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Chair

Mr. Bryan May

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

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• (1530)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Bryan May (Cambridge, Lib.)): I call the meeting to order.

Good afternoon, everybody. Welcome.

Pursuant to the order of reference of Monday, January 29, 2018, the committee is commencing consideration of Bill C-65, an act to amend the Canada Labour Code (harassment and violence), the Parliamentary Employment and Staff Relations Act and the Budget Implementation Act, 2017, No. 1.

Today the committee will hear from the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour for one hour, and then departmental officials for the second hour.

It's my pleasure to welcome the Honourable Patty Hajdu to this committee once again. Joining her today we have Lori Sterling, deputy minister, labour program.

Welcome, both of you.

Patty, the floor is yours.

[Translation]

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour): Thank you.

Mr. Chair and members of the committee, I am proud to be here with you today to speak to Bill C-65.

[English]

This bill aims to address and ultimately eliminate harassment and violence, including sexual harassment and sexual violence, in federally regulated workplaces.

Bill C-65 is a reflection of our government's commitment to gender equality. Women simply can't get ahead and have opportunities equal to men's in workplaces where they experience harassment or sexual violence and where this behaviour is tolerated. This bill will provide greater protections to Canadians in federally regulated workplaces, including Parliament Hill and political staff, for the very first time in our history.

Harassment and sexual violence are unfortunately not new behaviours, and while recent reports of these unacceptable behaviours have captured our attention, it's been happening for far

too long, and it is definitely time to take action. Harassment and sexual violence thrive in places where we see distinct power imbalances, especially here on Parliament Hill, and that creates a culture where victims of harassment or sexual violence don't feel comfortable bringing their complaints forward. As it stands right now, victims often don't have suitable options for making their complaints heard, and they also don't have options for resolving what are often very serious and traumatic incidents.

Like many of you here today, I have heard about heartbreaking experiences from many people who feel that their complaints will never be heard, that they will not be taken seriously, or that their issue won't be resolved.

When Canadians face harassment and violence at work, whether it's bullying, threats, physical assault, or mental abuse, the effects are detrimental for those employees, of course, but they are also detrimental for employers. People who experience harassment or violence often have higher rates of absenteeism, while employers see a greater staff turnover and, of course, a loss of productivity, so ensuring Canadian workplaces are safe and healthy is really a win-win for employees and employers alike.

[Translation]

That's why I was so proud to see my colleagues in the House take a united stand and unanimously send Bill C-65 to this committee.

[English]

I know that members of this committee agree that this is an issue that crosses party lines and that these behaviours have gone unchecked for far too long. Bill C-65 proposes amending existing provisions in the Canada Labour Code by replacing the patchwork of laws and policies that address these issues within the federal jurisdiction and putting into place one comprehensive approach that takes the full spectrum of harassment and violence into consideration.

It would expand these policies to cover, for the first time in the history of our country, as I've said, parliamentary workplaces such as the Senate, the Library of Parliament, and the House of Commons, including political staff on Parliament Hill.

Our framework aims to prevent incidents of harassment and violence from occurring, to respond effectively to those incidents when they do occur, and to support victims and survivors in the process.

I want to take a moment to outline the process for a complaint to be brought forward and dealt with in parliamentary and non-parliamentary workplaces. I want to be very clear that a complaint can be made to the Department of Labour at any time if a complainant doesn't feel that the process is being followed.

First, the employer must attempt to resolve the incident when a complaint is made. This can be done in various ways, including mediation, if the parties agree. If the incident cannot be resolved, a competent person will investigate and complete a report, with recommendations. If there is still non-compliance—for example, the employer doesn't implement the recommendations made by the competent person—there are two processes that follow, one for non-parliamentary employers and employees, and one for parliamentary employers and employees.

If an employee in a non-parliamentary workplace still believes that his or her employer is non-compliant after the investigation is complete, the employee can complain to the labour program. The labour program will initiate an investigation of whether or not the process laid out in the code has been followed. If the labour program finds that the employer is contravening the code, compliance will be sought through the use of compliance and enforcement tools that are available in the Canada Labour Code. We would first seek voluntary compliance, and then if it's not successful, there are a number of compliance and enforcement tools available that include publicly naming employers who are found to be non-compliant.

Similarly, if an employee in a parliamentary workplace still believes that his or her employer is non-compliant with the code after the investigation is completed, the employee can complain to the labour program. The labour program will initiate an investigation of whether or not the process has been followed. Then the Speaker of the House will be notified when there is an investigation. If the labour program finds that the employer is contravening the code, we will first seek voluntary compliance by the employer. If that's not successful, I, as the minister, will issue a direction to the employer to comply and will notify the Speaker. He or she may intervene. If there is still non-compliance and the direction has not been appealed, the direction, including naming the employer, will be tabled in the House of Commons.

• (1535)

For both parliamentary and non-parliamentary employers and employees, there is an opportunity to appeal directions from the labour program with independent boards.

[Translation]

Our government has been clear that harassment and violence will not be tolerated. The Prime Minister has shown that he is not afraid to take action when needed.

[English]

Also, the House sent a strong message to all Canadians in February with its unanimous support of this bill at second reading.

Now the time for inaction is indeed over. Bill C-65 will ensure that workers in federally regulated sectors, including on Parliament Hill, finally have the protections they need, and it will ensure that those who are in vulnerable positions will have a voice. Everyone

deserves to work in a safe workplace, and they deserve to live free from harassment and violence.

I'm very much looking forward to hearing the committee's views on how we can strengthen the legislation. Ideas were brought forward during the debate, and I look forward to discussing these further with all of you.

[Translation]

We know that the problem is far too big for us to solve with a bill. All Canadians will have to work together to change the culture that tolerates harassment and violence in the workplace.

[English]

By discussing this legislation, we are sending a strong message to all Canadians that indeed time is up. These behaviours need to stop. We're taking important steps to eliminate these behaviours in all federally regulated workplaces and right here on Parliament Hill.

[Translation]

I want to thank my colleagues, from all parties, for supporting this important legislation so far.

[English]

This committee has an incredibly important role in examining this legislation. You have an opportunity to effect real change and to send a strong message to all Canadians that harassment and sexual violence are unacceptable and will not be tolerated any longer.

I look forward to working with all of you to ensure the timely passage of Bill C-65.

Merci.

• (1540)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Minister.

Before we move on, I want to take a moment to welcome a few additions to our committee—MP Trudel, MP Harder, MP Dabrusin, and MP Damoff. Thank you for joining us. We're looking forward to working with all of you throughout this study.

We will go to questions. First up is MP Blaney, for six minutes.

[Translation]

Hon. Steven Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Welcome to the committee, Minister.

I would point out not only that the official opposition supported Bill C-65 in the House, but also that the parties agreed to an intensive study of the bill to help fast-track it. We believe this is a necessary bill whose time has come, as you mentioned in your remarks.

You said you wanted to send a strong message to all Canadians with this legislation. For those of us in the opposition, two things matter a great deal. First of all, it's important to ensure that the process is independent, especially as regards incidents or harassment on Parliament Hill. That's one element we'd like to examine with you this afternoon, as well as with the witnesses we hear from in the course of our study.

Minister, partisanship must have no place in this process. An alleged victim must not be forced to interact with their attacker or, in this case, with the minister in question. We need assurance from you on that, and by the same token, you will be reassuring Canadians about the benefits of the bill.

Second of all, will you show that the Department of Employment and Social Development has the expertise and capacity to investigate complaints and make recommendations when the process does not work?

Let's say, that, right now, someone feels they are experiencing harassment or violence in the workplace but fears going to their employer and having to go through mediation with their attacker. Can that person take their complaint directly to the Department of Employment and Social Development? Do you have the necessary resources to support the victim and make sure that the complaint is dealt with, today and after the bill is passed?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Thank you for supporting the bill.

[English]

To the second part of your question, yes, we have the resources available. We're confident that we will have the resources available to provide support to employers to fully implement the legislation, in particular the support they will need to develop the policy and do the training and education that will be necessary in each workplace.

A big part of this is actually the prevention piece. The prevention piece is critical. Many workplaces haven't had these conversations about what is harassment, what is violence, what steps you take if you're not comfortable in your workplace, or, God forbid, if you're experiencing ongoing harassment. We will be focusing heavily on making sure that employers have the supports to put that prevention into place.

In terms of pursuing investigations, yes, we have the finances available for that as well, and we will be ensuring that we can do that work.

In terms of the other part of your question, if at any point a complainant feels the process is not being followed as laid out by the policy in their workplace and they feel their rights are being infringed upon in terms of the policy in their workplace, they can come forward to the ministry of labour. They can talk to the department about the fact that the process is not being followed and they don't feel they have a fair process. At that point we can assist them in making sure they receive the support they need.

Hon. Steven Blaney: Minister, how many complaints did you have in the current year, and how many do you expect once the legislation is put in place?

Ms. Lori Sterling (Deputy Minister, Labour Program, Department of Employment and Social Development): Under the current legislation, we have very limited powers. We have no powers vis-à-vis the Hill, and vis-à-vis the private sector it's really about checking on the policies, so we receive very few complaints. However, under the new legislation, we do anticipate a significant increase in the number of complaints. As the minister has already said, we've made provision for resources—in fact, across the country—to be available to be able to respond in a timely way to these complaints.

●(1545)

Hon. Steven Blaney: Okay. With regard to the financial resources, those are not in the bill. Will that be in the budget and will you come back later, Minister? Can you elaborate on the resources that you will be providing?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: We're confident that we have the resources in place and that we'll be able to have the resources necessary to do full justice to the legislation.

Hon. Steven Blaney: Clearly, there will be a new task for the department, so you will need to adjust to this reality.

Hon. Patty Hajdu: We have provisions in place already to provide the training to the inspectors who will be responding to calls to the labour department for assistance. As I said, we are confident that we have the resources.

Hon. Steven Blaney: I just have one last question, Minister. Can you reassure us again this afternoon that if someone doesn't want to go to either the employer or the mediation, he or she will be able to go directly to the department and won't be told, "Go back to your employer and follow the process"?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: If the person feels that the process is not being followed, he or she will have the ability at any stage in that process to come forward to the labour department to say that the process that the employer has put into place through the policies it'll be required to have is not being followed, and that he or she doesn't feel that the process is being followed. The labour department will determine whether or not the process has been followed.

The Chair: Thank you.

Now we'll go to MP Fortier for six minutes.

[Translation]

Mrs. Mona Fortier (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you very much, Minister, for sharing your views with us today and, above all, for giving the committee the time to do this important work. I think we are all prepared to give it our all.

Are you open to recommendations or amendment proposals from the committee, if, in our opinion, they would strengthen the bill?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Thank you for your question.

[English]

We, as I've said all along, are interested in hearing what the proposed amendments would be, as long as they have the goal of strengthening the legislation. We'll be carefully reviewing all recommendations and amendments to make sure that we reach that goal of strong legislation that ensures that our workplaces are free from harassment and sexual violence. If at any point we determine that an amendment would in any way weaken the rights of people in the workplace, or weaken the regime so that people have less support, then we, of course, would not be interested in that amendment.

I've said all along that the intent of this legislation is to make our workplaces free of harassment and sexual violence. If we've missed something, we want to hear about what would make the legislation stronger.

[Translation]

Mrs. Mona Fortier: I read the bill, and I've listened to my opposition colleagues and fellow party members discussing it over the past few weeks. How will this legislation affect women, indigenous people, vulnerable individuals, and members of the LGBTQ community?

[English]

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Thank you. It's an excellent point that you raise.

It is often the most vulnerable in our workplaces who are subject to the experience of harassment and sexual violence. You've heard me speak about this, and many of you have spoken about it. It's that it is ultimately an issue of power. Frequently, people who are experiencing harassment and violence in their workplace are people who are among the most disempowered.

In our workplace, it's not hard to imagine who those folks are. They are many of the young staffers who sit around this room and, in fact, are with us today. They are often in situations that are very difficult for them. They have personally told me stories about circumstances in which they've felt very vulnerable.

This legislation will protect the most vulnerable. It is about setting up a fair playing field so that when someone experiences harassment or sexual violence in the workplace, there is a response, and that person can be confident that there will be a response.

In fact it's also, more broadly speaking, trying to lay the foundation for cultural change. I think when you look at the work of our Prime Minister, despite it many times being very politically difficult—calling out members who have violated our own party's code of conduct around behaviour, harassment, and sexual violence—you can see that it is not just legislation that will change a culture, but brave leadership. It's people being willing to stand up and say, “This is not okay in my workplace, and as a leader I'm going to take action and send that signal.”

To your point, it is the most vulnerable in our workplaces who will benefit the most, but I would also say that employers will benefit as well. I think when you look at the whole range of harassment and violence.... We've spent a lot of time talking about sexual harassment and sexual violence, but in fact, harassment can be bullying in the workplace. It can be yelling at employees repetitively. It can be asking employees to perform tasks that are not part of their employment contracts or their employment circumstances and that put them at risk of harm. I've heard many of those stories as well.

This is really about changing the culture, about learning how to treat each other with respect.

• (1550)

[Translation]

Mrs. Mona Fortier: Could you talk about the consultations you conducted leading up to this legislation? How did you seek out the input you needed to develop and bring forward this bill?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Our government consulted a variety of stakeholders and members of the public on the issue of workplace harassment and violence.

[English]

We held the consultations between June of 2016 and March of 2017 through targeted teleconferences, in-person meetings, an online public consultation survey, and ministerial round tables with stakeholders and experts.

As we move through the regulatory development process with employer and employee organizations, there are going to be additional consultations to make sure that we have a full set of regulations that will work in all workplaces.

[Translation]

Mrs. Mona Fortier: A moment ago, we talked about your openness to suggestions that would strengthen the legislation. Has anyone raised the definitions issue to you? Will they be incorporated into the bill itself, to inform policy? How do you envision that right now? I think that's one of the issues we'll be discussing in the next few weeks.

[English]

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Absolutely, I did hear the call, notably from the NDP, our colleagues across the way, about a concern that there weren't definitions.

I can tell you, as I've said publicly, that the intent behind not including definitions in the legislation was to reflect that harassment can evolve over time.

For example, even 15 years ago we would not have been able to consider cyberbullying. It was really an intent not to limit the legislation to specific forms of harassment and then having to open it up again when something new happened, but rather to deal with that through the regulations.

I'll be very interested to hear suggestions about how we make those definitions within the law, if that's the desire of the committee, in a way that is comprehensive and doesn't unintentionally eliminate the possibility of future types of harassment or violence.

The Chair: Thank you.

MP Trudel, you have six minutes.

[Translation]

Ms. Karine Trudel (Jonquière, NDP): Minister, thank you for being here today to discuss Bill C-65. I have a number of questions for you.

First, the bill contains strong privacy protections for victims of harassment and violence. It also gives federally regulated employers and Parliament the ability to make use of a third party from the same workplace.

Now, I will fire off my questions. How are you going to manage and protect people's privacy when individuals in the same workplace will be the ones investigating the complaint to determine whether harassment or violence occurred, particularly in the case of sexual harassment or violence? Furthermore, how do you intend to protect victims?

Do victims have any recourse if their privacy is breached in the course of the investigation? If their personal information were exposed, would they have any recourse in that regard? Would individuals affected by workplace harassment or violence receive some sort of redress if their privacy were violated?

[English]

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Thank you very much.

You're absolutely right that privacy is a big part of the legislation. It's a factor that we heard over and over in terms of why people won't come forward. They feel that if they come forward and people know they've complained, there may be cases of reprisal. An employer may punish them, or their manager may punish them, or the person who is harassing them, often someone with more power, may in some way jeopardize their well-being, financial or otherwise.

That's why we've tried to capture this concept of privacy in the legislation. That's why we've made stringent criteria prohibiting workplace committees, policy committees, and health and safety representatives from participating in investigations of cases of harassment or violence: so that we limit the information and it's not spread throughout. Often a committee may have four, six, or eight people. The more people who have information, the more likely there may be a leak of that information.

It's also about making sure they don't have access to any information that could lead to the identification of persons involved in incidents of harassment and violence, such as their name, age, address, or religion. Furthermore, employers and the labour program have legal obligations not to disclose that personal information.

To the second part of your question, about what happens if that information is shared inappropriately, they're actually breaking the law, including the Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act, the Department of Employment and Social Development Act, and the Privacy Act.

Finally, the Canada Industrial Relations Board, which is responsible for appeals, also has very strict policies on the release of private information. I suppose if private information is released, a complaint could come forward to the labour board, and the person could suffer penalties under those acts.

Maybe you'd like to speak to that, Lori.

• (1555)

Ms. Lori Sterling: Any violations of any of the privacy requirements that will be in the new statute are the basis for a complaint to the labour program, and of course we would investigate, but we have really tried to encourage people to come forward by providing additional protections of privacy.

I think you also asked about mediation and potential coercive aspects of mediation. Mediation is entirely voluntary. There's no requirement to mediate. If you want to mediate, you can mediate. The choice of the mediator has to be mutually agreed upon.

Again, we've tried to make it, from the complainant's perspective, an option if they would like to go forward; otherwise, they're entitled to the full process.

[Translation]

Ms. Karine Trudel: Thank you.

Earlier, the matter of definitions was raised. Including the definition of what constitutes a workplace is important, especially in relation to our activities as parliamentarians. Part 2 of the bill applies to all of us here, in the House of Commons. Therefore, what constitutes the workplace in Parliament should be defined. Education is important, but, for us, as parliamentarians, so is a definition of the workplace.

[English]

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Absolutely. It's always a challenge, and not just with parliamentarians, because the idea of a workplace can be quite fluid, depending on the particular employer situation.

As we see with social media, often there is a leakage of private and public life, workplace and not workplace. In fact, as an employer in a unionized environment, I had significant challenges with that. Often situations between two employees would happen in the cyberworld, but not during work time. In those instances in my workplace, they were treated as incidents of workplace harassment or something that had happened between colleagues.

In terms of work-related environments, that's why it will apply to any activity that's linked with work—for example, the off-site events that happen here all the time. It's not specifically attached to hours of work or places of work. It could also be linked to online spaces, as I just mentioned. If someone is engaging in harassment in an online space and it isn't during work time but it is a colleague, that could be considered workplace harassment.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

MP Ruimy, you have six minutes.

Mr. Dan Ruimy (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, Lib.): Thank you very much, Minister, for being here today.

I also want to thank you in the sense that as a new member of Parliament, newly elected in 2015, I always had this vision of coming here and making a difference in our country. When we see what's happening across our globe right now and we see as a committee, as all parliamentarians coming together, that we want to move this piece of legislation through, I'm proud to be part of a government and to be able, with our colleagues, to start to address this issue, because, as you've said, it is all about a cultural mind-shift.

Along that line, when we're talking about large organizations, there are a lot of layers involved, but when you have a smaller organization, such as an MP's office, how does one go about triggering an investigation? Quite frankly, there are only three, four, or five people in that office. You talked about the privacy part. How does that come into play?

•(1600)

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Under the legislation, employers will be responsible for having third parties designated as someone who can receive the complaint if in fact the harasser or the person perpetrating the harassment is the employer or is a colleague in a very small office. Every employer will be required to have a third party whom they can designate as someone who can receive complaints on their behalf.

As I said earlier, if a person feels at any time that the process laid out in the policy of their workplace isn't being followed, they can come to the department for assistance in making sure the process is followed.

Mr. Dan Ruimy: Thank you.

How do you see changing that mindset, especially when this has been going on for generation after generation? When we look at what's happening on the Hill, I'm quite surprised to see that we haven't already had this type of legislation, especially on the Hill. How do you see having the ability to change that mindset? What are the things that you think will bring trust back?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: I think the conversation we're having right now is invaluable, and I thank all the brave women who have come forward to talk about their experiences, whether it's publicly in the media or privately to any of us who have taken this seriously.

I think part of this is about bringing it out from the shadows, and that's exactly what our Prime Minister has done time and again by making sure that every time someone contravenes a woman's right to a safe workplace or a person's right to a safe workplace, he has taken action. Leadership is another really big part. Making sure that you have a zero-tolerance culture for harassment and sexual violence means that when something comes forward to you as the leader of an organization, the leader of an office, you take it seriously and you act promptly.

I can't tell you how many stories I've heard from people who've said, "I complained, but nothing happened" or "I told someone this was happening, and they told me, 'That's okay; he's just joking around.'" That's a very common response people will get: "He doesn't mean anything by it" or "He does that to all the women." These are very common statements that you hear on a regular basis. When we let that behaviour slide, essentially, first of all, we're invalidating a woman's experience of being harassed. We're invalidating her request for a safer workplace.

I'm 51 years old. When I was in my twenties and working in car dealerships for a while, this conversation was a regular daily occurrence. We wouldn't even have thought to speak out about it; it was so internalized that this was part of our experiences as females in a male-dominated sector that was all about drinking hard and selling cars. In fact, times have changed, so it's about leadership. It's about legislation. It's about all of the people who will stand up and say, "That's not okay."

Finally, I think I would say that we have an obligation to not be bystanders when we know.... We talk a lot about the whisper network. This is a phrase that's new to me in this work, but certainly I recognized it immediately. That's the informal network that happens, especially in places like this where there are high degrees

of power and low degrees of power, where people say to avoid that person because, in other words, that person is really dangerous.

We need to take those whispers out of the shadows. We need to hold people accountable for their behaviour. We need to do that by not being bystanders, by saying, "Hey, I don't know if you know that your behaviour makes people uncomfortable." Sometimes people aren't aware. It doesn't have to be the most dramatic infraction or violence. It can happen when sometimes people use a certain style of joking that makes people really uncomfortable. If you have the power and the ability to say to your colleague, "You know, when you said that to Sally, I don't know if you noticed the way she looked, but she looked really uncomfortable, and you might want to think about using that style of communicating."

It's a whole bunch of things that will change the culture.

•(1605)

Mr. Dan Ruimy: Thank you.

Now that this dialogue is happening and it's coming, for you, out of the shadows, sometimes there might be a little bit of fear that it might go a little bit too far. However, you have said that Bill C-65, once implemented, will actually help empower employers to be more effective when it comes to harassment and dealing with these issues. Can you expand a little bit further on that?

The Chair: Answer very briefly, please.

Hon. Patty Hajdu: I will just say that very clear boundaries are never a bad thing. It's not a bad thing to have a policy in place that clearly spells out what harassment is, what sexual violence is, what acceptable behaviours are in the workplace, what to do if in fact something's happening. I think clarity is our friend. To have a framework in place, in all of our workplaces, that clearly spells out what we expect in terms of the safety of our workplaces for all people, I think, will go a long way toward addressing this issue.

The Chair: Thank you.

Go ahead, MP Dabrusin, please. You have six minutes.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Toronto—Danforth, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Minister, for coming today.

When I was reading through the consultation report, the "what we heard" report, one thing struck me, and it struck me from a lot of the reporting that we've been hearing in the past few months. I also used to work in a practice that involved a lot of past historical sex abuse claims and those types of actions. What always came up was a lack of reporting and the fact that it simply wasn't being reported. You mentioned earlier the whisper networks as the alternate reporting system, if I can maybe put it that way.

In this legislation, and also maybe alongside this legislation, what are we going to do, and what are we doing, so that we can enable and empower people to start reporting these things right from the outset?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Again, I hate to kind of harp on the policy, but it's because I think it's such a critical piece.

There is a framework that's available for both employees and employers to know what their rights are in a workplace, and what to do when something happens. Part of the challenge, if you think about this workplace, is that nobody knows who to talk to, nobody knows how to manage this, so we talk to each other sometimes. I don't consider myself a vulnerable person anymore, but in thinking back to being vulnerable in workplaces, I know that we talk to each other as a form of support, but we don't know how to take action. That's critical.

It's also important that people feel that they can come forward without fear of reprisal. Then they know that when they come forward, their information is going to be treated confidentially and that they're not going to run the risk of alienating themselves from their employer, up to and including possibly losing their job. This has been something that people worry about tremendously, especially in precarious employment, and not just in this workplace but in other workplaces across the country. The strong privacy protections so that information is treated confidentially, I think, will help tremendously.

The ability of a person to feel that if the process is not working in his or her workplace.... If the person is following the process that's in the policy and feels that he or she is not actually being taken seriously or the process isn't being followed, that person does have another opportunity to go to another party, namely the labour department, to say, "I have this workplace policy. I'm having this experience. I've asked my employer to address it, and nothing's happened." The person has another avenue, whereas in the past, that person may not have had any support.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: Thank you.

We've been talking perhaps more about the sexual type of harassment today when we've been talking about it, but one of the things that came up as well in the consultation, and that struck me, was the part about psychological illnesses that arise from harassment and psychological harassment. It was addressed as a question: how are we going to deal with mental health issues, which also were not taken seriously, perhaps, in the past? How does this legislation tie into that?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: I think this legislation puts into place a framework in which people who are experiencing harassment and violence are going to be taken seriously and won't have to endure ongoing harassment as a condition of their workplace, their financial security, or their success in the workplace. I think the first thing is to have that framework in place so that people have actions they can take.

You're absolutely right. When people are in workplaces where they're experiencing ongoing harassment or abuse, it does lead to things like lost time, lack of productivity, and high turnover. I used to say to my managers in the organization that I ran, "If your team's turning over too quickly, you need to ask why. You need to ask yourself why you can't retain staff."

Sometimes staff leave because they have a better opportunity or they're going back to school. There are all kinds of great reasons and very legitimate reasons. However, if there's a pattern that exists.... Those are the kinds of things that cost employers a tremendous

amount of money, and employers may not even recognize what's happening.

In terms of mental health and psychological health, from my perspective, the best investment is always prevention. Employers will be responsible for taking these complaints seriously, for acting on these complaints, and people who are experiencing them will have avenues to seek that support.

• (1610)

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: When we're looking at all of that, the key part is that in some cases people, as you mentioned earlier, simply do not realize that their behaviour was untoward, yet it absolutely was.

You mentioned the role of the bystander in informing. When you look at the legislation, you see that all of this starts as an informal process. It starts at an informal place. Why do you think it's important to maintain an informal process at the outset before it escalates up?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: In my own experience as an employer, I have found that you can often avoid much more serious, prolonged experiences of harassment and violence in the workplace if you are able to address incidents as they start to occur.

As you point out, sometimes people don't realize the effect that their words or their behaviour is having on their employee or their colleague, in particular when you have differing positions of power. I always say that we're all managers now. We were elected and we all have staff now, but not all of us have come to this place with the same set of experiences. Sometimes being a good leader isn't organic. You sometimes need to learn how to be a good leader. Those informal processes allow for that process to say, "Did you know that your behaviour is having this negative impact?"

It depends, of course, on the severity of the situation. At any time, if someone feels that their safety has been jeopardized or that they need to involve the criminal justice system, they have the absolute right to do that, and we encourage people to do that, but so many times it could be a case of someone's unwanted touch on the shoulder, for example. That's a common thing: "He regularly massages my shoulder on the way to his cubicle."

Maybe that person doesn't understand that that touch could be threatening. It's quite possible. Sometimes, if you have received a complaint, you can take it up with the individual and say to the person through an informal process, "Do you realize that when you touch your much younger colleague or you touch people in that way, it may have another meaning to them and they're not comfortable with that touch?" There may be ways you can deal with it and prevent the behaviour from escalating and continuing over many years.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

MP Harder, go ahead, please, for six minutes.

Ms. Rachael Harder (Lethbridge, CPC): Minister, thank you for your time. We certainly want to make sure that we're working together in order to ensure that we get this legislation right.

I do have a few questions, just for clarification. It's my understanding that if the minister chooses not to investigate, then written reasons have to be submitted as to why that is not taking place. If a decision is made not to do an investigation, can that be appealed, and, if so, to whom?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: You may be referring to the piece of legislation that says frivolous or vexatious complaints can be dismissed by the minister.

Ms. Rachael Harder: That's correct.

Hon. Patty Hajdu: There are very clear definitions for that. It may be that—

Ms. Rachael Harder: Sorry; I'm not asking for definitions. I'm asking, if an employee comes forward and wants to go through an appeals process, but then the minister says no and has decided that it's vexatious, does that employee have another mechanism by which they can appeal?

•(1615)

Hon. Patty Hajdu: It would be very rare for the minister to get involved. There are numerous complaints every single day to the ministry of labour. We have an investigative team. I don't know what investigations happen every single day. At very few points is the minister asked to intervene.

Ms. Rachael Harder: If the team says no, and they declare it vexatious, does the individual have an appeals process?

Ms. Lori Sterling: Maybe I could answer that question.

If a complaint comes into the labour program, then we will investigate.

Ms. Rachael Harder: Full stop: every single complaint you will investigate.

Ms. Lori Sterling: The only time we would not investigate is if it were determined that it was frivolous or vexatious.

Ms. Rachael Harder: This is my question. If you determine that, is there a mechanism through which the individual can appeal?

Ms. Lori Sterling: When the minister makes a determination about frivolous and vexatious, which is an extremely high standard—

Ms. Rachael Harder: Is there a process through which the individual can appeal?

Ms. Lori Sterling: Yes. You can always judicially review the decision of a minister to a court of law. That is the nature of the appeal in the case of a ministerial decision.

Ms. Rachael Harder: The current act requires the minister to appoint an appeals officer for occupational health and safety appeals, and the decisions of this officer are binding and cannot be appealed to a federal court.

I understand that the budget implementation bill this spring will transfer these provisions to the Canada Industrial Relations Board. Is this correct? That's my first question. Second, will this transition be in place before Bill C-65 comes into effect?

Ms. Lori Sterling: It's true. We have moved appeals from decisions of investigators to the Canada Industrial Relations Board, and the reason is that they're a professional tribunal with lots of expertise. However, that appeal process—indeed, the whole process

—is set out in the new legislation and is not available at the present time.

Ms. Rachael Harder: Thank you. I'm aware of that. That's what I said, but will it be implemented, will it be in place before Bill C-65 is implemented?

Ms. Lori Sterling: I think that our intention is to make it in place before—

Ms. Rachael Harder: Okay, so you have good intentions—

Ms. Lori Sterling: Our intention is to have it in place and ready. When Bill C-65 comes into force, it will be ready. In fact, it may—

Ms. Rachael Harder: Okay. All right. Thank you.

My next question, then, is directly for the minister.

This position a minister holds. Complaints come forward or concerns come forward. Let's say an employee of the minister has a concern, that the employee feels they have been sexually assaulted or harassed in some way by the minister. Where does the staff member of the minister go with his or her concern?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: If at any time the complaint is about the minister of labour, the deputy minister takes those complaints.

Ms. Rachael Harder: Full stop, always.

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Right.

Ms. Rachael Harder: My next question, then, is, does the power to appoint the investigator come directly from the minister?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Yes. However, it's through the department. There's not an interference. There are investigators. The department has investigators. The complaint comes forward to the department and the investigation begins.

Ms. Rachael Harder: Regardless of which party is in power, we want this to be non-partisan. How are we going to make sure of that? How are we going to make sure that a Liberal minister and his or her department do not show favouritism or preference in complaints against a Liberal member, and meanwhile are maybe not so preferential with someone from the Conservatives, the NDP, or the Bloc?

How do you ensure that you treat all investigations the same way, regardless of the party the member being complained about belongs to?

The Chair: We need a very brief answer, please.

Hon. Patty Hajdu: The process is such in the political realm that the investigators approach the Speaker of the House of Commons, and the Speaker of the House of Commons then works with the investigation—

Ms. Rachael Harder: That's the investigator who's put in place by the minister.

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Well, there are many investigators.

Lori, maybe you could speak about what the investigations involve.

•(1620)

The Chair: Very briefly, please.

Ms. Lori Sterling: This is no different from any other occupational health and safety complaint. The complaint comes in to the program; it doesn't go to the minister. The program then assigns an investigator. We have hundreds of investigators across the country. There is no political interference in the current regime, and we will continue to operate on the same basis in terms of the investigations undertaken.

The Chair: Thank you.

MP Damoff, you have six minutes.

Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.): Thank you, Chair.

Minister, thank you for being here. I know that as you bring your experience as former Minister of Status of Women to your current role, you're bringing a level of passion and expertise that all of us appreciate, so thank you for your leadership on this issue.

I want to ask you about federal employees. We've talked a lot about people who work on the Hill. I had the privilege of visiting the maximum security Edmonton Institution, where there has been over a decade of harassment and abuse of employees. When I was there, I made them a promise. They said that we were their only hope. The department has done a lot of work to try to put an anonymous tip line in place, but there was a culture there such that if people came forward, there was retribution against them, so they were afraid to come forward.

How can we ensure that people working in corrections—working for us, the federal government—will be able to come forward without fear of retribution?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Thanks very much. I appreciate your talking to some of those vulnerable workers.

Just as in any other federally regulated workplace, the corrections systems and the various institutions will be responsible for having a very clear policy on harassment and violence, which will clearly outline, first of all, what the expectations of the workplace are. They will have requirements to do training for their staff on what harassment and violence are, and what happens if someone experiences that.

They will also have the full support of the legislation, just like anyone else, to be able to—as you mentioned—use a tip line if they are questioning what resources they have or what recourse they have, but primarily to be able to ask for an investigation at any point, or to ask for support if they are experiencing that in their workplace.

The employer will be compelled to have a process that they follow. They will also be required to have a third party who can take complaints if the person is intimidated and doesn't want to come forward to their own personal supervisor or their employer representative, who may in fact be the perpetrator.

Finally, at any point that person will be able to come forward, as we've said, to the labour department and ask for help if the process is not being followed in the way the policy outlines it should.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Their employment would be protected throughout, is that correct?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Absolutely, because the process also has to be confidential. If, in fact, the employer violates the confidential nature of their complaint, there would be sanctions for the employer through the department. Again, the employee would have far more tools than they would have in the current regime to be able to manage the situation and get some relief and support to move forward.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Moving back to the Hill, having the legislation in place is one part of it. What process will be available to members in particular, and ministers, in terms of educating them about this legislation with regard to their responsibilities and their rights as an employer, and what should be done to make sure that people are following the process properly and that employees know their rights and responsibilities?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: The department is working right now on the awareness and education components. There are tools, in fact, for employers that will do just that. They will assist them in developing policy once the legislation is in place, but there are also training materials that they will need for themselves as managers and as employers, and also for their employees. The idea is to give them a way to educate their staff about the policy, about their expectations as an employer, about what harassment is and isn't, and what steps the person can take if they are experiencing it in the workplace.

Ms. Pam Damoff: It's important that it's independent.

Do I have five minutes or six?

The Chair: You had six. You have one minute and 45 seconds left.

Ms. Pam Damoff: In terms of the federal employees not on the Hill, it will be an independent investigation. If it's a staffer here, would the process be to go to the chief human resources officer? Could you just go through the process if a staff member has a problem? I want to highlight the independence of the investigation.

• (1625)

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Let's use an example of an MP and their employee. If the employee has had an experience of harassment by a colleague, they could go forward to their employer, should they feel comfortable doing that—that would be the MP—and tell them about what happened. That employer, the MP, would have a responsibility to take appropriate action to address the incident.

Now, each incident is going to be different. Should the harasser be the member of Parliament, each employer—that would be each MP—would also have the responsibility of designating a third person, so that if the employee isn't comfortable coming forward to the member of Parliament, he or she could come forward to this third party. If at any time the person feels that the process is not being followed, they can come forward to the ministry of labour for support.

Again, it's very hard to describe the process step by step because each situation is going to be different, but in a worst-case scenario, the person will have the ability to come forward to the ministry of labour for support to ensure that the process is being followed.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Now we'll go over to MP Blaney.

[Translation]

Hon. Steven Blaney: Minister, thank you for appearing before the committee.

We want to make sure the bill does not doubly victimize people, and your remarks today are doing nothing to convince me that that will be the case. Whenever the question is put to you, you say that you will make sure the process is followed. When a victim turns to the Department of Employment and Social Development, are you going to send that individual back to meet with the person who assaulted them, or their employer, and make them go through the mediation process? Conversely, will you deal with that person's complaint?

I think that's what victims would like to know this afternoon. Will the department be there for victims, or will it instead ask them to follow a bureaucratic process that is likely to lead to their double victimization?

[English]

Hon. Patty Hajdu: The intent of having an ability to come forward to the ministry of labour at any time is not to double-victimize somebody. The intent is to make sure that if the process is not being followed in their workplace, they have an alternative party to turn to. There'll be a support hub for victims in the ministry of labour that will, first of all, determine the situation and determine whether the actions have indeed followed the process. If in fact the person is needing support to ensure that the process is followed, that's when we have inspectors who will be able to move forward and support that person in that approach.

Hon. Steven Blaney: I'm not convinced, Minister, but I will share my time.

Thank you.

The Chair: Go ahead, MP Harder.

Ms. Rachael Harder: Minister, I just want to be clear here. You stated before that it is the minister himself or herself who will choose the investigator to oversee these complaints. Is that correct?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: No, I didn't say that.

Ms. Rachael Harder: Then how is the investigator put in place?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Well, as the deputy mentioned, we have hundreds of investigators across the country. There will be a special team of trained investigators with a speciality in this area. I'm not privy to the names of the investigators. As a matter of fact, I'm not even sure I've ever met an investigator in the department of labour, because it's very arm's length from the minister.

Ms. Rachael Harder: Then who puts them in place?

Ms. Lori Sterling: Basically, we have regional operations. A complaint is likely to come in on a regional basis to the labour program in the department. Typically the regional director then will assign one from the team. We'll have, as I say, a special team, and there'll be people in each region.

Ms. Rachael Harder: The minister's own briefing notes here state as follows:

If the Labour Program finds that the employer is contravening the Code, we will first seek voluntary compliance by the employer and if not successful, I, as the Minister, will issue a direction to the employer to comply....

It would appear to me that the minister himself or herself, whoever that individual is, can in fact step in when he or she feels that the act is not being complied with, which means that there is a bit of a trump card there for the minister to play. Is that correct?

Ms. Lori Sterling: I think you mentioned in your previous questions that technically speaking, all inspectors operate under a delegated authority of the minister. They delegate authority because the statute is the minister's, but in practice what happens is that the inspector, working with their regional director or, if necessary, with an assistant deputy minister, will issue the direction. In fact, they are so independent that I typically would not see a direction until later, and I might never see a direction, so the minister doesn't—

● (1630)

Ms. Rachael Harder: But the fact still remains that your briefing notes say that the minister can in fact step in and force compliance. That is the minister's action to take.

Hon. Patty Hajdu: The act is under the minister of labour's responsibility, but as Lori said, the authority to investigate is delegated to the inspectors.

Ms. Rachael Harder: But at the end of the day, the minister does sign off on who those inspectors are, yes?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Sorry; the minister...?

Ms. Rachael Harder: The minister does sign off or give authority to who those investigators are, yes?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: No.

Ms. Rachael Harder: Who signs off, then?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: The investigators are hired independently of the minister. As I said, I've never met an investigator. I've never signed a piece of paper.

The department has a minister. As you know, all departments have a minister who has a piece of legislation that they're responsible for, but in fact there are very strong divides between the day-to-day operations of the department and the minister. Lori Sterling, the deputy, would be responsible for the day-to-day operations of the department of labour, including the hiring of investigators, including the management of her staff according to region, and including determining how in fact they would be applied to what cases.

The Chair: Thank you.

MP Trudel is next.

[Translation]

Ms. Karine Trudel: I'd like to pick up on the definitions issue and our earlier discussion.

Bill C-65 does not set out definitions for harassment or violence, and that is a serious concern. The Canada Labour Code lays out a definition for the term sexual harassment only. That means the definitions do not appear in the bill, the Canada Labour Code, the Parliamentary Employment and Staff Relations Act, or the Budget Implementation Act, 2017, No. 1.

You gave a few examples. I'd like to know how employers and unions are going to be able to provide training and define what constitutes harassment in order to prevent it. You said that a touch on the shoulder could be considered harassment. If the point is to educate people, we need to define harassment so that people are able to recognize it.

[English]

Hon. Patty Hajdu: I'm very interested to hear what your team would consider an appropriate definition of harassment, or the continuum of harassment all the way to violence.

As I said earlier, this was in no way intended to limit those definitions but rather to avoid a situation of the legislation having a definition that was too rigid, and then not being quick enough to respond to new forms of harassment. In fact, it would have to go through an entire legislative change. The intent was that through the regulatory process, we would develop definitions that would capture behaviours that are a part of that continuum of inappropriate workplace conduct. This could range from teasing and bullying all the way to physical violence, and the definition would include sexual harassment and sexual violence. It really was about trying to capture those in the regulations.

As I said to you and your colleagues in the debate at second reading, I'm not opposed to having a definition in the legislation, as long as it's broad enough that it would capture all forms of harassment and violence. If there is an amendment that comes forward with language that is broad enough to capture the full range of harassment all the way to violence, I don't have my heels dug in on that issue.

It really is about trying to make sure that the legislation is flexible enough to adapt, should there be some new way of harassing people. I think cyber-bullying is the example I gave earlier. That's a perfect example. It's nothing that any of us could have envisioned. Imagine if the legislation had been written 15 years ago, and didn't include the word "cyber-bullying". Would that be captured by the legislation? Those are the questions.

I'll look forward to the suggestions about the definition. As I said, if it makes the law stronger and there's a strong consensus that we need that definition within the legislation, then I'm really looking forward to those suggestions.

The Chair: Thank you everybody. Thank you, Minister, for being here today, and kicking this review of the legislation off for us.

We're going to suspend for a very brief five minutes to allow the department to come to the table.

• (1635) _____ (Pause) _____

• (1640)

The Chair: Welcome back, everybody.

We've been joined by, from the Department of Employment and Social Development, Brenda Baxter, director general, workplace directorate, labour program, and Barbara Moran, director general, strategic policy, analysis and workplace, labour program. From Public Services and Procurement Canada, we have Charles Bernard, director general, portfolio and government affairs.

Welcome to all of you. You will each have 10 minutes for opening remarks, and then we'll follow up, obviously, with questions. You're looking at each other—10 minutes? Did we know we had that long? You don't need to use all your time. If you thought it was seven minutes or if you thought it was five, we'll go from there.

Barbara, do you have a question?

Ms. Barbara Moran (Director General, Strategic Policy, Analysis and Workplace, Labour Program, Department of Employment and Social Development): We actually weren't aware that we were to make introductory remarks, so we are open to taking your questions if that's okay with all of you.

The Chair: Fair enough. We can jump right in. We can skip the opening remarks.

We'll go directly to Mr. Blaney.

[Translation]

Hon. Steven Blaney: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to pick up on a question I asked the minister earlier. I'd also like an explanation of the mechanics behind the process. At the Department of Employment and Social Development, what is the current structure for receiving complaints regarding workplace harassment and violence?

Could you tell us about any new resources that have been deployed? During the first hour of our meeting, it became clear that the bill would result in a surge of requests thanks to the heightened awareness around situations of harassment.

Describe for us, if you would, the structures currently in place at the department to deal with complaints?

[English]

Ms. Barbara Moran: The first thing I will mention is that in the current process, sexual harassment is dealt with under a different portion of the code. It's dealt with under part III of the code, which has different provisions and different requirements than does part II, which is occupational health and safety. It also applies to different workplaces.

On sexual harassment, for example, the requirement is that the employer have a policy in place. Any complaints that would come forward to the labour program would be limited to "Is there a policy?", and that would be the extent of our ability to investigate that situation.

That's the first thing I would mention on sexual harassment. Currently there are violence provisions under part II, on occupational health and safety, and there is a process currently in place whereby there are certain requirements for employers and there is an ability for the department to undertake investigations.

Hon. Steven Blaney: Thanks.

How many investigators do you have throughout the country to deal with those issues of policy related to harassment?

Ms. Barbara Moran: I'll turn to my colleague Brenda.

Ms. Brenda Baxter (Director General, Workplace Directorate, Labour Program, Department of Employment and Social Development): Currently under part II of the Canada Labour Code, on occupational health and safety, we have 97 health and safety officers across the country.

• (1645)

Hon. Steven Blaney: They are spread throughout the country?

Ms. Brenda Baxter: Yes.

Hon. Steven Blaney: Okay.

I'm going to ask the same question I asked the minister.

Let's say I am an employee. I don't want to go to my employer because he's the one who has victimized me. I don't want to go through mediation because I've spoken to a lot of victims and they said this is just going to be going over it all again and this won't solve it, and I don't trust it. Can they go to you, and will they be able to go to you, and if so, are you prepared to receive their complaint?

Ms. Barbara Moran: Sure. Maybe the first thing I will mention is that when the legislation comes into force, the labour program will have the capacity to help both employers and employees through it. We're going to have an outreach hub that will provide support for employees in navigating the process, understanding their rights, and understanding the responsibilities of the employer, as well as helping them just generally navigate the process. That same outreach hub will be available for employers to be able to understand what their obligations are under the code as well.

That would be the first thing available to somebody who has experienced harassment. There will be somebody in the labour program who will be able to help them navigate the process.

Hon. Steven Blaney: You're talking about the obligation of the employee, so are you saying that if an employee goes to you and says they were harassed in their workplace, you will say go back to your employer and follow the process? Is it what I've been hearing all afternoon?

Ms. Barbara Moran: I think the first step in it is that yes, indeed, they need to make their employer aware of the incident.

That said, if the employee doesn't feel that they're able to come to a resolution of the issue, then the employer is obligated to undertake an investigation by a competent person. That would be a person who would have to be agreed upon by both the employer and the employee as somebody who could neutrally and competently undertake an investigation.

Hon. Steven Blaney: Okay, let's talk about this competent person. I find that it's not clearly defined in the law. Can you explain to me who would be a competent person? What will be their qualifications? How will these people be chosen? With regard to their decisions, how will they be implemented or followed by the employer?

Ms. Barbara Moran: The qualities of the competent person will be one of the areas that we're going to clearly spell out through the regulations. The idea would be that in the regulatory process we'll be able to consult with employers and employees, as well as other experts, to make sure we get the qualifications correct for who we would deem to be a competent person. That will be spelled out in the regulations.

Hon. Steven Blaney: This competent person, if I understand you well, can be within the organization or without? Is that correct?

Ms. Barbara Moran: Again, it will be worked out through the regulations, but in theory, yes, if that's what they want to put in place. Again, I think the key part about it is that there has to be mutual agreement between the parties, the employer and the employee, that this indeed is a competent person. The regulations are going to spell out what those qualifications are for a competent person, but then it has to be agreed upon.

Hon. Steven Blaney: Let me get back to this example of the employee not agreeing on the competent person. Can she go to the department and have this investigation conducted by the department?

Ms. Barbara Moran: Again, through the regulations, we would look at putting in, I would suggest, a time limit by which there needs to be agreement. You don't want to have people just continually disagreeing. There's going to be a time limit, and then at that point, yes, it could come to the labour program.

Hon. Steven Blaney: You're telling me finally that if at the end of the duration an employee is not satisfied with the competent person or the process that has been implemented by the employer, they then can file a complaint to the labour department?

Ms. Barbara Moran: They can file a complaint at any point. It could be, for example, that your employer doesn't have a policy, or that you bring a complaint forward to your employer and they don't respond. At any point in that process, they can come to the labour program with their complaint.

Hon. Steven Blaney: For being harassed, can they...?

Ms. Barbara Moran: The labour program isn't going to investigate the complaint of harassment specifically. The role will be to investigate if the process has been followed. The idea is that in the process that's set out, there would be a competent person identified by the employer and the employee who would undertake an investigation.

Hon. Steven Blaney: Again, if we don't agree on a competent person, where do we go from there?

Ms. Barbara Moran: You go to the labour program.

The Chair: Thank you.

MP Morrissey is next, for six minutes.

Mr. Robert Morrissey (Egmont, Lib.): Thank you, Chair.

I wanted to follow up on a point that was raised by Ms. Harder. What was the rationale for the former government on Bill C-4? It was an omnibus piece of legislation introduced by Ms. Leitch at the time. It was a change, and in the language in the bill it named the minister directly to deal with frivolous complaints. What was the rationale used by the government for that change at the time?

•(1650)

Ms. Brenda Baxter: I don't know what the rationale for the government was, but at the time, the introduction of the ability for the minister to determine that a complaint would be frivolous, vexatious, or in bad faith was associated with the changes regarding the refusal-to-work process. If a refusal to work was made and it was seen that there was no merit to it, no facts against it, there would be an ability for the minister, through her delegates, to make a decision not to investigate.

Mr. Robert Morrissey: The issue of the minister being involved and named was brought in at that time on those changes in Bill C-4. Am I correct?

Ms. Brenda Baxter: Are you speaking about the change from a designation model to a delegation model?

Mr. Robert Morrissey: Yes.

Ms. Brenda Baxter: Yes, that was brought in at that time.

Mr. Robert Morrissey: Okay. Further to that, because it's important in this piece of legislation—and it's important for our government—to ensure that there is an unbiased investigative approach, could you elaborate on the steps taken in this legislation that ensure the minister is kept removed from those positions so that there cannot be even the perception of bias?

The case was identified that, well, if the minister got a complaint from a Liberal member versus somebody else, and we're now the government, how is the public assured that there will be no bias?

Ms. Barbara Moran: I'll begin, and then I'll turn to my colleague to add to it.

Essentially, the intention of the legislation is to include a number of steps that need to be undertaken before a complaint could potentially come forward to the labour program. In other words, when employers become aware of an issue, they have a duty to try to resolve it informally. If at that stage the parties to the complaint are not satisfied, then the employer has a duty to undertake an investigation led by a competent person.

That's where you get impartiality and bias. The department of labour isn't involved at that point, other than.... There will be some reporting, but that's it. An investigation gets undertaken, recommendations are made through that report, and then it's up to the employers to implement those recommendations. Again, the department is not involved. The only time the department would get involved would be if there were a complaint that the process hadn't been followed.

Mr. Robert Morrissey: Let me rephrase my question, because you are the same senior advisers who were advising a former minister. Am I correct?

Ms. Barbara Moran: Yes.

Mr. Robert Morrissey: Therefore, you're familiar with the situation that was identified. Given the legislation as it's currently drafted, can you assure this committee that the situation that the opposition attempted to allude to—the situation of the minister being biased in the decision-making approach—would not happen with this legislation?

Ms. Brenda Baxter: The officers that are put in place are delegated by the minister. Those officers are trained to make sure

they consider facts, make impartial decisions, and ensure that those decisions are put in place. That's the approach that's taken currently with the cadre of officers with regard to all of part II of the Canada Labour Code.

The extension of the provisions with regard to sexual harassment and violence would be dealt with in the same way. Our officers are extensively trained. They have to qualify and certify to be an officer, and they receive recertification on a regular basis to ensure they understand the code and implement the provisions of the code in an unbiased manner.

The Chair: Go ahead, Madame Trudel.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Karine Trudel: Thank you for being here.

I'd like to pick up on a discussion we had with the minister about financial resources. The slew of measures contained in Bill C-65 will have significant financial implications. Therefore, I'd like to know whether new funding will be available to help employers provide training and access the support needed to investigate allegations of sexual harassment and, of course, any harassment.

If so, can you tell me how much funding will be provided and, above all, where the money will come from?

•(1655)

[*English*]

Ms. Barbara Moran: Any time there are changes and updates to the legislation, resources are put in place to help employers adjust to them. That's in the form of education and training, and that type of thing. In addition, there's an intention to put in place an outreach hub that will allow employers and employees to get support in understanding the legislation and what their rights and responsibilities are under the legislation. The inspectors themselves will receive training to address issues related to harassment and violence, and to ensure they understand the legislation as well and are able to support employers in moving forward with it.

There will be costs associated with implementing the legislation for employers, and to the extent that we're able to provide employers with this type of material to help them, it will assist them. In the long run, there should be a reduction in cost for employers, because there should be a reduction in absenteeism, an increase in productivity, less litigation, and so on. There are going to be short-term costs that we will help them through, and then in the long term, there should be a reduction in cost for them.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Karine Trudel: I also wanted to know whether you have determined how much funding will be allocated and, if so, where the money will come from.

[*English*]

Ms. Barbara Moran: In moving forward with the legislation, we are still developing regulations. Until all of those regulations are developed, we won't be able to have the full gamut of all the educational products and training and that type of thing.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Karine Trudel: When inspectors go into workplaces, will employers have to bear the associated costs?

Will inspectors be brought in to conduct the investigation and then determine whether the harassment claim is founded?

[English]

Ms. Barbara Moran: The employer isn't required to pay for the inspectors. That's covered by the labour program.

Ms. Brenda Baxter: Employers would be required to potentially pay for a competent person if it was an outside third party and if there was an associated cost.

[Translation]

Ms. Karine Trudel: If it turns out that an inspector needs to be brought in but the employer is not willing to assume the associated costs, will the employer have an obligation under the act or regulations? If the employer does not want an inspector coming into the workplace, will the regulations or the act come into play?

[English]

Ms. Barbara Moran: Regardless, if the employer and the employee haven't reached a resolution of the issue, the employer is obligated to have a competent person and is obligated to pay for it. The only time the labour program would come in is if they don't do that.

The employer is obligated to conduct the investigation, and if they hire a third party to do it, then the labour program would only come and investigate if that process hadn't been followed, so the costs for this competent person would be borne by the employer.

[Translation]

Ms. Karine Trudel: In the case of collective agreements, how will the process work?

Will the union have to work with an inspector who is conducting an investigation, or will the inspector operate independently?

• (1700)

[English]

Ms. Barbara Moran: In a case in which there are collective agreements, often those collective agreements will set out a process by which they would deal with harassment and violence in the workplace. Those collective agreements will need to abide by the legislation, so in some cases that may mean the processes will need to be adjusted in order to be consistent with the legislation.

If there is a process in place, though, through a collective agreement, as long as it adheres to the requirements of the legislation, that's fine.

The Chair: Thank you.

Now we go over to MP Damoff for six minutes.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Thank you, Chair.

Thank you for being here.

We had a lot of talk in the first round about delegation of authority. Could you clarify for me? A fisheries minister doesn't go out and build docks. He delegates his authority to officials within his department to do that. Would that be similar to what the minister was talking about?

Ms. Barbara Moran: Yes, it would be delegated.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Thank you.

One of the things you mentioned was that the employee is required to make their employer aware of the situation, and that happens prior to going further. Is that correct?

Ms. Barbara Moran: It could be the employee. It could be anyone. Basically, if you were a bystander and you saw a situation of harassment, you could bring that forward to the employer as well. In order to trigger the process, the employer just has to be made aware that there is an issue.

Ms. Pam Damoff: What about a situation like what was happening at the maximum security Edmonton Institution, where they knew that taking it to the employer...? The employer was already aware of the situation, and nothing would happen, so would someone still be required in a situation like that, when they knew the complaints had come forward and nothing had happened? Would they still have to notify the employer before they advanced it further?

Ms. Barbara Moran: How would they know that the employer was aware? That would be my first question. Certainly I would think that they should once again bring it to the attention of the employer.

Ms. Pam Damoff: The report talked about retribution against people who came forward. People were very hesitant to come forward, because employees talk to each other, right? When employee one comes forward and it causes problems for them at work, employee two is fearful of coming forward because they're fearful of the same situation. If they have to continually go to the employer...

Do you follow what I'm saying?

Ms. Barbara Moran: Yes.

Ms. Pam Damoff: In that case, it was probably employee 35 who had gone forward to the employer, and nothing had happened except hell for those employees, so what's the process?

I mean, if they have to go to that employer, they're not going to do it. There should be something in place, I would think, whereby there would be someone independent that they could refer this to if they really were fearful of retribution in their employment.

Ms. Barbara Moran: There are two things I'll mention. First of all, under the code there are protections against reprisal. If there is reprisal, that is a contravention of the legislation, and they can complain about that as well. They are protected under the code for that.

The second thing, though, is that if the employer has been made aware of the issue of harassment and has done nothing, has not initiated the process as per the legislation, then yes, they could come to the labour program and indicate that the process has not been followed by their employer.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Okay.

Does the legislation envision any reporting to Parliament in terms of the number of cases that are reviewed and the outcomes? Is there anything in the legislation for reporting?

Ms. Brenda Baxter: There isn't anything in the legislation with respect to reporting to Parliament, but there would be reporting to the labour program.

Right now employers are required to report, on an annual basis, issues of serious injuries and fatalities in the workplace. The legislation envisions expanding that so that employers would have to report to the labour program on any incident of violence or harassment in the workplace that they would investigate. It's not necessarily just when the labour program is involved.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Is that a public report?

Ms. Brenda Baxter: That's something we'll have to determine through the regulatory process.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Okay.

Ms. Brenda Baxter: Currently, in terms of the reporting with regard to the information the labour program receives now on incidents of injuries and fatalities, a report is rolled up and made available on the labour program's website.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Then it might be possible to include something—obviously not personal details and confidential information, but just general statistics, right?

What's the time frame on the review of the legislation? We're putting this in place and we want to make sure it's working. Is there any kind of review to make sure things are going well, or not well?

• (1705)

Ms. Brenda Baxter: That's not something that's included in the legislation, but as part of normal practices in the department, there are evaluations and audits done on programs. It's possible that in the future an evaluation or audit that would be done in the occupational health and safety program would include these provisions.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Okay. Thank you.

The employer has to hire a third party: is that what I heard?

Ms. Barbara Moran: It doesn't necessarily have to be “hire”. Through the regulations, we'll spell out what a competent person is, and that person.... I think the key part is that it's impartial and has to be agreed to by both parties. Is it an external person? In some cases, it may be. In other cases, if you're in a large organization, such as the public service—

Ms. Pam Damoff: I'm actually thinking about a member of Parliament. A member of Parliament has a member's office budget. Would that person be someone we'd have to hire? If so, is it coming out of the office budget, or would there be a provision within the House of Commons to be able to provide for that third party?

[Translation]

Mr. Charles Bernard (Director General, Portfolio and Government Affairs, Public Services and Procurement Canada): It would be up to Parliament to decide how to implement the program. Parliament determines its own structures, so it would decide who would have to pay, when, and how.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you.

MP Fortier is next, please.

[Translation]

Mrs. Mona Fortier: I'd like to stay on this topic.

Is there anything you would recommend to us, as committee members, in the event that we had to address the issue? Would you have any advice for us?

Mr. Charles Bernard: It would be very unwise of me to give you any advice. That said, best practices certainly exist. I think members of Parliament will be able to determine adequate rules and procedures on their own.

Mrs. Mona Fortier: Thank you.

Currently, how many cases does an inspector handle every year, on average?

[English]

Ms. Brenda Baxter: I don't have that number in front of me. I'd have to get back to you.

[Translation]

Mrs. Mona Fortier: I don't know whether you've looked at any research on the subject, but I'd like to know whether you think this new legislation could mean an increase in inspector personnel.

If so, would you need more resources?

[English]

Ms. Barbara Moran: It's important to note that right now there are provisions under the code for violence. The inspectors are already receiving complaints on them and undertaking investigations. There are provisions on sexual harassment as well. They're just different, and what they're investigating is different. There already are inspectors out in the field working on these.

What we're planning to do, in preparation for the legislation, is to make sure these inspectors have adequate training to deal with harassment specifically, understand the legislation, and are able to help both the complainants and the employers to understand what their rights and responsibilities are under the legislation, as well as undertake investigations where warranted.

[Translation]

Mrs. Mona Fortier: I see.

Switching gears now, I'm going to turn to one of the proposed measures, the 1-800 line.

How do you think the measure will be implemented? How will people be able to call and then receive service? How do you see that taking shape?

[English]

Ms. Barbara Moran: That's one of the details we are still working through to have it in place when the legislation does come into force. We're calling it an outreach hub, and it would be a 1-800 line that employees and employers could call. There would specially trained individuals who would be able to refer them.

In some cases they may need local community support. They may need help immediately. The individual would be able to refer them there, but they would also be able to help them navigate the process. They would say, “Here are your rights under the code. Here is what your employer is required to do”, and walk them through it step by step.

In the same regard, that same outreach hub would be able to help employers by providing them with sample policies they may wish to use, again making sure they understand very clearly what their responsibilities are under the code.

• (1710)

[Translation]

Mrs. Mona Fortier: Thank you.

Given your rather long history with this file, I'm curious as to whether you have any concerns around the bill's implementation. Practical elements come to mind, as well as aspects that might need to be developed.

[English]

Ms. Barbara Moran: To be honest, one of the things that I'm planning, one of the big parts when we move forward with new legislation, is making sure people understand that the law has changed and that they understand their roles and responsibilities.

On harassment and violence, there is already so much media attention around it and so much heightened interest in it that in one way we don't have to be drumming up interest in it. In that way, what I'm finding is that people are coming to us, whereas in the past, we would have had to proactively go out and find people to make sure they paid attention.

We have people coming to us saying, "What do we need to do? We want to make the change in our workplace." For me, that's very optimistic, and that will certainly help us in the implementation phase.

[Translation]

Mrs. Mona Fortier: You just raised an important point. As the representative for the Ottawa—Vanier riding, much of my work is based in Ottawa.

Could you describe what happens outside the national capital region, in other words, in more rural and remote regions?

Do the people in those regions know that this legislation is coming down the pike? Do they know that it is meant to protect them, or give them the ability to make a complaint if they are dealing with a situation in the workplace?

[English]

Ms. Brenda Baxter: There will be more knowledge and interest with regard to the legislation once we start doing some of the consultations on regulations. Before the end of the fiscal year, we intend to speak to stakeholders and others about their experiences so that we can understand the specifics that need to be included in the regulations to ensure that they actually function for every type of federally regulated workplace and for every size of organization.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

MP Harder, go ahead, please.

Ms. Rachael Harder: On this round, it's Rosemarie.

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC): Thank you for being here today.

My first question for you is this. When an investigation is launched, what's the current time frame to complete it, roughly?

Ms. Brenda Baxter: It all depends on the nature of the investigation and the issue that's being looked at. I can't give you a time frame for any type of investigation right now.

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: Leading up to my next question, when the minister was here, we were discussing that a significant number of complaints are anticipated under this new legislation.

I guess you can't really give me an estimated time, if we're going to have investigations.... If it goes so far that there need to be investigations, do we have any idea what kind of backlog this would cause in the system? Is the department prepared, or what is it going to do? I know going through a complaint process and then the investigation, if that happens, is a rigorous process to begin with, and one that would be drawn out for the victim/survivor, right?

Ms. Brenda Baxter: I have two points here. First, I would say that when we do our consultations with respect to the regulatory development, one thing we may be looking at is whether there have to be some parameters put around the time frames of an investigation.

Second, there are two parts to the investigation. There's the internal portion that was identified by my colleague, the workplace investigation. It involves a competent third person who does an investigation, produces a report, and makes recommendations for the workplace. There are also complaints that could come to the labour program with respect to the process not working. There are two types of work to support the effective functioning of this piece of legislation.

• (1715)

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: That's perfect, thank you.

Also, at the beginning it was mentioned that supports for employees and employers will be provided for preventing harassment in the workplace.

Do we have any idea what that's going to look like for employers versus employees, and how employees would be made aware of their rights and how to bring things forward?

Ms. Barbara Moran: I think there will be a range of educational types of material. There will also be awareness campaigns and that type of thing—what is harassment, what is violence, what are your rights, what are your responsibilities? That can take a whole range of different forms, from social media to Twitter to putting stuff on the web. We have inspectors across the country who are going into the workplaces, as well, who can help with that.

I think a key part of the process, the first part of the process, is that employers are going to be required to have a policy in place that they've developed in consultation with the workplace committee, so that is the very first step. If you have a really good, strong, robust policy for prevention, that's going to go a long way to avoiding complaints and, frankly, to changing the culture in the workplace.

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: That leads to my next question.

We've heard mention of policies in the workplace. How is that going to be monitored? How is that going to be regulated, so to speak? If we each have our own policy, is there going to be a specific standard, and how is that going to be relayed to us to implement?

Ms. Barbara Moran: Through the regulations, we're going to spell out what a policy needs to include.

I think it's important to note that every workplace is different. Whether it's a member of Parliament or one of our private sector employers, they're going to be different, so we'll have to find that balance in the regulations and not be so prescriptive in what's required in the policy that they're not able to adjust depending on their workplace circumstance.

For example, a trucking company would have a policy that would be different from a member of Parliament's policy.

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: My last question is in regard to the “competent person” we've been discussing.

Are there going to be specific qualifications for this person, or can it just be Joe off the street who we both know is going to do this? Do they have to have some type of education or some type of courses or training to be put in this position?

Ms. Barbara Moran: Yes, they will have some sort of qualifications. Through the regulations, we're going to spell out what we would deem to be a competent person. Through our consultations on the regulations, we'll figure out what those qualifications would be, be they educational, experience, or whatever.

The Chair: Thank you.

MP Dabrusin, please, you're next.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: Thank you.

When we're looking at where we want to go, part of good groundwork—for me, anyway, when I'm looking at it—is knowing where we are now with the existing situation. I was hoping that maybe you could walk us through a little. Where is the legislation right now?

I was looking through an ESDC document here that talks about how they are two separate regimes. Can you walk through those regimes quickly so that we have an idea of where the gaps are now? Where do we jump over from here to where we're going with the legislation?

Ms. Barbara Moran: Sure. Right now violence and sexual harassment are dealt with separately in the code. Sexual harassment is dealt with under part III of the code, which is labour standards. What's different about labour standards is that the requirements associated with what the employer is required to do are different from what's in part II.

The other thing is it applies to different workplaces as well. A key difference between part II of the labour program, which is where the harassment and violence provisions will be put, and part III, as I said, is that part III does not apply to the federal public service. Currently neither part II nor part III applies to parliamentarians. What this legislation also proposes to do is bring all of part II, the occupational health and safety provisions, to parliamentarians, so that section will not be limited to the harassment and violence provisions but will also include occupational health and safety.

• (1720)

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: The full part II would be covered—

Ms. Barbara Moran: Yes, it will be the full part II.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: All right. The change that's happening mainly goes to breadth, as far as to who is covered between the two, and then the two are subsumed within one piece of legislation, as opposed to being within two regimes.

Ms. Barbara Moran: That's correct. We took the violence provisions that are already in part II and built on them to make them more robust, and we'll be continuing to do that through the regulatory process. For example, the requirement for an employer to identify a competent person to undertake an investigation, the qualifications of the competent person, and all those details are again building on what's already there and making it more robust.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: Right.

A bit earlier we had a lot of questions about what happens if you disagree with a decision that a complaint is frivolous or vexatious and about the appeals process. Can you set that out?

Ms. Barbara Moran: At any point in the appeals process, an individual can complain that the process hasn't been followed, and they can complain with the labour program. If it comes to the labour program and it's determined to be frivolous, vexatious, or in bad faith—and for that the bar is quite high—or if the issue has been adequately dealt with in another forum, then the labour program can say they're not going to investigate it. If that occurs, then there is an opportunity for judicial review of that decision. That's a decision of the labour program.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: I was curious the data that is collected. You touched a bit earlier on the data that is available to you right now. Do you have any disaggregated data about different forms of harassment and who is impacted? It came up through the consultation. There was discussion how it is gendered, for example. Is that data available to you?

Ms. Barbara Moran: One of the things we are doing through the legislation is trying to get more data, to be honest with you. One of the pieces will be requiring more reporting on occurrences of harassment and violence in the workplace, so that will help us on data.

In terms of the data we currently have, certain things like incidents of violence are reported to the labour program. In addition, we look at various surveys that give us a sense of what's out there. As part of the consultations we did an online survey, for example, that has provided us with data. We have a federal jurisdiction survey of employers that we were able to use to get a sense of the issue.

As well, more and more surveys seem to be made public, not necessarily limited to the federal jurisdiction, that provide us with a good sense of the extent to which harassment is a problem in Canadian workplaces.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: How does this legislation help you with getting better data?

Ms. Barbara Moran: This will be spelled out in the regulations. Reporting by employers is going to be required when issues of harassment or violence are brought to their attention. It's going to give us data on what gets brought forward to an employer.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: Within the context of the regulations, can they take into account intersectionalities and the like?

Ms. Barbara Moran: Yes.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: Perfect.

The Chair: We'll go over to MP Harder.

Ms. Rachael Harder: Thank you.

Ms. Moran, I'm wondering if you or anyone in the department has ever briefed the minister on an investigation with regard to an occupational health and safety matter.

Ms. Barbara Moran: I can say that I haven't. I work in policy, and I'm not involved in the operations. I'm afraid I can't speak for my colleagues.

Ms. Rachael Harder: Have any of you ever briefed the minister on anything having to do with health and safety?

• (1725)

Ms. Brenda Baxter: I've briefed the minister on issues of health and safety, but from a broader operational policy perspective.

Ms. Rachael Harder: Would there ever be a time when the minister would be briefed on a matter or a complaint that could come forward under Bill C-65, within this legislation, having to do with an assault or mistreatment on the Hill?

Mr. Charles Bernard: The minister would be briefed only if the issue was brought to the department of labour. After seeking a voluntary compliance, if that did not work, then the minister would be involved and would issue a direction.

Ms. Rachael Harder: Okay.

Mr. Charles Bernard: It's ramping up to that point.

Ms. Rachael Harder: What happens if the complaint comes from a staff member of the minister, and compliance is not met within the minister's office? In this case, it would have to make its way to the minister for a decision as to whether or not to tell the Speaker of the House and perhaps eventually table that MP's name in the House of Commons. Am I correct?

Mr. Charles Bernard: Are you talking about the minister of labour herself, or any minister?

Ms. Rachael Harder: I'm talking about the minister of labour. When a staff member has a concern, and that concern is brought forward, it gets to a point where it's up to the minister to go to the House and tell the Speaker that the process has not been followed. The member of Parliament, who in this case is the minister, can actually have her name tabled in the House of Commons. Is there a process in place to deal with this in a different way when the employee works for the minister?

Mr. Charles Bernard: I'll defer to my colleague on this one.

Ms. Barbara Moran: My understanding is that in a case involving the minister of labour herself she would avoid the conflict of interest by asking her deputy minister to step in. In my view, the deputy minister would play a role in ensuring the process was followed, in order to respect parliamentary privilege and inform the Speaker.

Ms. Rachael Harder: Would it make sense to put that in the legislation instead of its just being your understanding?

Ms. Brenda Baxter: I think we have to consider that there are other workplaces where the aggressor may be the employer. Through the regulatory system, we have to look at putting in place a process to ensure that in every workplace under this legislation, if the aggressor is the employer, there is some workaround that will allow the individuals coming forward to follow the process through to a fair resolution.

Ms. Rachael Harder: I'm out of time, right?

The Chair: You have about 30 seconds.

Ms. Rachael Harder: My concern is this: we have an opportunity to put forward some really great legislation, but this a glaring omission to me. I'm wondering how we protect those who work for the minister, regardless of who that minister is—the minister now, the minister in 10 years, or the minister in 20 years. No matter the party in power, how do we make sure the employees of the minister have a reporting mechanism in place?

The Chair: I'm afraid that's time, and I do need to get to MP Trudel for the final word.

You only have about one minute, I'm afraid, but go ahead.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Karine Trudel: Thank you. I'll be quick.

My understanding is that parliamentary employees will have the right to refuse to work if they consider their working conditions to be dangerous or feel they are being harassed. Is that correct?

As I understand part II of the Canada Labour Code, they have the right to refuse to work if they are the victims of violence or harassment.

Will measures for those employees be introduced, for instance, if they are pulled from the workplace or refuse to work? I am referring to things like paid leave while an investigation is ongoing or relocation to another workstation.

• (1730)

[English]

Ms. Barbara Moran: Currently under the code, in a refusal-to-work situation, it goes to whether or not there's an imminent danger. What the code includes is a definition of what is intended by an imminent danger. The bar is quite high, so for it to be a refusal-of-work situation, there truly has to be something that meets this bar of imminent danger.

Ms. Brenda Baxter: My understanding is that when there is a refusal-to-work process, while the investigation is being undertaken, the employee is not put on leave. That work stops until the investigation is completed.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Thank you very much for appearing today and answering all of our questions.

I have a little bit of future business here.

On February 14, we will be going through the consideration of the draft report on our seniors study. Please, please, make sure you've had an opportunity to read the amazing changes that have been made

by our analyst. The hope is that we go through it, not page by page, but section by section, so that we can get that process under way. That's this Wednesday. We should have the report soon. That is on February 14.

On February 21, we will be seeing witnesses again on Bill C-65, back here during the break week for two sessions, one on the 21st and again on the 22nd.

Go ahead, Mr. Blaney.

Hon. Steven Blaney: Chair, will it be possible to have the list of witnesses who will attend those four meetings next week?

The Chair: As soon as we have them, we'll make sure they get to everybody on the committee.

Thank you very much, everybody. As always, thank you to the analyst, the clerk, those behind us who make us audible to those who are not bilingual, and of course, all the technical people who put us on television today.

Thank you very much.

This meeting is adjourned.

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