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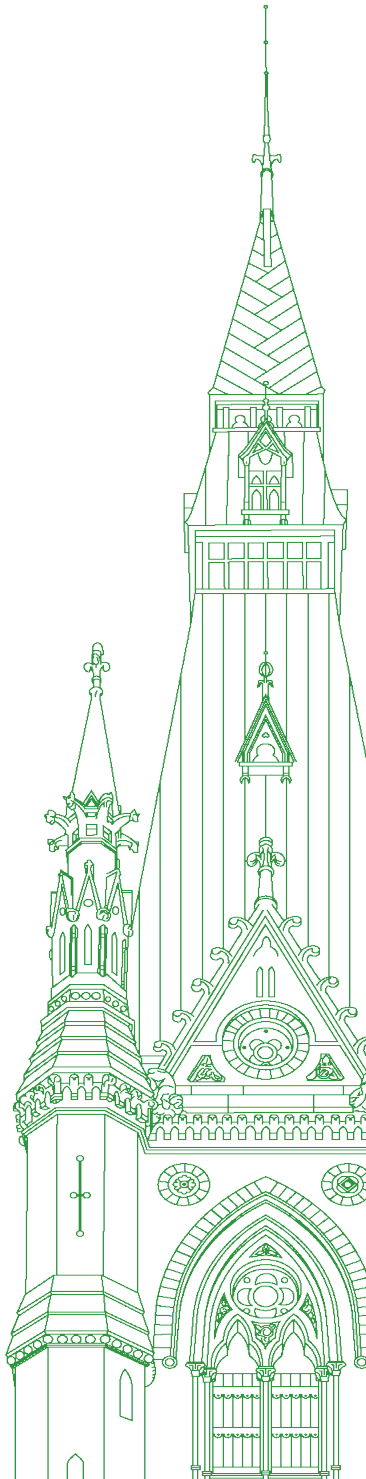

Chair: The Honourable Wayne Easter

Standing Committee on Finance

Thursday, June 3, 2021

● (1535)

[*English*]

The Chair (Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.)): I call the meeting officially to order.

Welcome to meeting number 53 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance.

Pursuant to the House order of reference of Thursday, May 27, 2021, the committee is meeting to study Bill C-30, an act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on April 19, 2021, and other measures.

Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format pursuant to the House order of January 25 of this year. Therefore, members are either attending in person in the room, or remotely using the Zoom application.

I sometimes hear those words in my sleep these days. We have repeated them so many times.

I hate to start without Mr. Julian, without one party here, but we will see where we are at first.

(On clauses 269 to 271)

The Chair: We had started a discussion—and you can correct me if I'm wrong, Mr. Clerk—on division 32, an increase to the old age security pension and payment. It was on page 286 of the bill. I believe the lead for the department was Kristen Underwood. There she is.

Welcome, Ms. Underwood.

The floor is open for further discussion on division 32.

Mrs. Jansen.

Mrs. Tamara Jansen (Cloverdale—Langley City, CPC): I was just wondering about the fact that what we're basically saying here is that 75-year-olds and older will be getting a 10% pay raise.

Canadians put money into this pension plan, this is their money and their employers do the same. In this proposal, however, we are suddenly going to give a raise only to those 75 and older.

How can we legally change a program that is paid for by employers and employees? Suddenly the government is going to change the rules mid-game. How does that work? How is that possible?

The Chair: Ms. Underwood, do you want to answer that?

We're not dealing with CPP. We're dealing with the OAS.

Ms. Kristen Underwood (Director General, Income Security and Social Development Branch, Department of Employment and Social Development): Yes, I was going to say for clarification, Mr. Chair, that we're talking about an increase to the old age security pension. The OAS is funded through the consolidated revenue fund and not by contributions from employees and employers.

Mrs. Tamara Jansen: I'm sorry, my apologies. I'm totally mixed up.

Can you explain to me how it is possible that we can decide to split seniors that way? How does it make sense that you can say that those 75 and older need it more than those 65 and older, and we're, therefore, going to split them in half, whereas OAS starts at 65? Presumably, they are all on OAS for the same reason.

The Chair: I don't want to put senior people in the bureaucracy on the spot. That's more of a policy question, Tamara. Can you find a way to ask it? It's the government that decides on the policy, so I think that's probably an unfair question for the bureaucracy to answer. They do the data, the details.

Mrs. Tamara Jansen: Okay.

Why is the government proposing measures that would apply to all pensioners age 75 and older, rather than measures that would specifically target low-income seniors?

Ms. Kristen Underwood: The measure is meant to target older seniors. It's a universal benefit for those 75 and older. We did some data analysis, and it does show that there are higher levels of vulnerability for those who are 75 and older.

We've talked about some of those statistics here before. I could talk about them again, but the issue we're trying to address here is the increased vulnerability of older seniors.

The Chair: Mr. Julian is next, followed by Ms. Dzerowicz.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Chair, thanks to my colleagues Mr. Kelly and Monsieur Ste-Marie.

I just came out of the House, where we were paying tributes to Bruce Stanton for his extraordinary career and his 10 years as the Deputy Speaker. I want to clarify exactly how you were proceeding with this particular section.

The Chair: We've just started because we didn't want to start without everyone present, as much as possible.

We're on division 32, which has clause 269. We will get to you—you have an amendment on clause 272—and others as we go through it.

I don't think there's really any choice on division 32 but to go through it clause by clause. There are so many amendments that we pretty well need to go through it clause by clause, unless you want to block some of yours in the middle.

Mr. Peter Julian: I would definitely be blocking the amendments to clauses 272 to 276. I'll flag that with you for our amendments that are coming up. Thanks for clarifying.

The Chair: Okay.

Then we will go back to questions for Ms. Underwood.

Ms. Dzerowicz.

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz (Davenport, Lib.): Thank you so much, Mr. Chair.

Good afternoon, colleagues.

I want to thank all the officials for being here today and for all their hard work.

I know you've given us some of the statistics, Ms. Underwood, but I do think it's important to have a little bit more on record in terms of the difference in challenges faced by seniors between the ages of 65 and 74, and the challenges or the data that we have for those who are 75 and over.

I know you talked about those who are 75 and over. We know they have some more needs and challenges, but could you provide some of the data you have on those between the ages of 65 and 74, and maybe a little bit more on the 75-plus?

● (1540)

The Chair: Go ahead, Ms. Underwood.

Ms. Kristen Underwood: I'm sorry. I am having some trouble with my computer. It's jumbling as people are speaking. I think I heard the question clearly, but if for some reason I crackle out, maybe my colleague Kevin Wagdin could take over for me.

Thank you for the question. I believe you were asking for a bit more detail on the statistics regarding differences between those who are 65 to 74 and those who are 75 and older.

As we've mentioned before, close to half of those over 75 have a disability and about 56% have severe disabilities. The majority of seniors over 75 are women, and those women tend to more frequently live alone and have lower incomes. Four in 10 are widowed, six in 10 have incomes below $30,000 a year and four in 10 receive the guaranteed income supplement, which is targeted to lower-income seniors. They face higher health costs. For those who are 80 and over, health costs are two-thirds higher.

Those are just a few of the figures we have on the increased risks for those 75 and older.

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: As a follow-up, Ms. Underwood, and as part of the conversation we're having today, have you any specific data that you might want to share, that you think might be helpful for us to know, regarding seniors between the ages of 65 and 74?

Ms. Kristen Underwood: We did share some data earlier for the committee's special study. We could share that again for the record, but I think the information I have given you is the same as what I gave before.

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Perfect. Thank you.

The Chair: Okay.

Is there any further discussion on clause 269?

Mr. Peter Julian: I have just a quick question, Mr. Chair.

We heard at the last meeting that 85% of Canadian seniors have incomes below $50,000 a year, so I am wondering if our witnesses have any more information now in terms of how that relates to seniors 65 to 75? These are low incomes, so what percentage of that 85% of Canadian seniors earning less than $50,000 are folks who are 65 to 75?

Mr. Kevin Wagdin (Director, Seniors and Pensions Policy Secretariat, Income Security and Social Development Branch, Department of Employment and Social Development): I can respond to Mr. Julian.

The Chair: Yes, go ahead.

Mr. Kevin Wagdin: In fact, thank you very much for that question and the opportunity to clarify.

I believe during our last session you had asked for the specific age breakdown of seniors 65 to 74 versus those 75 and over. I just wanted to clarify or to make sure to clarify for the record that, according to our most recent administrative data, we had about 3.7 million OAS recipients between the ages of 65 and 74, whereas 2.8 million were 75 and over. I wanted to follow up with that just to ensure it was clear.

With respect—

Mr. Peter Julian: I'm sorry. Can I just ask you what percentage, then, of those OAS recipients are under 75?

Mr. Kevin Wagdin: Again, there would be 3.7 million OAS recipients in March 2021.

Mr. Peter Julian: I know the number. I'm just asking you for the percentage.

Mr. Kevin Wagdin: It is 57% of the total client group who would be between the ages of 65 to 74.

Mr. Peter Julian: Thank you.

Mr. Kevin Wagdin: With respect to income distribution, while I don't have it broken down by 65 to 74, I can say, just to supplement our previous figure, 55% of all of our OAS pensioners have incomes below $30,000. That's just to add some more precision to the previous data we provided.

Mr. Peter Julian: Thank you.

These are important figures for us to know because we have a very important decision to make. You said 55% of Canadian seniors have incomes that are below $30,000.

● (1545)

Mr. Kevin Wagdin: That's correct.

Mr. Peter Julian: What percentage of those would be between 65 and 74?

Mr. Kevin Wagdin: Again, while I don't have a specific number there, what I can say is that for our guaranteed income supplement benefit, which is our targeted income supplement, of the previous figure that I had provided for you—the 57% who are between 65 and 74—about 50% of those recipients.... Pardon me, there were about 1.1 million who were on the guaranteed income supplement, so they had income low enough for that. Of the 2.8 million seniors who are getting an OAS pension who are 75 and older, it was, again, about 1.1 million who were receiving the guaranteed income supplement.

Mr. Peter Julian: An argument very clearly can be made that the needs are just as great from 65 to 74 as they are from 75 and over, and in fact we're missing the majority of seniors who are living under the poverty line. Thank you for that. That helps to clarify the facts.

We have an important decision to make soon about amendments, but I think it would be clear to all members of the finance committee that clearly we can't exclude most Canadian seniors living in poverty from a budgetary measure that is supposed to help all Canadian seniors.

Thank you.

The Chair: That's it for questions on this point.

(Clauses 269 to 271 inclusive agreed to on division)

(On clause 272)

The Chair: On clause 272 there is an amendment.

Mr. Julian, I have looked—and I know you said you'd like to block these—and the rulings for at least two of them are substantially different enough that I'm pretty near going to go clause by clause with each amendment. Your argument can be made on the whole works, but I will have to do a separate ruling at least on clauses 272, 273 and....

Go ahead, Peter, on your amendment NDP-14.

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Chair, I think I will move all four of them, explain the rationale for all four of them and appeal your decisions as they come.

I'll start off by saying, of course, that this committee has the right to do the right thing in terms of this legislation. When we talk about royal recommendations, in the past in minority governments, certainly with the famous Jack Layton budget, the government provided the royal recommendation for substantial changes in the initial budget when it became clear that, without those substantial changes, it would not pass the test of getting through Parliament. I'm very confident in saying that it is up to the committee to decide whether these amendments should be voted on and carried forward.

The four amendments in question obviously address what we have just heard is a profound discrepancy, that 57% of Canadian seniors are under the age of 75, and that the majority of Canadian seniors live at what can only be stated as close to poverty level, $30,000 a year. That is a profoundly difficult income level, especially when we see the extent to which COVID and the pandemic has hit Canadian seniors.

There is simply no sense or logic to what the government is proposing, that seniors 75 and over get a 10% bump in the OAS and a $500 bonus, when Canadians under 75 need it as desperately. There's just no sense, no logic. I think we've heard from our questions very clearly that the statistics and the facts show that, for the committee to do the right thing, we must extend the OAS increase to all seniors and provide the one-time supports of $500 to all seniors.

That is a slam dunk. Canadians who are listening to us would all agree that this is the right thing to do. Canadian senior groups have all intervened, including at this committee, saying that this makes absolutely no sense or logic. It penalizes and hurts seniors who are under the age of 75. For us to force them to spend 10 years before they can get a slightly more adequate income.... It is beyond belief that a government would propose that and that a finance committee would say, “That's okay.”

I have certainly heard, from questions from my colleagues, that they understand the dynamic. We cannot discriminate among seniors. We now know that the imperative for seniors under 75, as well, is as deep and profound as it is for seniors 75 and over.

That is why these four amendments would provide the $500 support to all seniors and ensure that the OAS increase goes to all seniors. I think we've heard compelling testimony in the answers to our questions. Even if the government uses the procedural trick of saying that it's going to withhold the royal recommendation, we should be pushing it to provide that royal recommendation, as it has done in the past and as the government has the right, and I would say, the responsibility in this case to do.

● (1550)

The Chair: Okay. I have a couple of people online for questions.

I would ask if you know what the cost of that might be. I'll go to Ms. Dzerowicz, if you want to think about that in the meantime.

Go ahead, Ms. Dzerowicz.

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Mr. Chair, I'd like to hear what Mr. Ste-Marie says first before I go, if that's okay.

The Chair: It's up to you.

Go ahead, Mr. Ste-Marie.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): I thank my colleague Ms. Dzerowicz for her courtesy.

Mr. Julian, thank you for your proposed amendments. Indeed, the seniors and groups that came to the committee to testify about Bill C-30 told us that it was unacceptable to create two classes of seniors and that it was discrimination. The president of the FADOQ network, the Quebec golden age federation, reminded us that seniors aged 65 to 74 often have additional expenses. For example, these people, often women, do not have a private pension plan and are caregivers. They have to take care of their spouse, or even their parents or relatives. As a result, they sometimes have to go to the hospital, which results in additional expenses.

The statistics that senior officials have provided clearly demonstrate the importance of not creating two classes of seniors. I fully understand the opportunity for the committee to vote on these motions. Then the government can table a notice of ways and means motion based on that. So I fully support the motions that have been put forward. They are good motions.

However, I would like more clarification on amendment NDP-15. I would like Mr. Julian to explain in more detail what his amendment 15 is actually trying to do.

[*English*]

The Chair: To respond to that question, we'll go to Ms. Dzerowicz and Mr. Julian. Could you explain NDP-14 a little further?

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: It's NDP-15.

The Chair: NDP-15, okay.

I'm going to give a separate ruling on each, so I'll deal with NDP-14 first, and then I'll ask....

Okay, give it now, Peter. Give your response to NDP-15 now. Although it's a different chair's ruling, we'll have all the discussion now.

Go ahead.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Peter Julian: I thank my colleague Mr. Ste-Marie for his question.

When we consulted with parliamentary counsel, they said that yes, the age of 65 should be specified in the provisions. That is what amendments NDP-14, NDP-16 and NDP-17 do. In all three cases, the intent is to specify that the provision comes into effect at age 65. Amendment NDP-15 removes a section of the law that prevents these three amendments from actually setting that threshold at age 65. Therefore, it is a consequential amendment since it is related to the others.

● (1555)

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Thank you.

[*English*]

The Chair: Are you satisfied with the answer, Mr. Ste-Marie?

Ms. Dzerowicz.

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Look. Just in terms of the debate of these, there is no intention or desire to discriminate. I don't agree with the premise of what Mr. Julian has said. I think everybody knows that in every budget there are choices that need to be made when there are limited dollars. I think that we heard very clearly from our officials that half of those over 75 have a disability of which 56% are severe, and 75% of them are women, who live longer and have lower incomes. There is a desire to provide some additional support to this group.

I guess maybe I'll end with a question to officials that I hope will be helpful in this discussion. Is there research that shows how the costs for seniors increase once they pass the age of 75 and why financial assistance is useful at this moment?

The Chair: That's for whoever wants to take it.

Did you hear that, Ms. Underwood? Go ahead if you did. I know your computer is just so-so.

Ms. Kristen Underwood: I did hear it, but I may turn to my colleague Mr. Wagdin. We have done some research.

Kevin, do you want to give it a go?

Mr. Kevin Wagdin: Again, some of the research that we looked at as part of this proposal I think my colleague Kristen has touched on. With respect to specific percentages, we do know that the percentage of OAS pensioners with incomes below $30,000 is about half of seniors 65 to 74, but it's actually 59% for those who are 75 and older. We know that 39% of seniors 75 and over receive the GIS, whereas only 29% of seniors between the ages of 65 and 74 receive the GIS.

As we have spoken about, there are also the added issues that come into play with experience with disabilities and then the fact that older seniors are less able to supplement their incomes with paid work. The median employment income for a senior between the age of 65 and 74 is $10,000, whereas for a senior over the age of 75, it's only $720. That was the evidence that we looked at with respect to this proposal.

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: That's excellent information.

Can I just clarify, Mr. Chair?

You mentioned something about 59%. Could you just repeat the data that you gave on the first one? I missed it.

Mr. Kevin Wagdin: Sure. According to the 2018 Canadian income survey, the percentage of OAS pensioners with incomes below $30,000—so, the percentage of seniors between the ages of 65 and 74 with an income below $30,000—was 52%. That percentage increases for seniors 75 and over to 59%.

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Thank you so much.

The Chair: I believe we've completed the discussion on several amendments.

I will give the ruling on NDP-14. I'm bound by procedure and the rules of the House of Commons, so I may be a stick in the wheel.

The ruling is this: The amendment attempts to apply the 10% increase of pensions mentioned in the bill to people who are 65 years old, where the bill provides for the increase at 75 years old, which would result in increasing payments from the consolidated revenue fund. The amendment as proposed is inadmissible, as it requires a royal recommendation since it does impose a new charge on the public treasury, so I rule it inadmissible.

I will deal with these one at a time.

Mr. Peter Julian: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

As I mentioned at the very beginning of this process, the government has the responsibility to apply a royal recommendation when very clearly they've erred. They have erred in this case. We have seen in the past, and precedent shows, that the government can provide a royal recommendation and can choose to do that.

It's not a question of being out of order. It's a question, I think, of the committee responding appropriately to what is a significant error in judgment. I would challenge your ruling on that basis and allow the committee to decide whether we should move and vote on these amendments.

● (1600)

The Chair: All right. As I said, I will have to deal with them one at a time, because they are somewhat different rulings.

Mr. Clerk, there's been a challenge to the chair's ruling. If you would like to poll the committee, go ahead.

(Ruling of the chair sustained: yeas 9; nays 2)

(Clause 272 agreed to on division)

(On clause 273)

The Chair: Is there anything more you want to say on NDP-15, Mr. Julian?

Mr. Peter Julian: No, I think we had a fulsome debate, Mr. Chair. I'll await your ruling.

The Chair: All right.

The ruling is this: The amendment attempts to remove the limit of increase of pension that is in the Old Age Security Act. If adopted, the amendment would provide for an increase of pension for people aged 70 years old, which would result in increasing payments from the consolidated revenue fund. The amendment as proposed is inadmissible as it requires a royal recommendation since it imposes a new charge on the public treasury. Therefore, the chair's ruling is that this amendment, NDP-15, is inadmissible.

Mr. Peter Julian: With respect Mr. Chair—and I haven't done this on all of the amendments, but this is a particularly egregious error in judgment by the government—the government has the ability to provide a royal recommendation. I believe our duty is to consider the amendment and to push the government to provide that.

I will challenge your ruling, with respect.

The Chair: That is fine, and that is every bit your right.

Mr. Clerk, could you poll the committee on the chair's ruling?

(Ruling of the chair sustained: yeas 9; nays 2)

The Chair: Shall clause 273 carry on division?

Mr. Philippe Méla (Legislative Clerk): Mr. Chair, it's the legislative clerk here.

The Chair: Yes.

Mr. Philippe Méla: We still have amendment NDP-16 on clause 273.

The Chair: Oh, yes. Thank you, Mr. Clerk. It's a good job you're paying attention.

On NDP-16, is there anything further you want to say Mr. Julian?

Mr. Peter Julian: Very clearly, what this would do is provide for 65 years of age. With the compelling evidence, and our witnesses have all said the same thing, it's important to adopt this amendment.

● (1605)

The Chair: This is the same ruling as related to clause 272. That's why I was trying to ignore it, but I will read it in any event so that we're all clear on the record.

The amendment attempts to apply the 10% increase to pensions mentioned in the bill to people who are 65 years old, whereas the bill provides for the increase at 75 years old, which would result in increasing payments from the consolidated revenue fund. The amendment, as proposed, is inadmissible as it requires a royal recommendation since it imposes a new charge on the public treasury.

I'll go back to you, Mr. Julian.

Mr. Peter Julian: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It would be a new charge that would be welcome and that the vast majority of Canadian seniors want to see.

With respect again, this is a procedural tool the government is using to repress amendments that improve where errors were made in the legislation, so with respect I will challenge your ruling.

The Chair: All right, we'll go back to the clerk.

(Ruling of the chair sustained: yeas 9; nays 2)

(Clause 273 agreed to on division)

(Clauses 274 and 275 agreed to on division)

(On clause 276)

The Chair: We're on clause 276 and there is amendment NDP-17. Do you want to add anything further on that one, Mr. Julian?

Mr. Peter Julian: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would just like your ruling.

The Chair: Okay.

This ruling is a little different but it amounts to the same result.

The amendment provides for a unique $500 payment to pensioners who are 65 years old, whereas the bill provides for the same payment for pensioners 75 years or older. This would result in increasing payments from the consolidated revenue fund. The amendment as proposed is inadmissible as it requires a royal recommendation since it imposes a new charge on the public treasury.

We'll go over to you, Mr. Julian.

Mr. Peter Julian: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

All four of these rulings stem from the fact that the government doesn't want to provide seniors with the equitable supports they need and wants to discriminate.

It's bad legislation. Each of the rulings you made, Mr. Chair, has the same optics—that the government is refusing to do the right thing and is withholding a royal recommendation.

In this case, as with the others, our responsibility as committee members, I believe, is to listen to the powerful testimony we've heard from seniors' groups across the country who have said that this discrimination should not be upheld. That's why I challenge your ruling.

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: On a point of order, Mr. Chair, I think my colleague just said that the government made this ruling. I think it was you who made this ruling, and I just want to put that on the record.

The Chair: All right.

Mr. Peter Julian: On a point of order, the reality is, as Ms. Dzerowicz knows very well, if the government provides the royal recommendation, the amendments are not out of order. It's ultimately a government decision that the chair has to enforce.

● (1610)

The Chair: Okay, we've had a little debate on the ruling.

We will go to the clerk, and he will poll the committee on whether we uphold the ruling or not.

(Ruling of the chair sustained: yeas 9; nays 2)

(Clause 276 agreed to on division)

(On clause 277)

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Underwood and Mr. Wagdin.

We will now turn to division 33, the Public Service Employment Act, and we have as the lead, Ms. Beattie.

Ms. Selena Beattie (Executive Director, People Management and Community Engagement, Workplace Policies and Services Sector, Treasury Board Secretariat): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you very much for coming and waiting through a couple of nights, likely.

Do you want to give a quick explanation on division 33? Then we'll see if there are any questions.

Ms. Selena Beattie: I'd be happy to do that.

Mr. Chair, the Public Service Employment Act provides a foundation for staffing in the federal public service by creating a framework for a non-partisan public service where appointments are based on merit. It gives the Public Service Commission authority to make appointments, which, in practice, is usually delegated to deputy heads.

This division amends the Public Service Employment Act to reduce and remove barriers to achieving diversity in the public service and enhancing the degree to which it embodies the principle of inclusion.

I can turn to clause 277 to begin with, which amends the preamble to add a commitment by the Government of Canada to an inclusive public service that reflects the diversity of Canada's population.

Shall I continue with other clauses?

The Chair: We'll start with that one and see if there are any questions.

I believe we're on page 289, for those who are following by way of the bill.

Are there any questions on clause 277?

(Clause 277 agreed to on division)

(On clause 278)

Ms. Selena Beattie: Subclause 278(1) amends the act to add a definition of equity-seeking groups, which will be defined as "a group of persons who are disadvantaged on the basis of one or more prohibited grounds of discrimination within the meaning of the Canadian Human Rights Act."

Subclause 278(2) amends the act by.... Did you want to pause after the subclause?

The Chair: Go ahead and explain subclause 278(2) too.

Ms. Selena Beattie: Subclause 278(2) adds proposed subsection 2(5), which would include bias or barriers that disadvantage persons belonging to equity-seeking groups within the meaning of error, omission or improper conduct, for the purposes of investigations by the Public Service Commission and by delegated deputy heads.

The Chair: Are there any questions on clause 278 by members?

(Clause 278 agreed to on division)

(On clause 279)

Ms. Selena Beattie: Clause 279 amends the act by adding a subsection to section 17, so that the commission may conduct audits related specifically to bias or barriers that disadvantage persons belonging to equity-seeking groups.

The Chair: Are there any questions on clause 279? I hear none.

(Clause 279 agreed to on division)

● (1615)

The Chair: We're on clause 280—

Hon. Ed Fast: Mr. Chair, I note that all members of this committee have received written briefing notes that effectively explain the different sections here, clause 280 all the way through to clause 287. I'd be prepared to allow this to go as a bundle.

The Chair: Okay. We'll ask Ms. Beattie to explain all of these as a bundle.

I believe Mr. Julian has a question.

Do you have a question, Peter?

Mr. Peter Julian: It's not a question, just a comment, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Okay, go ahead.

Mr. Peter Julian: I think that's a good proposal by Mr. Fast. He's mellowing.

The Chair: It's good to see the official opposition and the NDP agreeing.

(On clauses 280 to 287)

The Chair: Could we get an explanation on the remainder of those clauses, Ms. Beattie? Then we'll go to a vote seeing them all as one.

Ms. Selena Beattie: It would be my pleasure.

The remainder of the clauses will require a review of new and revised qualification standards to include an evaluation of bias and barriers, require the design and selection of assessment methods to include an evaluation of bias and barriers, broaden the preference given to Canadian citizens in external advertised appointments to include permanent residents, and provide for transitional provisions related to the timing and the coming into force of these sections.

The Chair: Okay.

Are there any questions from committee members?

I have one myself, Ms. Beattie.

How do you see doing this? Do you have supervisors over the supervisors supervising the hiring officers? How do you do this? How do you police this?

Ms. Selena Beattie: This will be done in different ways. For qualification standards, these are minimum requirements that are established by the employer. In this case, Treasury Board Secretariat's office of the chief human resources officer, when it conducts reviews, will need to conduct the evaluation.

For assessment methods, the Public Service Commission will be providing tools, supports and instructions for hiring managers about how to ensure the assessment methods have been evaluated and any barriers have been mitigated to the extent possible.

The Chair: I see that Ms. Dzerowicz has a question.

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: It's just a quick one, Mr. Chair. Thank you.

Can our officials just let us know which stakeholders support these revised provisions?

Ms. Selena Beattie: We have conducted consultations and engagement with different groups of stakeholders. In particular, we spoke with the employee diversity networks within the public service to understand the concerns of their members about the staffing process. We also conducted consultations with bargaining agents to understand the challenges their members were facing and with senior officials regarding diversity and inclusion. In crafting these amendments, we took into account the concerns they had raised.

The Chair: If everyone is satisfied, then we shall go to—

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Can I ask one quick follow-up question, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: Go ahead.

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Ms. Beattie, has this measure been informed by the findings on diversity detailed in this year's public service employee survey?

Ms. Selena Beattie: This was prepared before the results of the public service employee survey were available.

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

(Clauses 280 to 287 inclusive agreed to on division)

(On clause 288)

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Beattie. I don't believe you're here for the next one. Thank you for being here all along.

Division 34 is on early learning and child care.

We have Ms. Karen Hall.

Ms. Karen Hall (Director General, Social Policy Directorate, Strategic and Service Policy Branch, Department of Employment and Social Development): Hello, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: If you want to give us an explanation, go ahead. You will have to hold your mike up for the interpreters.

Ms. Karen Hall: Thank you.

Please just let me know if there are any issues with the sound quality.

I am here to speak to clause 288.

This clause provides for the appropriation of funding for early learning and child care to provinces and territories for fiscal year 2021-22. It includes three elements: first, statutory authority for payments to be made to provinces or territories in connection with the bilateral agreement for early learning and child care in this fiscal year; second, that the minister may establish terms and conditions in respect of those payments; and third, that the maximum total amount that may be paid to the provinces and territories be $2.95 billion.

The purpose of the statutory appropriations for this fiscal year is to ensure that the federal government is able to transfer funding to provinces and territories as soon as bilateral agreements are reached. Funding for future years will be provided through voted appropriations on an annual basis through the estimates process, as has been the case for the existing bilateral agreements.

I'm happy to take your questions.

● (1620)

The Chair: Okay. I just want to be sure of the numbers. It's $2.948 billion. Is that right?

Ms. Karen Hall: That's right.

The Chair: You guys in the public service round it higher than I do. I usually round it lower.

We'll have Mr. Fraser first and then Mr. Fast.

Mr. Sean Fraser (Central Nova, Lib.): Thank you, Chair.

Thank you to those who've been helping to shepherd us through the meeting while I was absent. I appreciate your support.

My question relates to the figure the chair just referred to: $2.9 billion. The commitment in the recent budget for the national early learning and child care framework is in excess of $30 billion over the next number of years. Can you just give us some clue as to how the figure of $2.9 billion was arrived at and what goal it's seeking to achieve?

Ms. Karen Hall: Thank you for the question.

Mr. Chair, within the $30 billion that Mr. Fraser referred to, there is $27.2 billion over five years for provinces and territories. Within that, the $2.9 billion is the first year of that five years of funding. With regard to how the funding was arrived at, I think that is perhaps not a question for me today. I think I'll just leave that there.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Fraser, are you okay?

Mr. Sean Fraser: Yes.

In effect, there have been a couple of commitments made by the government in respect of the child care strategy. One is to reduce the cost by a half in the next year, and I'm wondering if this $2.9 billion will get us there or whether there will be additional supports required through the estimates that would obviously have to go through the parliamentary process before we'll be able to see that goal achieved.

Ms. Karen Hall: Thank you for the question. My Internet connection is a bit choppy, so I'm hoping that you're able to see and hear me.

Mr. Fraser, that's correct. In budget 2021, the budget articulated a number of goals or commitments for child care. Perhaps first among those were commitments related to fee reduction. In the budget, the government outlined that it was providing funding to provinces and territories that would be sufficient to reduce the cost of regulated child care on average by 50% by the end of 2022, and then to reduce the cost to $10 a day by 2025-26.

This statutory appropriation will be part of the funding that will support achieving those objectives, in the short run achieving the 50% reduction by the end of 2022, and then in the longer run the 50% reduction for 2025-26.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Fast.

Hon. Ed Fast: Mr. Chair, this is more of a comment.

I believe, Ms. Hall, you mentioned that future appropriations would be done through the estimates process to fund the strategy. Is that correct?

Ms. Karen Hall: That's correct.

Hon. Ed Fast: Yes, the problem is that what we're finding is that the estimates process is woefully inadequate, in that ministers appear and are not prepared to answer even one question when dozens and dozens are raised.

I guess my charge to the Liberal members of our committee, and to you, Ms. Hall, if you could pass this on to the ministers of this government, is that when they appear on estimates, and they have their officials arrayed behind or in front of them, they come prepared to actually answer questions, and not just dodge, skip, jump and hop all over the place, because that's disrespectful. It's a lack of accountability.

I think that's a message that should go back, especially to the finance minister.

● (1625)

The Chair: We've noted that, Mr. Fast. I've been through a lot of Parliaments, as you know, but I'll make no further comment.

Ms. Dzerowicz.

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I want to thank Ms. Hall and her team for their hard work.

My question is around negotiations with provinces and territories. How will that be set up?

Ms. Karen Hall: Thank you for the question.

The intention is that the federal government will enter into negotiations with provinces and territories at the earliest opportunity to begin to implement the Canada-wide child care system.

I should underline that there is already a foundation that has been laid for those agreements. There are three-year bilateral agreements that were signed in 2017-18 with all provinces and territories, with a unique agreement for Quebec. Those agreements were extended last fiscal year and are actually in the process of being extended again as we speak. We will build on that foundation as we begin negotiations with provinces and territories to begin to implement these commitments that the government has made.

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Could I ask one more question, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: You can.

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Thank you.

The Minister of Finance set up a task force on women in the economy. Could you relay what role it plays in informing the government's strategy on child care moving forward?

Ms. Karen Hall: I can speak a bit about the support for the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development. Certainly the Minister of Finance has created the task force for women in the economy, but at this point in time I am not familiar with its work on child care. I will work with my Department of Finance colleagues and undertake to come back to the committee with a written response with more information on that.

What I can tell you is that the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development has had an expert panel on early living and child care data and research for about the past two years, which has studied the evidence base that's in place for early learning and child care. It has also provided other advice related to a Canada-wide child care system.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Hall, I happened to be around when the negotiations were going on between Ken Dryden and the provinces in 2004-05. Those negotiations are never easy, but we did have an early learning and child care program at the time.

Mr. Fraser.

Mr. Sean Fraser: Mr. Chair, I think you were around as a member of Parliament when Ken Dryden won the Conn Smythe Trophy before he won rookie of the year. We can learn from your experience.

Ms. Hall, I want to follow up on the investment in child care.

The economic argument behind the policy is essentially that the return on investment is greater than the cost of making the investment. There's obviously a social argument as well in terms of equitable participation in the economy, should parents and women, who have been disproportionately impacted by a lack of access to care, choose to access it.

This is a lot of money—nearly $3 billion for the next year. I had an interesting exchange with Nick Leswick, from the Department of Finance, earlier in the study of this bill. He indicated that depending on who you ask, some folks have the view that the revenue for government could be greater than the cost. I think there are few who would argue that the increase in GDP would be less than the cost of making the investment.

I'm curious if you can offer insight on the economic impact of this proposed investment, and whether we should expect to see returns, either through an increased GDP or through increased revenue to government, as a result of more people contributing to the economy and paying taxes.

Ms. Karen Hall: The budget did outline the economic and fiscal returns on investments in child care and pointed to a range of studies indicating that for every dollar invested in child care, the return can be anywhere from about $1.50 to I think $2.80. There are a range of studies out there. Many are based on the experience in Quebec, but others take a different perspective or are grounded in different work.

These studies look at both the GDP growth and the revenue growth that this translates into. As more affordable child care is provided, there are secondary earners within families who are able to be drawn into the labour force. As child care is less expensive, they are able to make the decision to work, and as a result, increased tax revenues come about. With those, the investments in child care are set off by the return on investment.

● (1630)

The Chair: I see no further questions on clause 288.

(Clause 288 agreed to on division)

(On clauses 289 and 290)

The Chair: Before you're gone, Ms. Hall, thank you very much.

Ms. Karen Hall: Thank you.

The Chair: For division 35, the lead will be Catherine Demers. It is on benefits and leave.

Ms. Demers, go ahead.

Ms. Catherine Demers (Director General, Employment Insurance Policy, Skills and Employment Branch, Department of Employment and Social Development): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My name is Catherine Demers. I'm the director general of employment insurance policy at Employment and Social Development Canada.

I will present division 35 and clauses 289 to 301 with my colleague Barb Moran, who will also present some of these clauses with respect to the Canada Labour Code.

I would like, if possible, to also invite my colleague George Rae to answer questions as we go through the clauses.

The Chair: That's not a problem. The clerk will bring them in.

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Alexandre Roger): Everybody is already in the meeting room, sir.

The Chair: Go ahead, Ms. Demers.

Ms. Catherine Demers: Thank you.

As I was saying, division 35 would amend the Canada Recovery Benefits Act and the Canada Labour Code in order to temporarily increase the duration of the Canada recovery benefit and the Canada recovery caregiving benefit.

For a bit of context, on September 27, 2020, as part of transitioning from the CERB, the government introduced three temporary benefits, available until September 25, 2021, to provide income support to Canadian workers affected by COVID-19: the Canada recovery benefit, the Canada recovery caregiving benefit and the Canada recovery sickness benefit.

In March, just a few months ago, the government increased the number of weeks available under each. For the Canada recovery benefit and the Canada recovery caregiving benefit, this was a 12-week extension, increasing the maximum duration of the benefits from the initial 26 weeks up to 38 weeks available for claims made between September 27, 2020, and September 25, 2021.

The amendments proposed here would further extend the CRB and CRCB, the Canada recovery caregiving benefit—I will be using acronyms if that's okay—in June to ensure that those who begin to exhaust their 38 weeks of benefits would continue to have access to income supports as their recovery takes hold and would provide authority as well to make potential additional extensions in the fall, if needed.

Clause 289 relates to eligibility conditions for the CRB. Subclauses 289(1) and 289(2) would amend the CRB Act to allow EI exhaustees—those who would have used all of their 50 weeks of EI benefits—to be eligible for the CRB in the event that there should be an additional extension of the CRB after September 25—for example, by allowing their EI income from regular benefits, or a combination of regular and special benefits, to count toward the $5,000 income threshold to qualify for the Canada recovery benefit if their EI benefit period was established on or after September 27, 2020.

Subclauses 289(4) and 289(5) add a new eligibility condition for those who apply for more than 42 weeks or those who apply for the first time after July 18 to file an income tax return for the 2019 or 2020 taxation years.

Should I continue to clause 290?

● (1635)

Hon. Ed Fast: Yes.

The Chair: Yes, you can do clause 290, and then we have an amendment on clause 291. You can do clause 290 as well.

Ms. Catherine Demers: This clause requires applicants to attest that they meet each of the eligibility conditions, including the new ones introduced in clause 289.

The Chair: Okay. Is there any discussion on these clauses? I think we have agreement to go to clauses 289 and 290 at the same time. Is there any discussion?

Mr. Fraser.

Mr. Sean Fraser: Yes.

It's just a nuance that I hadn't actually picked up on until your comments. I'm interested in the interplay between someone who has exhausted their EI claim and seeks to subsequently apply for the Canada recovery benefit.... One of the conditions of the Canada recovery benefit is that the applicant lost their income or work as a result of COVID-19. Is that criteria also applied to someone who has exhausted their EI, or is there a presumption that if you've run out of EI, you're eligible?

If not, I'm curious more broadly as to what mechanism is being used to investigate an individual applicant's claim that their job loss was due to COVID-19.

Ms. Catherine Demers: Thank you for the question, Mr. Chair.

In the context where there should be an extension of the CRB—a further extension in the fall—this amendment would allow EI exhaustees to apply. They would not be transferred automatically. They would need to apply to the CRB and attest to all of the eligibility criteria, as was the case with other applicants.

However, there would be a new flexibility applied, which would allow counting their EI income towards their income eligibility. As well, even if they have an open benefit period remaining, they could apply for the CRB, but they would still have to attest like anybody else.

The Chair: Okay. I think that satisfies the question.

(Clauses 289 and 290 agreed to on division)

(On clause 291)

The Chair: We'll go to clause 291, if you want to give us a quick explanation. Then we have an amendment from Mr. Ste-Marie.

Ms. Catherine Demers: Mr. Chair, would you agree if I put together clauses 291 and 292, because they are related? They deal with the extension.

The Chair: Yes. I think with the permission of the committee we're okay, so go ahead.

Ms. Catherine Demers: These clauses include amendments to provide an additional 12 weeks of Canada recovery benefits, to increase the maximum weeks available from 38 to 50 weeks or 25 two-week periods.

The first four weeks of these additional 12 weeks would be paid at $500 per week. The remaining eight weeks of this extension would be paid at an amount of $300 per week claimed. This means that those who extend their weeks of CRB beyond 42 weeks, as well as new claimants who apply for the first time on or after July 18, would receive the $300 per week benefit available up until September 25, 2021.

The Chair: Are there any questions on that explanation before we go to Mr. Ste-Marie's amendment? We also have one from the NDP.

Mr. Ste-Marie.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

If I am not mistaken, amendment BQ-7 is exactly the same as amendment NPD-18. So I assume that Mr. Julian will be able to say more about that.

In contrast to the CERB, the Canada Recovery Benefit requires claimants to conduct a job search. This is the equivalent of what is required of employment insurance recipients. Only those who are unable to find a job continue to receive it.

In our view, therefore, there is no need to decrease the amount paid by the program. We ask that it remain at $500 per week after July.

● (1640)

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Julian.

Mr. Peter Julian: The two amendments are very similar, and the reality is that we can't be slashing benefits from people at this point, with a third wave hitting our shores. People who are still unable to find work should not see a massive slashing of their benefits. That's certainly something we've heard as a committee. In this respect, I think things are very clear, if we are listening to the witnesses and listening to the concerns that people have raised about the slashing of these benefits at such a critical time.

We are in the midst of a third wave, and there's the possibility, tragically, of a fourth wave. We're now seeing new variants coming in. Why would we deny people the wherewithal to put food on the table or keep a roof over their heads by slashing benefits at this time?

It's no time to do a victory lap. It's no time to say everything is done and we can wrap up supports. As we've heard consistently and repeatedly at this committee, it's important to extend supports. As Mr. Ste-Marie said, these are people who are unable to find work. We're not talking about people who are not in need. We're talking people who are in need, have to put food on the table and have to keep a roof over their heads. The slashing of the benefit means that, in so many tragic cases, they will be unable to keep a roof over their heads.

We've seen growing homelessness through the pandemic. We should be providing support so that fewer people become homeless and impoverished during the pandemic, not slashing benefits in a way that puts more of them out on the street and makes more of them unable to feed their families.

There are two other points I'd like to make on this, Mr. Chair. First off, food banks are absolutely overwhelmed, which shows the magnitude of the need right now. I just heard from a food bank this week that is struggling to keep up with unprecedented demand. At the same time, Mr. Chair, as you well know, this government provided $750 billion in liquidity supports to the big banks.

The contrast I think people see is striking. Let us not be mean-spirited with people who desperately need these supports. Let's not slash supports at this critical point—the third wave of the pandemic.

The Chair: We've heard the explanation on the amendment and I will have to give a chair's ruling.

The amendment attempts to remove proposed subsections 8(1) and 8(1.1) in clause 291 of the bill. The effect would be to revert back to the existing text of the Canada Recovery Benefits Act, which provides for a payment of $500.

Since the bill provides for a decrease of these payments, this amendment, if adopted, would result in increasing payments from the consolidated revenue fund. The amendment as proposed is therefore inadmissible, as it requires a royal recommendation since it imposes a new charge on the public treasury. As I think Mr. Julian and Mr. Ste-Marie mentioned, this ruling applies to both BQ-7 and NDP-18. The amendments are inadmissible under the rules.

Are there any challenges to that? Everyone seems quiet. There's no challenge?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Chair, I'm going to ask Mr. Ste-Marie if he has something to say. If not, I'd like to add something.

[*English*]

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Julian.

Mr. Peter Julian: He's a very polite member of Parliament. I'm less polite.

The government should be doing this. The government could provide a royal recommendation on this. It's outrageous that it is choosing to slash benefits at such a critical time, particularly when it has been so amazingly generous with Canada's big banks and Canada's billionaires.

It's an outrage, quite frankly, so yes, I will challenge your ruling on that basis. A government that actually cared about the people affected by COVID would not be doing this.

● (1645)

The Chair: Polite or not, Mr. Julian, you speak from the heart.

Ms. Dzerowicz, there's a challenge to the chair, so I'll take that up first and then go to you.

Mr. Clerk, could you poll the committee on the chair's decision?

(Ruling of the chair sustained: yes 9; nays 2)

The Chair: Ms. Dzerowicz, you have your hand up. Is it on clause 291?

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: No, it's okay, Mr. Chair. I'll pass for now. Thank you.

(Clause 291 agreed to on division)

(Clause 292 agreed to on division)

(On clause 293)

The Chair: On clause 293, go ahead, Ms. Demers.

Ms. Catherine Demers: Clause 293 would add proposed new section 9.1 to the CRB Act to specify that, if the week during which an EI claimant exhausts their EI regular benefits or a combination of regular and special benefits is in the middle of the CRB two-week period, then that person may receive a payment of $300 to avoid a one-week period without income, provided the person meets the other eligibility criteria of the CRB.

In other words, it is to ensure that if someone's EI is exhausted and they apply for the CRB, they will not face a one-week income gap if their EI ends in the middle of a two-week CRB period. That relates to clause 289, as I was describing at the beginning, in the event there should be an extension of the CRB in the fall.

The Chair: Are there any questions on that? No questions.

(Clause 293 agreed to on division)

(On clause 294)

Ms. Catherine Demers: This clause would increase the maximum number of weeks for the Canada recovery caregiving benefit from 38 to 42, with four extra weeks available, June 19 to July 18. These four additional weeks would be at the same current rate of $500 per week. This is accompanied by a corresponding amendment to the Canada Labour Code, which we will talk about in a moment.

The Chair: Are there any questions on clause 294?

(Clause 294 agreed to on division)

The Chair: We're on clause 295.

Hon. Ed Fast: Mr. Chair, would you be prepared to consider grouping clauses 295 all the way through to 302?

The Chair: Absolutely.

(On clauses 295 to 302)

The Chair: We'll get an explanation from Ms. Demers on them all. Then we'll see if there are any questions, and then we'll go to a vote collectively.

Ms. Demers, go ahead on clause 295 through to clause 302.

Ms. Catherine Demers: Absolutely, it's my pleasure.

If you agree, I will do clause 295, and Ms. Moran will proceed with the other clauses, which relate to the Canada Labour Code.

The Chair: Okay.

Ms. Catherine Demers: Clause 295, which is also in the context of amendments to the Canada Recovery Benefits Act, proposes to amend the act by adding a new regulatory-making authority to extend the eligibility period for benefits under the CRB Act up to November 20, 2021, should they be needed, as announced in the budget.

The Chair: Ms. Moran on the rest, go ahead.

Ms. Barbara Moran (Director General, Strategic Policy, Analysis and Workplace Information, Labour Program - Policy, Dispute Resolution and International Affairs Directorate, Department of Employment and Social Development): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Clause 296 through to clause 302 align with the changes to the CRCB, the Canada recovery caregiving benefit, to extend job-protective leave for the federally regulated private sector from 38 to 42 weeks if someone is unable to work due to caregiving responsibilities due to COVID-19, and also changes the repeal date to match the new date, prescribed by regulation, on which the Canada recovery caregiving benefit and the Canada recovery sickness benefit aren't available. It covers various changes that relate to the federally regulated private sector.

● (1650)

The Chair: Okay. Are there any questions on that? I see none, and nobody is up.

(Clauses 295 to 302 inclusive agreed to on division)

(On clause 303)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Demers and Ms. Moran.

I believe we have Mr. Rae and Ms. Nandy here, who are ready for the next one.

We will turn to division 36, which is on benefits and leave related to employment.

Ms. Nandy, you're up to explain clause 303.

Ms. Mona Nandy (Executive Director, Employment Insurance Policy, Skills and Employment Branch, Department of Employment and Social Development): Thank you, Chair. I hope you can all hear me.

My name is Mona Nandy. I am the executive director of employment insurance policy at Employment and Social Development Canada. I'm here with you today to present clauses 303 to 361, which propose amendments to the Employment Insurance Act, the Canada Labour Code and the employment insurance regulations.

I am joined by my colleague, Barbara Moran, who will speak to the proposed amendments to the Canada Labour Code, as well as by several colleagues, including Catherine Demers, who was just on for division 35, as well as George Rae, Benoit Cadieux and Michael MacPhee, to help answer questions you may have regarding division 36.

For some additional context, division 36 proposes a series of amendments that I will be speaking to related to the Employment Insurance Act and the employment insurance regulations, which can be grouped in four categories.

The first category would be those amendments that would maintain more flexible access to employment insurance benefits for a period of one year while the job market continues to recover from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The second would be those EI temporary measures that are otherwise expiring in September 2021, related to seasonal claimants and fishers. The measures included in this bill would extend those temporary measures that are otherwise expiring.

The third set of proposed amendments would continue training supports and integrity actions related to the EI emergency response benefit.

The final set of changes in division 36 would make permanent changes to enhance EI sickness benefits.

That's just an overview, before I move into it clause by clause, if that's okay, Chair.

The Chair: That's good. You can go ahead clause by clause.

Ms. Mona Nandy: Starting with subclause 303(1), this repeals the definitions of “major attachment claimant” and “minor attachment claimant”.

The objective of the subclause is to support the establishment of a new national entrance requirement of 420 hours of insurable employment for claimants seeking EI special benefits, for a one-year period starting September 26, 2021.

The Chair: Okay. We're on page 300 of the bill. Are there any questions on clause 303? I don't see any questions.

(Clause 303 agreed to on division)

(On clause 304)

The Chair: Could you give us an explanation on clause 304? Then we have NDP-19.

Ms. Mona Nandy: Definitely, Mr. Chair.

There are numerous subclauses to clause 304. The first subclause establishes that all claimants seeking EI regular benefits and special benefits must have at least 420 hours of insurable employment in their qualifying period in order to qualify for benefits. The objective here is to support the establishment of this new national entrance requirement of 420 hours of insurable employment, for both regular and special benefits, for a one-year period starting September 26, 2021.

Subclause 304(2) would return the sections of the EI Act that I just spoke about to their original language and operation, beginning on September 25, 2022, as per the expiry of that one-year period.

Subclause 304(3) would remove the qualification requirement table based on the regional rate of employment, which is outlined in paragraph 7(2)(b) of the EI Act. The objective here is to remove the qualification requirement's dependency on regional rates of employment.

Subclause 304(4) reverts the sections of the EI Act that were listed, which I just mentioned in subclause 304(3), to their original language and operation, beginning on September 25, 2022, again with the end of the one-year period.

That concludes clause 304.

● (1655)

The Chair: I have an NDP-19, Mr. Julian, if you want to go there.

I know, Elizabeth May, that you have an amendment here as well at some point, so don't let me miss that.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): I'm on page 342 when you get there, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: It came in late, so I don't have it in my notes.

Mr. Julian, if you want to explain your NDP-19, I'll give you a ruling.

Mr. Peter Julian: I don't doubt that, Mr. Chair.

This would lower the qualifying period, ensuring that there's a national threshold of 360 hours for EI. This is something that we've heard in testimony is very much needed and would make a difference in terms of easing accessibility to benefits that people desperately need.

The Chair: If there's nothing further to add there, then my ruling is this, which you're expecting: The amendment attempts to reduce the number of insurable employment hours necessary to obtain benefits under the Employment Insurance Act from 420 to 360 hours. The effect would be that more people would have access to these benefits, which would result in increasing payments from the consolidated revenue fund. The amendment as proposed is inadmissible as it requires a royal recommendation since it imposes a new charge on the public treasury, so I rule it inadmissible.

Mr. Peter Julian: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The key words that you used were these: “that more people would have access to these benefits”. It's a sad testament that you're being forced, as the chair, to enact the government's refusal to provide more supports and more access to benefits.

I certainly don't hold it against you, Mr. Chair. I know it's the government that's forcing you to say those words through its practices and its refusal to put a royal recommendation in place.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (London North Centre, Lib.): I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: We have a point of order from—

Mr. Peter Julian: With that, I will challenge the ruling.

The Chair: Okay, Mr. Fast, you had a point of order.

Hon. Ed Fast: No.

The Chair: Okay. The reality is that it does require a royal recommendation when it's about money out of the federal treasury, so the challenged ruling—

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: It was me, Mr. Chair, who raised the point of order.

The Chair: Okay. I thought it was Mr. Fast. Go ahead.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: I'm sure he shares the concern that I have, which is that Mr. Julian put some things on the record that were not accurate by any means. To defend the chair here, I know you're modest, Mr. Chair. You're not going to get in the way of Mr. Julian's making an argument, letting his opinions cloud what are the facts, and the facts are not what he said.

The Chair: I don't think it's a point of order. I think it is debate. I don't mind being challenged, so we'll leave it at that and not get into a strenuous debate. I have to follow the rules, and that's what they are.

We'll move to a vote on the challenge to the chair, Mr. Clerk.

(Ruling of the chair sustained: yeas 9; nays 2)

● (1700)

The Chair: Mr. Fast, you have your hand up. Is it on clause 304?

Hon. Ed Fast: No, it's on clauses 305 to 307. I'd be glad to bundle those.

The Chair: Okay, wait until we vote on 304 first.

(Clause 304 agreed to on division)

(On clauses 305 to 307)

The Chair: Do I see any disagreement on bundling clauses 305 to 307? I see none.

Could we get an explanation on those, Ms. Nandy or whoever? Then we will vote on them.

Ms. Mona Nandy: Definitely, Mr. Chair.

Clause 305 simply continues the objective of ensuring that EI claimants with violations are no worse off by selecting the hours of penalty that correspond to the highest rates of unemployment, so more than 13%.

The objective of clause 306 is simply to make sure that when stipulating for the period between September 26, 2021, and September 24, 2022, claimants with monies paid on separation—that could be vacation pay or severance pay—can receive EI benefits at the same time, thereby increasing access to the EI system.

Similarly, that's the same objective for clause 307.

The Chair: Are there any questions on those three clauses?

(Clauses 305 to 307 inclusive agreed to on division)

(On clause 308)

The Chair: On clause 308, could we could get an explanation? We have two amendments on that, I believe.

Ms. Mona Nandy: Certainly.

Again, Mr. Chair, clause 308 has several subclauses. I will go through them one by one.

The first subclause, subclause 308(1), outlines the maximum number of weeks of entitlement for regular EI benefits that an eligible seasonal worker claimant can receive, as outlined in the new schedule V. This subclause also outlines the criteria by which a seasonal worker is eligible to receive these maximum weeks of entitlement.

Those include that the claimant has a benefit period that falls within the period beginning on September 26, 2021, and ending on October 29, 2022; that at the beginning of the benefit period the claimant is a resident of a region described in schedule VI of the BIA; and then, that in the five years prior to the beginning of the benefit period, the claimant had demonstrated that they were a seasonal worker—for example, they had three benefit periods established with various presumptions in the parameters around the establishment and beginning of the benefit periods.

The objective of this subclause is to replicate in legislation the parameters of the pilot project related to increased weeks of benefits for seasonal workers, which is commonly known as "pilot project number 21". That is included in the EI regulations as of September 26, 2021. That's subclause 308(1).

Subclause 308(2) increases the maximum number of weeks for which benefits may be paid "because of a prescribed illness, injury or quarantine" from 15 weeks to 26. The objective of this subclause is to provide more weeks of sickness benefits to claimants on a permanent basis.

I do realize, though, that I have moved on. I think there is an amendment, as you were saying, Mr. Chair, on subclause 308(1). I wonder if you want me to continue or just pause there.

The Chair: Maybe you can finish the clause and then we'll come back to each of the amendments, so that we're done with the discussion on clause 308 before we get to the amendments.

Ms. Mona Nandy: Certainly.

Subclause 308(3) replaces subsection 12(8) of the EI Act: the reference in that subsection to "major attachment claimant" with "claimant" as part of the removal of the definition of "major attachment claimant" for the EI Act for that one-year period beginning on September 26, 2021 and ending on September 24, 2022. As previously mentioned with the subclauses of clause 303, the objective of this subclause is to support the establishment of the new national entrance requirement of 420 hours of insurable employment for special benefits for a one-year period as of September 26, 2021.

Finally, subclause 308(4) returns the sections of the EI Act listed in the previous subclause 308(3) to their original language and operations, beginning September 25, 2022, which is the end of the EI temporary measures for a one-year period.

That's it for clause 308.

● (1705)

The Chair: Thank you very much for that fairly lengthy explanation.

We'll turn to Mr. Ste-Marie on amendment BQ-8.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would like to speak to amendment BQ-8, and I will return to amendment BQ-9 later.

They are both along the same lines and complement what was suggested to us by the Conseil national des chômeurs et chômeuses, who testified before the committee.

For the period beginning September 27, 2021, Mr. Serré had reminded us of the two blind spots in this legislation. In particular, this amendment is designed to ensure that the benefit period is 50 weeks. As we know, the old version of employment insurance did not work well. It needs to be revised and it will be. In the meantime, the pandemic is still with us and the economy is still at risk. This motion ensures that EI benefits will last 50 weeks, in part to ensure that seasonal workers are not adversely affected.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Ste-Marie.

The chair's ruling on this amendment is that the amendment attempts to extend the duration of the pilot project number 21 until September 2022. The effect would be that more people would have access to an increased number of weeks for a longer period of time, which would result in increased payments from the consolidated revenue fund. The amendment as proposed is inadmissible as it requires a royal recommendation, since it imposes a new charge on the public treasury. I rule it inadmissible.

Can we go to amendment NDP-20?

Mr. Julian.

Mr. Peter Julian: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

As I stated at the outset, I have the utmost respect for you and have repeated that consistently through the finance committee. Mr. Fragiskatos took objection to the reality, which is that the government's withholding a royal recommendation puts you in an uncomfortable position of having to rule out of order improvements that would make a big difference in people's lives. I would have to disagree with Mr. Fragiskatos that this is something that's acceptable. The government should be walking the talk and should be accepting these improvements, which would make such a difference in people's lives.

That is also the case for amendments NDP-20 and NDP-22. I'll present both of them together. We have heard, through the course of the witnesses that we had and the testimony, that the 26 weeks is simply not enough time to get through illness. This is from Liberal witnesses who came forward and when opposition members asked them, “Is 26 weeks sufficient?” these Liberal witnesses—witnesses called by the Liberal Party—said that, no, actually it would be much more important to have a full year of benefit support when people are going through critical illnesses, such as cancer. While they are recovering, the time, the requirements and the demands on people when they are trying to get through these health crises are enormous, so when Liberal witnesses brought forward to our committee agree with the opposition that we should be looking to 50 weeks, I think that is a fundamentally important recommendation that we as a committee should uphold.

That is why both NDP-20 and NDP-22 have been put forward. Also, as you know, Mr. Chair, the labour movement nationally and a variety of other organizations are all calling for this as well. This is very germane to another measure within the budget implementation act that fell far short of what's actually needed, and now is the time for us to rectify that error.

● (1710)

The Chair: The amendment attempts to extend the number of weeks of benefits for prescribed illness, injury or quarantine from 26 to 50, which would result in increased payments from the consolidated revenue fund. The amendment as proposed is inadmissible as it requires a royal recommendation since it imposes a new charge on the public treasury.

Mr. Peter Julian: On a point of order, Mr. Chair, with deep respect for your role as chair and not a lot of respect for the government action on refusing a royal recommendation, I would challenge your ruling.

The Chair: All right. Mr. Clerk, there's been a challenge to the chair's ruling. You can poll the committee, please.

(Ruling of the chair sustained: yeas 9; nays 2)

(Clause 308 agreed to on division)

The Chair: A new clause 308.1 is proposed by the NDP in amendment NDP-21.

Mr. Julian.

Mr. Peter Julian: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I think we already dealt with this under the Bloc amendment. It's a slightly different approach but the same thing—to include the standard denominator. As I mentioned earlier, I wouldn't be challenging all of the rulings on this, but it is clear that this would provide more stability for people who are unemployed and searching for work at this difficult time.

The Chair: Okay. Whatever ruling I make here will apply to amendment BQ-9 as well.

Does Mr. Ste-Marie have anything to add to the argument for either NDP-21 or BQ-9?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: I would remind you that representatives of the Comité national des chômeurs et chômeuses appeared before the committee to tell us about the two blind spots in Bill C-30. This is the second blind spot. In accordance with the representatives' recommendation,the amendment seeks to use the single denominator of 14 instead of denominators of up to 21 in some cases. The amount that seasonal workers will receive each week will be greatly reduced because of this blind spot in Bill C-30. It is, therefore, an important amendment.

● (1715)

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you both.

The amendment provides for a different method of calculation of weekly insurable earnings such that the insurable earnings would be divided by 14 in all cases rather than a number between 14 and 22, which would result in increased payments from the consolidated revenue fund. The amendment as proposed in inadmissible, as it requires a royal recommendation since it imposes a new charge on the public treasury. That ruling applies to BQ-9 as well.

Mr. Peter Julian: I'm sorry, Mr. Chair. I think I'll be appealing your decision, but I do have a question for our witnesses. Your ruling specifically states that this would increase payments from the consolidated revenue fund, but it's the employment insurance account that pays for employment insurance.

Could our witnesses respond to my question? Is the employment insurance account separate from the consolidated revenue fund account, or has this current government basically taken over the employment insurance account?

The Chair: We'll go to the witnesses, but as I understand it, there's separate accounting on both and it is the consolidated revenue fund.

Go ahead, Ms. Nandy, or whoever else from the public service who wants to answer this.

Ms. Mona Nandy: Hi there. I'm going to ask if George Rae can be called in to help with this particular question.

The Chair: Mr. Rae, if you're not in, the clerk will let you in.

Mr. Rae.

Mr. George Rae (Director, Policy Analysis and Initiative, Employment Insurance Policy, Skills and Employment Branch, Department of Employment and Social Development): The employment insurance operating account is a fund that gets reimbursed and has debits and credits from the consolidated revenue fund.

Mr. Peter Julian: When did that merging happen? Of course, organized labour has raised this over the years. I think this is the first time we've had the government openly admit that they've just taken over the employment insurance account. When did that merging take place so that employment insurance is no longer considered separate and independent of the consolidated revenue fund?

The Chair: As I understand it, Mr. Julian, it was always a separate accounting. I could be wrong on that.

Mr. Rae.

Mr. George Rae: That's correct. It is a separate accounting.

Mr. Peter Julian: If it's a separate accounting, how could the ruling be that this has an impact on the consolidated revenue account?

The Chair: It's because the consolidated revenue fund either owes EI money or EI owes it.

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Chair, I think this actually exposes a deep, dark secret that I'm not sure the government wanted to expose. It's very clear that either the employment insurance account has been merged, despite the government protests to the contrary, or the employment insurance account continues to be administered separately.

If it's administered separately, your ruling, of course, does not stand. If it's been merged together, I think it's important that the public know that. I think the best way for the public to be better informed would be for the committee to overturn your ruling, so I will challenge it.

The Chair: Thank you for your explanation, Mr. Rae.

Mr. Clerk, it's over to you for a polling of the committee.

(Ruling of the chair sustained: yeas 9; nays 2)

● (1720)

The Chair: The ruling upheld, so we shall vote on clause 309—

Mr. Philippe Méla: Mr. Chair, the amendment was to create new clause 308.1. Since it was inadmissible, we go to clause 309.

The Chair: That's right. You are correct. Thank you.

(On clause 309)

The Chair: Is there an explanation here?

Ms. Mona Nandy: Yes, Mr. Chair. It's similar to other subclauses that I've spoken about. The objective is simply to ensure that all qualified claimants with at least 420 hours of insurable employment can receive sickness benefits for a one-year period as of September 26, 2021. Subclause 309(2) would return the sections of the EI Act just mentioned to their original language and operations.

It's rather cumbersome, but this is the way the drafting process had to work.

That's it for clause 309.

The Chair: Okay. Is there any discussion?

(Clause 309 agreed to on division)

(On clauses 310 to 316)

Ms. Mona Nandy: Mr. Chair, if you would prefer, clauses 310 to 316 are all consequential amendments with the same intent of ensuring that those who are eligible for sickness benefits can receive sickness benefits with 420 hours, with the definitions of major and minor attachment claimant being removed from the act.

The Chair: I think we can get agreement on that.

Are there any questions on clauses 310 to 316? I see none.

(Clauses 310 to 316 inclusive agreed to on division)

(On clause 317)

The Chair: Ms. Nandy or whomever.

Ms. Mona Nandy: It's going to be me, Mr. Chair.

I think we're on clause 316, if I'm not mistaken. Subclause 316(1) amends the definition of “employment” in paragraph 29(a) of the EI Act, which is used to deal with the qualification and disentitlement roles set out in sections 30 to 33, to a definition that will now only include the claimant's most recent employment or any employment in the benefit period. The objective of subclause 316(1) is to temporarily ensure that a claimant cannot be disqualified or disentitled under sections 30 to 33 based on employment that does not meet this new definition for a one-year period as of September 26, 2021.

Subclause 316(2) again reverts to the original language and operations after the end of the one-year period.

The Chair: Are there any questions?

(Clause 317 agreed to on division)

The Chair: We're on 318.

Hon. Ed Fast: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

I note that Ms. May does have one amendment, and I believe.... Is that the only one that we're left with?

The Chair: No, we do have NDP-22, which is on clause 324. Ms. May's is on schedule 3.

Hon. Ed Fast: What if we—

Mr. Peter Julian: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

I think we've already dealt with NDP-22 because that was coupled with NDP-20.

The Chair: Okay, but we will have to.... We will get to it, and we will ignore it. We'll just make a statement when we're going by it. That's not hard to do.

Mr. Peter Julian: We'll do a drive-by.

Hon. Ed Fast: A drive-by is great, Mr. Chair, given the fact that I think we had hoped to have this done by 5:30.

If you could use your discretion to lump together all of those clauses that don't have amendments so that we could pass them on division, then we could deal with the remaining amendments. I guess there are two left then.

● (1725)

The Chair: We can do that. I do have to remind committee, though, that with the agreement we have with the translators, we do have to suspend at 5:30 for 30 minutes. That's the agreement with the translators—to go to 7:00 Ottawa time, I guess, is it? I'm looking at my clock.

Okay, let's deal with clauses 318 to 323. I'll mention on clause 324 the chair's ruling so that we do that properly. Then we will try to block the rest until we get to division 37.

(Clauses 318 to 323 inclusive agreed to on division)

(On clause 324)

The Chair: On clause 324, there is an NDP amendment already spoken to, and I've ruled it inadmissible. I believe that's been agreed to, so it's inadmissible.

Mr. Peter Julian: I don't like it, but I accept it.

The Chair: Okay.

(Clause 324 agreed to on division)

(Clauses 325 to 361 inclusive agreed to on division)

(On clauses 362 and 363)

The Chair: Now we'll bring in folks on division 37, which is on the Canada Elections Act.

Ms. Paquet.

Ms. Manon Paquet (Director, Special Projects, Democratic Institutions Secretariat, Privy Council Office): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My name is Manon Paquet, and I'm the director of special projects in the PCO's democratic institutions secretariat.

Clause 362 relates to section 91 of the Canada Elections Act, which prohibits specific types of false statements made to affect the election results. The amendment would add the word “knowingly” to the associated offences to clarify that for that provision to apply, the individual or entity needed to know that the statement was false. It responds to a recent court decision of the Ontario Superior Court of Justice.

The Chair: Are there any questions on this that relate to clause 362? Is there any discussion?

Ms. Dzerowicz.

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Thank you so much, Mr. Chair.

I want to thank Ms. Paquet for the explanation.

Could you tell us a bit more about the ruling from the Ontario Superior Court of Justice?

Ms. Manon Paquet: Sure. Thank you for the question.

The court decision was about the constitutionality of section 91. Even though there was an intent within the provision itself, imparting the intent to affect the outcome of elections, the court ruled that the knowledge requirement to know that the statement was false was not clear within the provision. The amendment would explicitly include that knowledge requirement.

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Thank you. I have a follow-up, if it's okay, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Paquet, can you kindly refresh my memory on section 91?

Ms. Manon Paquet: Of course.

Section 91 prohibits specific types of false statements regarding candidates, prospective candidates, the leader of a political party or a public figure associated with a political party. It only applies during the election period. It's for a statement, for example, that one of those persons would have done something illegal, or a statement regarding citizenship, place of birth, education or professional qualifications, so factually verifiable information.

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Thank you.

Can I have one more small question, a definition one?

The Chair: You can have one more small question, and then we'll go to Mr. Kelly.

Go ahead.

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Could you just define for us what “knowledge requirement” means?

Ms. Manon Paquet: It would clarify that the individual making the statement needed to know that the statement was false.

● (1730)

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Thank you.

The Chair: Does your explanation also relate to clause 363 so that we can deal with these two together?

Ms. Manon Paquet: Clause 363 is about the coming into force. It comes into force with royal assent.

The Chair: All right.

Mr. Kelly.

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Mr. Chair, I quickly want to flag that there will not be consent to extend the meeting.

We're down to literally the last bit here. If we're not able to vote on these clauses by 5:30, we'd be prepared to adjourn the meeting so that other committees can meet.

The Chair: I'll have to find my notice, Pat, but the notice of meeting goes until eight o'clock, so it's not a question of—

Mr. Pat Kelly: Was there agreement to extend that?

The Chair: We sent the notice out.

Mr. Pat Kelly: Okay, I guess I'm just encouraging...since we are down to the last bits here.

The Chair: The problem is that lately the rules for the people doing translation say that we have to give them 30 minutes.

There was an agreement, as I understood—maybe there's something I don't know—among the whips that we would go until eight o'clock tonight and that there would be a 30-minute suspension right now. The notice of meeting went out for meeting number 53 to be from 3:30 until 8:00.

I can't do anything about it. I'm sorry, but I can't impose on the agreements with the translators. I just can't.

Mrs. Tamara Jansen: Mr. Chair, I have a question.

The Chair: Go ahead, Ms. Jansen.

I'm sorry. I would love to finish, but I just can't.

Mrs. Tamara Jansen: Do you have a guesstimate of how much time it will take us to finish?

The Chair: I don't know how long it will take on Elizabeth May's amendment, but I expect it will take us 15 or 20 minutes.

The translators are operating under an agreement that they have to have a 30-minute break right now. We ran into that the other night. I will have to suspend for 30 minutes and reconvene. I'm sorry about that, but there's just nothing I can do about it, in all honesty.

The meeting is suspended until 6:02 Ottawa time.

● (1730)

(Pause)

● (1800)

The Chair: We'll call the meeting to order once again.

We did have a discussion on clauses 362 and 363. Are there any questions on those discussions? I see none.

(Clauses 362 and 363 agreed to on division)

The Chair: Shall schedule 1 carry? I see Mr. Fraser—

Ms. Annie Koutrakis (Vimy, Lib.): I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Your amendment is on schedule 3, I believe, Elizabeth May, but I have Sean Fraser first, and then I have you, Ms. May.

Sean.

Mr. Sean Fraser: I expect this is the same point of order that Ms. Koutrakis was about to raise. I think there's a technical issue with the phone lines, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Annie Koutrakis: That's right.

The Chair: What's the trouble? Is it at my end?

Mr. Sean Fraser: Someone trying to dial in can't hear.

The Chair: Okay.

The Clerk: We're looking into it, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Okay. Look into it, because we have Pat, Ed, Tamara.... Is Mr. Falk here? I don't see him. There he is.

Mr. Sean Fraser: I think we're okay.

The Clerk: Yes, the phone lines are okay.

The Chair: All right.

Is there any discussion on schedule 1?

(Schedule 1 agreed to on division)

(Schedule 2 agreed to on division)

(On schedule 3)

The Chair: On schedule 3, there is an amendment from Ms. May called, I believe, PV-1.

Ms. May, the floor is yours.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Just to briefly remind members—and I know you're all keen to get out of here—you passed a motion some time ago that requires me to be here if I have amendments. Otherwise, I could have done this at report stage. I'm here because of your instructions.

I have a reminder to the clerk to please remember in future to give me the 48 hours' notice so that I can get my amendments in on time pursuant to the motion you passed.

This one is very straightforward. Prince Edward Island right now, as you can see in the bill, is treated as “The region of Charlottetown, consisting of the Census Agglomeration of Charlottetown”, and “The region of Prince Edward Island, consisting of all Census Subdivisions that are not part of the Census Agglomeration of Charlottetown”.

My amendment is very straightforward. I'm really speaking to you today on behalf of a number of municipalities in Prince Edward Island, and particularly on behalf of the mayor of Charlottetown, who asked me to try to carry this forward. I know there are problems, and I want to touch on them briefly, but the message here is “one island, one province, one zone”.

What is happening here is a number of very odd results. I think Mr. Fraser is aware of the kinds of things that sometimes happen in maritime provinces. You can be a few feet from somebody else and your entitlements under employment insurance can be very different.

In the case of Prince Edward Island, it is quite a perverse result. Now, I recognize—and I have had notes from Finance Canada and actually had a very helpful conversation with Minister Carla Qualtrough—that in making the change here, this section deals with the seasonal pilot program. It won't solve the larger problem.

I took that back to the mayor of Charlottetown. The concern here is that if we enshrine in the statute these different zones for purposes of EI, it will make it harder to fix it in regulations down the line, and the mayor of Charlottetown, Philip Brown, doesn't see how we're going to get to fix this problem any earlier than 2023 if we don't grasp the nettle and try to fix it here.

That's what I'm attempting to do to: assist a wonderful province. We know how wonderful it is because our chair hails from there. In getting this fixed, we will be showered in Malpeque oysters and we will have a grand celebration one of these days, but for now, I put it to you that we have a problem.

I know that my amendment is controversial, in that it is not perfectly suited to fix the problem, but I don't think the municipalities and the unemployed workers of Prince Edward Island have a better option right now than passing this.

● (1805)

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. May. We did look at the amendment and I had the legislative clerk look at it. The amendment is in order.

Mr. Fraser.

Mr. Sean Fraser: Thanks very much.

I'll do my best to be concise. Ms. May and I had a conversation about this issue as well, which I was grateful for.

The issue around this proposed amendment is that it pertains to a section that only deals with the seasonal pilot program, as Ms. May has quite rightly acknowledged. My fear is that it's not entirely innocuous. My understanding is that there would be risk if we create a different definition of the zones in Bill C-30 that refers to the seasonal pilot while the regulations that apply to the ordinary EI zones remain as they are. We could, in an unintended way, actually lead to the perverse consequence where Islanders would not be eligible for the seasonal pilot expansion.

I just have a final point. This is a problem that actually impacts my constituency. I was looking for other ways to address the issue for my own constituents, who sometimes work for the same employer or live in the same community, but have access to different EI benefits. I understand that the commissioner's review of the program is under way. There will be an opportunity in the medium term—I don't have a specific date for you—to actually address the underlying issue through the regulatory change, which I would submit is the proper course of action rather than amending Bill C-30.

I'll leave it to members to decide what they're going to do, but for that reason and with great respect to Ms. May, I'll be voting against the amendment, despite the fact that I want to fix the problem in my own community.

The Chair: I expect we will have to go to a vote on this. Is there any further discussion?

With no further discussion, Mr. Clerk, could you poll the committee on PV-1?

(Amendment negatived: nays 9; yeas 2 [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

● (1810)

The Chair: The amendment is lost. Thank you, Ms. May, for putting that forward, though.

(Schedule 3 agreed to on division)

(Schedule 4 agreed to on division)

The Chair: Then we go to the short title....

Mr. Fraser.

Mr. Sean Fraser: Mr. Chair, I meant to raise this at the beginning of the meeting, but I had a substitute, so I didn't. I promise not to take long on this.

There was one clause during the course of our clause-by-clause exercise that I wanted to raise for the potential opportunity to revisit. I'd like to propose a short motion and then just give a one-minute explanation as to what it is. It is a motion that relates to Monsieur Ste-Marie's initial proposed amendment that would have limited the transfer of funding to the Canadian Securities Transition Office to $1. The amendment was defeated, which would have had the effect of ultimately not allowing the organization to operate.

The Conservatives sided against the amendment, as did other parties as well. I did also. Subsequently, on the vote on the main motion, the main motion was defeated, which, in effect, resulted in the same outcome. I don't know. I view those two outcomes to be at odds. I was hoping to propose a motion.

I move that the results of the vote by the committee on clause 158 of Bill C-30, an act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on April 19, 2021, and other measures, be rescinded.

I can boil it down to the Coles Notes. I think this organization is important. It has important impacts on capital markets regulation. It has a major opportunity to work not only with the bank on securities regulation, but also with the major banks to strengthen our anti-money laundering regime in Canada.

Finally, the reason I raise it.... I would have taken everybody's vote at their word, but it was one of the few things, when former Prime Minister Harper was in office, that I was quite in agreement with when it happened. I just wanted to give the opportunity for folks to revisit this issue at committee before we deal with the bill in the House.

I'll leave it there. I could repeat the motion in French if that would be for the benefit of the crowd, if the translation wasn't accurate. I see Monsieur Ste-Marie's shaking his head no, so I'll leave my submission there.

The Chair: I will have to ask both the clerk and the legislative clerk if this motion is to rescind the results of the vote on.... Did you say clause 158?

Mr. Sean Fraser: Yes, it's clause 158.

The Chair: I, to be honest with you, have never dealt with this kind of situation before. Is that motion in order? Can anybody give me some advice? That's why I like it when the clerk and the legislative clerk sit beside me.

Who wants to give me some advice, the clerk or Philippe?

Philippe says I would need unanimous consent to allow that, Mr. Fraser.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: I am against the motion, Mr. Chair.

[*English*]

The Chair: I'll let Mr. Ste-Marie speak.

Go ahead.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: I will vote against the motion, in any case.

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Ste-Marie, can you repeat that, please?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: I am against the motion.

You said we needed unanimous consent; I am going to vote against the motion. We've spent a long time debating it. I think I'm making an informed choice, not a random one.

Thank you.

[*English*]

The Chair: Okay, so we do not have unanimous consent to go back and do that. Thank you.

We don't have unanimous consent for Mr. Fraser's motion, so we'll come to the bill itself.

The Chair: Shall the short title carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

The Chair: Shall the title carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

The Chair: Shall the bill as amended carry, because we do have a couple of amendments here?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

The Chair: Shall the chair report the bill as amended to the House?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

The Chair: Shall the committee order a reprint of the bill as amended for the use of the House at report stage? We'd have to do that.

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Folks, that completes the bill, and I will hopefully report the bill, as amended, to the House tomorrow.

I would say thank you to the clerk, the legislative clerk and the translators. I know this has been a long go on very technical stuff.

I thank all the witnesses from numerous departments who did their best to give explanations to us on all the questions that were asked.

Thank you to committee members for their endurance. There were many late evenings, a lot of reading, a lot of research and listening to a lot of witnesses.

● (1815)

Ms. Elizabeth May: Can I just say something? I'm sort of your mascot because I don't have any status, but I just want to take my hat off to all of you. This is a well-run committee. It does really good work. It really listens and does the work, so to all of you I just want to add my thanks as a Canadian citizen.

The Chair: Very good. Thanks, Ms. May.

With that—

Ms. Annie Koutrakis: Mr. Chair, if I may, I'd like to also extend my thanks to all our committee members, to all the clerks, the legislative clerk, everybody who's really helped us along, and for the thoughtful debates and conversations that we've had. As an elected MP in 2019, I have to tell you that this is quite the experience for me. Thank you so much for allowing me to learn from all of you. Thank you to the translators and to everybody who made this happen.

The Chair: Good stuff.

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Yes, that's on behalf of us all.

The Chair: Thank you all.

With that, we shall see you all in the House.

We'll have a steering committee likely next Tuesday, I believe.

I call the meeting adjourned.