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Chair: Mr. Sean Casey



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• (1900)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.)): I call this meeting to order. Welcome to meeting number 39 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Health.

Today we meet for clause-by-clause consideration of Bill C-31, an act respecting cost of living relief measures related to dental care and rental housing.

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Chair, I have a quick question in respect to this.

It's very loud right now. Hopefully, our colleagues and those in the gallery can hear this.

We only just heard some of the testimony on the fee guide. I, for one, have some concerns, as I stated to the officials, regarding the fee guide and how we ensure that dental care remains affordable and that the benefit actually will be applied to....

I guess the question I'm asking is this. If we had an amendment towards the fee guide, is there a mechanism in place for us right now, tonight, where we could have somebody help us draft an amendment?

The Chair: Yes. They're here. Philippe Méla and Marie-Hélène Sauvé are legislative clerks who are here to help us. It is permissible to bring forward an amendment for which there has not been given notice, but once we get to 12 o'clock, we will be going straight to a vote on those, and only those, for which notice has been given.

If there is an amendment proposed for which there was no notice given, which is what you're contemplating, you are welcome to do that. It will have to be done in writing, in both official languages, and it will have to be dispensed with before midnight or it effectively falls off the table.

Mr. Todd Doherty: I've been a member of Parliament for seven years now. This is the first time I've ever seen a bill or a piece of legislation where the amendments had to be in before we even saw the witnesses. We saw two ministers on this. We studied this bill for literally two hours, on something that is \$10 billion.

While I appreciate that there are a lot of moving pieces to this, the ministers weren't really able to answer some of the questions. Minister Hussen said that if the Conservatives would just get out of the way, essentially.... Well, we're doing our job. The amount of \$10 billion is projected to be spent. We want to ensure that (a) it's getting to the people who require it, and (b) there are measures

in place so that all of a sudden the industry doesn't increase their fee guide and make it unobtainable again. I guess there are just questions and concerns.

You're saying now that if we do draft an amendment, it won't be able to be voted on anyway.

• (1905)

The Chair: It will be able to be voted on provided that vote happens before midnight.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: Ms. Sauvé has some additional information, Mr. Doherty.

Go ahead.

Ms. Marie-Hélène Sauvé (Legislative Clerk): I just want to put in a clarification. We can advise here, as legislative clerks, on the admissibility of an amendment that is brought forward from the floor and that's not currently included in the package. However, we cannot assist with drafting it. That would be the work of the legislative counsel.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Okay. So there is no mechanism in place to have it done tonight before midnight. It would have to be translated. Essentially, what we have is what you get. That's what you're saying.

All right.

The Chair: Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format, pursuant to the House order of June 23, 2022.

I would now like to welcome the officials who are with us this evening. We are well supported with plenty of expertise around the table.

We have, from the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, Ms. Nadine Leblanc, senior vice-president, policy; Ms. Patricia Roset-Zuppa, vice-president, policy development; and Ms. Louise Michel, director, legal services. From the assessment, benefit and service branch of the Canada Revenue Agency, we have Ms. Gillian Pranke, assistant commissioner; and Ms. Heather Daniels, director general, benefit programs directorate. From Health Canada, we have Ms. Lynne Tomson, associate assistant deputy minister, strategic policy branch.

As you just heard, we also have with us the legislative clerks, Marie-Hélène Sauvé and Philippe Méla.

The good folks at the back of the room should be able to handle any technical questions you have with respect to the substance of the bill or the amendments. The good folks at the front of the room will be able to handle your legal and technical questions on that end.

There will be no opening statements. Everyone you see here is here as a resource to help us do our work.

We're now going to move to clause-by-clause consideration of Bill C-31, but I have a bit of a script here for you.

As the name indicates, this is an examination of all the clauses in the order in which they appear in the bill. I will call each clause successively, and until midnight tonight, each clause is subject to debate and a vote. If there is an amendment to the clause in question, I will recognize the member proposing it, who may explain it. The amendment will then be open for debate. When no further members wish to intervene, the amendment will be voted on. Amendments will be considered in the order in which they appear in the bill and in the package each member received from the clerk.

Members should note that amendments must be submitted in writing to the clerk of the committee.

The chair will go slowly to allow all members to follow the proceedings properly. Amendments have been given an alphanumeric number in the top right corner to indicate which party submitted them. There's no need for a seconder to move an amendment. Once it is moved, you will need unanimous consent to withdraw it.

During debate on an amendment, members are permitted to move subamendments. These subamendments must be submitted in writing. They do not require the approval of the mover of the amendment. Only one subamendment may be considered at a time, and that subamendment cannot be amended. When a subamendment is moved, it is voted on first. Then another subamendment may be moved, or the committee may consider the main amendment and vote on it.

Once every clause has been voted on, the committee will vote on the short title, the title, and the bill itself. An order to reprint the bill may be required if amendments are adopted so that the House has a proper copy for use at report stage.

Finally, the committee will have to order the chair to report the bill to the House. That report contains only the text of any adopted amendments, as well as an indication of any deleted clauses.

We're now proceeding with clause-by-clause consideration.

Pursuant to Standing Order 75(1), consideration of clause 1, the short title, is postponed. I therefore call clause 2.

(On clause 2)

The Chair: I understand there is an amendment proposed to clause 2.

Monsieur Garon, do you wish to introduce the amendment?

• (1910)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Bloc Québécois is proposing an amendment to the suggested preamble. The change would be applied to line 18 on page 1 and lines 1 and 2 on page 2 of the bill, where it states, "while working towards the development of a long term national dental care program".

As you know, this is considered by Quebec and a number of provinces to be interference in their jurisdictions. We understand that this is a matter of—

[*English*]

Mr. Todd Doherty: On a point of order, Mr. Chair, I thought we moved past the short title and on to clause 2, which would be the Bloc amendment to clause 2. Is that correct? That's what I'm asking.

I guess I'm asking my colleague.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon: Yes.

[*English*]

That's where we are.

Mr. Todd Doherty: I'm sorry. I thought you were talking about the short title.

The Chair: Mr. Garon, go ahead.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon: Of course, we are talking about a program that is justified in large part by the federal spending power. This again confirms to us that Ottawa has an enormous amount of revenue, while the responsibilities fall to the provinces.

This is particularly true in the case of dental care. Quebec already has a program that covers this care for children aged 10 and under. As I mentioned earlier, this program used to cover many more people, but it had to be scaled back owing to a lack of funding, especially from the federal government. The context is important: the federal government is partly responsible for the fact that this universal program is not as generous as it once was.

As far as this bill is concerned, it is within the federal spending authority. We will discuss the rest in detail. That said, the development of a national dental care program, not a program to support families for dental care, is obviously an interference with Quebec and provincial jurisdictions. It is also likely to be detrimental to the relationship between Quebec and the federal government and, therefore, to the development of programs that will, in the longer term, make dental care for children sustainable.

This first amendment by the Bloc Québécois is to the proposed preamble of the new Dental Benefit Act, and it does not change the substance of the bill in any way. In fact, the part of the sentence that the Bloc Québécois seeks to remove by its amendment should never have been there. Removing this part of the sentence from the proposed preamble, which is found in line 18 on page 1 and lines 1 and 2 on page 2 of the bill, better describes the nature of the bill. Let me say, these three lines are merely a political stunt for future purposes: they presuppose future government actions that are not part of the bill.

Therefore, not only would the removal of these three lines be appropriate in the context of Bill C-31, but it would be respectful of Quebec. I say it and I repeat it to my colleagues, this will in no way prevent the federal government, starting in the next few weeks, from sitting down with the governments of Quebec and the provinces to think about dental care programs or their improvement, as well as opt-out rights with full financial compensation for children's dental care.

These three lines have no place in the bill. They are essentially political manoeuvring that has no legal or descriptive value in context. Therefore, I propose that we remove them.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Garon.

[English]

Next is Ms. Sidhu, and then Mr. Davies.

Ms. Sonia Sidhu (Brampton South, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

We need a national dental plan that covers everyone. This bill is the first step. The proposed amendment would remove key context from the preamble.

I just want to say that when I earlier asked a question of the minister, the answer was that work on the long-term national dental care program is ongoing. We need a national dental plan that covers everyone. This bill addresses that.

I am opposed to this amendment, Mr. Chair.

• (1915)

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Sidhu.

Mr. Davies is next, and then Mrs. Goodridge.

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I have a couple of practical reasons to respectfully oppose this amendment, as well as some broader constitutional ones.

On a practical level, what I think a preamble, and legislation, should do is describe in very plain and very accurate language to the people who elect us exactly what the laws that they are expected to comply with say. I know that my Conservative colleagues, Mr. Poilievre, made it a strong feature of his recent leadership campaign to speak in plain language. In terms of an accurate description, the reason these words not only should be in the bill, but must be in the bill, is that they describe accurately to Canadians exactly what this legislation is doing.

I think anybody on the health committee who has been following social media will see that there's an immense amount of confusion about what this bill does. I've seen people on Twitter and on Facebook saying this bill is not a dental care plan. They attack this legislation on the basis that it was politically pledged to Canadians that we would provide them a dental care plan, and this legislation is not that.

They're right. This legislation is not a dental care plan, because it's not designed to be a dental care plan. This legislation is designed to be an interim bridge benefit to pay money to parents of children under 12, while we work on the permanent national dental care plan. That's exactly what this is.

Were we to take these words out, Mr. Chair, we would be doing a disservice to Canadians by not describing to them exactly what this is. If we just said that we recognize the need to provide interim dental benefits for children under 12 years and stop there, without telling them that we're working toward the development of a long-term national dental care program, it would be inaccurate, because we are working toward a national dental care plan.

I respect the position of my colleague from the Bloc Québécois on the constitutionality and the considerations that go into working with the provinces. We can certainly have that discussion on a different day, but that's not a discussion for this legislation tonight, because this legislation simply sets out what is going on, which is dealing with legislation that would establish the interim bridge payment. Again, we're telling Canadians that there's further work to be done.

When that further work is tabled, it's at that point that I fully expect Mr. Garon and others to raise issues over the permanent dental care plan and whether things are constitutional.

While I'm on that subject, though, I must say that I've made it my mission in life, any time anybody questions the constitutionality of the federal government's role in health care, to have a robust defence. My friend brought up the spending power. Constitutionally, the term "spending power" has come to mean the power of the federal government to make payments to people, institutions or governments for purposes on which it does not necessarily have the power to legislate.

The constitutional validity of federal spending in the area of health was confirmed by the Supreme Court of Canada in its 1991 decision in Reference Re Canada Assistance Plan. The Supreme Court of Canada held that the establishment of the Canada assistance plan was valid action, and stated that federal spending power is wider than the field of federal legislative competence.

Constitutional expert Peter Hogg said this, which I think describes the state of law in the most pithy way:

the federal Parliament may spend or lend its funds to any government or institution or individual it chooses, for any purpose it chooses; and that it may attach to any grant or loan any conditions it chooses, including conditions it could not directly legislate. There is a distinction in my view, between compulsory regulation, which can obviously be accomplished only by legislation enacted within the limits of legislative power, and spending or lending or contracting, which either imposes no obligations on the recipient...or obligations which are voluntarily assumed by the recipient...

In other words, if the federal government is using its spending power to give money to an individual and imposing no obligations or conditions whatsoever on the recipient, the federal government is free to do so. It's only when it attempts to impose obligations or conditions on a province, a territory or an individual that it has to act within its legislative ambit.

● (1920)

Recent federal benefit payments to individuals using this power are the universal child care benefit, the Canada child benefit, the Canada disability benefit and the Canada emergency response benefit, CERB. You may know of and be interested in, perhaps, Monsieur Garon's view on this. When the federal government recently used its spending power on CERB, it was very similar—I would argue identical, in fact—to what's happening in this bill.

The federal government sees a crushing need, and they respond by developing a federal program. They say to Canadians, “You can apply directly to the federal government for money.” The federal government spends that money, and I didn't hear any opt-out argument from Quebec or anybody else. There was no question of constitutional jurisdiction there. There was not a peep. Why? It's because that's as it should be. That's the federal government doing what it should do.

I'm going to conclude by saying that dental care is primary health care. It's not a luxury. It's not an option. It's not secondary to health care.

Mrs. Goodridge gave this committee some very powerful words when she described the pain her child was in when the child was teething and they couldn't get access to Tylenol for children. Imagine that right now, as we speak, there are parents in this country with children who are five, seven, nine or 11 who are crying because they have dental pain and they can't afford to go to the dentist.

This legislation would, in a very quick way, get money out the door, with \$1,300 per child in the next 12 months. If necessary, we can talk about what that would buy, but we know that it would buy a checkup at the dentist. It would buy an exam. It would buy a set of X-rays. It would buy a cleaning and multiple fillings. That's what \$1,300 buys. We can have that money out the door as early as December.

In terms of working towards a national plan, this legislation simply describes to Canadians the intentions and the actions of this Parliament, and I'll conclude with this. By removing these words, we would actually be confusing and misleading Canadians, as opposed to telling them what this government is doing.

What we're doing is probably the single biggest expansion of public health care in this country in half a century, and I'm proud of that.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Davies.

We'll have Mrs. Goodridge, please.

Mrs. Laila Goodridge (Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Mr. Davies, for that in-depth conversation on your assessment of the division of powers and how that comes down, but it's not necessarily pertinent to this particular piece. A long time ago, when I asked my dad how he voted, he told me that he always voted for the politician with the shortest speech, so I've always tried to keep that in mind.

My question on this particular amendment is quite simple. It's not the same in English versus French. Why?

The Chair: Ms. Sauvé, do you want to help us with that?

Ms. Marie-Hélène Sauvé: Sure.

It's simply a feature of how the French and the English in the bill itself don't necessarily line up, but what it does, in effect, when reading the French and the English, is that it amounts to the same result.

The Chair: Next is Monsieur Garon.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon: Mr. Chair, it's always wonderful to have an NDP member give us a master class on the existence—it's recognized by certain courts—of a gap in the Constitution, a document that Quebecers never signed. What a delight, it's unbelievable. Quebecers will remember this.

While my NDP colleague was getting ready to recite the little lecture he'd memorized on constitutional law, he really should have been listening to me. What I said was that the bill before us relies on federal spending power and therefore this is as far as the federal government can go, even though we really don't like it and feel it's unacceptable. I said that was the content of the bill. If my colleague from the NDP—very respectfully, as he says—had listened to what I said, he probably would have agreed with me.

Let me clarify my argument. The two lines we're asking to strike out have no legislative purpose, they have a political and speculative purpose. We know that the purpose of this bill is to keep the Liberal-NDP deal afloat. It's an insurance policy to guarantee the Liberal majority in the House, and that flies right in the face of the mandate voters gave us last year.

I'm concerned that, from this day forward, in every bill that goes to committee and to the House, we will begin inserting lines from the NDP's political platform for next year, the year after that, the next election or the one four years after that, all to keep this government alive.

These are political and speculative lines, which is why they have no place in the bill. I believe my colleague totally misunderstood what I said.

● (1925)

[*English*]

The Chair: We'll have Mr. Doherty, and then Mr. van Koevenden, please.

Mr. Todd Doherty: I will apologize to my colleagues again. As I'm new to the committee, I still have a lot of questions with respect to the bill. I will go again on record to say that I can't believe we are moving forward so quickly with a piece of legislation that's going to commit, at minimum, \$10 billion.

I appreciate our colleague Mr. Davies saying that it's not a plan, because it isn't a plan.

The question I have is more on a technical aspect to our witnesses here. I can't remember the testimony from the ministers—forgive me for that—even though it was just an hour ago. Are first nations families eligible for this benefit?

Ms. Lynne Tomson (Associate Assistant Deputy Minister, Strategic Policy Branch, Department of Health): Yes, they are, as long as they meet the eligibility criteria. They are covered by NIHB. However, if there are expenses for which they are not covered under that program—which would be unlikely, but if it was to happen—and if they meet all of the other criteria, they could receive this benefit.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Okay, so then it goes back to my earlier comment regarding the fee schedule. Many first nations live in rural and remote areas where the cost for dental care is fairly high. It is an incredible barrier.

On a point of clarification, there is stacking allowed with this for first nations families. What they're getting from the NIHB, they can top up with this benefit. Is that correct?

Ms. Lynne Tomson: If they have out-of-pocket expenses for which they would have a receipt, again, as long as they have the other benefits, they can. This is similar to others who would have access to provincial—

Mr. Todd Doherty: I'm sorry to cut you off, but they don't do an attestation; they just have to have the receipt.

Ms. Lynne Tomson: Well, they would still have to do an attestation. There's the income threshold, and then there's the age of the child. There are all the other things. They have to give us the name of the—

Mr. Todd Doherty: The dental provider.

Ms. Lynne Tomson: Exactly.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Okay, thank you.

The Chair: Mr. van Koeverden, go ahead.

Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Milton, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm compelled to speak up a little bit on the direction of this conversation, specifically on Monsieur Garon and the conversation around the federal government's ability...its spending power. I would challenge the word "ability". Of course the federal government has that ability. They also have the requirement, the obligation, to support all Canadians, not just one province.

I'm an MP from Ontario, but I care about provinces that don't have a dental care provision and I care about the ones that do have a dental care provision, whether it's Nunavut, Northwest Territories or British Columbia. I was elected to support Canadians from every province and territory.

I'm not challenging any of your arguments, but I think that using the word "ability"... I think of it as an obligation to send money across this country and ensure that we are reducing inequality.

Second, the number \$10 billion has been thrown around a lot. Most recently, it was "at minimum" \$10 billion. I don't think those numbers are correct. I think it's quite a lot less. I think it's a maximum of \$10 billion over a long period of time, which includes a future that, at that stage, will give us a dental care bill. I'm going to look a little bit more into those numbers.

In addition to all of that, the main reason I am extremely supportive of this bill is that it will support Canadians in really tough financial situations right now, and it will ensure that they can go and visit the dentist when that might be a tough decision. It's expensive to visit the dentist, and they shouldn't have to choose between... We've heard members from other parties talking about having to choose between essentials like rent and food, and dental care is an essential. This will remove that from the equation.

Finally, every party in the House right now in this minority Parliament has an opportunity to contribute, and precisely zero people I talked to during the last campaign would say that they didn't want us to work together. We have an opportunity to work together and an obligation to work together. To continually suggest that this bill is just to keep the government alive or something like that is disingenuous. Canadians don't care about our partisan crap. They want us to get on with it and create programs that support them. This is an example of that. There are other examples of that.

Mr. Doherty, I know you're up next. You have a good idea. You contributed a lot to the conversation around mental health and suicide prevention. We work on that together, and I'm thrilled that we do. This is just one of those opportunities to work together for better outcomes for Canadians.

• (1930)

The Chair: Dr. Ellis, you have the floor.

Mr. Stephen Ellis (Cumberland—Colchester, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

Interestingly enough, my colleague mentioned working together. It's interesting that there is a guillotine clause in this bill. Obviously, we need to be here until midnight debating this without any significant number of witnesses from many stakeholders, which appears to be unusual in how we work together. From that perspective, it really doesn't make a whole lot of sense.

That being said, I had a question for the witnesses who are here. I think we heard specifically about the NIHB situation. If a family fits all the other criteria and they have a copay from their private plan, could they use the money to pay for that?

Ms. Lynne Tomson: Yes, as long as they have that receipt for which they have out-of-pocket expenses, they could apply for this benefit.

Mr. Stephen Ellis: So that's a yes.

Ms. Lynne Tomson: If they used it for dental services, that's a yes.

Mr. Stephen Ellis: That's great.

That's all I have, sir. Thank you.

The Chair: We'll have Mrs. Goodridge, please.

Mrs. Laila Goodridge: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I just want to clarify something. I'm really digging in here. Sub-paragraph 7(b)(iv) states very clearly:

who is not insured under a dental services plan and who does not have access to a dental care insurance plan obtained on the basis of the employment of the applicant, their cohabiting spouse or common law partner or any other person

I'm curious how that matches up with the answer you just gave to my colleague from Cumberland—Colchester. It states very clearly in black and white in this bill that they cannot apply for this if they have other insurance.

If the intent of the bill is to allow people to have the top-up, I believe that would probably require some major amendments, but as the bill is currently written, unless I am out to lunch—and perhaps our legislative clerks can assist us in this—I believe that the bill stipulates that that answer is incorrect.

The Chair: Just before you answer, I'd like to provide some guidance here.

We are now debating an amendment to clause 2. The question that you're being asked to answer is in connection to clause 7. In fairness, we've gone a bit away from where we should be. She has asked the question and I would ask you to answer it, but I raise that as a note of caution for everyone here. We will get to clause 7.

Go ahead.

• (1935)

Ms. Lynne Tomson: Mr. Chair, the first question was...as long as all of the eligibility criteria were met.

You're absolutely right. If you do have private insurance, you're not eligible for this benefit, but if you do have out-of-pocket expenses for which you have a receipt, and you have met all the criteria that are included—

Mrs. Laila Goodridge: I'm right, then.

Ms. Lynne Tomson: You are right. If you have private insurance, you cannot apply for this benefit. If you have out-of-pocket expenses for which you are not reimbursed, you could apply.

Mrs. Laila Goodridge: I'm still confused. I guess this is something that we'll get to when we get to clause 7.

The Chair: Actually, Mrs. Goodridge, it's my bad.

You said it was clause 7. It was actually subclause 7 within clause 2. You're entirely within your rights and I shouldn't have provided the guidance or intervened or interrupted or anything of the sort. You are absolutely on point and you should go right ahead.

Mrs. Laila Goodridge: I'm sorry. I thought I was right and then I got confused and very nervous.

I think it just points a few things out. The part that gets me concerned is when we look at the program that's in place for first nations kids specifically. Many of these kids have to travel long distances to see the dentist. In my riding, if a kid lives in Janvier,

they're travelling 150 kilometres each way to get to Fort McMurray or a few hundred kilometres to get to Lac La Biche. While they are covered under insurance for the cost of the procedure, there are a lot of out-of-pocket costs to be able to attend this.

I'm very confused as to whether those kinds of out-of-pocket costs for mileage would count for large rural ridings like mine or Mr. Hanley's, where a large number of people would have to travel to be able to get these services, or is it just for the service itself?

I think there's some importance in having some of this clarification because this will benefit, potentially, families in my riding, depending on how the answer comes out.

Ms. Lynne Tomson: There is a definition about dental care services and what that encompasses. It does not encompass the mileage, for example, that you used in your example. It is really meant for the services that a dentist, a denturist—that's probably less likely for children—or a dental hygienist is lawfully entitled to provide.

It goes on to explain that it could be for “oral surgery and diagnostic, preventative, restorative, endodontic, periodontal, prosthodontic and orthodontic services.”

Mrs. Laila Goodridge: I'm still confused, but I think we're going to have to move on.

The Chair: Mr. Shields, go ahead, please.

Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'll go back to the original amendment that we have, just for clarification from the sponsor of that first amendment.

Are we talking about this being an aspirational statement that you see being added on? This isn't an aspirational document. This is legislation, a bill, and this is not where an aspirational statement should be because that's not what the bill is.

I'm assuming that's what you're talking about, so with all of the conversations that are going on, you would like to see the statement ended it where it is because that's what this bill is. It's a plan for all of those conditions. They say 12 and under and those types of things. That's what the bill is. It's not a plan.

What comes after in that sentence is an aspirational statement, which is not this bill. What you're looking for would be the next bill they're going to bring, which says what the extension is and what the plan is. That would be that bill, not this one.

The Chair: Thank you.

[Translation]

Would you like to respond to that comment, Mr. Garon?

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon: Yes, Mr. Chair.

It's important to understand that right now we're focused on the legislative content of Bill C-31. My colleague got that right.

As the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health said, all the parties must work together, whether it's the NDP, the Liberal Party or the others. We must be constructive and work for Quebecers and for Canadians.

There's nothing stopping parliamentarians from doing their job. There's nothing stopping other types of policies related to this from being developed later on.

What's in here is the NDP's electoral platform, not what should be in the legislation. To be thorough, I think the two lines should be removed. We're not here to include speculative statements in the proposed legislation. The preamble serves to describe the content of the legislation in the simplest of terms, and these two lines should not be part of it.

• (1940)

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Davies, go ahead.

Mr. Don Davies: I have two interventions.

Like Mr. van Koeverden, I think that in terms of costs, it's important that we speak accurately. The budget tabled by this government allocated \$300 million to cover dental payments for the fiscal year 2022-23, and \$600 million for 2023-24, for a total of \$900 million. Recently, the Parliamentary Budget Officer issued a more refined analysis of that, where he cut that figure to about \$703 million. We probably will be under the budgeted amount, but really we're talking about \$700 million to \$900 million as the figure. That will pay for the two dental payments—\$650 per child in the two different time periods that can be applied for in the next 14 months.

In terms of Mr. Garon's recent comment, I don't see the word "NDP" anywhere in the preamble. It says, "whereas the Government of Canada recognizes the need to provide interim dental benefits for children under 12 years old while working towards the development of a long term national dental care program". There is no rule that I'm aware of that says preambles can't be aspirational and can't be descriptive. It's a preamble.

If you look at the very first sentence, "Whereas the cost of dental care services is of particular concern for Canadians", you see that's a political statement. There are people probably in this room, probably in the House of Commons, who don't think that dental care services are of particular concern to Canadians.

The preamble sets out a particular introduction to the legislation that's going to follow. I won't belabour this point, but, again, given there's been so much confusion about this bill and what it does and doesn't do, I think it's imperative that we say that this establishes an interim payment and the government is working towards a permanent dental care plan—and that's what the preamble says.

I think we should vote on it. There are obviously other issues, which we can get to, that are going to come up in different sections, but I think at this point...

I just want to say as well, Mr. Chair, I don't know about the numbering of this, but this is part 1, clause 2, the preamble. After this, we get into the short title, which is clause 1, and then clause 2, the definitions; and then we get into other sections. I do think debate at this point should be restricted to the preamble and the amendment

by my colleague. We certainly will get to the other issues that are very legitimate and have been brought up, but I don't think now is the right time to get to those discussions.

The Chair: Mr. Doherty, go ahead.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I have another question for Ms. Tomson.

If a family has insurance, but they max it out and they are in need of dental care, are they eligible for this at all?

Ms. Lynne Tomson: No, they're not.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. van Koeverden, go ahead.

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: Did Mr. Doherty want to continue?

Mr. Todd Doherty: Just with the NIHB, again, a first nations family with the NHIB is able to top up with that. Is that correct?

Ms. Lynne Tomson: That's correct—again, bearing in mind that you meet all the eligibility criteria and you do have a receipt for out-of-pocket expenses for what they're not covering. It's the same thing for provincial and territorial programs.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. van Koeverden, go ahead.

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would ask if any officials have any corrections about the costing of this program. I would welcome their input.

Further to Mr. Davies' intervention, the amount of \$10 billion struck a chord, and I just keep coming back to asking where the \$10 billion is, because I don't see anywhere we could possibly be spending \$10 billion with this. I looked at the PBO, too, and the legislative costing notes said there are \$703 million for one aspect of it, and \$940 million for the other aspect of it, which adds up to \$1.643 billion. It's the same amount of money approximately. That's the total over the course of the three years this would be in place. There's some of 2022, all of 2023, and then some of 2024. This is a two-year period that would be starting now. It's a one-time payment of \$500.

I suffer from the big numbers problem. That's an enormous amount of money. It sounds extraordinary. In May 2020, we unanimously passed a \$300 top-up to CCB, because everybody was in dire straits. It was a really challenging time. Lots of people weren't working and things were costing a lot of money. And that was more money; that was \$1.9 billion. This is an injection of money that is going to support Canadians who need it at a time when they really need it—and it's not \$10 billion.

If I'm wrong, I would love some clarification.

• (1945)

Ms. Lynne Tomson: [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] different reports, one on a dental care program, which is more extensive, and what you would imagine a dental care program could be. What just came out is for the benefit. The benefit is two cycles, two benefit periods, and the budget that the government has announced is \$938 million.

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: Thank you.

Just to clarify, we're not having any conversations about future and ambiguous dental care provisions tonight.

The Chair: No. It's not in the bill.

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: Thank you. That's all I wanted to know.

The Chair: Dr. Ellis, go ahead, please.

Mr. Stephen Ellis: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Just to be clear, and out of deference to what I'd like to say, I won't talk about the almost \$11 billion for the whole program. That being said, the deputy minister of finance has talked about throwing stones into a lake. I think we have to really understand here that we have a significant difference with respect to how we should be spending Canadians' money and when we should be spending Canadians' money. The deputy minister of finance would say we're throwing stones into a lake. Well, if you're throwing boulders into a lake, there's a good chance that you'll actually fill up the lake.

That's really the point here. It's about how much this government wants to continue to spend, which of course we all know is fuelling the inflationary fire as well. That's the real point here. "Let's spend a billion here and a billion there; here a billion, there a billion, everywhere a billion." That really doesn't make any sense to me. Those billions add up. I don't know that there's any billion-dollar money tree that exists out in the backyard behind Parliament Hill.

I think that's the difficulty and perhaps the entrenchment that we see. We have a significant difference in how we think we should be spending, and when we should be spending, Canadians' money. That's an important thing. Even the Minister of Health alluded to that today, talking about how people need to make good decisions about where and when they spend their money and how they spend it. That perhaps is a significant difficulty.

I just want to be clear on something. I know that this has been a bit belaboured, but what we're saying here is that in terms of all eligibility requirements being met with respect to salaries, age, etc.—this is just to be crystal clear—people who have a private plan will never qualify for this money, but people who are covered by their provincial plan and by NIHB will.

Do I have that right?

Ms. Lynne Tomson: You do. If you have access to private insurance—

Mr. Stephen Ellis: You're out.

Ms. Lynne Tomson: Well, you're not eligible.

If you have access to a public program, and NIHB is considered a public program—also, provincial and territorial programs are very diverse across the country, which I've been hearing about to-

day, with different coverage, different income levels and different elements that are covered—to ensure that there is more parity across the board, this would be eligible if there are out-of-pocket expenses.

Mr. Stephen Ellis: Thank you for that.

Just as a final point of clarification, if I didn't apply for my \$650 now—not me, as I know that I'm never going to get it, which is perfectly fine—or if a person doesn't apply this year, is there a carry-forward provision? I couldn't find that in there anywhere.

• (1950)

Ms. Lynne Tomson: There is a provision. If an eligible person didn't access it in the first year because they weren't aware, etc., they could apply in year two for the first-year period. That's in clause 7.

Mr. Stephen Ellis: Okay. I just didn't see it.

Thank you.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: You have the floor, Mr. Garon.

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon: I just want to raise a minor technicality, Mr. Chair. You know I'm new, so please be patient with me.

If I understand correctly, because we're currently debating the proposed preamble, which is in clause 2, that means clause 1, which is the short title, has already been adopted. Am I right?

The Chair: No, it hasn't yet been adopted. According to the established rules, we will do that at the end. We started with clause 2, but we'll come back to clause 1 later.

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon: Okay, I just wanted to make sure. Thank you.

[*English*]

The Chair: That concludes the speakers list for now.

Is there any further debate on BQ-1?

Seeing none, are we ready for the question?

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

The Chair: The amendment is defeated.

The debate now is on clause 2, unamended. Is there any discussion on clause 2?

Oh, I'm sorry. There's another amendment.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Garon, you filed a second amendment. Would you like to move it now?

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon: Absolutely, Mr. Chair.

I think everyone here respects parliamentary institutions. I think that's an innate quality, so to speak. One of those parliamentary institutions is the Office of the Parliamentary Budget Officer, which serves parliamentarians. Its role is to enable us to make better decisions based on facts and calculations made by competent individuals.

As you know, we've been working in a strange context here. Today we're debating a bill, but we're not even allowed to move amendments. In addition, we're not allowed to move new amendments after hearing witnesses. The least they could have done is let us hear from witnesses. However, as you know, something magical happened between Tuesday, when we decided to set aside six hours to hear witnesses, and today. Suddenly we no longer have any witnesses. We would have really liked to call the Parliamentary Budget Officer.

Bill C-31 was put together in a hurry, on the back of a napkin, with a certain lack of consideration for the parliamentary process, which we all claim is so important to us. We received the final numbers from the Parliamentary Budget Officer last Friday, after the deadline for submitting amendments. It's really quite simple: this is completely backward. As my grandfather used to say, this process is ass backwards.

You will see how what I'm saying rings true and how it relates to the amendment we're moving.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer told us that this bill leaves out a lot of Quebecers. I will reiterate what my honourable colleague the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, whom I respect, said, which was that today we had an opportunity to contribute, that we had a duty to work together. The Parliamentary Secretary told us that he was working for all Canadians, not just the people of Ontario who elected him. When he says all Canadians, that includes Quebecers. They would do well to remember that. About 130,000 of those Quebecers will be left out and won't receive the dental benefit.

To be honest, Quebec is being penalized for doing things well. We Quebecers are being penalized because, when it comes to Quebecers' taxes, we've made social choices, and we stand behind them. The tax burden is high in Quebec, after all, because we decided to fund a number of programs, including one for dental care. I'll say it again, it's not perfect coverage. It's for kids under 10. At the end of the day, 130,000 people in Quebec will be denied dental care because they already have public coverage. Moreover, these individuals already pay for these services through their taxes.

So, we're in an awkward situation. Sometimes we work too quickly and take shortcuts. I want to believe that we inadvertently forgot that Quebecers were going to be paying twice.

Having no respect for this principle puts public services at risk. Quebec is ahead of the curve. Nova Scotia has a generous program that already covers young people under the age of 12. What message are we sending to the Quebec government and the provincial governments when we tell them dental care is so important that if they have a universal program, they're going to be penalized. The day Ottawa steps in to make up for the lack of programs in other provinces, we will be paying double.

I like consistency, and I find that because it excludes Quebec and it penalizes Nova Scotia as well, by its very nature, Bill C-31 will hinder the provision of dental care services by the provinces in the future. Every detail of that has been well laid out by the Parliamentary Budget Officer.

In Quebec's case, that's about 130,000 people who will not be entitled to a benefit of just over \$500, but let's also look at Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. These are two neighbouring provinces with similar population sizes. The Parliamentary Budget Officer's document looks at the situation in detail. Nova Scotia, whose residents bear the tax burden of the province's choice to invest in a universal dental program, will receive \$5 million under the federal program. In contrast, the neighbouring province of New Brunswick, which made a social choice not to invest in the same program, will receive \$13 million. This is seen as an incentive to provide public dental care, but that's not right. If anything, the bill does the exact opposite of what it was originally intended to do.

• (1955)

There is a solution to this. From the federal government's perspective, how do you go about promoting public dental care while also accommodating what some provincial governments already have in place? I reiterate that some provinces already have an infrastructure and are able to provide dental care very quickly, without the hassle at the Canada Revenue Agency, without the need to be audited, without the need to submit invoices through the My Service Canada Account portal. I wouldn't wish My Service Canada Account on my worst enemy. Because you know that I like you, my colleagues opposite, I would not wish that on you. In Quebec, we already have an automated payment system.

Therefore, the solution is quite simple. If a province already has a program with similar objectives and is already providing the care, as is the case with Quebec and Nova Scotia, all you need to do is offer that province an opt-out and financial compensation equivalent to what that province would have received under the federal program. That's how you promote dental care. That's how you honour the responsibility that Quebec and Nova Scotia have taken up.

This is where my colleagues opposite will tell me that they have looked at all the programs in all the provinces and that some provinces have decided not to cover dental care. They will tell us again about the Beautiful Smiles Ontario program, which only covers urgent dental care. When you have a plethora of different programs, surely you can't introduce such a centralized law or measure without, at the very least, taking the time to sit down, properly list the provincial programs and figure out how to compensate them.

When we talk to colleagues opposite about the provincial programs, the funny thing is, they list off the worst provinces but they never sing the praises of Nova Scotia or Quebec. They talk about the Beautiful Smiles Ontario program and they talk about the provinces that have no coverage.

Strangely enough, it's almost like the administrative work to align the federal program and the provincial programs was done after the bill was drafted. It is almost like my colleagues opposite realized that this work had to be done after we read the document, completed our opposition work diligently and said that they were working against public dental care. That's no small thing: the NDP is working against public dental care. Its platform says the opposite, however. The Liberals are getting behind this to stay in power. It makes no sense.

We have a solution for this that's constructive, effective and respectful of the provinces and the principle behind the bill, which is to ensure that children receive a number of services. As you know, this kind of right to opt out with full financial compensation has to be negotiated. The federal government can call up the Quebec government—it has to find the telephone number first, of course—or the Nova Scotia government to ask them to enhance their program and provide services, if families and children are so important to them, and offer some compensation to those provinces.

I've said it before and I'll say it again, it's all about context. It's central to the delivery of care. It's not ideological or partisan. If we'd done exactly the same thing in the 1970s, which was to send cheques to people without talking to the provinces, without talking to Quebec, and telling them to use the money to go to a private sector provider, the NDP's legacy in Saskatchewan would never have happened. If they had done that, we would have no provincial public health care systems well funded with federal support. This is a long-term trashing of the NDP's historic legacy in Western Canada. Saskatchewan inspired all the other Canadian provinces to have public services. Those public services, which we are proud of, are provided day to day by Quebec and the provinces, like Nova Scotia, and they could be improved.

● (2000)

I appeal to all my colleagues: if it's important to you to have a dental care benefit that's quick, timely, effective and well funded, you will vote unanimously in favour of the Bloc Québécois amendment. A province that has a dental care or public insurance program for children with similar objectives to those of the bill—which doesn't recommend a service offering, by the way—must receive compensation equivalent to what would otherwise have been spent. If it's important to my colleagues, I'm asking them to support the Bloc Québécois amendment, since it's in the interest of all children in Quebec and Canada. This will allow us to provide quality dental care for years to come.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Garon.

[English]

Part 1 of Bill C-31 enacts the dental benefit act, which provides for the establishment of an application-based interim dental benefit for eligible Canadian children under 12 years old across all provinces and territories. The amendment proposes to add a new clause, clause 2.1, which allows provinces to opt out of the dental benefit program and to receive financial compensation for opting out.

House of Commons Procedure and Practice, third edition, states on page 770:

An amendment to a bill that was referred to a committee after second reading is out of order if it is beyond the scope and principle of the bill.

The document further states on page 772:

Since an amendment may not infringe upon the financial initiative of the Crown, it is inadmissible if it imposes a charge on the public treasury, or if it extends the objects or purposes or relaxes the conditions and qualifications specified in the royal recommendation.

In the opinion of the chair, the amendment is contrary to the bill's stated principle of creating a national dental benefit program, since there is no mechanism to allow any province or territory to opt out of the program. In addition, the amendment proposes to alter the terms and conditions for spending provided in the royal recommendation.

Therefore, I rule the amendment inadmissible.

● (2005)

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon: On a point of order, Mr. Chair. I'd like to share my opinion on your decision.

The bill's short title, Cost of Living Relief Act, No. 2 (Targeted Support for Households), has little to do with dental care. In fact, it doesn't mention dental care.

Based on the debate about the preamble of the proposed legislation and the fact that the first Bloc Québécois amendment did not pass, it's safe to assume that we're talking about the provision of dental care today.

I am, of course, debating the substance of your decision, Mr. Chair. In my view, the purpose of the program was supposedly—

[English]

Mr. Don Davies: I have a point of order.

You have made a ruling, Mr. Chair, that the proposed amendment is inadmissible. It strikes me that what Mr. Garon is doing, and I was arguing that point...

I ask whether or not that's in order.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon: Mr. Chair, I can assure you of the relevance—

The Chair: One moment, Mr. Garon.

[English]

Mr. Davies, I agree with you.

[Translation]

Mr. Garon, you really only have one option at this point. You can't debate the decision I just made, but you can challenge it if you wish. The committee will therefore decide if the chair's decision should be upheld.

Mr. Davies made a very good point: A decision by the chair cannot be debated. Your only option is to challenge my decision.

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I will take that option: I will challenge your decision and call for a vote.

[English]

The Chair: The ruling of the chair has been challenged and a vote has been requested. That's a non-debatable motion.

Therefore, the question for the committee is, shall the ruling of the chair stand?

(Ruling of the chair sustained)

The Chair: The ruling of the chair is upheld. Therefore, we are now ready to debate clause 2, unamended.

Go ahead, Mr. Davies.

Mr. Don Davies: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I have a very novel, unusual request here. I'm hoping that we can get unanimous consent regardless of what the rules are.

This is with great respect to Mr. Hanley. Under clause 4, on eligibility, in paragraph 4(1)(d), the last words are “plan established by the government of Canada or of a province”. I think that's just a drafting error and it should say “or territory”.

I'm just wondering. I think this committee has worked well on this to ensure the territories are included. I would just ask if we could have unanimous consent to add that word in both English and French.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon: On a point of order, Mr. Chair. We no longer have interpretation.

[English]

The Chair: Okay.

Do you now have interpretation?

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon: Yes, interpretation services have resumed.

[English]

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Davies has posed a question as to the fact that the territories are not included in paragraph 4(1)(d). I would like to refer the question to the legislative clerks or the officials.

Who wants to take that?

Go ahead, Ms. Tomson.

Ms. Lynne Tomson: I will ask my legal services to chime in here, but I believe that the term “province” does include territories. That's why it's not explicitly put in this bill. The Interpretation Act allows for that. It is included. It's just not explicit.

• (2010)

Mr. Don Davies: Thank you. I am content with that.

The Chair: Are there further interventions with respect to clause 2?

Go ahead, Mr. Shields.

Mr. Martin Shields: Are we doing subclause 2(2) on the definition of “adjusted income”?

The Chair: We are doing clause 2 in total, so if you have a concern over a specific aspect of clause 2, this is the time to raise it.

Mr. Martin Shields: On the definition of adjusted income, I see what you have listed here in referring to dates. I understand that adjustment is flexible, but I don't know what the definition of “adjusted income” is under the Income Tax Act.

Ms. Lynne Tomson: Mr. Chair, I will ask my colleague Gillian Pranke to answer that question.

Ms. Gillian Pranke (Assistant Commissioner, Assessment, Benefit and Service Branch, Canada Revenue Agency): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

For the purposes of the act, adjusted income has the same meaning as in section 122.6 of the Income Tax Act. It refers to the total of all amounts of income received for the year for the individual or the person who was the individual's cohabiting spouse or common-law partner, namely family, which is spouse, plus spouse/partner. It's income at a specific date based on the composition of the family at that date.

Mr. Martin Shields: Further to that, on adjusted income, in my simple mind I know what gross income is, what net income is.... In dealing with adjusted income, I can deal with adjusted dates in here. Are you talking about income in the adjusted dates?

Ms. Gillian Pranke: Mr. Chair, if I may, for the vast majority of citizens, the adjusted family net income represents line 23600 of the tax return. It's essentially family net income minus any universal child care benefit—the UCCB—and registered disability savings plan—the RDSP—income received, plus any amounts that were repaid. For the vast majority of citizens, it represents the family net income.

Mr. Martin Shields: You know, that would be a lot simpler. We all would have understood it. You've put “adjusted income”. That is not something that we are used to reading and saying. You've put in here something that is just not clear, whereas with “net income”, people would understand. I'm just saying, bureaucracy rules, and that one is just not clear. That's my opinion.

The Chair: Are there any further interventions with respect to clause 2?

Dr. Ellis, go ahead.

Mr. Stephen Ellis: Thank you, Chair.

In going along with that, is this a term, this “adjusted income”, that we can expect to see coming forward in more bills? Is this something new? Is “net income” passé now? I'm unsure as to the reasoning for creating a new term. Is this something we're going to see going forward from the CRA?

Ms. Gillian Pranke: Mr. Chair, it's a definition that's used in the Income Tax Act. As the Canada dental benefit is being pursued and it's linked to the Income Tax Act, the same definition applies.

Mr. Stephen Ellis: I think we're speaking different languages, but that's okay. I don't speak CRA.

I can speak doctor. I don't speak CRA.

An hon. member: I bet you can write doctor too.

Mr. Stephen Ellis: I can write doctor too.

The Chair: Are there any further interventions in respect of clause 2?

(Clause 2 agreed to)

(On clause 3)

The Chair: We're now on clause 3.

I believe that the Bloc has an amendment.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Garon, you may move your amendment.

• (2015)

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon: I'm sorry, Mr. Chair, I will need a few seconds because my papers are a little jumbled. Are my colleagues willing to give me a minute?

The Chair: Would you like me to suspend the meeting?

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon: Yes, please.

[*English*]

The Chair: All right, we will suspend for three minutes.

• (2015)

_____ (Pause) _____

• (2025)

The Chair: I call the meeting back to order.

When we left off, we were considering clause 3. Monsieur Garon was contemplating whether to move an amendment.

Monsieur Garon, you have the floor.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to thank all committee members for their patience. It turns out that in different versions of the bill, the line numbers were not listed the same way. Now that everything is in order, we can debate the amendment.

The bill provides one-time assistance with rent. This assistance is targeted to those who are considered low-income, most vulnerable, and for whom rent makes up a significant portion of their expenses.

Many provinces are experiencing a major housing crisis. That's the case in Quebec, particularly in Mirabel. I've had constituents still attest to that recently. The cheque will be welcome, but the fact is we're helping people only once. I believe my colleagues are having the same experience in their respective constituencies: People are talking about the housing issue.

There are all kinds of long-term solutions. Here, we're putting a little salve on a wound that's gaping in some places. That's the case in my constituency. Of course—

[*English*]

Mrs. Laila Goodridge: I have a point of order. Just because there are some complications with the numbering, I'm wondering if we could specify where we are at so that we can follow along.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon: We're on BQ-3.

Mrs. Laila Goodridge: Yes, I know, but what part of the bill does this amendment relate to?

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon: It's on page 17 of the bill, specifically paragraph 4(1)(g) of the proposed act. It reads as follows:

(g) subject to any of subsections (2) to (6) that apply in the circumstances, the total amount of the rent referred to in paragraph (f) is at least 30% of the applicant's adjusted income for 2021.

The first part of the amendment is to delete proposed paragraph 4(1)(g), as I just explained. In that case, a number of changes to the calculation method would be nullified because the calculation would be eliminated. So that's what's in the rest of the amendment.

I hope that answers Ms. Goodridge's question.

So I'll go back to what I was saying. Housing is important. I would say that this is the part of the bill that I welcome the most because it helps people in an extremely difficult situation.

Once again, targeted support is being proposed. I know that a Liberal colleague asked the Minister of Health about the virtues of targeted support. There is an inflation crisis, and we need to help people in a targeted way. The Bloc Québécois has been proposing targeted measures for the past year. We applaud the attempt to target support to those households that are struggling the most and need it the most.

The amendment deals with how that support is targeted. For a person to qualify for this rent assistance cheque, they have to meet a number of criteria, one of which is income-related, obviously income adjusted for the provisions. In the case of a single person, they would have to have an annual income of less than \$20,000, which isn't much; for a couple, it's less than \$35,000. There is an additional criterion, which is the percentage of income spent on housing. In other words, in addition to having to have an annual income below a certain threshold, the criteria require that at least 30% of your income be spent on housing.

This criterion could have an unintended effect. Let's compare the situation of two people, for example. Let's say the first person earns \$1 more in income than the second, but that income is just \$1 more than the allowable threshold. This person would not qualify for the benefit. But the second person, whose annual income is just below the threshold, will be able to receive the benefit and will end up with more money in their pocket in the end. But we're talking about people who really don't have much income.

Again, in the application of this measure as well, people will be left out. I say that very candidly, because I have hope that we can help people by passing this amendment tonight. I still believe in it.

In Quebec, we have a number of programs that are quite unique in the federation. Quebec is the only province that has permanent social housing construction programs. That's why negotiations on the national housing strategy took a long time. It had to be adapted to accommodate those programs. That said, that's not what we're discussing today.

However, because of these permanent programs, there are more people in Quebec living in housing co-ops or low-income housing. In the case of housing co-ops, people pool their resources. By regulation, to help these families, the cost of rent is capped at 30% of income, and in the case of low-income housing, it's subsidized by the Quebec government. In this case, too, under the regulations, you can't pay more than 30% of your income in rent.

We're doing this in Quebec to help individuals and families who need it most. We agree that this measure wasn't put in place to help wealthy households. An annual income of \$20,000 for a single person and \$35,000 for a couple is not a lot of money. Quebec has invested in these kinds of programs over time. I think that permanent social housing construction programs are a good model to follow, because we have to increase the housing supply. But the bill has the effect of setting people aside. Because they're paying exactly 30% of their income in rent, or maybe a little less, they won't qualify for the benefit.

There are already enough criteria as it is without adding more. No one around this table would want to be in the situation of a single person earning less than \$20,000 a year or a couple earning less than \$35,000 a year. That's already a fairly stringent criterion, targeting those who need the benefit the most.

● (2030)

Removing proposed paragraph 4(1)(g), which requires that the person pay at least 30% of their income in rent, would allow for greater inclusion, justice and equality. Again, it would recognize that it's legitimate for a province or for Quebec to decide to invest in social housing.

Sometimes there are differences of opinion on how to proceed. Still, after listening to Minister Hussen at the previous meeting we had today, I understand that encouraging the construction of social housing, so that we don't leave 100% or too much of it in the hands of the market, is something that is part of the Liberal government's agenda and something that the NDP feels strongly about.

Additionally, when it comes to helping people through a housing assistance benefit, we have to be as inclusive as possible. That's the intent of the amendment. I trust that all of my colleagues will be open-minded enough to consider it very seriously.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Garon.

[English]

Part 2 of Bill C-31 enacts the rental housing benefit act, which provides for the establishment of a one-time rental housing benefit for eligible persons who have paid rent in 2022 for their principal residence and who apply for the benefit. The amendment proposes to remove the 30% rent-to-income threshold set out in paragraph 4(1)(g) and referred to in subclauses 4(2) to 4(6).

As *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition, states on page 772:

Since an amendment may not infringe upon the financial initiative of the Crown, it is inadmissible if it imposes a charge on the public treasury, or if it extends the objects or purposes or relaxes the conditions and qualifications specified in the royal recommendation.

In the opinion of the chair, the amendment relaxes the eligibility criteria for the rental housing benefit, which would impose a greater charge on the treasury than is provided for in the bill, since more people could have access to the benefit in question.

Therefore, I rule the amendment inadmissible.

● (2035)

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon: A point of order, Mr. Chair. With all due respect, I challenge your ruling.

The Chair: Okay.

[English]

Mr. Garon has challenged the chair. That's a non-debatable motion.

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

(Ruling of the chair sustained)

The Chair: We are now back at clause 3. I believe there are further amendments to clause 3.

Ms. Kwan, do you have an amendment?

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): I do. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The intent of this amendment is to stop the reduction of the rent claims of only 75% of the total payment for individuals who pay an unspecified amount for board or other services. This reduction would, in my view, penalize individuals such as students, people in supportive housing and seniors who live in these kinds of arrangements. If the rent is \$1,000 and that includes an unspecified amount for utilities, let's say, the amount for rent the applicant could claim would only be \$750, for example.

There are those who are living in a room-and-board kind of situation. In that situation, they would not have full coverage, so I think that this 25% reduction is steep. From that perspective, I would like to make an amendment for it to become 90% instead of 75%, so that it's only 10% for utilities and such.

The Chair: I'm going to rule on the admissibility of the amendment, so if it's a point of order, Mr. Doherty, go ahead, but if you want to debate the amendment, can you just wait until I make my ruling?

Mr. Todd Doherty: I was just going to suggest that it's probably not admissible, given the previous one.

I'm not trying to take away your job there, Mr. Chair. I'm trying to help you out, sir.

The Chair: I can use all the help possible.

Mr. Doherty was clairvoyant.

Part 2 of Bill C-31 enacts the rental housing benefit act, which provides for the establishment of a one-time rental housing benefit for eligible persons who have paid rent in 2022 for their principal residence and who apply for the benefit.

The amendment proposes to modify, in subsection 4(2), the calculation of the 30% rent-to-income threshold set out in paragraph 4(1)(g) by increasing the percentage of the payment to be taken into account for rent payments that include board or other services from 75% to 90%.

As *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition, states on page 772:

Since an amendment may not infringe upon the financial initiative of the Crown, it is inadmissible if it imposes a charge on the public treasury, or if it extends the objects or purposes or relaxes the conditions and qualifications specified in the royal recommendation.

In the opinion of the chair, the amendment relaxes the eligibility criteria for the rental housing benefit, which would impose a greater charge on the treasury than is provided for in the bill, since more people could have access to the benefit in question. Therefore, I rule the amendment inadmissible.

Ms. Kwan, go ahead.

● (2040)

Ms. Jenny Kwan: With respect, Mr. Chair, I challenge you.

I challenge the chair on the ruling.

The Chair: There is a motion to challenge the ruling of the chair. That's non-debatable.

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

(Ruling of the chair overturned)

The Chair: The chair's ruling is overturned. The debate is on the amendment.

Mrs. Goodridge, go ahead.

Mrs. Laila Goodridge: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I guess we can see the costly coalition at work here.

I think this raises a really important question. If we have amendments that we have to submit in advance—and it is worth noting that we had to submit amendments before we even had an opportunity to hear from witnesses, which is highly unusual and I think is in contravention of the spirit of our democratic process here and the conventions we've established, but that is an aside—and you already have a pre-written piece saying that the amendment is not admissible, I am baffled as to why we even have the opportunity to bring forward an amendment that would be inadmissible based on the parliamentary practice and procedure manual.

This entire system is broken. This is not what Canadians expect when they elect us to come to Parliament and to provide the best possible legislation. This is being rammed through. We can tell that this is a predetermined outcome already. At least I can, from my vantage point on this side of the table. It is baffling to me that we are sitting here debating this, and yet a pretty common-sense amendment that was brought forward by our colleague Mr. Garon

wasn't even allowed to be debated. It was simply ruled out of order. I think this just goes to show that this entire process is an absolute sham.

If you guys have a predetermined decision as to which ones are going to pass or not, why don't you just give us the green marker as to which ones you're voting on and save us the trouble of having these debates?

The Chair: Mr. Doherty, go ahead.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Again, I can understand that there are people who could really use what Ms. Kwan is suggesting. My concern with this is purely procedural here. The Liberals and the NDP have just committed the government to spending more money without ministerial overview or permission, or was this already predetermined?

If I might ask our witnesses who are here, what does that jump from 75% of the payment to now the approval of 90%...? What does that financial figure look like? The Liberals and the NDP have just committed a further 15% increase in this benefit. That is a significant cost to the Canadian government, and we don't have ministers here to answer that question. Unless this is, again, already...unless the agreement was cooked before we all came and sat here for the last four hours.

I'd like to know whether the work has been done behind this because there is a significant financial cost to the government. It goes against your ruling and *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* on page 772.

Ms. Nadine Leblanc (Senior Vice-President, Policy, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation): The 75% threshold that was put in the bill is based on the Ontario energy and property tax credit, which has similar features around claiming rent payment. When it comes to boarding and other services, it does have a threshold of 75%.

When it comes to determining some of this data around the particular criteria at the federal level, it's quite limited, to be honest, because with Revenue Canada, as well as CMHC, we don't have visibility into how many people are claiming such rent and have such arrangements in their rent agreements. However, we do know that if you are increasing it from 75% to 90%, it will increase the number of applicants by default because you're increasing the rent level, which would increase the number people who are paying over 30% in rental expenses. By definition, if you're increasing the volume, you're increasing the costs. We don't have the precise number with us right now.

● (2045)

Mr. Todd Doherty: So, this hasn't been vetted. It hasn't been accounted for, and we're now signing the government up—not we, but members of this committee, the Liberals and the NDP, have gone against House procedures on this, committing the government to further dollars, a financial commitment.

Mr. Chair, perhaps you need to suspend so you can confer with the legislative clerk or whomever to see if this is even possible.

The Chair: I don't. This will go back to the House, and it will be for the House to determine what happens next, including the same question on which I just ruled, so the final word hasn't been spoken. The House gets a say.

Mr. Ellis, go ahead, please.

Mr. Stephen Ellis: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Oftentimes in committees, we're very concerned about committee time and committee resources and all those things. I guess I would like to echo my colleague's comments. Once again, as we saw at other times in this committee, if there's a predetermined route in how we're going to go, we're wasting much committee time here.

I was in the SECU committee just before we came here this afternoon. It was on the deaths of 23 Nova Scotians, and they were talking about how they didn't have enough committee time to even bring the ministers in front of the committee. Here we have predetermined outcomes already, and my smug colleagues across the way don't want us to continue to have debate, or they want to debate in some sort of sham—

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Stephen Ellis: From that perspective, I would suggest that this is—

The Chair: Just a second, Dr. Ellis. We have a point of order.

Go ahead, Mr. van Koeverden. Do you have a point of order?

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: The name-calling is totally unnecessary.

Mr. Stephen Ellis: Oh, wow.

The Chair: Go ahead, Dr. Ellis.

Mr. Stephen Ellis: Thank you very much. I really appreciate that.

That being said, I think that moving on with respect to the serious business we have in front of us of spending now perhaps more than \$1 billion, from the ridiculous perspective that we're unable to even have a debate here—that we're just wasting time in a committee—doesn't make any sense to me.

Once again, here we are. What kinds of games are we playing? We have no witnesses for a multi-billion dollar bill. We have the inability to even have the rulings of the chair respected. Is this really the type of parliamentary committee...?

I mean, I've said it once before, and perhaps I'll say it again. I thought we had a reasonably functioning committee here. This is utter ridiculousness with respect to this committee not being able to do its work. We have legislation now that has a guillotine motion. We have the inability to accept rulings of the chair. We obviously have difficulties in terms of what is right, what is left, and what is up or down. What are the rules of this committee? I guess that's the question that continues to be played out here.

From my perspective, as I said, if there really is a difficulty with committee time and all we're doing here is wasting committee time, I don't want to do that on behalf of Canadians.

I think we should be cognizant of spending \$1 billion. In my mind, \$1 billion is a lot of money. Now we're simply adding to the cost of this bill in a willy-nilly fashion, with rules that are being challenged on the floor—from one perspective. From the other perspective, it's "Well, no, that's fine. Let's go ahead and do it." Wow. Is that really what Canadians expect from the Liberals on this committee? Is that what your constituents expect from you? If it is, it makes no sense to me.

● (2050)

The Chair: Dr. Powlowski, go ahead, please.

Mr. Marcus Powlowski (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, Lib.): I think you clarified this earlier. If something needs royal recommendation, then however we vote here, it's still going to go back to the House. It needs support from the House before it goes into the legislation. Am I not right on that?

The Chair: That's correct.

Mr. van Koeverden, go ahead.

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: I don't have anything to contribute.

The Chair: Dr. Hanley, go ahead.

Mr. Brendan Hanley (Yukon, Lib.): Thanks. I just want to point out a few things.

One is bringing us back to the affordability crisis. I believe that there is some urgency to getting help to Canadians. We are in a crisis of affordability, and this is an opportunity to work together to move forward. I will point out that there were opportunities for anyone, any party, to bring amendments to this committee.

I also want to point out that, in this case, I think MP Kwan pointed out an area where there was an extra vulnerability. In changing the threshold from 75% to 90%, we have an opportunity, again, for that targeted intervention that Canadians need and I think are depending on us for.

I support this amendment. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Dr. Hanley.

Mrs. Goodridge, go ahead.

Mrs. Laila Goodridge: Mr. Chair, tonight I am thinking about my dad quite a bit, clearly because I'm going to share another one of the phrases he used to repeat to us all the time. It was, "A lack of planning on your part does not make for an emergency on my part." I understand the timelines that are related to this bill, but we had literally 11 hours discussing this bill. If this was such a key, pinnacle piece of legislation, the government could have introduced it weeks earlier. It chose not to. It chose to use a guillotine motion. It chose to allow us to have two hours of witnesses before the committee to study this.

I was looking up, just for my own interest, Bill C-11, which was almost verbatim to what it had been in the previous Parliament. It was studied in the previous Parliament. Parliament fell, and then it got brought back. It was allowed to have 80 witnesses come to committee. I think that perhaps that was a little excessive, but we were allowed to have two, and they were ministers.

Frankly speaking, I understand that there is a timeline, but this is a timeline that was fully within the control of the Government of Canada. It was fully within the control of the ministers who brought this legislation forward. Had the government House leader done his due diligence, he would have brought this legislation forward much earlier and we would have had an opportunity to provide more meaningful contribution to and study of this bill rather than be pushed into an absolute corner.

I'm sorry. I think this entire process highlights that this is broken. We're not even following our own Standing Orders. This is a sham and an absolute shame.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Doherty.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Thanks, Mr. Chair.

To Mr. Hanley's comment, as I said, there's no disputing that. I think that there are people who could probably use that, but we have seven people here. I've never been part of a committee doing a legislative review where seven people can commit the government to a substantial amount of funds, not even the minister.

I get that it has to go back to the House, Mr. Powlowski, but it's crazy that.... Here we are. Cabinet obviously doesn't have a say in this. The ministers are not here—unless this was, again, as I said, preordained and it's already been put in place and everybody knows, except for those of us on this side, what's going on. What a waste of time. All these people who are here could be at home with their families. Mrs. Goodridge could be home with her son.

Mrs. Laila Goodridge: I could FaceTime him.

Mr. Todd Doherty: You could FaceTime him.

Again, I hold out hope that we can have further debate on Thursday regarding this. I would ask, Mr. Chair, through you to our witnesses, that, prior to the further debate on this, the departments do the homework and can provide the members of this committee with the cost of the bump from 75% to 90% so that we can have an educated debate and discussion on this moving forward.

I'm blown away that seven people on a parliamentary committee can commit our government to a substantial amount of money, when our colleague from the Bloc had reasonable amendments but, for the very same reason, they were voted down, only because he's not part of the Liberal-NDP coalition.

It is going to be costly. I'm trying to take a reasonable approach to this, but clearly reason and common sense are out the door because the deal is done.

It's frustrating, because we are here to do a job. Canadians send 338 members of Parliament to do their job and to ask the hard questions, the tough questions, not to ram things down and not to have a false majority. It really is disappointing.

• (2055)

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Garon.

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon: Mr. Chair, everything is predetermined here. At least we know the Liberals were told how they should vote. This is a directive that comes from the top. Parliamentarians are physically present, but a higher authority has already decided when they should raise their hands or keep them down.

I would never reveal anything that was said in camera. That said, last week we agreed in public to hear witnesses for four hours, yet we haven't had any witnesses here today; the ministers don't count, because they're not answering our questions. By definition, a witness is someone who answers questions. We haven't had any answers today. So what has happened in the meantime? We're not allowed to say. In any case, we see that we haven't heard from any witnesses today. What has happened so that today we are debating an amendment that requires a royal recommendation?

I'm getting to the substance of the amendment, Mr. Chair. You'll see that it's relevant.

As we've said many times, the bill was poorly written. It's the result of sloppy work, done at the last minute, scribbled on a napkin at the end of the summer, when the NDP leader pouted and threatened the government that if there wasn't a dental program, they wouldn't support the government anymore and would end their deal. I can understand the NDP pushing because they have a fight to fight and they have every right to do so. The bottom line is that the work wasn't done well.

Let me explain what happened. First of all, we supported the principle of the bill. There are people who are familiar with the housing situation. I'm talking about people who represent housing groups or housing co-operatives, for example, and who deal with Quebeckers and Canadians in need on a daily basis. They probably called the NDP members to tell them what they thought. They were amazed at how poorly the coalition had done and how, after the NDP had fought for it, they had forgotten about the people who were struggling to find housing, the seniors and other categories of people.

As a result, today we are amending the rules. The bill already contains overly complex calculation methods. Don't tell me that the Liberal members, after consulting their cell phones, suddenly decided to vote in favour of the amendment. They received the text of the amendment several days ago. The decision comes from the top. My colleagues on the other side have made no decision; they're doing what they're told to do. That's what happens.

The chair first ruled that the amendment, because of its substance, required a royal recommendation. Then we voted to reverse that ruling, after which the Liberal member Mr. Hanley, whom I particularly like, said that it was because there was—in his words—an extra vulnerability. I find that frustrating.

For our part, we proposed an amendment specifying that this housing support left out some 87,000 Quebeckers. No one at that time said that it was an extra vulnerability. No one stood up or raised their hand to defend Quebeckers. No one has defended the Quebec model of social housing and low-cost housing, which allows us to house more people at a reasonable price. Why? Because the Prime Minister's Office told them not to support the Bloc Québécois to defend Quebeckers. The Bloc Québécois amendment would have allowed even more people to be included.

I understand the Conservatives' reasoning that this would increase spending, but this is one-time assistance. If we're going to help people, let's help the most vulnerable. The Parliamentary Budget Officer said that a ton of vulnerable and low-income people were being left behind. When I challenged the chair's ruling on my amendment, what did the Conservatives do? They just sat there. None of my colleagues dared look me in the eye. That's sort of a testament to their judgment, because it probably means that they're ashamed that they didn't stand up for Quebeckers.

Personally, I'm in favour of the amendment because it accomplishes a small part of what the Bloc Québécois amendment sought to do.

The NDP probably called the government, and it was decided to give in to cronyism, rather than provide universal assistance. That's where we're at today.

● (2100)

When we say that equity, justice, redistribution, social justice and access to housing are important values, we aren't giving in to cronyism. Instead, we're raising our hands to show that we're in favour of it. The resulting decision can then be debated in the House, and perhaps the approval of the two ministers in question will be required. In any case, we're raising our hands in favour of what helps people.

We are reduced to accepting this amendment. However, it must be made clear that this amendment will help fewer people, compared to the Bloc Québécois amendment, which would have helped more people and which no Liberal member showed their support by raising their hand. That is what we deplore, and that is what the Conservatives deplore, despite our ideological differences.

What are we doing in committee? We put forward reasonable amendments that took people's needs into account and that even reflected the spirit of the bill. Because the Liberals didn't receive an order from the top to vote in favour of these amendments, they decided to vote against the spirit of their own bill. In doing so, we are reduced to cronyism.

Do you know what? We're going to pass it anyway, because people are important to us. It's better to bring more of them into the fold than to forget all of them. However, we aren't happy with the result we are seeing today: we are reduced to cronyism. The chair's

ruling was overturned in order to adopt these amendments piecemeal. In fact, we wouldn't even be discussing these amendments if we had deleted proposed paragraph 4(1)(g), because the content of these amendments would now be null and void.

I must admit that this is a deplorable situation for anyone who has the public good at heart.

[English]

The Chair: Go ahead, Ms. Kwan.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I wanted to say, in response to the suggestions that, somehow, we're not following the rules at this committee with this amendment and the challenge of the chair, that it's simply not true. There's a procedure that we follow. Committee members will vote on it. The results will go forward accordingly.

In a different committee.... I don't normally sit on this committee, so I'm a bit bewildered as to how this committee normally works. I don't know if this is how it always works. In any event, this is my first time sitting on this committee. In the committee I sit on, which is the immigration committee, there have been many times when the Conservative members challenged the chair. Sometimes they succeeded and sometimes they didn't.

All of that is to say that it is within members' rights to do what they wish to do and then follow the procedures accordingly. Nobody is usurping the rules here. We are following the rules as they are.

Getting back to the issue at hand, the purpose of this amendment is.... In my community of Vancouver East, for example, there are a lot of people who pay room and board. Sometimes they're students. Sometimes they're seniors. Sometimes the amount they pay is not the 25% that is deemed in this legislation. What I intended to do was come up with a number that better reflects the actuality of how much they pay, so that more people would qualify. I will admit that I am trying to get more people to qualify. That is my sin here. I am trying to do that.

If the Conservatives don't like that and don't support it, which is exactly where they are, they're entitled to that and to vote against it, accordingly. However, to somehow suggest that I'm trying to usurp the rules, Mr. Chair, is offensive and it is just not true.

● (2105)

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Shields.

Mr. Martin Shields: Thank you, Chair.

Back when we first had a couple of amendments, particularly the second one from the Bloc, I understood what you said in the two rulings. Then the ruling on this one, when you ruled against it and then they voted for it, really caused me a problem. When I looked at their second one, where they talked about provinces and their objectives, in a federation there have been lots of opportunities.

Day care was the most recent one that I can remember, where the federal government said it wanted a day care program and then negotiated to have the day care program it wanted—the \$10 myth day care—out there across the country. It negotiated with the provinces.

Carbon tax is another one where you either get in this one or get in the federal one—and they did that. Policing works the same way. You can be in the RCMP or you can be out of it. You can negotiate that with the federal government. There are lots of them out there that are negotiated.

This one, too, didn't cost any more money. There was no money difference in this one. The one the Liberals voted for—and the NDP this time—was a money difference. I would understand the first two in the sense of how it went on the vote and why they said they supported that because it's a change of money. It wasn't a change of money. This one was a change of money. Of the three, the rationale for it didn't make sense.

That's where I have a problem with what's going on here. I would suggest that this has all been decided. Everybody knew what the ruling of the chair would be on each one of these ahead of time. They knew how they were going to vote, either for or against the chair on each one of these, before the meeting started.

It still doesn't take away from the fact that the rationale makes no sense, for the second one in particular. The first one I agreed with, but for the second one, we're in a federation. The Liberals as a party, in the things they have been implementing, have been working with partnerships, like with day care. With this one, they're not.

On the one you voted to overrule the chair on, you changed the monetary one on that one. It's going to go through. We're going to have a third reading in the House. You've been around here long enough to know this goes back to the House without asking that, and you'll vote on it. The NDP and Liberal bloc will get together and pass it. You know that.

Mine was with the rationale that it was pre-decided. You knew. I've been around long enough. The chair knows his ruling. He's seen these before. You've decided you're going to go this way. You'll vote for this one; you'll vote against that one.

Think about the Bloc's number two and what that means in provinces, in the sense that we're in a federation. You have just kicked the federation. I'm not talking about Quebec. I'm talking about the other nine provinces and territories. You just said that it's not important.

That, fundamentally, causes me a problem. We have a federal government that's willing to not work in partnership with the provinces, but becomes dictatorial. That's when you're going to face problems in this country. You're going to face them from more than one province. That kind of dictatorial decision-making is not how this federation works.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

• (2110)

The Chair: Dr. Powlowski, go ahead, please.

Mr. Marcus Powlowski: I'd like to respond a bit to that, in that there have been a lot of accusations that we're not following the democratic process.

The House was elected by all Canadians. It was in the House where all representatives from all the ridings in Canada voted on this. They decided to limit the number of days we had to do this. They're the ones who decided when the amendments had to be in by. It's not up to us 11 people, elected by people in 11 ridings, to make the rules for all of Canada.

Really, you lost your fight over in the House, not here. We are obliged to follow the rules given to us by the House. Rightly or wrongly, that is the democratic process.

As for changing and making amendments that have financial implications, again, that's a matter that requires royal recommendation. Again, that has to go back to the House. It can't be done by us.

I do believe we are following the democratic process, which certainly isn't unflawed.

The Chair: Mrs. Goodridge, go ahead.

Mrs. Laila Goodridge: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Yes, the costly coalition in the House joined forces and created a guillotine clause and forced their way through giving us a set of shackles here at this committee as to how we could proceed.

I think it is very unfair and disingenuous for Dr. Powlowski to say that it was them. "Them" is us. We are all members of Parliament who got to vote on that piece. We can't just pass off the buck. I'd be curious to know exactly how you voted. Wait, I already know how you voted. So you did vote for that guillotine motion. On this side of the horseshoe, we did not vote for the guillotine motion. But if you're so opposed to it, next time a guillotine motion comes up, you can vote against it.

I want to be exceptionally clear that what is being suggested by Ms. Kwan brings up some valid points. I think there are a lot of misconceptions when someone's rent includes room and board. What exactly is room and board? Room and board is not as defined by how much food it is and what meals it includes as it might have been perhaps 50 years ago. I think the substance of this amendment is actually a valid argument to be having and a worthwhile debate, because I know for many people their rent contract says they get room and board, but in actuality they might receive a continental breakfast and part of a dinner and no lunch. I do believe that there is some conversation that should be had around that.

However, the fact that we don't know what this cost is going to mean to Canadians, and that we're not going to have an opportunity to hear from the Parliamentary Budget Officer to see what the difference in cost is, I think just shows another space where this government would rather work in secret than out in the sunshine. It's said that sunshine is the best disinfectant, and yet this coalition is committed, in this bill, to removing as much sunshine as humanly possible and allowing this to stay in the shadows and darkness, as we're debating it, in darkness, at 9:15 at night.

The Chair: Mr. Doherty, go ahead.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Mr. Chair, if you will indulge me, I just want to speak to Ms. Kwan's intervention a few minutes ago.

Could you please read the standing order on page 772 and then cede the floor back to me so that I can explain what my argument is?

The Chair: It isn't really the Standing Orders, but on page 772, the passage that I quoted in my ruling was as follows:

Since an amendment may not infringe upon the financial initiative of the Crown, it is inadmissible if it imposes a charge on the public treasury, or if it extends the objects or purposes or relaxes the conditions and qualifications specified in the royal recommendation.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I was not saying, Ms. Kwan, that through your work you are somehow skirting the rules and skirting the issues. Where I took offence to this is that the amendment that you're suggesting will come.... Again, I think I said in my preamble that I'm not doubting that there are people in your riding or in my riding who could benefit from what you are suggesting. However, I fail to see how seven members of this committee can commit the government to this financial commitment that you're suggesting.

There will be more. You said the intent was to increase the eligibility, which means more people. I'm not disputing that there will probably be people who are doing that. I just fail to see how we, as a committee, can do that. It will have to be debated. Where I took offence to it was.... It was like the deal was already done. We just had three rulings previously—or two at the very least—for Mr. Garon under the exact same ruling as to why it was ruled inadmissible.

We know this is going to pass, or it has already. We'll have our day on Thursday. Where I took offence to it, again, was not.... It was not that you usurped the rules or bypassed the rules, as you suggested. Conservatives are not against people getting benefits. It was the fact that you and your colleagues across the way have rammed this down, and you committed the government without any

further discussion or any review as to what that cost is going to be for the government.

I've never seen a piece of legislation like this before, where this has taken place, in the seven years that I've been a member of Parliament. As a matter of fact, it's always been ruled out, as the chair—rightly so—ruled it inadmissible. That challenge would take place. Obviously, I think democracy took place at that time. We're seeing a little bit of a different bent now. So be it. We'll have our day in the House on Thursday, where we'll bring this up again. For Canadians who are listening in, I think we'll see that the deal is done.

Mr. Chair, we have three pages left to go on this. We already know on this side that any of the comments we're going to make are going to be voted against. I would just say that we leave it at this, and it's time to move on. We know that the deal is already done.

● (2115)

The Chair: Mr. Ellis, go ahead.

Mr. Stephen Ellis: Thank you, Chair.

Part of democracy is that we all get to have our say. There are rules to be followed—understood.

I think there are two parts: One is transparency and one is about the spirit of the rules. I'll speak to transparency first.

Even though we've talked a lot about perhaps seven people in this room making this decision, we know that's not necessarily the way it is. I don't for one second believe—and no disrespect to many of my colleagues on the other side of the horseshoe—that they dreamt this up and then suddenly said that this is a great thing just this evening: “We should actually support this. That's something I never heard before. Let's do that, and let's move forward as a group. Let's not even talk about it on our side. Let's just use our telepathy to understand that this is what we should be doing.” We all know this is not true, and that points back to the lack of transparency of the costly coalition as well.

We've heard before in the House of Commons about this great and transparent government, how they were going to be the most transparent government in the history of governments in the entire world. Once again, we know this is just not true. That's a falsehood, and I will say that.

There is no way that this happened this evening. There was no discussion on that side amongst them, and I don't believe for a second that they all have telepathy. I don't believe that. I could be wrong, but I don't believe that for one second, and I don't think they share their telepathy with Ms. Kwan. I don't believe that's true. I'm open to challenge on that. If any of you have telepathy, please let me know. I would like to speak to you about it, because it would be a neat superpower to have.

That being said, we know there's clearly a lack of transparency here. We know that the costly coalition, guided by the PMO, had input into this. As my great colleague pointed out, this was a foregone conclusion. I would suggest that this is, again, a banana republic that we're looking at—the foolishness coming up next. Please, indulge me and prove me wrong, and I would be happy to retract that. That's no issue.

The other part that is related is about the spirit or the gestalt of what we are to do here. I realize that there are rules. I get it. You like to bend the rules; you like to fiddle with the rules. However, clearly the gestalt of the whole thing—the idea, the spirit—is to understand that these rules should be applied justly and fairly and evenly. We, as parliamentarians, have an opportunity to partake in that in good faith, and to say, “Yes, that makes sense” or “You know what? I haven't done a clause-by-clause review before.”

When the chair brought forward the big book of words, as we might say, and said that this was important, that we can't be meddling with a bill that the government has said is a priority, and how much we're going to pay for it—which we already talked about almost ad nauseam—my colleagues across the way were saying, “Oh, well, it's not that much money.” Well, guess what. If you continue to add to it, your little tiny snowball, as it rolls down the hill, is going to run over your VW Beetle at the bottom. It started off as a snowball that you want to throw at each other, and now we're continuing to add to it willy-nilly, outside the spirit of everything we're here to do. I find that very frustrating.

Yes, I understand: You have your say. You can take it back to the House. You can do this; you can do that. That being said, it's outside the spirit of what we're actually called to do here. What regulations exist to guide us in the deliberations that we have? This is an utter travesty.

Again, it's a sham. It's ridiculous. I think that continuing on in this nature, as I said previously, is an utter waste of House time and resources that we continue to want to talk about being held so dear. I can't believe that my colleagues, with whom we have bargained in good faith—and I thought we were doing great work in this committee previously—continue to be disappointing in their approach.

Obviously, there's a scorched-earth approach, “my way or the highway” or whatever euphemism you'd like to use. That is where we are in this committee, and that is a shame. It's a darn shame. We're lacking transparency. We're lacking the spirit of the rules. When we get to that point, I am unsure of how to move back from the precipice in terms of moving forward as a committee.

I think that should weigh heavily upon my colleagues on the other side of the horseshoe.

● (2120)

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Go ahead, Dr. Powlowski.

Mr. Marcus Powlowski: I don't think we're at a precipice. I think this isn't just a democratic process; this is policy-making in general.

My administrative law professor in law school, Professor Janisch, whom I had a lot of respect for, once said that, if you want

in on policy-making, you have to be in early. Don't come once everything is done and want to change things. I think that's true.

Now that this bill has come to us, it's obviously gone through a lot of people, through a whole democratic process already before. It's hard to stop a train that's going full bore and all of a sudden pull the switch on it. That's the reality.

I would say, though, in response to where the democratic process is, that where we can add most to the democratic process is when we have studies and we look into issues, like the health care shortage, and when we're there early and we are part of the early decision-making process. We all have input at that point.

I would also say the things you're saying here, and some of the points.... I'm sad that Mr. Garon is going. What he had to say about having a provincial opt-out made some sense to me.

The democratic process isn't just about this bill, which has already obviously gone way down the road. Part of the democratic process is that the things you say here don't necessarily fall on deaf ears. Perhaps our words aren't totally lost, and we're not just wasting our time here, I would suggest.

● (2125)

The Chair: Ms. Kwan, you're next.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Yes, I have a very quick comment, through you, Mr. Chair, to Mr. Doherty.

It wasn't him who said that what I had done is a sham; rather, it was his colleague Mrs. Goodridge.

Notwithstanding, I think that the rules are being followed here by all members. That—

Mrs. Laila Goodridge: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

I, in no way, shape or form, said that—

The Chair: It's a point of debate, Mrs. Goodridge; it's not a point of order. You're arguing with the submission. If you put your hand up, you'll get a chance to make a full response.

Go ahead, Ms. Kwan.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I don't want to prolong this debate. Suffice it to say that this is a process that's afforded to all members of Parliament at this committee. I followed that process. The matter will be referred to the Speaker of the House, and we will see how things unfold.

The government, the minister, will have a chance to look at these amendments. Then they will be able to make a determination. Ultimately for it to go through, it would require a royal recommendation. I am hopeful that some of these things can go through.

You know, Mr. Chair, like so many things we do.... I still remember that back in 2015, when I first came to the House as an elected member of Parliament, the first bill was an immigration bill. I never thought in a thousand years, as an opposition member in a majority government, that I would be able to move an amendment to a government bill, Bill C-6, on immigration. That's exactly what I was able to do. I was floored. I had a say in democracy with some hope that, in opposition, we can make change.

This is what I'm trying to do here now.

The Chair: We have Mr. Doherty, and then Mrs. Goodridge.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I won't keep this any longer, other than to say that your amendment to that bill, Ms. Kwan, probably didn't commit the government to millions upon millions of dollars. It may have, I don't know, but I'll leave it at that. I think I've been very clear on the record as to where I stand with this. I think it's a reasonable amendment. I just don't believe it's for us to do that. I think it's for the minister and cabinet to make those decisions to commit the government.

Through you, Mr. Chair, I just want to ask our witnesses here if they would be able to get us the information on any projected increases in this and what the potential cost could be moving from 75% to 90%, and by what time.

Thank you.

Ms. Nadine Leblanc: Mr. Chair, we will get that information by the end of this week.

Mr. Todd Doherty: If at all possible, Ms. Leblanc, as we're set to start debating this again on Thursday, could we have it potentially on Wednesday night?

Ms. Nadine Leblanc: We will commit to having it by Wednesday night. I just want to reiterate that it is a very subset component that we're talking about. We do believe that the cost will not be substantial. It will be modest. I just wanted to point that out. That was not a question posed, but I wanted to clarify and we will provide that information.

The Chair: Mrs. Goodridge, did you wish to intervene?

Mrs. Laila Goodridge: Yes, and I apologize for my previous point of order that was actually a point of debate. I was not calling what Ms. Kwan was doing a sham. I was simply stating that given the predetermined outcome of the costly coalition between the NDP and the Liberals, who have already determined which amendments they will even allow to have debate and conversation on, this overall bigger-level process is a sham and is broken. I stand by those statements. I was not referring to the specific amendment or the actions of Ms. Kwan. This is much larger. This is the costly coalition's actions at play here.

It's terrifying to me that we are asked to vote on an amendment without having any understanding as to what the costing of this amendment is. I think it is absolutely inappropriate to ask parlia-

mentarians to just trust that we're going to get numbers by Wednesday night. We as parliamentarians are supposed to do our due diligence. How can we in a reasonable space vote for an amendment that we know is going to add cost to the taxpayer, but we don't know how much cost it's going to add? Are we talking about \$5 million? Are we talking about \$5,000? Are we talking about \$50 million? We have no clue. We can't even get a general estimate.

I don't blame the officials here. That goes beyond what would be expected because this was an amendment that was out of scope, so I would assume they probably did not prepare for amendments that were known to be out of scope. It is unfortunate that we're in this position here, debating a space on pieces that we just don't have all of the information to be debating.

• (2130)

The Chair: That exhausts the speakers list. Is there any further debate in connection with NDP-1?

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

The Chair: Colleagues, bearing in mind that we are not allowed to debate after 12 o'clock, I would like the direction of the committee on whether this might be a good spot to take a break for 15 minutes. If you're concerned with losing 15 minutes of debate, we can plow on, but if not, how do people feel about taking a break of about 15 minutes now?

There's no consensus. We're on NDP-2.

Ms. Kwan, do you have another amendment in connection with clause 3?

Ms. Jenny Kwan: I do. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Hopefully I won't take too much of the committee's time.

On this amendment.... As the current legislation is written, the legislation assumes that all cohabiting partners have an income and are equally contributing to rent. I fear that this would penalize individuals who are paying larger portions of rent in their circumstances. For example, if only one spouse has an income and is paying 100% of the rent, and the other is not, under this provision they would only be able to claim 50% of their rent.

I think it would be better to change the language to reflect the actual total amount of rent paid by the applicant. Therefore, it's actually a reflection of how much they paid, as opposed to a decision of the 50% number. That's what my amendment speaks to, Mr. Chair, and I would move this amendment.

The Chair: Part 2 of Bill C-31 enacts the rental housing benefit act, which provides for the establishment of a one-time rental housing benefit for eligible persons who have paid rent in 2022 for their principal residence and who apply for the benefit.

The amendment proposes to eliminate, in subclause 4(3), the rule that would reduce the amount of rent taken into account in the calculation of the 30% rent-to-income threshold, set out in paragraph 4(1)(g), paid in 2022 by cohabitating spouses or common-law partners living separately on the reference day.

As has now become common in today's meeting, I am going to cite *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition, page 772. It reads:

Since an amendment may not infringe upon the financial initiative of the Crown, it is inadmissible if it imposes a charge on the public treasury, or if it extends the objects or purposes or relaxes the conditions and qualifications specified in the royal recommendation.

In the opinion of the chair, the amendment relaxes the eligibility criteria for the rental housing benefit in a manner that would result in a greater charge on the treasury than is provided for in the bill, since more people could have access to the benefit.

I therefore rule the amendment inadmissible.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: I will challenge the chair on that one.

The Chair: Ms. Kwan has challenged the chair. That is a non-debatable motion.

The question for the committee is whether the ruling of the chair should be sustained.

(Ruling of the chair overturned)

The Chair: Therefore, the debate is now on NDP-2.

Mr. Doherty, go ahead.

• (2135)

Mr. Todd Doherty: I'm going to spare everybody. I think you heard the arguments that I had for the last hour on the last one. I'm going directly to our witnesses to ask if they could give us the estimated financial cost for moving this from 50% to 100%, if at all possible by Wednesday evening.

Thank you.

Ms. Nadine Leblanc: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I can answer the question, but we can also commit to providing—

Mr. Todd Doherty: Oh, you have it. Okay.

It extends the eligibility, potentially, doesn't it?

Go ahead.

Ms. Nadine Leblanc: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

In our calculation of the 1.8 million low-income renters who would be eligible for this program, it includes people who paid their rent. That change would not have an impact on the cost, unless somebody would directly or indirectly falsify their attestation. That remains a risk to the attestation process.

The Chair: Dr. Ellis, go ahead.

Mr. Stephen Ellis: Thank you, Chair.

I guess to the witness's comments, this is an absolute unknown. There's no way to understand who's going to say, "I paid 63% and you paid 37% of the amount." There's absolutely no way to figure

this out. For our witnesses to say that it's not going to add to it... They have no idea. There's no way to figure that out. Nobody knows what evil lies in the hearts of men. When you think of it that way, people can say whatever they want. I realize it's an attestation. I understand that point, unless I'm missing something here with respect to this amendment. If I am, please enlighten me. I'd love to know.

Ms. Nadine Leblanc: Mr. Chair, there is a check and balance through an upfront validation and through the attestation process, as well as some audit and compliance steps to this program.

I will pass it over to my colleagues at CRA should we want to hear more around that.

The Chair: Is there anything to add from CRA's perspective?

Ms. Gillian Pranke: Mr. Chair, I'm happy to respond to questions specifically regarding validation, but I have nothing further to add based on the response from my colleague from CMHC.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Kwan, go ahead, please.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I think Ms. Leblanc really spoke to that, because in other parts of the bill, there are provisions for verification with the attestation process and CRA random checks or spot checks or however they do the checks. All of those measures are still in place.

All this provision does is that, instead of coming up with an arbitrary number of 50%, it reflects the actual amount of rent that people paid. That's all. There's nothing untoward about that. It's just to say that the benefit should reflect what people actually paid. That's it. There are no secrets.

The Chair: Mrs. Goodridge, go ahead.

Mrs. Laila Goodridge: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Ms. Kwan.

I think having an amendment that stipulates that you can only get what was paid is a reasonable space to be in, but it comes back to how this could potentially change the overall cost to government. I wish we had full financial information that we could be basing our decision on.

While I believe the intent is very clearly good, any time you're dealing with attestations you're opening yourself up to some abuse and to some potential where people can fall somewhere in the middle. That's always a spot that makes me a little bit leery, but I won't belabour that point.

The Chair: I see no further interventions requested. Therefore, are we ready for the question on NDP-2?

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

The Chair: Ms. Kwan, do you have a further amendment to clause 3 of the bill?

• (2140)

Ms. Jenny Kwan: I do. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

The next amendment I would like to move is to change the application period from 90 days to 120 days. I just fear that 90 days is a very short time frame for people to make an application.

Earlier I asked the ministers about the process and what they intend to do to notify people. For example, in my riding, Vancouver East, I fear that I have a great number of seniors who are not necessarily technology-literate or even able to access technology, so they rely on a lot of help from the community and volunteers to help them do all kinds of stuff, including getting their taxes done and what have you. I also fear that there are individuals who may have a language barrier in getting the information and then understanding how to go about applying for this benefit.

I think extending the period of time so that it gives more time to make that application would be beneficial to the community. To that end, I am making the amendment to change the 90-day period to 120 days, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: I'm sure everyone here will be pleased to know that the amendment is in order. The debate is now on the amendment.

Mr. Ellis, go ahead.

Mr. Stephen Ellis: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I guess the question I would have for the witnesses is this.

Obviously, every bill has built into it the necessary difficulty that many people won't apply for the benefit. I guess I'm wondering this: What is the number that would normally be used to understand how many people might not apply for the benefit—whether they don't know about it, care about it, think about it, or whatever the reason might be?

Of course, adding days to that time will add more people. Again, we are adding, potentially, to the cost of this bill. Is there an estimate from our witnesses about that?

Ms. Nadine Leblanc: We are estimating that there will be a 95% pickup on this program, so that is built into our current numbers.

Mr. Stephen Ellis: Just to be clear, you're saying that the original estimate for a 90-day period is 95%. Do you have an estimate that this is going to change that, or is this just something we shouldn't even bother with? If it's not going to change it, why are we amending it?

Ms. Nadine Leblanc: Extending the period will allow Canadians to get their income tax filed for this period, and allow Canadians to access this program for a longer period of time. Again, we believe there would be a 95% participation rate in this program, and our numbers—the 1.8 million—include everybody who would be eligible for this program.

Mr. Stephen Ellis: Your cost estimates were for 100%, if I understand you correctly.

Ms. Nadine Leblanc: They were for 95%.

Mr. Stephen Ellis: Maybe you're misunderstanding what I am saying. If we're creating an amendment, and the idea or the spirit behind the amendment is that more people will be able to apply,

does that change your 95% to 95.2%, 96.8%, 99% or 100%? Where are we?

If it doesn't change it, why are we even bothering with it?

Ms. Nadine Leblanc: Thank you for the question.

The 95% was based on the overall population of the 1.8 million. Extending it would allow more people a chance to file their income taxes in due course.

Mr. Stephen Ellis: How many more?

Ms. Nadine Leblanc: I would have to provide this number by Wednesday—if that number is changing.

Mr. Stephen Ellis: Thank you.

The Chair: Seeing no further interventions, are we ready for the question?

Go ahead, Mr. Doherty.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Mr. Chair, my question to you would be whether you see any infringement on the financial authority of the government through this if we're going to increase it. Would you rule this inadmissible?

Again, I'm just asking for the chair's ruling on that. Would it be inadmissible, because there could potentially be another financial cost?

• (2145)

The Chair: I don't. If I did, I would have ruled it inadmissible, but I don't.

Go ahead, Ms. Kwan.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Maybe I can jump in on that.

Based on the answer from Ms. Leblanc, I think one assumption that a person could make is that the government's projection of 95% of the population who qualify and who would apply within the 90-day period might be a high estimation. It may be that 95% would not make it, so giving a 120-day period for people to apply may well mean that 95% of the people would be able to make it. Maybe it will be 96%. I don't know.

I think the estimation is already a very robust number. I fear that 90 days means that some of those seniors I talked about and some of those people with language barriers would not make it into the 95%.

That's perhaps the reason there is little implication in terms of additional cost. It's possible. I don't know.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Doherty.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Thank you, Ms. Kwan and Mr. Chair.

I am not disagreeing with Ms. Kwan. As with the previous ones, all I am saying is that there should be a financial consideration, regardless of the fact that this committee cannot impose upon or infringe upon the government.

Again, we know this is going to pass, so we should go to the vote. We'll have the discussion, hopefully, and the witnesses can provide us with details on 90 days and 120 days.

It's the reason I brought it up when the minister was here. What happens if somebody misses it or isn't able to get their application in within the 90 days? It makes perfectly good sense in terms of getting your tax return back or filing it and, hopefully, getting it back in time to be able to apply for this.

The Chair: Go ahead, Dr. Hanley.

Mr. Brendan Hanley: Thanks.

I don't profess to have technical knowledge on this, but I suspect the 95% target is the same.

However, as Ms. Kwan says, it allows individuals greater time to get to that same end. If there is an analogy that resonates with Dr. Ellis, I think it would be like vaccine uptake. There are only so many people who will come forward—5% probably will not—but it gives those individuals more time to get to that goal.

The Chair: Seeing no further interventions, are we ready for the question? Shall NDP-3 carry?

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

The Chair: Ms. Kwan, do you have a further amendment to clause 3 of the bill?

Ms. Jenny Kwan: I do, Mr. Chair. Seeing as I'm on a roll, let me give this one a try.

I asked the minister earlier about potentially extending this program beyond this year, in the anticipation that the cost of living will continue to increase and people will continue to struggle with their ability to make ends meet. To that end, the intention of this amendment is to allow the minister to issue another payment after the application period to provide additional support to Canadians who need assistance without going through the legislative process.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Kwan.

Part 2 of Bill C-31 enacts the rental housing benefit act, which provides for the establishment of a one-time rental housing benefit for eligible persons who have paid rent in 2022 for their principal residence and who apply for the benefit. The amendment proposes, in clause 3, to add a new section, section 6.1, which would allow for the new rental housing benefit to be paid out in more than one year.

As *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition, states on page 770:

An amendment to a bill that was referred to a committee after second reading is out of order if it is beyond the scope and principle of the bill.

The document further states on page 772:

Since an amendment may not infringe upon the financial initiative of the Crown, it is inadmissible if it imposes a charge on the public treasury, or if it extends the objects or purposes or relaxes the conditions and qualifications specified in the royal recommendation.

In the opinion of the chair, the amendment goes beyond the scope of the bill, which only provides for a one-time payment of the rental housing benefit. In addition, by providing subsequent payment, the amendment would impose a greater charge on the treasury.

Therefore, I rule the amendment inadmissible

• (2150)

Ms. Jenny Kwan: I challenge the chair.

The Chair: Ms. Kwan challenges the chair.

The question for the committee is whether the chair's ruling shall be sustained.

(Ruling of the chair sustained)

The Chair: The chair's ruling is sustained.

Seeing no further amendments to clause 3, the question is now on clause 3 as amended by NDP-1, NDP-2 and NDP-3.

(Clause 3 as amended agreed to on division)

(Clauses 4 to 7 inclusive agreed to on division)

The Chair: Shall the short title carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

An hon. member: On division.

The Chair: Shall the title carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

An hon. member: On division.

The Chair: Shall the bill as amended carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

An hon. member: On division.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Shall the committee order a reprint of the bill as amended for the use of the House at report stage?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Thank you very much, colleagues.

Thank you to all of our officials for their patience in sitting into the evening.

To the legislative clerks, the procedural clerks and the good folks from the Library of Parliament, we very much appreciate your service to the committee and your patience in sticking it out.

Is it the will of the committee to adjourn?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: We have consensus. The meeting is adjourned.

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