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Chair

Mr. Phil McColeman

Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities

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• (1150)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Phil McColeman (Brant, CPC)): Welcome to meeting 35 of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities.

This is Thursday, October 30, 2014. We're here today to continue our review of Bill C-247, an act to expand the mandate of Service Canada in respect of the death of a Canadian citizen or Canadian resident.

Committee members, because of the timing, we're going to have seven-minute presentations from our witnesses. We have three witnesses. We'll have one round of five-minute questioning and then we're going to move into clause-by-clause consideration, which will shorten somewhat the time we have with witnesses. Then, hopefully, we will have time right at the end of the meeting to deal with a couple of pieces of committee business.

Without further ado, I'd like to introduce our witnesses and welcome them.

First from CARP, we have Janet Gray, the chairperson of the Ottawa chapter. From the National Pensioners Federation, we have Barry Thorsteinson, who is the past president. By video conference from Waterloo, Ontario, we have Marny Williams of the Bereavement Ontario Network.

Welcome to our witnesses. You have up to seven minutes for your presentation.

We will start with Janet Gray.

Ms. Janet Gray (Chairperson, Ottawa Chapter, CARP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Canadian Association of Retired Persons, also known as CARP, is a non-partisan, not-for-profit national organization, with 300,000 members across the country, in 60 different chapters. We are committed to a new vision of aging for Canada, promoting social change that will bring financial security, equitable access to health care, and freedom from discrimination. Our mandate is to promote and protect the interests, rights, and quality of life for all Canadians as we age.

My name is Janet Gray. For the last seven years I've been the chairperson of the Ottawa chapter of CARP. As the daughter of two aging parents and as a professional financial planner, I have personally helped my own family and clients with estate settlement

and/or with advice on the process to follow on death notification. As the chair of over 6,000 CARP members here in Ottawa, I also get asked by members how to simplify their government transactions, especially at a time when their emotions are high and the task is daunting.

I'm here today to support Bill C-247, an act to expand the mandate of Service Canada in respect of the death of a Canadian citizen or Canadian resident.

Currently, Canadians are obligated to take unnecessary measures to notify the government on the death of a loved one. A bereaved Canadian must notify multiple government departments, potentially over 30 different departments in some cases, and often requiring multiple forms of documentation for proof of death.

Some of the departments and programs include: CPP, OAS, GIS, social insurance number, Passport Canada, GST/HST payments, veterans disability program, death benefit, Elections Canada, citizenship card, earning loss benefit, Canada child tax benefit, and working income tax benefit, just to name a few.

The consequences of not notifying any of these could potentially lead to requests for repayments or other government penalties years later.

CARP welcomes Bill C-247 in creating a single point of contact for Canadians. The bill will streamline the currently uncoordinated fragmented system. It will remove unnecessary stress and burden of repeated notifications to multiple government departments. Instead, the bill would create a clear path for Canadians during a difficult time. Canadians do not accept that the government does not have the ability to share information across their own departments, they only see one government.

CARP members would support Bill C-247 as it will remove unnecessary costs for Canadians, as well as cost inefficiencies for government. In a CARP poll prior to the 2013 budget, CARP members said that they wanted a budget that promoted a vision of a fiscally responsible, sustainable, and caring society. The majority said that eliminating waste and inefficiency is the best way to fund this vision of Canada.

Bill C-247 is a low-hanging fruit that all parties can support as it benefits all Canadians. CARP is asking that this bill be enacted right away.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you for your presentation.

Mr. Thorsteinson.

Mr. Barry Thorsteinson (Past President, National Pensioners Federation): Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and committee members.

It's an honour to be here today to represent the National Pensioners Federation, of which I am past president. For those of you not familiar with the federation, it's in its 70th year now after being founded on the Prairies. It's a national organization with large groups as diverse as the British Columbia Retired Teachers' Association to East Margaree Seniors' Club, close to Roger Cuzner's home riding. You can check that out with the folks when you're there next.

We have 250 organizations across the country, representing about a million members. We're the only organization representing seniors that has an annual open democratic convention where we elect our officers and debate our policies in open and public debate, and by democratic vote. I'm here representing the executive board and President Herb John, who can't be with us today.

Simply put, we're pleased to see the progress of this bill and we're here to voice our support. I'm not going to repeat all the same specific reasons why one point of contact is such a strangely revolutionary development in this day and age, but somehow it still is upon the challenge of parliamentarians to enact.

We encourage you pass the legislation for all the reasons that have already been mentioned by my colleague opposite. I had a few points to single out, but they touch on the same specifics. I'm sure this committee has been canvassing those very same points time and time again since the introduction of the bill by the honourable member from Guelph.

I did have a few points of concern, however. One of the questions I have—and I'm sure you've got a good answer for this—is why can't we just do this simply, administratively within the minister's purview now in human resources? It's an administrative feature really that connects all the dots online, with today's technology, within the Government of Canada. One would think it would be an administrative change that doesn't require parliamentary action. However, not being as experienced as the committee members present on what's necessary legally, I'm sure you know what you're doing with having a bill to enact the necessary changes.

Given that a bill is necessary, then trying to think it through, we're also wondering if it needs an amendment for any potential legal challenges down the road after the bill is presumably passed by Parliament. For instance, a very resourceful and energetic lawyer in the legal community might be keen on privacy issues and might say you didn't put anything explicitly in the bill to override any privacy concerns.

It shouldn't be a concern, these are all federal government departments, but you don't want to see any delays in the implementation of the bill due to any potential legal challenges down the road. Whether an amendment is in order or not, I'll leave that in the hands of much more experienced and wise parliamentarians than I could possibly imagine.

Although CPP has been mentioned as one of the many points that would be affected by this, we're also wondering about the automatic triggering of the death benefit under the Canada Pension Plan. We are wondering whether or not that can be quickly dispatched with by that particular pension plan oversight to the executor of the estate after the point of contact has been made, or whether there still has to be a separate application. We're not sure that the legislation provides for that, but you may want to specifically look at that.

We're hopeful, with the British experience already well known and some of the material that's known to this committee on at least one G-8 country that's already had experience with this, that it can be quickly implemented in the days ahead.

Lastly, a note of fondness for the all-party support that this bill has received to date. I hope it remains that way. It's certainly refreshing to see, considering the last time I was here on Bill C-23 on the alleged Fair Elections Act.

I'll leave it at that. Thank you for the time. If you have any questions, please submit them.

• (1155)

The Chair: We move on to Ms. Williams by video conference.

Mrs. Marny Williams (Vice-Chair, Bereavement Ontario Network): I wish to thank you for the opportunity to speak to Bill C-247, and the importance of having one point of contact for the bereaved when it comes to death notification.

I have read and listened to Frank Valeriote's presentation about the practical benefits of Bill C-247 and agree that it will reduce costs associated with finalizing estates for both the families and the government. But I'm here to talk to you about the emotional benefits of this bill.

I've been involved in the bereavement community for 12 years. I entered the world of grief when my husband died after a brief six-week battle with cancer. Since that time, I've worked hard on my own personal grief journey to rebuild my life for myself and my children, but I've also worked professionally. I facilitated support groups for nine years. I received my certificate in grief and bereavement from Western University, and I work for a local funeral home providing bereavement support.

I am also the founder of a non-profit that specifically supports widows and widowers with children at home. I come here today as the vice-chair of the Bereavement Ontario Network. I bring to you 12 years of stories from the many families with whom I've had the privilege to walk alongside.

In Mr. Valeriote's report, he states that having one point of contact will assist the senior population. I would like to expand on that and say that it will benefit anyone at any age who is trying to cope with the death of a loved one. I will speak to my personal story.

At the age of 30, I found myself a widow and solo parent to two children aged three years and three months old. My world had been completely turned upside down and inside out. I was so devastated by the death of my husband, Keith, and the reality of supporting my children through their grief, that I didn't have the time or knowledge or desire to struggle through the multitude of paperwork that was required.

I was also in a financial crisis. I was a stay-at-home mom and my husband, Keith, was the main breadwinner. When he died, that income was also lost. The reality of being so young and not having ever experienced the logistical side of death, I did not have the knowledge or education of what needed to be done when someone dies.

Deemed disposition, final tax return, survivor benefits, these were all terms that I'd never heard of before and didn't know they even existed, but now they were a part of my new reality. I was lucky to have my brother-in-law to assist me through the paperwork, but not everyone has that support. This is my story, but sadly there are hundreds more like it.

When a loved one dies, the immediate family begins a journey of grief that they are unprepared for. The world as they knew has been dramatically changed and the family is now left to mourn the loss of their loved one. Grief is a combination of emotional and practical hardship.

The emotional heartache and pain that is felt by the family can bring on feelings of anxiety, anger, confusion, and sadness, to name a few. Many do not think of the practical hardship that comes as a result of the death. Immediate family members must take on the roles and responsibilities that the person who died contributed to the family.

For me, that meant taking on all the duties of the home and car maintenance, daily finances, and raising children as a solo parent, at the same that I was grieving the death of my husband. I did not have the time or desire to work through the legalities. When you are newly bereaved, the emotional toll of having to tell multiple strangers that someone you loved so deeply has died feels like a cruel punishment.

Many of these families are still trying to process the death and reality of the new world. Standing in line in a government office and sometimes, unfortunately, being greeted by less than compassionate people can feel like adding salt to the wound. Having to share the devastating news with only one person will help to lessen the burden for these families.

Ironically, this past Tuesday night, I was facilitating a bereavement support group. As we were going around and seeing how everyone's week was, one of the ladies shared her frustration with having to deal with a \$61 cheque that was issued from the government after her husband died.

Three months ago when she received the cheque, she called to report the error. She was told how to deal with the cheque and followed the instructions exactly. Now, three months later, she received another letter with further instructions. When she called the office she was told by the person on the phone that they could not help her until they received a copy of the will. She spent the next day

drafting a letter, finding past paperwork, copying documents, and mailing this package back to the government office. All of this time, frustration, and anger for only \$61. Again, this is just one story of many.

Bill C-247 is about one point of contact for death notification for government departments. But it is important to remember that when someone dies, it is not just the government that needs to know.

● (1200)

There are financial institutions, investment companies, credit cards, insurance companies, places of employment, provincial departments like the Ministry of Transport, and legalities such as changing the deed of the home and writing a new will, just to name a few.

Each one of these must be notified of the death and then the resulting paperwork to be processed. Each one is a harsh reminder that your loved one has died.

Bill C-247 is one small yet impactful step that can help ease the emotional burdens felt by these families. Grief is an under-appreciated, misunderstood emotion that affects all aspects of your life. Grief is a force that needs attention in order for the bereaved to begin to heal. It takes a village to support those who are desperately missing their loved one. Anything that we can do as an individual, a society, or a country, to make that journey of grief a little smoother is a good thing.

Mr. Valeriote said it best. Let's create a practical and compassionate approach to reducing the burden and guesswork of grieving Canadians. Let's be a model to the world for the client services it provides to its citizens and residents.

I strongly support the implementation of Bill C-247 and I look forward to sharing this information with the families I support.

Thank you.

● (1205)

The Chair: Thank you for your presentation.

We'll now move on to our first round of questioning with Madam Sims.

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Thank you very much.

First of all, I want to thank the three of you for coming to present to the committee.

Marny, I especially want to thank you for sharing your personal experiences and your first-time experiences of what it's like. For many of us who've been through the loss of a loved one, whether it's a parent, a partner, or a child, we know what a difficult time it is to go through grieving.

Just so you know, I've gathered from the last meeting very strong support for this legislation. We're here today because every one of us, no matter which part of the House we sit in, wants to alleviate as much anguish as we can for families who are going through so much. To tell you the truth it took me by surprise that we did not have an integrated, coordinated system when I had a first-hand experience of going through it myself on behalf of my mother when my father passed away. I think this is long overdue.

The one concern I do have is that when I have talked to a number of people they're telling me how long everything takes and how cumbersome it is. Over the last number of years we've had incredible cuts to ESDC where this is housed, that is, over \$243 million worth of cuts. My major concern is how this is going to be rolled out. I don't want it to be even more stressful for families.

What kind of transition would you like to see that you think would help to implement this bill? What kind of staffing would you like to see?

Mrs. Marny Williams: Are you asking me that?

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims: I think I would like to hear the perspective of the three of you.

The Chair: Why don't we start with you, Ms. Williams.

Mrs. Marny Williams: When my husband died I never realized how much paperwork there really was and the amount of death certificates that were needed. The photocopying and all that stuff was extremely surprising to me and overwhelming. I think how we can ease this and make it doable is by asking, what do the front people do at Service Canada? Is there just one form that we can fill out? Maybe this form is going to be five pages because it requires information for all the different departments, but I would rather sit down and fill out one five-page document than have to fill out a similar document over and over again with the same information.

It's a good question. I'll put it out to my colleagues here.

Mr. Barry Thorsteinson: It would take implementation some study with the ministry to come up with that but I'm hoping the end product would be a quickly identifiable source of assistance and the forms clearly available online. I don't know that this would require extra staffing once the procedures are in place. We do comment unfavourably on the Service Canada cuts that have occurred in the past. But with this particular useful new measure being implemented we hope it is done by consulting the stakeholders.

Also, some of the member organizations—I'm not sure I have the correct name—but the funeral service directors association, I think it's a national one, are very good at getting out the information to executors and to families of where to find information and whatnot. I would hope that this would be streamlined as well, possibly even the forms provided once Service Canada streamlines them to what's necessary for their operational procedures. We're not experts in the field of staffing and resources. We leave that to the government. We just hope that this is a valuable service to Canadians and will actually save time compared to the multiplicity of departments that are now processing, goodness knows, how much conflicting information.

Ms. Janet Gray: I totally agree.

To give you an idea of the forms involved, when you go to the funeral home after your loved one has died they'll give you up to 18

death certificates to disseminate to the various departments. Sometimes people have to go back and get further copies because often an official copy is needed.

To maybe answer your question, I don't see that it is a staffing issue. If I have to go to 27 departments I'm still talking to 27 people. I would think that Service Canada is the one stop for me, who then notifies those 27 people.

I hope that's the easy solution. It may not be, but I don't see that's an obstacle.

• (1210)

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Now we move on to our next questioner, Mr. Armstrong.

Mr. Scott Armstrong (Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I want to thank all our witnesses for being here today.

We did have the funeral directors in on Tuesday to hear from them. One of the challenges, of course, was that previously you didn't have the technological capability to have the instant communication that we have today. With multiple departments now using the SIN as a reference point, it makes it obvious for us to move in the direction of Bill C-247 to streamline the administrative issues amongst multiple departments and multiple agencies being informed of this.

We do have the challenge. You were talking, Mr. Thorsteinson, about why Service Canada does this. There are some legal and privacy concerns around the SIN and what departments have opened it. Those are things we have to work out internally, as you said, within the department. However, I do think you'll see—the way this bill has been written and the way there's going to be some amendments later today—that as further departments start using the SIN as a point of reference they'll be able to extend this legislation out for other departments that currently won't be approached by this particular legislation. I think we are moving in the right direction and we appreciate all of your support for this.

With the added ability for Service Canada to be the one point stop for all this information, how important do you think it is for Service Canada to develop a relationship with the funeral directors across the country to make sure this works in a streamlined fashion? Could you talk about any advice you'd have for us as we embark on this relationship with the funeral directors?

Mr. Barry Thorsteinson: I don't see that as a major challenge at all. I think they would be eager to be working cooperatively with the end product of what the implementation steps look like. Being astute professionals, they are going to be eagerly awaiting the outcome. I don't see any obstacles or delays there. In a very smooth transition they would be cooperating strongly with the one point of contact that ultimately comes of this, if I'm understanding your question correctly. I can't speak for them, obviously, but I can't see a problem.

Mr. Scott Armstrong: Okay, great.

Mrs. Williams, you talked about the issues you had with the massive amount of paperwork you had to deal with while you were bereaved with the unfortunate death of your husband, and my condolences by the way. One of the issues that also has been brought to our attention is you're dealing with multiple levels of government—not only the federal government, you're also dealing with the provincial government in many of these aspects. We already have a good relationship with nine of the ten provinces across the country. Saskatchewan will be coming on board very soon—I think it's the last province to come on board—and having direct flow of information from their vital statistics to the federal government.

Do you think the efforts we're going to put in to coordinate that would ease that pain you're going through as you're trying to deal with your grief, if we can develop a smooth transition with the provinces for a good two-way flow of information?

Mrs. Marny Williams: Again, you're going to that office and telling the provincial government the same information that, ultimately, you're telling the federal government. A direct line between provincial and federal would be a huge benefit.

There's also practicalities that come in later on as your grief continues and the timeline passes as well. When I went back to the provincial government for the Ministry of Transport, I had to produce documents five years later still proving that my husband had died, and changing name and changing address and all that stuff. That was five years down the road and I was still having to deal with the legalities and the practicalities of his death. If the provincial government and federal government work together, then maybe the provincial government would already have that information, and therefore lessen my stress when I walked into that office.

Mr. Scott Armstrong: I know that at Service Canada they're soon going to have the technological capability to have some digital imaging of official records, medical records for example, and death certificates. That will increase the ability to have this single point of contact where, if the provincial government wants any information, they'll be able to go through their vital statistics and get those medical documents electronically. Through digital imaging we're going to have that ability. Not only is this legislation going to help support this single point of contact, there's also some technological improvements being made within the department that will also help some of those issues that you face. With the use of improved technology, with the use of technological innovation, we hope to make things even smoother as we move forward.

● (1215)

The Chair: You have about 20 seconds.

Mr. Scott Armstrong: I'll just thank you all for your comments.

We appreciate your support for the legislation.

The Chair: Thank you.

Now we move to Mr. Cuzner, for five minutes.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Thanking the witnesses, I have the bill's proponent here, Mr. Valeriote, and I'd like to turn my questions over to him.

Mr. Frank Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Cuzner.

I want to thank Ms. Gray, Mr. Thorsteinson, and Ms. Williams for your presentations. You've highlighted the three real benefits of this legislation. First and foremost it is a compassionate piece of legislation addressing the needs of people at the most serious and probably the most sensitive part of their lives, when they're grieving the loss of a loved one. It's a piece of consumer legislation in that it will ultimately reduce the costs, primarily for the consumer, who will no longer have to turn to people like lawyers to help them fill out documents and make contact with the government.

I know that because I was one of those estate lawyers people would often come to and say, "I don't know what to do." They would find the process so daunting that they would just give up and place it before my me or my staff. I would say, "Well, I'm going to have to wind up billing you for this extra work and I don't want to have to do that. Are you sure you can't do it yourself?" They found it so overwhelming that they preferred to just leave it at the doorstep of a lawyer.

As well it does create efficiencies in government. I think Mr. Armstrong has highlighted the fact that this will unfold over time. This isn't just going to be, over time, we'll flick a switch and everything will happen tomorrow. It is going to be cumulative and incremental, using SIN with other departments that will adopt the SIN system and integrate as our systems improve and our technologies change.

I'm going to ask a few questions and I'll ask this of Ms. Gray and Mr. Thorsteinson first.

Do you know of anyone who had, or did either of you ever have, to deal with a lawyer with respect to these issues of someone dying and having to apply for benefits with the government?

Ms. Janet Gray: I haven't had to, personally. As I mentioned I'm a professional financial planner so I feel very comfortable in helping clients or family members dealing with a lot of that. Of course when it's a personal death in the family it's another matter. It can be overwhelming, but knowing what I know, with the frustration I still felt, I certainly feel for people who have no idea where to start. I know that the funeral homes do offer an awful lot of assistance, especially with their after-care programs that many of them have taken on.

I do want to mention, while I have the opportunity, that it's not just families who have to be involved in these processes. It can be out of town, or out of the country, family members. It can be trustees and lawyers, and other well-meaning neighbours and friends. It's not always overlaid with the grief, but it's certainly overlaid with the frustration. Like I said, while I haven't fortunately had the frustration that some people certainly have, I know that within my working environment and with the CARP environment too.

Mr. Barry Thorsteinson: I've personally had experience with those many 800-number phone calls at the various government departments upon the passing of my parents a few years back. I did find the documentation from the funeral director to be helpful to quickly navigate that. I did not deal with a lawyer directly.

Mr. Frank Valeriote: Janet, you raise a good point because it's not always a relative or family member who know the affairs of the deceased. Quite often it's somebody who doesn't know the affairs of the deceased and that makes it that much more daunting because they don't know which department to get in touch with, necessarily, not knowing what the state of circumstances are with the deceased.

I was mindful of a circumstance in a scenario that was raised by the funeral association the other day about the person who is representing the estate and three, four, nine, or ten months later finds a lot of money in the account of the deceased, not realizing that there were payments that were being made to the deceased even after the point of death, which has to be returned. I thought about those circumstances where the money is easily returned, or indeed the money is not returned at all, and the government is using staff to try and recover that money. I thought, if that's eliminated at the point of death, there are savings found right there.

Have any of the three of you ever experienced, either yourselves or with those who have used your services, people who found themselves in receipt of that money and had to return it?

• (1220)

The Chair: Actually, I'm going to have that answer perhaps in the time of some other questioner, because you're out of time.

We'll move to Mr. Butt for five minutes.

Mr. Brad Butt (Mississauga—Streetsville, CPC): Thank you all very much for being here.

Maybe I'll just follow up and have you answer Mr. Valeriote's question, because I think it's a very good one. It's one main reason that I like the idea of this bill.

People are getting payments after death. The executors don't know; the family members don't know. It has been set up as a direct deposit, probably, which is automatically going into an account. The account is sitting there.

We know that some wills and estates are complicated. They take a long time to work out before people get access to money; there aren't powers of attorney; there aren't other things.

Why don't you take the opportunity to answer Mr. Valeriote's question? I think it's a very good one.

Ms. Janet Gray: The short answer is no. I've heard it anecdotally. I don't have any case studies or direct experience with it, but I know that it does happen.

Mr. Barry Thorsteinson: I have the same answer. In short, the answer is no, so I can't help you much on the substance of what you're looking for.

The Chair: Ms. Williams.

Mrs. Marny Williams: In my presentation I talked about the one lady who received a cheque for \$61, which she was dealing with because she had to return it, and about the paperwork required just to return that \$61. She had already notified the government as well, but it had come out.

Mr. Brad Butt: The funeral directors' association was here a couple of days ago. They indicated to this committee that they would

be very willing to work with Service Canada and with the Government of Canada on the implementation of this.

They indicated that they use their own death certificate, which in many ways is similar to the ones the various provinces are using. As we're all aware, the provinces register births and deaths in Canada; we rely on the provinces to work with us. Some provinces, it appears, are much more efficient, let's say, in the reporting than others.

It was in their presentation that they indicated it could take as long as 48 days, in some cases, before a death certificate is issued by a provincial government. It seems to me that's quite a long period of time, although there may be special circumstances in that regard.

Are you folks comfortable enough and confident, from your perspective, that if Service Canada were to agree to use—and I believe in some circumstances it already does—a funeral director's death certificate as the official notice of death to get this new process of one-stop reporting to Service Canada going, it would satisfy your concerns? Or do you think the process should be the registration of the official, provincial death certificate that is used?

I see the funeral directors as speeding the process up, which I think is in the best interest of everybody. It is a legal document that, it appears, has status. I'm curious to know about your positions on that.

This is to each of you.

Mr. Barry Thorsteinson: I don't see any problem with it whatsoever. I may be speaking a personal judgment, but I just can't see any problems with the authenticity of the documentation supplied by the funeral director. I hope Service Canada can enshrine the legitimacy of the process as well. If it requires some provincial, official documentation, that just delays the process. I would leave it in the hands of the professionals to work it out.

The short answer to your question is that there should not be a problem with it because copies of the documentation are normally accepted by the various departments and any other interested organizations.

Mr. Brad Butt: Did anyone else want to comment on this, or are you generally of the same view?

Mrs. Marny Williams: I personally only gave out funeral home death certificates; I never used the provincial ones. The funeral home was adequate for me to notify people.

Just to address the question of using the funeral home as a point of contact, many bereaved build a relationship with the funeral home people, and they're quite comfortable going back to them to discuss what needs to be done. I think it's a great idea for the funeral homes to be that point of contact as well.

•(1225)

Ms. Janet Gray: Let me add that whatever it takes to get it done faster is the point CARP comes from on this matter. I would suggest that there still be an alternative, because not everyone will deal with a funeral home, or there are going to be different permutations of it, so I don't know that it's the single point of access we're looking for. But if it's going to move the process along to accept their death certificates, then absolutely, yes.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

That ends our first round of questioning, and as I said at the start of the meeting, we are going to have one round of questioning.

It's now time to thank you for taking your time to be here to respond to this bill. As you can see, and as I believe was mentioned, there is all-party support here.

We're appreciative of your giving us your points of view today.

We're going to pause for a short period and then move on to clause-by-clause consideration.

•(1225) _____ (Pause) _____

•(1225)

The Chair: We're back in session for the consideration of the clause-by-clause of Bill C-247.

I'd like to welcome to our committee, Justin Vaive, our legislative clerk.

You have something before clause-by-clause?

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims: Mr. Chair, I have a notice of motion:

That the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities, at its earliest opportunity, undertake the study of the functionality of the Social Security Tribunal.

The Chair: Is this a notice of motion, or is it a motion?

You said "notice of motion".

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims: Sorry, it's a motion because the notice was already given.

The Chair: Are you moving it?

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims: I'm moving it.

The Chair: Mr. Armstrong.

Mr. Scott Armstrong: I move to go in camera, please.

The Chair: That's not debatable, so we will take a short pause to move....

Oh, I'm sorry, we need to vote.

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims: We'd like a recorded vote.

The Chair: There is a vote on the motion presented by Mr. Armstrong.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 5; nays 4)

•(1230)

The Chair: We'll take a short pause so that the technical people can move us in to camera and we'll be right back.

[*Proceedings continue in camera*]

•(1230)

_____ (Pause) _____

•(1240)

The Chair: [*Public proceedings resume*]

I can open session now for clause-by-clause consideration of Bill C-247.

First of all, I'm going to postpone the preamble until the end. Clause 1, the short title, is going to be postponed until the end.

(On clause 2—*Single point of contact*)

We'll start with clause 2, which is actually an amendment proposed, G-1. I'll just mention that if amendment G-1 is adopted, so are amendments G-3, G-4, and G-5 as they are consequential to G-1. Likewise, if G-1 is defeated, so are amendments G-3, G-4, and G-5 as they are consequential to the vote on G-1.

I believe you've received the amendments. I'll look for any discussion on the amendments.

Mr. Armstrong.

Mr. Scott Armstrong: Thank you.

I don't have to move my amendment. I think everyone has had a chance to read it. I think there is all-party support for the amendment, so I think I'll leave it at that.

The Chair: I'm advised that you do have to move it.

Mr. Scott Armstrong: Okay. I move:

That Bill C-247, in Clause 2 be amended by replacing line 20 on page 1 to line 11 on page 2 with the following:

2.(1) The Minister of Employment and Social Development must implement measures necessary to establish the Department of Employment and Social Development as the main point of contact with the Government of Canada in respect of matters relating to the death of a Canadian citizen or resident that pertain to the use of that person's social insurance number, so that no person is required to communicate directly with all persons to whom information about that deceased citizen or resident may be made available under subsection 28.2(5) or subsection 35(1) of the *Department of Employment and Social Development Act*.

(2) On receiving notification of the death of a Canadian citizen or resident, the Canada Employment Insurance Commission must, if it may make information relating to that deceased citizen or resident available to any persons under subsection 28.2(5) of the *Department of Employment and Social Development Act*, do so, subject to the conditions that would apply if the Commission were to make that information available under that subsection.

(3) On receiving notification of the death of a Canadian citizen or resident, the Minister of Employment and Social Development must, if the Minister may make information relating to the deceased citizen or resident that pertains to the use of their social insurance number available to a minister or public officer of a prescribed federal institution, under subsection 35(1) of the *Department of Employment and Social Development Act*, do so, subject to the conditions referred to in that subsection.

(4) For the purpose of subsections 28.2(6) or 35(2) of the *Department of Employment and Social Development Act*, the information made available to any person under subsection (2) or (3), is deemed to have been obtained, respectively, under subsection 28.2(5) or 35(1) of that Act.

•(1245)

The Chair: Okay, thank you for that.

A voice: That was good.

Mr. Scott Armstrong: I'm not even a lawyer; I'm not like Frank.

The Chair: I'll call the vote.

Do you want to debate first?

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: No, just on a point of order I think.

My colleague, the proponent of the bill, the one and only Frank Valeriotte, said that while reading it into the record he left out the point (5), the 28.2(5).

The Chair: Duly noted.

Okay, now I'd like to call the vote so we can continue to move along.

(Amendment agreed to)

(Clause 2 as amended agreed to)

(Clause 3 agreed to)

The Chair: Now we're on to new clause 4 and we are on amendment G-2.

It's not necessary to be read in unless desired by the mover.

Mr. Scott Armstrong: I would like to read it in.

I move Government G-2, that Bill C-247 be amended by adding that after line 14.

The Chair: Shall amendment G-2 carry?

(Amendment agreed to on division [See *Minutes of Proceedings*])

(Clause 4 as amended agreed to on division)

The Chair: Because the consequential amendments were carried, we'll now move to the short title, which was clause 1.

(Clause 1 as amended agreed to on division)

The Chair: Shall the preamble carry, as amended?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Chair: Agreed to on division.

Shall the title carry as amended?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Shall the bill carry as amended?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Chair: Agreed to on division.

Shall I report the bill as amended to the House?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Chair: Agreed to on division.

Shall the committee order a reprint of the bill?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Chair: Agreed to on division.

We have done the clause-by-clause review. Mr. Valeriotte is quite relieved and happy.

Meeting adjourned.

I'm sorry, there's a piece of housekeeping I'd forgotten.

First of all, I want to thank Caroline. This is her last meeting as she is moving on. Caroline, thank you for all the wonderful work you've done for this committee.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

The Chair: I'd also like to welcome Jessica Kulka, who is sitting to the left of Caroline. Jessica is our new clerk. She'll be with us from this point on. Welcome.

The meeting is adjourned.

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