadmissible before we had debate? Are you suggesting that something...?

You government chairs of these committees are very hard to deal with. Is this in the book that you guys were given?

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

• (1555)

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Ruby Dhalla): I wasn't privy to that book.

I have been advised by our expert legislative clerk that the chair cannot rule something inadmissible until it's been brought forward and an amendment has been moved.

Hon. Geoff Regan: Are you saying we can't bring forward amendment L-1 now?

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Ruby Dhalla): We can bring forward amendment L-1 once we commence our debate on the particular motion and it's brought forward. Right now we're discussing amendment BQ-3, which is on page 10, and Mr. Lessard asked for a few minutes.

Mr. Lessard, your only option at this point is to challenge the ruling of the chair. We can have a vote.

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Lessard: Madam Chair, it is of course with deep regret that I challenge your ruling. This is why: our amendment deals only with the clauses of Bill C-284. That is to say that the opting-out provision applies only to the clauses of Bill C-284. This is why we believe that it is admissible, and why I challenge your ruling, Madam Chair.

[English]

Mr. Mike Lake: This is not debatable.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Ruby Dhalla): It's non-debatable, so we can ask for a—

Mr. Mike Lake: Can we get a recorded vote, please?

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Ruby Dhalla): We can get a recorded vote if Mr. Lessard would like.

The question is, shall the ruling of the chair be sustained?

Mr. Mike Lake: It's a recorded vote, right? I asked for a recorded vote.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Ruby Dhalla): It's a recorded vote, yes.

An hon. member: We respect our Chair.

(Ruling of the chair sustained [See *Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Ruby Dhalla): The ruling of the chair is sustained. I'm sorry, Mr. Lessard.

If we would like, I can also make a ruling with respect to amendment BQ-4.

Going on, we're going to start with amendment BQ-1, which is on page 1.

Mr. Mike Lake: Can we vote on amendment BQ-4?

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Ruby Dhalla): We've just dealt with amendment BQ-3, which has been ruled inadmissible. Amendment BQ-4, which is on page 11 and which should be the last page of your package, will also be ruled inadmissible.

We can finish up with that, perhaps, if everyone would like, and then move on to the first amendment.

Once again, amendment BQ-4 will be ruled inadmissible, as it is out of the scope of Bill C-284. If anyone would like to challenge the chair's ruling, they may do so at this particular point.

Mr. Ken Epp (Edmonton—Sherwood Park, CPC): I have a point of order.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Ruby Dhalla): Go ahead, Mr. Epp.

Mr. Ken Epp: I don't think that motion has yet been moved, has it? There's no point in ruling it inadmissible if it hasn't been moved.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Ruby Dhalla): Would anyone like to move it? I'm asking for the committee's consensus, or we can start back at BQ-1, at the first amendment.

Hon. Geoff Regan: Madam Chair, I wonder if we could move to L-1. I think it would resolve the matter Mr. Lessard is concerned about, not perhaps in exactly the way he has in mind, but I think it does so in the way that the present act already provides for.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Ruby Dhalla): Can we get consent from Mr. Lessard to proceed with L-1 prior to dealing with BQ-4?

Go ahead, Mr. Lessard.

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Lessard: Where is the amendment?

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Ruby Dhalla): It's L-1 on page 9. Mr. Regan is asking if he can move Liberal amendment 1.

Just so we're all on the same page, I had asked that we move amendment BQ-4, which was going to be ruled inadmissible. Mr. Epp raised a point of order, saying that it hadn't been brought forward on the floor; the motion had not been moved. Mr. Regan then interjected and wanted to deal with Liberal amendment 1 on page 9. In order for us to be able to deal with amendment L-1, we would need the consent of Mr. Lessard, as we had brought forward the option of discussion on BQ-4.

• (1600)

Mr. Mike Lake: I thought we had originally decided to do BQ-3 and BQ-4 together. No?

Let's get rid of BQ-4. We know it's out of order. Let's dispose of that. We can go to L-1 if we want, but let's do this in some way that makes sense here.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Ruby Dhalla): As chair, I would suggest that we follow that format—that we deal with BQ-4.

Could we please have Mr. Lessard move it?

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Lessard: Madam Chair, I think that we should not waste the committee's time. When you ruled—and the committee has supported your decision—that amendment BQ-3 was not admissible, I believe that you also automatically condemned amendment BQ-4 to the same fate. In fact, the latter was brought in to support the former. Madam Chair, amendment BQ-3 corrected a gap in the regulations. Amendment BQ-4 led us to discuss an even greater say for the provinces. It tightens things up even more. I suppose that you are going to declare it inadmissible too, and the committee, if it maintains its logic, will concur. We will respect your decision, Madam Chair, because the committee has dealt with the matter.

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Ruby Dhalla): Thank you very much, Mr. Lessard.

Once again, BQ-4 is also inadmissible, along with BQ-3.

We were supposed to now start at BQ-1, which is on page 1, and now Mr. Regan has moved that we start at amendment L-1, which is located on page 9. In order to do so, I will require unanimous consent from the committee.

Do I have unanimous consent to proceed to amendment L-1 on page 9?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Ruby Dhalla): Thank you.

Mr. Regan, could I ask you to please move your amendment?

Hon. Geoff Regan: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I move that Bill C-284 in clause 1 be amended by adding after line 24 on page 3 the following:

14.4 Every reference in this Act to “to persons pursuant to regulations made under paragraph 15(p)” shall be read as a reference to “to persons pursuant to sections 14.1 to 14.3 and regulations made under paragraph 15(p)”.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Ruby Dhalla): Does any other member wish to debate or speak on this particular amendment?

Go ahead, Mr. Chong.

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'm surprised that the Liberal Party would be proposing such an amendment. Basically it allows no role for the federal government with respect to the Canada access grants or the Canada student loans program.

As it stands right now we have a program, a national program, that is directly administered in nine provinces and one territory by the Government of Canada. With respect to the other province and the other two territories, moneys are only released by the Government of Canada if the provincial programs are substantively the same as the national program.

What this is proposing to do is to eliminate those conditions on the release of moneys; in other words, why bother even having a national program if we're not going to have any standards with respect to these three programs?

I'm surprised that we would propose this, because that's in effect what it's doing; it's in effect proposing a new regime for provinces, so that they would be eligible for transfer of alternative payments by excluding the Canada access grants from the application of subsection 14(7).

Just so everybody on the committee is clear, subsection 14(7) as it currently stands requires a province to satisfy the Government of Canada that their provincially or territorially run programs are substantially the same as the Government of Canada's program, as the national standard, and only when we are satisfied as a government that those provincially run programs, that those territorially run programs, are in effect the same will we release those moneys to the province or territory.

In effect, what we are doing here with this amendment is getting rid of the application of subsection 14(7), thereby really throwing out the window any sort of national program when it comes to Canada student loans.

I was elected as a member of Parliament to act on behalf of all Canadians, not to get rid of programs of national import. I'm sure the witnesses in front of us today, from the department, can corroborate what I've just indicated to the committee.

• (1605)

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Ruby Dhalla): Thank you, Mr. Chong.

Next on the list I have Mr. Lessard.

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Lessard: Madam Chair, we had this amendment in our hands when we prepared our amendment. By its nature, this amendment tries to amend Bill C-284. The drawback, in our view, is that it has the opposite effect to the one that Mr. Chong claims. It restricts the power of the provinces when they are establishing grant programs that fall under their jurisdiction.

The reason why we presented a more clearly-expressed motion that...

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Ruby Dhalla): Sorry, Mr. Lessard.

I have Ms. Yelich on a point of order.

Mrs. Lynne Yelich: I wanted to get in line here. Is this amendment admissible?

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Ruby Dhalla): Yes, it will be admissible.

Mrs. Lynne Yelich: Could you please seek advice?

Mr. Mike Lake: The amendment is admissible?

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Ruby Dhalla): Yes.

Mrs. Lynne Yelich: And yet it sounds like it's not any different from the ones we ruled out of order.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Ruby Dhalla): This amendment, as I've been informed, versus the other two that were ruled inadmissible, actually gives advice; there's nothing actually set out in terms of concrete restrictions.

Mrs. Lynne Yelich: I would like to ask, then, the officials—

Mr. Mike Lake: It's not—

Mrs. Lynne Yelich: Yes, it's not my turn.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Ruby Dhalla): Mr. Lessard, you have the floor. Please continue.

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Lessard: Madam Chair, I have made my views on the matter known. It would be good to let our friends opposite express their opinion.

But I take the opposite view, Mr. Chong. This provision restricts the powers that are presently in the regulations even if it seems only to be amending Bill C-284.

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Ruby Dhalla): Mr. Lake.

Mr. Mike Lake: I go back to the same questions I had the last time around. I'd be curious to hear from the officials today what the real impact of this is going to be, if this amendment is added to the bill.

Mr. Luc Leduc: I'd be pleased, Mr. Lake, to address your question, the first part of what we understand the provision to do, and then Ms. Frith will talk about the impacts of it.

When I read the amendment, with section 14 today, it clearly,

[Translation]

I see it clearly,

[English]

allows provinces to obtain the alternative payments without being required to set up their own Canada access grant. By bypassing subsection 14(7) and amending only the paragraphs in the way the member drafted it very specifically, it only amends two particular provisions of section 14 and they do not touch 14(7), the requirement to have a similar program in place. Without touching 14(7), that requirement, as I understand the legislation, will allow the province to obtain the alternative payments,

• (1610)

[Translation]

without establishing the grant. This gives the provinces even more power, because they do not have to establish a similar system. They can put no system at all in place, or one that is less than equivalent. Ms. Frith can explain it to you.

[English]

Ms. Rosaline Frith: Essentially, the non-participating jurisdiction could put in place a grant program, but that grant program could be targeted at a completely different audience from the Canada access grant target that has been set out by the government. We would still be obliged to make an alternative payment for a grant, which might not have the same outcome as the intended program outcome that has been put in place.

Mr. Mike Lake: Would it have to be still a post-secondary program? Are there limitations at all? Could a province set up a universal child care benefit of its own and use money towards something like that? Are there any restrictions with this amendment?

Mr. Luc Leduc: I don't see any more restrictions in the way. Without section 14(7), it's totally.... The minister of the jurisdiction just says, "I'm opting out. I do not want to participate in those." Then the formula that is currently in place would come into play and the minister would have to fund. There wouldn't be any need, the way I see it, for him to have a corresponding grants program.

Mr. Mike Lake: So then the budget for the program could be used to pave a highway or to fund another program or....

Mr. Luc Leduc: Ms. Frith tells me that she believes the province—and I may have misspoken because of amendment BQ-3—has to have some type of program, but obviously it wouldn't have to be similar to the federal program.

Mr. Mike Lake: It would be some type of program, but there would be no control for the federal government in terms of making sure that it actually accomplishes the goals of the original program.

Ms. Rosaline Frith: That is correct. It would not have to have the same outcome. So it could be any program that is similar to the example I gave earlier, where non-participating jurisdictions submit to us information on programs they are offering to post-secondary education but that are not substantially similar to the outcomes intended from the federal programs, and therefore no alternative payments would be made today under the current regulations. This amendment would remove that requirement.

Mr. Mike Lake: So in terms of accountability on the federal government's part, how would we be able to assure the Auditor General, for example, that we're accountable, that the money we're spending on this is actually going to what we say it's going towards?

Ms. Rosaline Frith: There would be no assurance. There would be no formal mechanism in place by which we could say, here's the control we put in place in order to ensure we are meeting the same outcomes through the alternative payments as we are through our direct grants and participating jurisdictions.

Mr. Mike Lake: Okay.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Ruby Dhalla): Thank you, Mr. Lake.

We have Ms. Yelich.

Mrs. Lynne Yelich: That is more or less what I was going to ask. Does this get away from the purpose of the bill? Isn't that what happened?

What is the difference between the Bloc amendment and this amendment? Mr. Regan said there is a difference, but it doesn't sound as though there is much of a difference, other than that you can't pave a highway with this one and with the other one you could.

Mr. Luc Leduc: The difference is that amendment BQ-3—and I misspoke—doesn't require a province to set up any type of Canada access grant or anything. There is no access grant for low-income families and no access grant for disabled persons. Amendment L-1 requires that the province have some type of grant for low-income families and for physically disabled persons, but just some type of grant.

• (1615)

Mrs. Lynne Yelich: I want to go back to why this one has not been ruled out of order, because it's similar, really.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Ruby Dhalla): In terms of admissibility of different amendments, I've been advised by our legislative clerk that admissibility is based strictly on procedural grounds and not on anything else.

Amendment L-1, I've been informed, maintains the status quo—it's simply advice—versus amendments BQ-3 and BQ-4.

Hon. Geoff Regan: I think a better way to say it, rather than that it's advice, is that it's interpretive. It indicates how you interpret the references in proposed sections 14.1, 14.2, and 14.3, for example. It's saying that every reference, etc., “shall be read as”. To me that's not advice; it's instruction on how to interpret the legislation, and that's the difference from Mr. Lessard's.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Ruby Dhalla): Yes, Mr. Regan, you could use that word.

After Mr. Regan, you're next on the list.

Mrs. Lynne Yelich: So it would be the implications of this particular clause. I guess it's maybe answered by your former answer.

I'll defer for a few minutes.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Ruby Dhalla): Next on the list is Mr. Brown.

Mr. Patrick Brown (Barrie, CPC): Thank you, Chairman.

I want to go back to your ruling about this being advisory rather than “requiring” the government. I think it's something important for the Bloc to take note of, in the sense that the status quo of this bill wasn't good enough and was inadequate for that party a few weeks ago. If this suggested solution by the Liberals only adds an advisory, a suggestion to the government, and it respects the status quo.... That's what the chairman said: this is the status quo with advice on it.

Advice is not binding for the government. This is Quebec losing \$5.4 million all over again, with, on top of that, a tidbit of advice saying it would be a good idea not to take \$5.4 million from Quebec.

At the end of the day, this bill, if this amendment is successful, is still a huge loss for Quebec. I want to be very clear about that.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Ruby Dhalla): Next on the list I have Madame Savoie.

Ms. Denise Savoie (Victoria, NDP): Thank you.

I wondered what restriction is foreseen in subsection 14(7). Would we have to add to Mr. Regan's amendment, to achieve the goal you're suggesting, that it would have to be a similar program? Is there something we could add? Whether it's acceptable to the Bloc or not, I don't know, but is there something that could be added?

I'm asking, Madam Chair, through you to the officials.

Mr. Luc Leduc: Would there be various corrections, amendments, changes that could be made? I'm not certain it's proper, but if the chair wants me to speculate on what could be done, I could offer. I don't know whether the chair wants me to offer ways of improving. I don't think it's really my role.

Mrs. Lynne Yelich: I would like to challenge the chair's decision—I'm allowed to do that, am I not?—on its being admissible.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Ruby Dhalla): Yes, you can challenge the chair in regard to the decision. That's an option that exists.

Mrs. Lynne Yelich: Then I will.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Ruby Dhalla): Okay.

The challenge before the committee right now is in regard to the chair's ruling. The question I will put before the committee is whether or not the ruling of the chair shall be sustained.

Hon. Michael Chong: With respect to...?

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Ruby Dhalla): With respect to the admissibility of amendment L-1 on page 9, which I ruled admissible.

An hon. member: Can we have a recorded vote?

The Chair: It will be a recorded vote.

(Ruling of the chair sustained [See *Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Ruby Dhalla): The ruling of the chair has been sustained.

Going on to resume debate, we have Mr. Chong.

• (1620)

Hon. Michael Chong: I just want to go back to his point about why we're not supporting this amendment.

I'm actually astounded that members of the Liberal Party are supporting this. They talk a good game about programs of national import, like the Canada Health Act, for example. The Canada Health Act has restrictions on moneys that are transferred to the provinces. The Government of Canada does not transfer money through the Canada Health Act to the provinces unless the five principles of the Canada Health Act are met and unless certain other conditions are met.

The same exists with the Canada access grants. The Government of Canada does not transfer money to the provinces or to the territories unless they can assure us that they have a similar program in place, with standards similar to those that we've set out.

In essence, what you're doing here is getting rid of those standards. With respect to the Canada health transfer, it would be akin to getting rid of the Canada Health Act and the principles therein that make the funding contingent. In essence, what you're saying here is that the alternative payments will no longer be contingent on any sort of standard and that any province can do what it wants. Some provinces may have generous programs. Some provinces may have programs that don't address persons with disabilities or don't address those who are disadvantaged.

I'm quite astounded that you would, as federal MPs in a federal Parliament, put in place an amendment that would get rid of these standards that have been put in place and that have been in place, as a matter of fact, for decades. I'm not sure where this is coming from. As we've heard from the expert witnesses from the department, if you put this in place, in essence you're making the alternative payments not contingent on anything. With the exception of some sort of student program, there will be no standards across the country. Provinces can opt out and put in place whatever programs they want, and there will be no necessity for any of the standards that we currently have in place to ensure that Canadians, regardless of where they live in this country, have similar programs and similar access to social services.

So, again, I'm not sure where this is coming from, and I'd urge the members of the Liberal Party to take a second look at this amendment.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Ruby Dhalla): Thank you, Mr. Chong.

Going on, we have Mr. Regan.

Hon. Geoff Regan: Thank you, Madam Chair. I have two things.

First of all, in relation to the suggestion that this provision is only advisory, I think it's important to understand that it is in fact interpretive. In other words, it uses the word "shall". Something that's providing advice doesn't just say "shall". This is basically directing the courts and others on how to interpret this legislation. That's what it's about.

We also know there are different circumstances and different education systems across this country. With universities, for example, we know that on the cost of a university education, tuition levels in Quebec are much lower than they are in other provinces. That has to be considered. But we've also heard from the witnesses today that a province that opts out would have to offer programs for low-income students, persons with disabilities, etc.

The point is that this does cover it. I disagree with Mr. Chong in terms of his interpretation, but I respect his view. He has the right to interpret it as he sees fit, but I disagree with the interpretation he's offering. This is a good way to solve the problem the government has tried to bring forward in an attempt to derail the bill.

I hope the members will support the bill when it comes to the final vote, and this motion as well.

• (1625)

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Ruby Dhalla): Thank you, Mr. Regan.

I have Madame Savoie.

[Translation]

Ms. Denise Savoie: Thank you.

I feel that the amendment recognizes the principle of open federalism that many Conservatives talk about. It recognizes that education needs are perhaps different in Quebec. For cultural reasons, Quebec is in a specific situation that your party recognized by a motion some time ago.

If we see Quebec culturally as a nation within federalism, I feel that it is important to recognize education. For me, this motion balances what Quebec needs to operate in an area under provincial jurisdiction and what the rest of Canada wants.

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Ruby Dhalla): Thank you very much.

Going on, we have Mr. Lake.

Mr. Mike Lake: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I think we're facing the same problem that we face over and over again in the committee. We have legislation that has a pretty big hole in it and the opposition is desperately trying to fill the hole. But of course it's like the kid who sticks his finger in the hole in the dyke; the next thing you know you've got eight other holes opening up and popping open.

This is the wrong way to go about this. We've heard from the officials that clearly by doing this we're bypassing 14(7). Clearly, we're going to wind up with unintended consequences here.

It's very interesting to hear some of the things I'm hearing from the other side, in the context of things that we've heard as we've discussed past bills. There is no consistency in terms of the approach. On the child care thing, it's all about accountability and reporting and everything else, and then on this we've totally thrown any kind of accountability out the window. There's no consistency.

I think as a committee we have to seriously consider the ramifications of this approach to all of the legislation we discuss as we go through this. It's not just about this legislation, it's about every piece of legislation. It's about our very effectiveness as a committee as we go through these processes.

I would encourage that the members of this committee really seriously consider voting against this amendment, and let's move on to some things where we can actually accomplish something.

Hon. Geoff Regan: [*Inaudible—Editor*]

Mr. Mike Lake: I'll leave it at that.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Ruby Dhalla): Thank you, Mr. Lake.

Are there any other members who wish to speak on the motion?

Mrs. Lynne Yelich: Yes, I would like to, and I again would like to refer to the officials.

First of all, I'd like to make the point that the effect of this amendment is that provinces don't need an access grants program. They just need a grant program, not the access grants program. The Liberals are saying they want to support the objectives of the Canada access grants, but they are doing so with an amendment that completely undermines the objectives of this Canada access grants program. So the provinces no longer need to show their grant program is an access grants program; that's what I see as the objective or the effect of this amendment.

I'm asking the officials if they agree with that, and if they also agree with Mr. Regan's challenge to Mr. Chong, where he said he doesn't agree that the advisory is important. I'd like you to please comment.

Mr. Luc Leduc: I will deal with the latter part of the question, if the chair permits. I certainly don't want to go against the chair's ruling, but to answer the member's question, the type of amendment that is put there is an indirect amendment to section 14. It says anyone who reads the act from now on shall read those words.

It's a perfectly well-drafted, crafted, amendment. But it is whatever the member said. Advisory? I'm not certain what that means.

Hon. Geoff Regan: Interpretive.

• (1630)

Mr. Luc Leduc: It's much more than interpretive, in my view. It is a direction to read into section 14 those words that the amendment does not purport to say, but which it does in fact say.

Where it says, "Every reference in this Act", that is a command by Parliament. It says:

Every reference in this Act to "to persons pursuant to regulations made under paragraph 15(p)" shall be read as a reference to "to persons pursuant to sections 14.1 to 14.3 and regulations made under paragraph 15(p)".

That is an indirect amendment. That is opening up section 14 of the act indirectly to say that you are obliged to read in those words when you read section 14. Section 14 is not a section that is currently part of Bill C-284.

I'm just answering the member's question on that first part.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Ruby Dhalla): Go ahead.

Ms. Rosaline Frith: On the other part of the question, you're correct, this amendment would mean that the non-participating jurisdictions must put in place a grant—any grant. That grant doesn't necessarily have as its targeted audience first-year, first-time students. It doesn't necessarily have students from low-income families. It doesn't pick up 6% of student borrowers who normally would be receiving grants because they're coming from low-income families.

In the way it's set out, there's no requirement for the federal government to be able to ensure that the grant meets the intended outcome, whether it's for a low-income family or whether it would be for permanent disability.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Ruby Dhalla): The last person on the list is Mr. Chong.

Hon. Michael Chong: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Just to build on what Madam Yelich was asking about, and just to be clear, this amendment would not require a province to have programs in place for persons with disabilities and for persons from low-income families. Is that correct?

Ms. Rosaline Frith: It's an access grant for those students who are specifically laid out in today's regulations. That is correct.

Hon. Michael Chong: So the provinces would not be required to have those programs in place to receive the alternative payment if this amendment passes.

Ms. Rosaline Frith: If this amendment were to pass, they would have to put in place some form of a grant program, but not necessarily the grant program the federal government has set out currently.

Hon. Michael Chong: For persons...

Ms. Rosaline Frith: For persons from low-income families and for persons with permanent disabilities.

Hon. Michael Chong: Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Ruby Dhalla): Thank you, Mr. Chong.

We're going to go on to the question.

Shall the amendment carry?

Mr. Mike Lake: I'd like a recorded vote, please.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Ruby Dhalla): It will be a recorded vote.

(Amendment negated [See *Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Ruby Dhalla): Now we can start from the beginning of the package, as we had intended an hour and a half ago.

Mr. Lessard, please move your amendment BQ-1, which is on page 1.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Lessard: Madam Chair, with your approval, I am going to withdraw amendments BQ-1 and BQ-2.

There is no longer any reason for us to propose amendments.

[*English*]

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Ruby Dhalla): Mr. Lessard has withdrawn BQ-1, which is on page 1. He has also withdrawn BQ-2, which is on page 8.1.

We will now go to amendment NDP-1, which is on page 1.

Ms. Savoie, could you please move the amendment?

• (1635)

Ms. Denise Savoie: Thank you.

The first amendment is to delete lines 17 and 18 on page 2, and the intent was to respond to the need expressed by some of the witnesses who spoke about mature students.

But I also want to add that I think it's very unfortunate that the Bloc members have decided to withdraw their support for an amendment, because it in fact withdraws the possibility of a program for the rest of Canadian students.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Ruby Dhalla): Thank you. I have Ms. Yelich.

Mrs. Lynne Yelich: I would again like to ask the officials about this particular amendment. I would like to ask whether it isn't beyond the scope of the bill, when you start talking about mature students and not about the intent of the original access grants, for access for those who are disabled, in particular, and others who are in particular categories. But now we're looking at mature students. I would just like to ask whether or not this wouldn't be quite out of the scope.

Mr. Luc Leduc: It does change the scope of those who....

We're talking about amendment NDP-1 right now?

It does expand on the original bill. I'll leave it there.

Mrs. Lynne Yelich: Then it's possibly out of order?

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Ruby Dhalla): Once again, in terms of admissibility, it's nothing personal against anyone; the admissibility decision is really based on procedural grounds. It's not made on legal grounds, and it's made on the advice of the legislative clerk, who has extensive experience. If anyone wishes to challenge the—

Mr. Mike Lake: Well, what is the ruling? What are you ruling?

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Ruby Dhalla): The ruling is admissibility. I was just commenting on her.... But if anyone wishes to challenge the chair's ruling in terms of admissibility or not, they're free to do so.

This particular amendment will be admissible.

Mrs. Lynne Yelich: This is beyond the scope of our original Canada access grant and its mandate; it's quite beyond it.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Ruby Dhalla): Madame Savoie has a point of order.

Ms. Denise Savoie: On a point of order, I think the officials have not said it's beyond the scope; they said it expands, which is different.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Ruby Dhalla): Once again, the amendment NDP-1 is admissible.

Is there any further debate?

Hon. Geoff Regan: Question.

Ms. Ruby Dhalla: Shall the amendment carry?

(Amendment negated)

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Ruby Dhalla): We will now go on to the second amendment, NDP-2, which is on page 2.

Could I please have Madame Savoie move the amendment?

Ms. Denise Savoie: Thank you.

Well, rolling merrily along here, it is replacing lines 19 and 20 on page 2 with the following:

has never completed a program of studies described in paragraph (b);

The purpose for it was that the way the access grant reads now, it really puts students who have started and are perhaps two years in the program and decide to change from arts to science.... It basically eliminates them from this grant. So it seemed pretty straightforward.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Ruby Dhalla): Are there any other members wishing to speak on this particular amendment?

Then we are going to call the question.

(Amendment negated)

• (1640)

Ms. Denise Savoie: I have a feeling we're going to.... It seems a little pointless to continue: the vote seems to be written from the beginning.

Shall I just continue?

Mrs. Lynne Yelich: In all fairness, what we were talking about is not really beyond this, but it is a bill. It is a new program, and if I remember correctly.... I would ask the officials to again comment on how much we know about it. Do we have any way of measuring this bill? How much do we know about the bill and its successes? There's no track record.

Hon. Geoff Regan: Madam Chair, on a point of order.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Ruby Dhalla): Madam Yelich, there's no amendment on the floor. Once an amendment is put forward, at that time we can resume discussion and debate.

Madame Savoie, would you like to put forward amendment NDP-3?

Ms. Denise Savoie: The amendment deletes lines 21 to 25 on page 2. I think we all heard that rather than have income-based grants, the majority of the students' associations have asked that the grant system be needs-based, as is the loan program. That is the point here.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Ruby Dhalla): Thank you.

Mr. Savage.

Mr. Michael Savage: I don't want to harbour unrealistic expectations, and I share Ms. Savoie's concern about this. This clearly was a bill that we thought was good for students. We tried hard to work with the Bloc to get their support, with a couple of different amendments. It appears that's not going to be the case, but I would implore the Bloc nonetheless, as a last-minute cause, to give due consideration to what this will do for Canadian students and to support the bill. I'll support this amendment.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Ruby Dhalla): Thank you very much.

Mr. Epp.

Mr. Ken Epp: Thank you.

I have a question about this whole clause whose deletion is being proposed, and I think it's germane to the debate here. The way I understand this, it says students would be qualified for a grant if they're a "person in respect of whom a national child benefit supplement, or a special allowance under the *Children's Special Allowances Act*, is payable". We're dealing here with people who are in elementary or high school; otherwise, they wouldn't be eligible for this. It continues, "is payable or would be payable if the person was less than eighteen years of age".

If you have a 50-year-old, would they be eligible? To me, this is terribly ambiguous. I don't know. I don't understand why that criterion would come in there at all. I would like to have Mr. Regan comment on that if he can.

Hon. Geoff Regan: I'd be happy to do that, Madam Chair.

This is basically how you define someone as a low-income person. Is my honourable colleague Mr. Epp really saying that a person...? Let's say a person is 50 and they have a very low income. They're ready and they want to go back to university to get an education so that they can improve their lot in life. Should there be no assistance for them to do so? Should we exclude them because of the fact that they're 50?

Mr. Ken Epp: I don't think you should be implying motives here.

Hon. Geoff Regan: I'm sorry.

Mr. Ken Epp: I'm trying to understand what this thing is trying to do. When you talk about special allowances under the *Children's Special Allowances Act*, you're not dealing with a 50-year-old there, I wouldn't think. It's a strange way of defining an income level, in my view.

Hon. Geoff Regan: I think you would find similar kinds of definitions in other legislation.

Mr. Ken Epp: Thank you for that explanation.

Hon. Geoff Regan: Thanks for the question.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Ruby Dhalla): Mr. Lake is on the list.

Mr. Mike Lake: I'll comment that if you actually read this, it uses the words "eighteen years of age", but it talks about how it "is payable or would be". It doesn't actually define it by age.

I'd just like to talk to the witnesses and ask them if they could speak to the impact of this amendment, of taking this out.

Ms. Rosaline Frith: This amendment essentially removes any requirement for grant recipients to be eligible based on family income, as was just described. That means all students, irrespective of family income, may apply. I would say a rough estimate of the cost for this would likely be an additional \$100 million annually in grants that we would be giving out.

• (1645)

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Ruby Dhalla): I now have Mr. Regan and Ms. Savoie.

Hon. Geoff Regan: Madame Savoie is going to make a point, so I'll let her make the point in response to that. I think it's all about the next amendment.

Ms. Denise Savoie: That's right. I was going to say that the next amendments will circumscribe that amount. Nonetheless, I think some of the members wanted to speak, and I'd be very interested to

hear why they're voting against a bill that basically would help students. We know from the employability study that students are increasingly indebted and are increasingly facing challenges when they leave university. Why would the members opposite be voting against a bill that would facilitate their accessing a more affordable education?

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Ruby Dhalla): Thank you, Madame Savoie.

Mr. Chong.

Hon. Michael Chong: Thank you, Ms. Chair. I just want to respond to that.

It's ironic that we have a member of the New Democrats criticizing us for not supporting what is a very poorly crafted bill. On the one hand, she has said we should respect the specificity of Quebec. Then, when the two members of Parliament who are from Quebec decide to exercise their specificity, she criticizes them for not supporting this very bill. I thought that was a bit ironic.

This is a poorly drafted bill as it presently stands. This bill is going to have repercussions in terms of funding for Quebec. We have a raft of amendments here that are trying to untangle this mess, and those amendments are in fact creating a bigger mess. For that reason, we are not supporting this bill. It's quite simple. It's a poorly drafted piece of legislation, and the amendments are actually making a bigger mess of it. That's why members of the government are not supporting this bill.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Ruby Dhalla): Thank you, Mr. Chong.

I'm going to call the question.

My apologies. We have someone else.

Mr. Lessard.

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Lessard: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I bring the matter up again out of respect for my colleagues who have tabled this bill. Mr. Savage rightly said that a lot of work went into the bill. We are well aware of that and we have recognized the effort. Unlike our Conservative friends, we feel that the bill is perfectly warranted, and that it is well drafted, with one omission. Of course, the omission makes all the difference for Quebec. It means that provisions are written into the bill that disappear when the regulations are enacted.

I feel that the Liberals understand our situation very well. Let us not overlook the fact that the Bloc Québécois has made an effort by introducing four amendments, two of which specifically tried to correct the omission, and of course the amendments on indexing which demonstrate our interest in improving the bill. The Liberals tried to introduce an amendment that would correct this oversight. But the discussion that took place makes it clear to me that their amendment, as far as I can see, does not adequately address the matter of the provisions in the regulations.

Let no one misrepresent our position on this bill. We think it is excellent, except for the one deficiency that we pointed out, and that put the opting-out clause in jeopardy not only for Quebec, but for all the other provinces as well.

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Ruby Dhalla): Thank you for that intervention, Mr. Lessard.

I'm now going to be calling the question on amendment NDP-3 on page 3.

(Amendment negated)

• (1650)

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Ruby Dhalla): We're now going on to page 4 and amendment NDP-4.

Prior to commencing, I gather that Madame Savoie understands that there is some conflict in regard to amendments NDP-4, NDP-5, and NDP-6.

Ms. Denise Savoie: That's right, Madam Chair, so what I was going to propose in this amendment—given the track record the rest of the amendments have had, I'm not very hopeful—is the idea of adding a provision for middle-income students, more money for low-income students, and an indexation or escalator clause that would move along with the cost of tuition. If that were to fail, then I was going to go to amendment NDP-4, NDP-5, and so on.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Ruby Dhalla): Would you like to withdraw the amendments or would you like to proceed?

Ms. Denise Savoie: I'll proceed with amendment NDP-4, and then I may take everybody out of their misery and move to the end.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Ruby Dhalla): It's never a misery at committee.

We're going to proceed to any individuals wishing to speak on amendment NDP-4, which is on page 4.

Are there any members who wish to speak? No?

We'll call the question.

(Amendment negated)

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Ruby Dhalla): We'll move on to the next amendment, NDP-5, on page 6.

Ms. Denise Savoie: I think the fate of NDP-5 is sealed, so I'll withdraw it. I will go directly to the last amendment I was proposing, Madam Chair, and that was NDP-6.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Ruby Dhalla): Amendment NDP-5 on page 6 has been withdrawn.

Ms. Denise Savoie: The purpose of amendment NDP-6 was simply to provide more funds for low-income students. I think there is a recommendation in our employability study, but I won't go into details about it.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Ruby Dhalla): NDP-5 has been withdrawn. We're now going on to NDP-6 on page 8, right?

Ms. Denise Savoie: That's right, so shall I go into NDP-6?

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Ruby Dhalla): Yes, you may move amendment NDP-6, which is on page 8.

Ms. Denise Savoie: The purpose of this amendment is simply to provide more money for low-income students. From everything we've heard during the employability study, we know they are not accessing university, college, or post-secondary education in the

same way as students from higher-income families. We know the existing patchwork of tax credits and whatever else disproportionately favours students from higher-income families. The idea is to bridge that gap and help these students to complete their studies.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Ruby Dhalla): Do any members wish to speak on NDP-6? No?

We'll call the question.

Ms. Denise Savoie: I would be very interested in why the Conservative members of this committee would not support an amendment that would favour lower-income students to help them access education, when we know having them do so is a problem in Canada today.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Ruby Dhalla): Mr. Chong would like to respond.

Hon. Michael Chong: Certainly, Madam Chair, I can respond to that.

The simple reason is that we believe that if a program is to be ameliorated or introduced, it should benefit Canadian students in all provinces. This bill does not do so, because it does not help out students in the province of Quebec. Therefore, we won't be supporting it.

Any amendment that you propose to this bill ameliorates services, but it will only do so for students in living in nine out of ten provinces and one out of three territories. Therefore, we will not support it, nor will we support any amendments.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Ruby Dhalla): Does that answer your question?

I'll call the question.

(Amendment negated)

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Ruby Dhalla): We're going to go on to the next question. We may be able to get you out of here a little early today. We are finished with all of the amendments. We are now going on to the clauses.

(Clauses 1 and 2 negated)

• (1655)

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Ruby Dhalla): Shall the title carry?

Some hon. members: No.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Ruby Dhalla): That too is defeated.

Shall the bill carry?

An hon. member: I'd like a recorded vote, please.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Ruby Dhalla): It will be a recorded vote.

Mrs. Lynne Yelich: Can I ask a question to the officials? Why would this bill be—

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Ruby Dhalla): We have to proceed to the vote right now.

This will be a recorded vote, in regard to whether or not the bill shall carry.

(Bill C-284 negated [See *Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Ruby Dhalla): The bill has been defeated.

The last question of the day is whether or not I shall report the bill to the House.

Mr. Ken Epp: How does this work? If you report the bill, do you report it as defeated?

Hon. Geoff Regan: I wouldn't worry about it, Ken.

Mr. Ken Epp: I would like to know the answer to that question before I vote.

Hon. Geoff Regan: Yes, but you're wasting our time.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Ruby Dhalla): A report needs to be made. It would just be reported empty.

I am informed by our expert clerk that if there is no report, it's deemed reported as is. Hence, we have to have a vote.

Mr. Ken Epp: Then on whether or not we should report the bill, the answer is yes.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Ruby Dhalla): We will redo the vote.

Shall I report the bill to the House?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Michael Savage: On a point of order, Chair, I would like to make a comment.

Mr. Regan, as a former member of this committee and with whom some of you have worked, has done a lot of work on this bill with stakeholders, particularly with students. The bill does recognize the need for assistance to students.

We understand the position of the Bloc. We did try to work this through—

Mr. Mike Lake: Is this a point of order?

Mr. Michael Savage: Just a second now. I'm not taking too much time.

We respect the view of the Bloc on this. This bill has been discussed in the House, and it went through a number of readings before it came back here. Mr. Regan should be congratulated for the work he has done on behalf of students. It's too bad the bill didn't pass, but I know we would all want to congratulate Mr. Regan for the work he did on the bill.

Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Ruby Dhalla): Thank you, Mr. Savage.

Are there any other comments?

Mr. Lessard.

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Lessard: I share Mr. Savage's opinion on the work done by Mr. Regan and by all those who went to great lengths to try to accommodate the rights of everyone involved.

Madam Chair, I would like to ask the clerk a question. Mr. Savage prepared a motion asking the department to provide us with a breakdown of the Summer Career Placement program by constituency. I would like to know if the clerk has received the list, given that the deadline was today.

● (1700)

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Ruby Dhalla): I'd like to inform all committee members that the clerk informed me—both prior to the commencement and just as you asked your question—that the list has not been received by the committee.

Mr. Epp first, and then Mr. Chong.

Mr. Ken Epp: Thank you.

I would just like to say that many members in this House have tried to grapple with the question of student costs and with trying to enhance the financial ability of young people from all backgrounds to be able to attend post-secondary institutions. I am one who is very much supportive of this.

The reason I voted against it is that this just isn't the way. I want that to be understood. I'm very supportive of students and their ability to get education.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Ruby Dhalla): That will end the debate.

Is this a point of order, Mr. Savage?

Mr. Michael Savage: I just have a point of clarification, Chair—and thank you for the unusual wisdom that we found from the chair today.

I just want to ask you something on your information about the student grants. Are we being told that it's not going to come by the end of the day today?

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Ruby Dhalla): It hasn't been received by the committee up to this point.

Mr. Michael Savage: But you said you spoke with the clerk beforehand. Will we not be getting that information today?

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Ruby Dhalla): We will not be able to receive, as committee members, the information.

Mr. Michael Savage: Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Ms. Ruby Dhalla): The meeting is adjourned.

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