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Chair: Mr. Robert Morrissey



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

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• (1835)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Robert Morrissey (Egmont, Lib.)): I call the meeting to order. The clerk has advised that we have a quorum, and the witnesses have been tested.

Ms. Ya'ara Saks (York Centre, Lib.): Chair, I know we're about to start with the witnesses, but if it's possible, I'd like to move a quick motion about the timelines for the submission of amendments, if I may.

The Chair: Okay. If you can let me formally get into the meeting, I will come to you.

Welcome to meeting number 60 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities.

Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format, pursuant to the House order of June 23, 2022. Therefore, members are attending in person and virtually using the Zoom application.

To ensure an orderly meeting, I would like to make a few comments for the benefit of the witnesses and members.

Before speaking, please wait until I recognize you by name. For those participating virtually, please use the "raise hand" function. Before speaking, click on the microphone icon to activate your own mike. For those in the room, if you wish to speak, please raise your hand. Your microphone will be controlled by the proceedings and verification officer. The clerk and I will manage the speaking order.

You may speak in the official language of your choice. Interpretation services are available. If there is a loss of interpretation services, please get my attention by raising your hand. We'll suspend while it is being corrected.

I would like to remind all participants that screenshots are not allowed to be taken and are not permitted.

Should any technical issues arise, please get my attention by raising your hand. We'll suspend while they're being dealt with.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) and the motion adopted by the committee on Friday, February 3, 2023, the committee will continue its study of Bill C-35, an act respecting early learning and child care in Canada.

I would like to inform all members that the witnesses appearing virtually today have completed the technical tests to check their connectivity and equipment.

I would like to welcome our witnesses to begin our discussion with five minutes of opening remarks, followed by questions. I'll introduce the witnesses, and then I'll go to Ms. Saks.

In the first hour, we have Julie Bisnath, program coordinator. We have from the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada, Alain Dupuis, executive director, and Jean-Luc Racine, representative. From the Fondation Lucie et André Chagnon, we have Dr. Christa Japel, representing on screen, and we have Fannie Dagenais, director, but we're still working out communications issues.

Before I get you to begin your five-minute comments, I will go to Ms. Saks.

Ms. Ya'ara Saks: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I believe the clerk has received what I have and that it's in order.

For the case of housekeeping, we lost two meetings because of the budget and the visit of President Biden. Making sure that we're moving along well, I'd like to propose:

That amendments be submitted to the clerk of the committee in both official languages no later than 1:00 p.m. EST, Tuesday, April 11 2023; that the clerk of the committee write immediately to each member who is not a member of a caucus represented on the committee and any independent members to inform them of the study of Bill C-35 by the committee and to invite them to prepare and submit any proposed amendments to Bill C-35 which they would suggest that the committee consider during the clause-by-clause study of the Bill; and the committee begin clause-by-clause consideration of the Bill on April 18, 2023.

The Chair: Mr. Clerk, is it in order?

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. David Chandonnet): Yes. I distributed it.

The Chair: It was distributed. Is there any discussion?

Go ahead, Ms. Gray.

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I wonder if we can recess for a couple of minutes, so that we can have a look at the motion and see how this is different from what the timeline currently is?

The Chair: Yes, we can suspend for three minutes. Is that fine?

Mrs. Tracy Gray: It's unfortunate that this is taking witness time, but since this just came in, we need to look at it.

The Chair: Sure.

We'll suspend for three minutes.

● (1835) _____ (Pause) _____

● (1840)

The Chair: We'll resume.

The committee has before it a motion that's deemed in order.

Is there any discussion on the motion before the committee?

Ms. Saks.

Ms. Ya'ara Saks: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

This was presented more as a friendly motion to keep the train moving, per se. If you look at the timeline of April 11, you see that gives members a week to really sit and digest the information and be well prepared, so that when we come back we can do the important work that needs to be done on the clause-by-clause. It's just in light of the fact that time got eaten up between the budget and President Biden.

Usually there's one motion that tracks out the timeline on this, and we got a little lost in the shuffle. This was just an effort to put us back on track, so that we can get to the important work of going through the legislation.

The Chair: Ms. Ferreri.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC): I'm happy to discuss this motion further, but right now what I would suggest is we move to adjourn this motion so we can get to the witnesses.

We can talk about this at committee business. I don't want to waste the witnesses' time.

The Chair: Let's be clear on your motion. Is it to suspend debate on the motion and resume with the committee?

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: That's right.

The Chair: I have to call a vote on that.

Ms. Ya'ara Saks: We can call the vote, Chair.

The Chair: Yes.

Just so we're clear, we're calling the vote to suspend debate on the motion of Ms. Saks.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Is there no debate?

The Chair: No, because it's to adjourn.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: I have a point of order, then, Mr. Chair.

Our staff don't have a copy of the motion. It would be normal protocol. Our parliamentary staff who are here actually don't even have a copy of the motion.

The Chair: You have a copy.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: That's right.

The Chair: Do members of the committee have the motion?

Ms. Ya'ara Saks: We do, and it is in order.

The Chair: Yes, and it was in order.

I only deal with the committee members, Ms. Gray. The motion of Ms. Ferreri was to suspend debate on the motion.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: It's to suspend it to tomorrow, when we actually have committee business scheduled to discuss....

The Chair: Yes. I will call a vote on the motion of Ms. Ferreri.

Is the committee clear? You're voting on the motion of Ms. Ferreri to suspend debate on the motion of Ms. Saks so we can go to the witnesses.

(Motion negatived: nays 6; yeas 5)

The Chair: The motion of Ms. Ferreri is defeated.

We'll resume debate on the motion of Ms. Saks.

● (1845)

Ms. Ya'ara Saks: Chair, I move to call the vote on the main motion.

The Chair: Mrs. Gray.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: I was looking for debate on the.... I had my hand up.

Can we discuss...?

The Chair: Yes.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: First of all, this is being tabled at the beginning of the meeting. We have witnesses who have been very generous with their time. They're not allowed here. It's unfortunate this wasn't done during a questioning time of the party that's bringing this forth.

First of all, I have a question to the clerk.

Do we have all the submissions that have been submitted all translated and sent to MPs?

The Clerk: No, there are still some that are with translation at the moment.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Okay. Do you have an estimated timeline for when those might be coming in?

The Clerk: No. I can request that.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: That in itself means that we are asked to come up with amendments, potentially, on this very important piece of legislation without having all of the submissions from stakeholders across the country: from individual people, from organizations or from anyone who wants to speak on this.

Normally when we're dealing with this type of situation, we would wait until we have all of those submissions in. We've just heard that we don't know when we'll be getting all of those, so to bump up the timeline even sooner for potential amendments.... Those take time. We have to send them in. They have to be properly worded. That work takes time. We do have a timeline here that we're working towards.

This is a little bit of *déjà vu*, like when we had Bill C-22. We had all of those people who were sending in submissions, and we didn't even have all of them by the time we were working on it. We didn't get all of them by the deadline for when we had to come up with potential amendments, and then we were working on the clause-by-clause. That was really unreasonable.

Here we are again. It's *déjà vu*. We're in a situation where we're being asked to rush things along. We don't want to delay this at all, but out of respect for all of the people who have sent in submissions, it's not appropriate and it's not respectful to them to not even have all of their information to us before we can come up with potential amendments here. That's just a really unreasonable request. I question why we're here.

We have a timeline that we're working towards. If anything, we should be bumping ahead on the clause-by-clause, because even the timeline itself is really tight for when we need to have the amendments in and then we're doing the clause-by-clause. It's really only a couple of days. Right now, we have to have the amendments in, and then the clerks have to do their work, get to us and then look at clause-by-clause. It's just really unreasonable that we don't even have all of the testimony in, and we're being asked to start making those decisions that do take time.

That just seems really unreasonable, and the clerk doesn't even have an idea, as we just heard. A few days so we can properly do this, so we can properly have all the information, would be appropriate. As well, we have to remember that the agreements with the provinces are signed, so it's not like there's a delay in anything. The agreements are already signed. It's not like they're waiting for this legislation to then have the government go and start negotiating agreements with the provinces. Here we are solidifying things, and we have our due diligence to do.

I'll leave it there. I might come back, but I'll leave it there, Mr. Chair.

• (1850)

The Chair: I have Madam Saks, Madam Ferreri and Mr. Long.

Go ahead, please, Madam Saks.

Ms. Ya'ara Saks: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Having just arrived on the committee specifically for Bill C-35, I don't really have a point of reference on Bill C-22. I have noticed that chunks of testimonies and submissions are coming in. I'd like to ask the clerk if these submissions in translation were after the March 17 deadline date, the ones that are being submitted now.

The Clerk: They were before the deadline.

Ms. Ya'ara Saks: Okay. Are we only looking at submissions until the deadline that are being held up...?

The Clerk: For the most part. There was some correspondence we were getting translated for you that did not qualify per se as—

Ms. Ya'ara Saks: Would that be deemed inadmissible if it were after the March 17 deadline date?

The Clerk: For the correspondence, people can write to the committee whenever they want, so....

Ms. Ya'ara Saks: Thank you for the clarification.

The Chair: Now we have Ms. Ferreri.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Thank you so much, Mr. Chair.

I'm pretty dumbfounded, actually. I'll be honest. I can't believe we've brought these witnesses here, who are ready to testify and who are here to represent the welfare of the child, and now we're having this discussion when we could have easily done this in committee business. Now we have to make all these people who have waited to testify wait. It's quite embarrassing, if I'm going to be honest.

I'm the critic, as some people may or may not know, for families, children and social development. It has been a huge undertaking for me and my team to take all of the correspondence, because there are so many families, parents, child care workers and ECEs who are deeply impacted by this bill. If we're not listening to them and talking about this, I'm not sure we are doing what we were elected to do.

I know we have the Child Care Providers Resource Network here today. One of the things they have said is that the Child Care Providers Resource Network, CCPRN, is committed to and focused on the well-being and safety of all children. Isn't that the truth, Mr. Chair, that we should be focusing on all children when we look at a child care plan?

They are a non-profit charitable organization with a network reach of more than 4,800 parents and caregivers across the province and beyond. It is their mission to provide information, training, resources and support to those providing child care in a home setting. This part is really important, Mr. Chair. I want everyone to hear this, because this is what we should be listening to right now.

Child care is the care of a child, regardless of who provides the care: parents, grandparents, friends, relatives, in-home nannies and/or home care providers, both licensed and unlicensed. That's a lot of people.

There are two million children under six in Canada, and if we are not listening to all of these people, we cannot get this bill the way that it should be so that it doesn't collapse on itself and fail Canadians.

When we look at Bill C-35, it is supposed to be this universal child care bill, but there's nothing universal about it. In fact, it is set up for winners and losers right now the way it's currently written. We on this side of the House, the Conservatives, are fighting to ensure that everyone is a winner and that we have access for all Canadians so that all these families who are on wait-lists that are thousands of people long get access.

If this is legislation that, quite frankly, is already in place with the provinces and territories, as my colleague Mrs. Gray has pointed out, why are we rushing through if we need to listen to all voices to make sure all voices are included? What are we doing here?

I want to talk about this email that came in today. It says, "Thank you so much for speaking out for all Canadian parents of young children following the recent self-congratulatory announcement of \$10-a-day child care in Newfoundland by the leader of the Liberal-NDP coalition government.

These are not my words. This is an email, Mr. Chair.

It continues, "As a retired systems analyst, it begs the question of whether anyone in the coalition spent more than five minutes developing this misguided debacle. Did no one ever consider the all-important impact on child care providers, when those services were clearly known to already be in short supply, or was this just another clumsy virtue-signalling attempt rushed to completion, hoping no one but those mothers requiring child care would understand how poorly thought out it was? I have a daughter in Newfoundland who began looking for a child care provider immediately after giving birth, 10 months ago, since she is or was planning to return to work in June and resume her engineering career. She's still looking.

• (1855)

"There are no doubt tens of thousands of other working mothers in the same position all across Canada, and even more women considering joining the workforce if the prospect of spending the greater portion of their income on child care expenses is no longer an issue. Did no one ever think of that? Help wanted signs abound all across Canada, but with the current inflation, minimum wage earners can hardly afford to drive to work, let alone pay for child care. How does the Liberal-NDP plan help those families?

"Think of how many women could return to the workforce, provide for the welfare of their families and contribute to the economy if only this government had been more diligent in developing a sensible child care plan. Instead, all the Liberal-NDP plan is offering mothers is a \$10 coupon to shop at a store with empty shelves. If this Liberal-NDP coalition government sincerely intends to help young families, they need to address how to stock those shelves and not just hand the store keys to provincial governments and walk away congratulating themselves for a mission accomplished."

Ms. Ya'ara Saks: I have a point of order.

It seems that my colleague, Ms. Ferreri, is now reading text rather than talking about the actual amendment in front of us. I encourage debate on timelines and making sure we get through this work plan in an efficient way. There is an appropriate time to share the thoughts of stakeholders and it's not while we are debating the actual timeline for the work.

Can we actually hear from our witnesses today and get on with things?

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: With all due respect, Mr. Chair, the Liberals had the opportunity to hear from the witnesses when I put forward the motion to listen to them right away and to leave this for committee business. Now it is on me to ensure that we have this discussion so that all voices are heard, because you're pushing through something that needs to be thought out well so that all children are cared for and this bill includes everyone. Right now, it has winners and it has losers.

Ms. Ya'ara Saks: I have a point of order, Chair.

I ask if my colleague could stick to discussing the work plan so we can—

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: That's exactly what I'm talking about.

Ms. Ya'ara Saks: I'd argue relevance, Chair.

The Chair: Ms. Ferreri, keep your comments to the motion.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Thank you.

To the motion of ensuring that we get everything in on time, that we are listening to all of these families and all of these people who didn't get a chance to come testify, because we already compromised, quite frankly, on the number of meetings, I can't rationalize what the rush is from the other side if these agreements are already in place. We actually want to ensure that this plan, as they say in their words, is going to enshrine a national universal child care plan. If that's the case, then what are we rushing through here, Mr. Chair? We have to listen to all of the voices to ensure that there are no losers.

The number one thing in the bill is flexibility and accessibility. Right now, based on the witnesses we've heard, there isn't accessibility. We don't have that, so how are we supposed to solve something, a piece of legislation that's going to live on and help children—

• (1900)

Mr. Tony Van Bynen (Newmarket—Aurora, Lib.): I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

Let's come back to relevance here. We're not debating the bill. We're debating the timeline. I don't think that this is relevant.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: But that is it.

Mr. Tony Van Bynen: I don't agree. I simply don't agree.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: I don't agree that you didn't just let witnesses, who have come here to do their job, speak.

Mr. Tony Van Bynen: It's not me who's holding up the witnesses, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: The motion that we have—

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): I have a point of order, Chair.

I understand what my colleague, Madam Ferreri, is saying in terms of holding up witnesses. I feel like we are holding up witnesses sooner.

I have to be honest, Chair. I do feel rushed to get this legislation through. I know how much it would have meant to me as an early childhood educator and certainly a single mom, and I'm hoping that we can stop filibustering—everybody in the room stop filibustering—so that we can respect the witnesses and we can get care to families. I like working with everybody in the room. I work with other members on other committees, but I really want to get to this legislation. It is critical legislation that I think we all want and we could all agree on. Let's move forward and get it done. I think we can work together.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

What my colleague is talking about is very relevant. What we have to remember is that the NDP and the Liberals voted to not leave this until tomorrow.

It's a little disingenuous for anyone on that side to be saying.... That's what the motion was. That was the motion that my colleague made and they voted it down. That was the motion, so I think what Ms. Ferreri is talking about is very relevant.

The Chair: Mrs. Gray, we already....

The discussion is on the motion of Ms. Saks.

I would remind all members to keep your comments in relation to the motion, which was about the two days.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The motion, as I have it in front of me, is:

That amendments be submitted to the clerk of the committee in both official languages no later than 1:00 p.m. EST, Tuesday, April 11 2023; that the clerk of the committee write immediately to each member who is not a member of a caucus represented on the committee and any independent members to inform them of the study of Bill C-35 by the committee and to invite them to prepare and submit any proposed amendments to Bill C-35—

Mr. Chair, can I have clarification on what you mean by, “the clerk of the committee write immediately to each member who is not a member of a caucus represented on the committee”?

The Chair: It's standard procedure, but I'll ask the clerk to comment.

The Clerk: Yes, there are a number of members who are not part of a caucus. We write to them, on top of everybody else, to inform them of the study of the bill.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Okay, so it's the independent—

The Chair: This is standard procedure on all committees when you notify for clause-by-clause.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: It also continues here:

—which they would suggest that the committee consider during the clause-by-clause study of the Bill; and the committee begin clause-by-clause consideration of the Bill on April 18, 2023.

Why is losing two meetings...? This was the reasoning brought forth on the floor. They said that we had the President of the United States visit, so we lost two meetings in our regular committee. I'm not understanding how that would mean that moving the deadline sooner rather than later makes any sense. There's no logic there. I'm just confused about that as well.

To go back to what my NDP colleagues said, and as I've been saying repeatedly, why are we rushing a lot of what we need to do to make it right?

That would be my question. It just doesn't seem to make any sense why we would move a deadline sooner or what the difference would be. Originally, as I believe it was proposed—and if I could confirm with you—it was supposed to be the 13th.

Is April 13 correct, Clerk?

● (1905)

The Clerk: There was never an agreement on that. It was a suggestion in the calendar.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Okay. It was never agreed upon.

We lost two meetings, so I'm not sure I'm understanding why we would move the deadline sooner and not later when we've actually been pushed back. I'm not understanding that. What we really have to come back to is what I've been trying to say in terms of this motion: How are we supposed to have everything done?

Also, if I could, Mr. Chair, the clerk had said this already, but what about the translation of all the documents? Do we know how many submissions we've had to the committee at this point?

Ms. Leah Gazan: I have a point of order, Chair.

I just want to clarify what I was sharing, since it was mentioned.

I'm just encouraging us to work together. I think we all have good intentions. We certainly have different opinions on what that looks like, but I think we all have good intentions.

I'm just encouraging all members of this committee—I'm a guest for this bill—to work together, collaboratively, to get to work on the bill. I feel that, as this conversation goes on.... It's been 40 minutes—

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Gazan.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Thank you.

The Chair: That is debate. It is not a point of order, Ms. Gazan.

Ms. Ferreri, I'll go back to you on the motion, and I will hold you to your comments on the motion, as is the procedure.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Sure. I was just asking the clerk about those timelines in terms of submissions and how many there are.

The Clerk: We're halfway. Roughly half of them are still with translation at the moment.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: They're halfway through, so would we not need more time? I guess that's what we're trying to figure out here, because if that's only half and you need to do the translation—

The Clerk: We receive a few every day, so we're moving along. It will take a few more days, but we don't have a precise deadline in terms of when we will have received them all.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Chair, we're in a situation here, as we have these great witnesses who are waiting to give testimony. As I've said, I did make a motion to get them to speak as soon as possible so that we could do this not on their time. They obviously have some important things to address.

What we're looking at is trying to figure out how to include everyone if this is supposed to be universal. When I did this in the House, when I debated this bill in the House at second reading—

The Chair: Speak to the motion, please, Ms. Ferreri—the two days

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Yes, that's where I'm.... Yes, of course.

I talked about “universal”. How are we supposed to get all of the feedback in this time frame? I just can't understand how we're going to get all of that done if we're going to include all of Canada and all of the forms of child care, which I referred to earlier in terms of the Child Care Providers Resource Network, a witness that is here today and would like to share their stories with us. Obviously, child care is the care of a child, regardless of who provides the care: parents, grandparents, friends or relatives, in-home nannies and/or home child care providers, both licensed and unlicensed.

We need to ensure that we are doing this. It's two days we're talking about. I think we saw right off the top that there isn't collaboration from the other parties, in particular the Liberals, because, as I said, of course we can talk about this. It was a friendly motion, as you said. It was, okay, no problem, we'll chat about that tomorrow at committee business because we have all these witnesses who have come here to talk about Bill C-35 and how we strengthen this bill, how we fix it and how we ensure that everybody has access.

That's the fundamental part of the bill. That's what's a little frustrating. Is there opportunity here to discuss...? Can we have another amendment to this motion so that we can change the clause-by-clause date to one week later to give us more time? Can we discuss something like that? Is that an option so that we can get to these witnesses, which I think is really important, and so we can ensure that the clerk and everybody can get.... There is so much information, and my colleague across the way doesn't....

I have listened to thousands and thousands of families—thousands—and this bill is not ready to go to the floor.

• (1910)

The Chair: Bring your comments to the motion as before the floor, which is not the bill. It's the two-day extension. It's the two-day reference, Ms. Ferreri.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It is about the two-day reference, because if we could have some collaboration, if the welfare of the child really is at the crux of this discussion, why are we voting “no” to me saying, “Let's talk about it tomorrow”? It makes no sense.

Why did you do that?

Mr. Chair, why did they—

Ms. Ya'ara Saks: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

I would just like to clarify that this process was supposed to be six meetings in total to end on April 18, and this was a friendly motion for the simple reason that we are extending time. I encourage my colleague to stick to her debate on looking at the timelines. That's all I'll ask, Chair.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you, Ms. Saks.

Ms. Ferreri, you have the floor.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm trying to understand that. I'm trying to do the job that we were elected to do, which is to listen to everybody and to try to get it done in a timely manner and to try to get everything in.

How do we make sure that this bill right now...? As it stands right now, quality, affordable child care is a wonderful concept, but if it is not accessible, it does not exist.

These timelines, Mr. Chair, back to the motion—

Mr. Tony Van Bynen: On a point of order, Mr. Chair, we're back to the bill again and not on the issue that's on the floor.

The Chair: Again, I'll remind you, Ms. Ferreri, to keep your comments to the motion on the floor.

Mr. Michael Coteau (Don Valley East, Lib.): I have a point of order. It's a real point of order.

The Chair: They're not real until I get to hear them.

Mr. Michael Coteau: That's a good point.

The Chair: Go ahead on your point of order.

Mr. Michael Coteau: We have witnesses in the next round. At this point, we have two sets of witnesses, with 7:30 p.m. to 8:15 p.m. for the second set.

The Chair: That's correct.

Mr. Michael Coteau: At this point, do we have enough time for them to be witnesses?

The Chair: We will conclude at 8:30 p.m.

A voice: There's a vote as well.

Mr. Michael Coteau: I'm just asking a question around process. If we don't have enough time, if we've exhausted 45 minutes already, should we let the second group go, based on the fact that we may not have the time? If not, at what time do we actually say to them that they don't have to stick around? They shouldn't be waiting that long.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: That's what I said at the very beginning.

Mr. Michael Coteau: The other point is that maybe I can suggest we take a three-minute recess and try to figure something out.

The Chair: Procedurally, Ms. Ferreri has the floor. The witnesses are here, and the witnesses are scheduled for the second hour, should we get there. I cannot predetermine that, Mr. Coteau.

I have to resume with Ms. Ferreri unless somebody wants to ask for a suspension for a period.

Mr. Michael Coteau: What I'm saying, Mr. Chair, is that right now it's 7:15 p.m. If we hear from the witnesses and have the first round, it's going to be an hour. Then we'll be at 8:15 p.m., after which we have 15 minutes of committee business. Is that right?

The Chair: That's correct, Mr. Coteau, but I have to return to Ms. Ferreri, who has the floor.

Anybody can ask for a suspension at any time, and I'll consider it.

Mr. Michael Coteau: Would it help to have a motion to suspend for three minutes?

The Chair: Not a motion—you can just request it.

Mr. Michael Coteau: The request is to suspend for three minutes, and then, of course, the member gets the floor back.

The Chair: Do we have agreement from the committee to suspend for a few moments so that you can consult?

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: No. I don't think that's what—

The Chair: We don't have consent to suspend, Mr. Coteau.

Mr. Michael Coteau: If there's no consensus, I'll withdraw my request.

The Chair: Okay.

I have to return the floor to Ms. Ferreri.

Go ahead on the motion.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

To Mr. Coteau's point, that's exactly why I put forth what I put forth. Then you guys voted no, which is why I'm sitting here going round and round and round. I was like, okay, we'll talk about this. This is totally talkable. Let's talk. Let's work on this. Then, no, everybody said no. Now here we are. Now we have these people waiting, and we're back where we started.

Do we add an amendment, at this point, asking if we can change the clause-by-clause date to one week later, which would give us more time? This is what we're talking about—ensuring that we have enough time. That's back to the motion. It's all about time and ensuring that, as I keep looping back, we can hear from all these thousands and thousands of parents and people who work in the industry, who are not comfortable with the way in which the bill is

currently written. If we don't strengthen it here, then how is it going to get fixed? It's not going to. Then the Canadian families who rely on us to make legislation that works, we've all just failed.

I guess I will ask again: Is there an opportunity to add an amendment to change the clause-by-clause date to one week later? Then we can debate that.

• (1915)

The Chair: Ms. Ferreri, you can introduce an amendment at any time.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Yes.

I would ask that we add an amendment to the motion put on the floor to change the clause-by-clause date to one week later, so that we can at least have this time for what I'm talking about, for hearing from everyone, because now we've also pushed these poor witnesses into the parliamentary wormhole of life.

I would say April 20, Mr. Chair. I would propose an amendment to change clause-by-clause to one week later, which would be April 20.

The Chair: Okay.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: I'm sorry. It would be April 25.

It would be April 20 to submit. April 25 would be the one week.

The Chair: Okay, we have an amendment to the motion.

I will ask the clerk to read the amendment so everybody's clear.

The Clerk: The amendment is to change the time for submitting the amendments to April 20 and to change the clause-by-clause portion to April 25, 2023.

The Chair: I will ask the clerk to call a vote, unless someone puts their hand up.

Mrs. Gray, go ahead on the amendment by Ms. Ferreri.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

This is really all about giving members enough time to listen to the witnesses.

When we're looking at the timeline right now, moving the clause-by-clause and actually pushing it further ahead is reasonable because the actual motion that we're debating here today talks about independent members. They're listed right in the motion. In fact, that gives the members who aren't sitting on this committee very little time.

In fact, moving the clause-by-clause forward a bit more does give members, other than the people sitting on this committee, time to look at this. I think that is reasonable for the motion that Ms. Ferreri put forth. This is really allowing us enough time to have proper scrutiny, not only for the people on this committee but also the independent members who don't sit here every day.

We heard from some other members that they sit on two or three committees, plus there's all the other work that we have to do. This would really allow everyone...because all members do have an opportunity to put in amendments.

I know that when we were doing Bill C-22, a member who doesn't sit on this committee brought forth numerous amendments. A number of those were debated. There was—I can't remember the exact number; I know for sure there was one that everyone voted on—an amendment that was actually then put into the legislation. That's why it's really important to allow all members, including independent members, to have the proper time to really scrutinize what this is and be able to put their amendments in.

We also know, Mr. Chair, that it takes time. You can't just write amendments overnight. It has to go to legal. It's really important that we get it right—for us at this committee and also for independent members. Moving that date ahead, to look at clause....

Then of course the clerk has to.... We don't know how many amendments are coming forth. It could be one. It could be a hundred. We really don't know. We see that with other legislation. The clerk's office has to be able to put everything together and categorize it. When we had it for Bill C-22, they were kind of looking at amendments from different people, parties and individuals that were similar. It all gets categorized. You can't just do that in a couple of hours. We really do need the time to do this.

The other thing is that the clerk does have to prioritize amendments. They really look at where there are duplications and which ones would come up before others because of who submits an amendment first.

There's a lot to consider, so to try to rush this all into a couple of days for an important piece of legislation like this.... It's not just a private member's bill with a couple of lines. We're talking about a substantive piece of legislation, so it's really important that we do this properly.

I'm in support of extending the timeline on this so at least we can have time to go through the amendments. Again, we don't know how many there will be. There could be a substantial number of amendments. Also, it's talking to other members here. I know that on Bill C-22.... We have different people on the committee here, but I had a great working relationship with my counterpart on the Liberal side. We would look at what some ideas were...of course without disclosing confidences, but just looking at ideas. Unfortunately, that hasn't happened here so far with this piece of legislation.

We had this dropped on us today without any type of conversation, so to hear members talking about working collaboratively and good intentions.... There were no preconversations here.

• (1920)

However, that's an aside. Going back to the amendment that we're discussing here, I think it's very reasonable to look at the timeline.

The Chair: I have a point of order from Ms. Falk.

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC): Am I permitted to speak here?

The Chair: Yes.

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: Okay. Thank you very much, Chair.

I was wondering, because we've had some subbing and I'm just coming in, if that amendment—I think it's a subamendment—could be repeated, please.

I want to make sure. I'm away. I'm virtual. I'm in transition. I want to make sure that I'm not missing what's going on.

The Chair: Yes, but I do not believe that's a point of order. It's left to committee members to keep themselves current. There was a member sitting in on it.

I will repeat the motion before it's voted on.

Who had the floor? I'm going to Ms. Saks, who had her hand up.

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: It was Mrs. Gray.

The Chair: I'll let Mrs. Gray finish. You interrupted.

Ms. Gray, you have the floor.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: That's right, Mr. Chair.

[Translation]

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ): I want to raise a point of order, Mr. Chair.

First of all, I want to say that it's important to give some time to the witnesses.

I would like to thank them, in fact, for being with us tonight, as well as extend an apology to them.

I would like to know if, because of this discussion, which is very lengthy, the witnesses will be invited to appear again.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Madame Bérubé.

That's left to the committee. I am simply the chair. I ensure that the committee functions properly. The discussion currently before the committee is within the committee's order and mandate.

At 7:30, though, the first hour will conclude and the witnesses who were scheduled to appear will be excused. At 7:30, the committee will have to choose.

This is a point of order. Am I clear on that, Madame Bérubé? Okay.

We'll return to Mrs. Gray. The next person who has the floor is Madam Saks.

• (1925)

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'll reiterate that when this was presented—

An hon. member: [Inaudible—Editor]

The Chair: Give me a moment.

Mrs. Gray hadn't concluded. She had the floor when the point of order was raised by Madame Bérubé.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

There were a couple of points of order there. It's still my time.

Going back to the amendment that we're discussing, the reason we're here is that, in fact, some members of this committee voted down the point that we wanted to discuss this when we had committee business, a discussion literally 14 hours from now. I'm not sure why that was voted down or what the rationale was.

A lot of committees will have a subcommittee. It's usually the vice-chairs who discuss the work of the committee. In this committee, we haven't done that. I brought it up a couple of times. There doesn't seem to be much of a desire for that. We spend a lot of time at this committee talking about what we want to talk about at committee. This committee has a proportionately higher amount of legislation that comes through it than other committees. Legislation always takes precedence.

Again, going back to this amendment here for the 25th—

The Chair: Ms. Gray, return your comments to the amendment.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: I'm setting it up.

Where I'm going with this is that, here we are, having this discussion that could have happened outside of this committee room. On the 25th, I think it's very reasonable, based on the rationale that I've given, that we should allow more time. We're literally talking about a few extra days here. That seems to be very reasonable.

I'll leave it there for now on this amendment. We'll see where it goes.

Thank you.

The Chair: We have Ms. Saks and then Mr. Long.

Ms. Ya'ara Saks: Thank you, Chair.

With regard to the current amendment of moving the dates along, I do recall from my notes in preparing to come to committee that, on February 3, this committee adopted six meetings that were supposed to conclude on April 18, including clause-by-clause.

The motion that was put forth—and now we're on an amendment of timetables—was really, as mentioned, to put us on track to reset. There's always the opportunity, if we would like, to meet next week with witnesses virtually. I would like to make sure everyone has their time.

This wasn't meant to be a filibuster, as my Conservative colleagues are putting on the floor here. It was that we lost days and I wanted to put us on a calendar track. April 11 gives 12 days for amendments to be submitted and then a subsequent week after that for them to be contemplated, which is well within the normal timeline of committee business. My colleagues are putting down to push it further and further ahead.

I'm trying to keep the committee on the timeline that it set for itself, recognizing that we were supposed to be done this legislation on April 18. The original motion was to begin clause-by-clause on April 18, so to waste witness time.... I'm more than happy to call witnesses back next week, but I'm not supportive of this amendment.

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: I have a point of order. My point of order, Mr. Chair, is that committees are their own domain. The parlia-

mentary secretary should not be telling or lecturing our committee on what the schedule should be.

The Chair: That's not a point of order, Mrs. Falk.

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: We hear over and over at the House, and you say yourself, Chair, that the committee is its own domain.

The Chair: It is and that's why the committee will choose by majority.

Ms. Saks has the floor.

• (1930)

Ms. Ya'ara Saks: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Certainly the committee is its own domain, which is why I am sharing what the committee's decision was on February 3, which was to complete this entire legislative process by April 18. Out of a genuine desire to hear from witnesses and ensure that the train continues on its track, we provided a timeline to ensure that we could get through this legislation in a timely manner.

I am open to the contemplation of a meeting next week if we have to, to make sure we get all our witnesses in. It's a Passover holiday for me. I will be taking time off to do that out of a commitment to this committee to see this legislation through.

To spend so much time on what was a simple process to keep us on the track is highly disappointing. To see this from my colleagues, who have been filibustering us here for just over an hour, is really unfortunate because the collaborative nature of this was to follow the committee's previous will of February 3 and make sure we're staying on the same page.

Clearly, they are not on the same page. It is unfortunate that the members across the way don't want to contemplate a timeline in an effective manner.

Dr. Christa Japel (Representative, Observatoire des tout-petits, Fondation Lucie et André Chagnon): Am I allowed to say something?

The Chair: No, Dr. Japel, not at the moment.

It's now gone beyond 7:30. I'm going to suspend.

I will apologize to the witnesses, Ms. Ferreri.

As chair, I am suspending the meeting at 7:30 as was scheduled, so we can transition to the next group of witnesses as per the schedule. The debate can resume at that time if anybody wants the floor.

At this time, I want to thank the witnesses for coming. I would ask that you would simply submit your briefs in writing to the committee, if they have not been.

With that, thank you for coming.

I will suspend the meeting, so we can transition to the next hour.

• (1930)

(Pause)

• (1935)

The Chair: I call the meeting back to order.

Committee members, welcome back.

The committee will resume its study of Bill C-35, an act respecting early learning and child care in Canada.

To assist the interpreters in their work, I kindly remind all members and witnesses appearing today to introduce themselves when speaking and to speak slowly. You have the option of speaking in the official language of your choice. Interpretation services are available. Should interpretation services be lost, please get my attention and we'll suspend while they're being corrected.

I'll remind all members and witnesses to direct their questions through, me, the chair, and to wait until I recognize you. Those appearing virtually have a "raise hand" icon at the bottom of their screen. Please use it to get my attention. Again, all comments are addressed through me. I'll remind everybody that screenshots are not allowed in the meeting.

I will introduce the witnesses.

We have appearing now Kim Hiscott from the Andrew Fleck Children's Services. We have Marni Flaherty, acting chief executive officer of the Canadian Child Care Federation. From the Ontario Association for Independent Childcare Centres, we have Maggie Moser, who is the director and on the board of directors.

Before I turn to the witnesses for their opening statements, the committee was in a discussion when we suspended following the earlier hour.

I see before me Ms. Falk with her hand up.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: On a point of order, Mr. Chair, I'm wondering if you could please clarify whether you have a speakers list that was carried over from earlier, or if you're starting a new speakers list.

If you have a speakers list, could you let us know who's on it, Mr. Chair?

• (1940)

The Chair: Yes, the questioning list starts with Madam Ferreri.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: No, I'm talking about.... We had hands up before we briefly suspended. I'm just wondering if you're keeping on with that speakers list, or if you're starting a new list.

If you have a speakers list, could you let us know what that speakers list is?

The Chair: Thank you, Mrs. Gray.

I had Mr. Long, and then I had a hand up from Ms. Roberts and then Ms. Ferreri.

Now I see Ms. Falk with her hand up as well.

Mr. Long, did you—

Mrs. Tracy Gray: On a point of order, Mr. Chair, wasn't Ms. Falk...? Didn't she have the floor before we—

The Chair: Yes.

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: You gave me the floor.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Falk, that is correct. You had the floor.

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: Thank you very much, Chair.

I understand how with my intervention earlier.... I was trying to get clarity about where we were, to make sure that we weren't wasting time. I wasn't really afforded that opportunity, so it's disappointing for me. I want to understand. I understand that there was a motion that was moved, which said:

That amendments be submitted to the clerk of the committee in both official languages no later than 1:00 p.m, EST, Tuesday, April 11 2023; that the clerk of the committee write immediately to each member who is not a member of a caucus represented on the committee and any independent members to inform them of the study of Bill C-35 by the committee and to invite them to prepare and submit any proposed amendments to Bill C-35 which they would suggest that the committee consider during the clause-by-clause study of the Bill; and the committee begin clause-by-clause consideration of the Bill on April 18, 2023.

I understand that was the main motion, but I understand there was then an amendment, if I'm correct, to change some dates. I believe it would have been from April 20 to the 25th, if I've understood this correctly.

It's unfortunate for me, because I feel that this is a trend over and over again from the Liberal-NDP coalition to.... We're seeing it in the House right now. Debate is being limited on something that's very important and that we've heard a lot on from Canadians. Now what's concerning to me is that we're seeing this in committee as well.

I don't understand. Through you, Mr. Chair, I understand that MP Saks isn't happy that she's not getting her way. It's not even just her, but this is from the remarks that she has made. This could be the whole Liberal-NDP coalition not being happy that we're not in agreement.

We want to make sure that there is a thorough job done of hearing testimony from witnesses and from as many child care providers as possible. This is a very big country, and I think we would be doing a disservice to parents like me.... I have four young children. I said that in the previous meeting. As someone who has had difficulty finding child care, I know the real frustrations, just like I can't find formula on shelves either. I have a young baby who's not even one year yet—

The Chair: Ms. Falk—

• (1945)

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: I'm getting there.

The Chair: Mrs. Falk, I have the floor.

Please respect the chair and keep your comments to the amendment that's currently on the floor, which is in relation to the dates.

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: Absolutely.

The real frustration that I feel regarding the things that I have not been able to access and that I know other Canadian parents have not been able to access is that, if we don't do a thorough job on this.... Really from the 11th to the 20th and then the 13th to the 25th, I just....

We also had this conversation with a speed-up in a previous legislation. I think MP Gray alluded to that in her amendment comment. It's a troubling precedent that I see and that I'm living. I think we're doing a disservice by not giving the time to hear from witnesses and not doing our job thoroughly, as we're supposed to.

Mr. Chair, I do want to say, in response to MP Saks' comment about our having an agreement, at a February 3 meeting, for an end date, that I don't know where that is. When I pull up the committee business from the committee website from the February 3 meeting, it states:

The committee proceeded to the consideration of matters related to committee business.

It was agreed,—That six meetings be dedicated to the consideration of Bill C-35, An Act respecting early learning and child care in Canada, commencing Tuesday, March 7, 2023, including a technical briefing from relevant department officials, an invite to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development accompanied by department officials, witness testimony and clause by clause consideration of the bill.

It was agreed,—That, in the context of the consideration of Bill C-35, An Act respecting early learning and child care in Canada, committee members submit their prioritized witness lists to the clerk of the committee no later than Friday, February 24, 2023.

The Chair: Mrs. Falk, we're not discussing....

Bring your comments to the amendment that's currently on the floor for debate. This is not the witness list.

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: Chair, that is what I am doing. MP Saks was permitted to speak about an agreement. She was not told to bring her comments to the amendment.

The Chair: Mrs. Falk, I did ask Ms. Saks to bring her comments to the amendment and I would ask you to do the same. Bring your comments to the amendment that was moved by Ms. Ferreri.

Before you resume your comments, Mrs. Falk, I want to advise the witnesses that, currently, there is a procedural motion before the committee that the committee is debating and discussing, which is the prerogative of the committee members. That's why we're not getting to the witnesses for their opening statements. I just want to clarify that the committee is within its prerogative to have this debate.

Mrs. Falk, it's back to you for comments on the amendment.

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: Thank you, Chair.

My point is that there wasn't an agreement, so I'm not understanding why the Liberals are telling us that we're prolonging this when there wasn't an agreement. We had agreed to six meetings. That is what is in the minutes.

It's unfortunate. What is the big push? What is the big push of nine days? I don't understand and it's unfortunate.

It's very frustrating, Mr. Chair, because there is this—what's the word I'm looking for?—brush painting that we're holding this up,

which is not the case. From what I understand, as I had said, this kind of stuff should be discussed in planning meetings.

To the witnesses, I'm so sorry that this is happening and that the Liberals and the NDP don't want to do this planning outside of these meetings and are actually eating up witness time.

I just don't see the justification in the argument to move this up, especially when we have two riding weeks coming up here with major holidays between those riding weeks. We have to be respectful of our witnesses when it comes to rescheduling them as well. I feel that moving this original motion—

● (1950)

The Chair: Ms. Falk, your comments should be to the amendment of Ms. Ferreri, which was to change the date, and not to the original motion.

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: Right.

Yes, the original dates are not sufficient. What is being proposed by the Liberals to move this from the 11th to the 13th under the false pretense that there was an agreement.... I read the minutes from the agreement that was being referred to, and there was no agreement. Now this is being thrown on us.

I don't see why the Liberal and the NDP coalition cannot agree to the April 20 date and the April 25 date.

This is a real—

The Chair: Ms. Falk, the amendment was never adopted because that is what the discussion is. Nobody disagreed with it or agreed with it because this committee did not vote on it.

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: Okay, so it wasn't a formal vote, Mr. Chair, but it was remarked on from the Liberals, saying that they didn't disagree with it.

The Chair: The committee hasn't adopted it, because we're still debating the amendment of Ms. Ferreri, which was on the two dates in question. That's what the current debate is.

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: MP Saks had already said, during the debate, that she didn't agree with it. I would assume that's what would translate to her vote and that she would vote against it.

The Chair: Assuming what somebody is going to do is not debate. It's to—

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: Right, but isn't the point of a debate to hear each other's side? I am expressing why I don't agree with what the Liberals have proposed in the comments from MP Saks.

Chair, am I not permitted to do that?

The Chair: You should focus your comments on the amendment of Ms. Ferreri, which is currently on the floor.

I will move to another speaker if you have concluded your comments.

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: Yes.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Mr. Long, did you have your hand up?

Next on my list is Mrs. Roberts.

Mrs. Anna Roberts (King—Vaughan, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I must say I'm enjoying this committee and the debate, but I don't understand why, on a bill as important as the one we are about to discuss, we don't have the opportunity to have that information in front of us so that we have the opportunity to review all the witnesses.

This is an important bill and I am a little insulted because, as a single mom, and because many of my constituents have called me and said that they can't find spaces, why are we not giving our constituents—

Ms. Ya'ara Saks: I have a point of order, Chair.

It's not relevant to the dates recommended by her colleague, Ms. Ferreri. I'd like to keep the debate in line with the timeline.

Thank you.

Mrs. Anna Roberts: Okay, so—

The Chair: Mrs. Roberts, please keep your comments to the amendment made by Ms. Ferreri, which was simply to consider two additional dates.

Mrs. Anna Roberts: I think the amendment that my colleague presented to the team is fair to every single one of us to have the opportunity—

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: I have a point of order, Chair.

The Chair: Mrs. Falk, are you raising a point of order?

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: Can you give some clarification here?

I understand that the amendment is dates, but in order to debate something, you need to be able to explain why and what supports your reasoning for these dates. I just don't understand how—

• (1955)

The Chair: Mrs. Falk, as long as the debate stays focused on the two dates, and that's what Mrs. Roberts is doing now, she has the floor.

Mrs. Anna Roberts: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The point I am trying to make is that I would have appreciated an opportunity to ensure that the witnesses' testimony gave me an understanding of what.... We are here. We are the servants of our constituents. We are here to serve them.

I believe that, in the best interests of this committee and in the best interests of Canadians right across this wonderful country, we should take the time to ensure that all the witness information is presented to this committee so we can have open and honest dialogue. We can't do that if we don't have the time.

By providing us with this time it will allow us the opportunity to present a proper amendment and proper documentation to the rest of the country. This is a very important bill. I'd like to thank my colleague because I am a little offended by my colleague across the way.

I really enjoy her company, so Ms. Saks, don't take this personally, but I was in that position and I could not find day care. I was a young widow and left with two babies I had to find care for. I could not find it. I have constituents calling me, having their parents move from another province to come to where they are currently residing because they can't find—

Mr. Tony Van Bynen: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair, on relevance.

Mrs. Anna Roberts: The relevance here is, don't we have a right to listen?

Mr. Tony Van Bynen: Mr. Chair, this is the amendment that we're debating.

The Chair: Mr. Van Bynen is correct. It's the amendment of Ms. Ferreri, which is to extend the date.

Mrs. Anna Roberts: Right, and I agree with that amendment, but I want you to understand that we have an important job here to listen to our—

The Chair: Please keep your comments to the amendment, Mrs. Roberts.

Mrs. Anna Roberts: I understand that, Mr. Chair. I really do, but I think it's important that we take every precaution we possibly can to understand and listen to everything that's in front of us so that we can make the decisions that Canadians expect us to make. This should not be rushed.

This should be done in a timely manner. However, it also has to accommodate our opportunity to review all the documentation and put in the amendments. We don't have that. It's not even in two official languages yet. From what I understand from the clerk, and correct me if I'm wrong, they're only halfway there anyway. I don't understand how we can possibly do that.

I and MP Ferreri are on another committee. We will be travelling across this country in the second part of the riding week. We need to make sure that the documentation is thoroughly understood so that we can come back to this committee and have an open and honest conversation. That's what I think we need to do. I think if we continue that and all get along and all have an opportunity to have an open conversation honestly....

Every single person in this committee has the right to voice their opinion. I'm a newbie MP, so please excuse me if I'm not 100% understanding what's going on, but if I'm going to represent my constituents, I'd like to hear what they want to say. I'd like to represent them based on my riding, based on Canada and what is best for this country. Again I say to you, we are their servants. We are not the masters. We are their servants. Give us an opportunity to please listen to each and every constituent and understand that we have a right to make decisions that will benefit the entire country. This is an issue for all parents.

As a female and young mother, a widow with two children, let me tell you that I did not have a nine-to-five job. That was not my luxury. I wanted to make sure I could support my children. How could I support my young children, if I were put in that position today, making sure they had day care if I couldn't find it?

If we don't have the spaces—

Ms. Ya'ara Saks: I have a point of order, Chair.

Respectfully to my colleague, whom I do enjoy time with, truly, outside this chamber, I'm also a single mother. I have not raised it once during the debate. I made sure to stay within the guidelines of the timelines.

I ask respectfully, through you, Chair, to keep relevance.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Saks.

Mrs. Roberts, the amendment that's currently on the floor for debate is to change the dates.

• (2000)

Mrs. Anna Roberts: Right. I'm making the point that I would really appreciate the opportunity to do that. I would really like to understand everything that's in this amendment. I would like the time to make sure I fully review it so that I can bring objective conversation and debate to my colleagues across the floor, and so that everyone has an opportunity to share.

Isn't that what we're here to do? We're here to make sure we listen to each other and we bring those points to the floor. That's my conversation. That's what I would like to do. I'd really appreciate it if we could all...

I think this is a great group. Thank you for having me here today, but I also think we can come to a mutual understanding. It's a simple request that we're asking. We're not asking for more than that. Give us the time to do that.

Those are my comments. Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mrs. Gray, I believe you had your hand up to speak to the amendment.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

When you ran through the list, I thought you had Ms. Ferreri and then me. When I asked for the list earlier on—

The Chair: It was you and then Ms. Ferreri—

Mrs. Tracy Gray: —I wrote it down. Just for clarification, I think it's Ms. Ferreri and then I'm after her. Is that correct?

The Chair: Not on my list. I do have Ms. Ferreri—

Mrs. Tracy Gray: She's after me.

The Chair: Yes. Mr. Long conceded his spot.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: That's right. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

As we're talking about this date, just to clarify for the witnesses we have here today, at the very beginning of the meeting, the government side put together a motion to amend when they wanted amendments from the committee. Basically, what it did was.... Conversation happened, and we realized that we would not have all the

written testimony before we were able to write whatever amendments we wanted. We heard from the clerk that we've received only half the written submissions. They didn't have a timeline as to how long that was going to take.

The motion was dropped at the very beginning of the committee. There was no written notice, as is the usual precedent, and there were no conversations with us. It was literally dropped. We heard that we wouldn't even have the written submissions, yet we as members of Parliament were then to go away and potentially write up amendments.

The government wanted to move that deadline closer. We would actually be writing amendments without having all the information from Canadians who have written in submissions. They're sitting with the clerk's office right now. They do great work, but it takes time to translate. We put in an amendment to say let's discuss this when we had the committee time scheduled to do this.

Just so you're aware, the NDP and the Liberals voted against that, which is why we're here. We actually wanted to push it ahead for when we had time allocated. Now we're dealing with a situation where we have another amendment, when we're looking at our timelines here, in order to be able to do what's called clause-by-clause. We think we've made a very reasonable request by giving a little bit of extra time so that we can properly review things. That's where the discussion is.

This is all just so that our witnesses who are here are aware of what's going on. It's the reason we're in this place here.

Talking about the timeline, I know that the government representatives made comments about missing days. I just want to note that one of the reasons we missed some committee time was that the government tabled their budget. That's all in the government's timeline. That was their choice when they tabled the budget. That is why we had a committee meeting cancelled.

Here we are now, sort of pushing everything ahead, but still, with the original motion we had, there were no specific dates given. There were discussions, but there were no specific dates as to when, specifically, we would be doing the amendments and then the clause-by-clause. Having this new information is why we're discussing the amendment. It's in order to have proper time to review all the potential amendments that might come from different parties, to be able to have the time to review them and to then start the clause-by-clause within a more reasonable time period.

As I mentioned earlier, but it is applicable now, when we were doing Bill C-22, we had members not on this committee who put forth amendments. All of that takes time. We need time to go through them and prioritize them. The clerk needs time to prioritize them and see what similarities there are or if there are duplications.

Moving ahead, based on the amendment my colleague moved, to literally just give us a few more days is very reasonable. In terms of the amount of time it takes to potentially go through whatever amendments might be presented, we don't know. There could be one or there could be a hundred. We need time to do that. I think the request to just give a little bit more time is very reasonable.

• (2005)

I think the date my colleague gave was very reasonable. It's not like she gave a date that was at the end of May. It was literally just a few extra days so that we would have time to go through whatever amendments might come forward.

The date that she's—

Ms. Ya'ara Saks: I have a point of order, Chair.

Respectfully, through you, Chair, my colleague Mrs. Gray has said the same thing about three or four times now. It's been quite repetitive. She has shared her thoughts on the volume of submissions. She has shared her thoughts about the time. She has shared her thoughts about reasonableness and about the date.

If she has nothing new to add to the discussion, her points have been well taken. I'm sure there are others who would wish to comment.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Madam Saks.

Mrs. Gray, it is a point of order. Your comments cannot be repetitive.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Just to clarify, I was referring to the amendment and how it's applicable. When I was talking earlier, it was to the general motion. I'm talking about the amendment. Even though I might have made reference in a different form, it's very relative to the amendment. My comments at that time didn't have anything to do with the amendment, because we didn't have an amendment before us. Therefore, those comments are very relative. Even though I'd made maybe similar types of comments earlier, they weren't with the context of the amendment we're dealing with.

Anyway, I'll move on.

The Chair: Just so we're clear, Standing Order 11 states that you cannot be repetitive in the comments. You have to expand your subject matter.

Mrs. Gray, you have the floor.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Great. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The other thing I want to mention is that we actually don't know how many written pieces of testimony we have waiting for us to see. The clerk made a comment that we've received about half of them. I'd have to go back to actually count how many have come in. It's been quite substantive. I've spent quite a bit of time going back and reading all of them. I archive them and then go back.

We don't know how many are coming—

Ms. Ya'ara Saks: I have a point of order, Chair.

Mrs. Gray has said this statement several times during this filibuster, which they continue to discuss. Her points have been well taken and noted. I'd like to see her move on.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Saks.

Mrs. Gray, I'll remind you again that the standing order states you should not be repeating the same comments.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Great. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Going back to look at the date we're looking at, if we look at the calendar, we are basically giving this a few more days.

The other thing, too, is that we're staying consistent with how many meetings were originally planned to look at this piece of legislation. Originally when we were looking at this, we wanted more meetings so that we could have a little more time, because it's so important. However, we agreed to the six meetings. We're still staying within that. This is not an extension of meetings.

I think I'll leave it there. I think Ms. Ferreri is up next. I think her motion is very reasonable. I definitely support it, based on what we have before us today and the new information that we received today.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

• (2010)

The Chair: Go ahead, Ms. Ferreri, on the amendment.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Thank you so much, Mr. Chair.

I just have to acknowledge the witnesses.

I'm sorry you are part of a parliamentary procedure that is painful.

The Chair: Ms. Ferreri, speak to the amendment, please.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Yes, I'm on the amendment. I just think it's important that we acknowledge the witnesses, who are critical because that's actually what we are debating when we talk about the amendment.

It was brought forth by me. There was a motion on the floor to close amendment submissions and clause-by-clause. I said we would discuss this later. I said we could discuss this during committee business and not during witness testimony, which chews up their valuable time. The Liberals and NDP voted no, so here we are, trying to ensure that all voices are heard so that we can ensure that Bill C-35 is done correctly.

I have also put forth an amendment to further this, so that we can actually get to the crux of what we're trying to do as elected officials, which is make sure that legislation is not set up to fail, but that it is set up to serve Canadians.

Witnesses, I will definitely ensure that we can get you back as soon as we can.

The amendment I put forth is, “That amendments be submitted to the clerk of the committee in both official languages no later than 1:00 p.m, EST, Tuesday, April 20, 2023”. It's not far, when you think that we have two weeks of constituency work

It continues, “that the clerk of the committee write immediately to each member who is not a member of a caucus represented on the committee and any independent members to inform them of the study of Bill C-35 by the committee and to invite them to prepare and submit any proposed amendments to Bill C-35 which they would suggest that the committee consider during the clause-by-clause study of the bill”.

The way we're looking at this is that we need amendments. Then we have to go through clause-by-clause to ensure that everybody agrees or disagrees and to strengthen this bill to its absolute strength. It concludes, “and the committee begin clause-by-clause consideration of the bill on April 25, 2023.”

We're back in the same round and round discussion of why we need these dates. The reality is that, as we've heard already, half of the submissions are in. We need to translate all of that. We need time to listen to all of it.

Mr. Chair, through you, the other issue is that we cannot write and create amendments until we have listened to every witness. We have to listen to every witness, listen to every submission and read every submission, so that we know we are listening to what they are saying and we can put forth amendments that strengthen the bill.

Even when we look at one of our witnesses, who never even got to testify tonight because of this circus—

The Chair: Ms. Ferreri, speak to the amendment, which is the two dates.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: This is on the amendment.

Less than 25% of Ontario children are accessing licensed child care. The new Canada-wide early learning and child care—or CWELCC, as many people know it—excludes more than 75% of Ontario children and families. That's just Ontario. If we're looking at those numbers, we need those submissions to strengthen this bill.

We didn't vote against this. We are here to work with you.

Through you, Mr. Chair, we are in this nonsense and it's ridiculous. If we are really here to serve people, we need to strengthen this bill. The reality is that we have so many wait-lists. This is actually setting the provinces up to fail, if we do not do this properly.

To go back to the amendment, if we do not have this extension.... I'm not asking for years of extension, Mr. Chair—

Mr. Tony Van Bynen: On a point of order, Mr. Chair, we're really wandering from the discussion of the amendment. Let's get back to the amendment.

I'm challenging this on relevance.

The Chair: I'll ask members to keep their comments to the relevancy of the amendment, which—

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: I think we may have a different definition of what the relevance of the amendment is. If we need time to listen to people and to write good amendments—

Mr. Tony Van Bynen: That's my point of order, Mr. Chair. It's not relevant.

• (2015)

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: How is this not relevant? The amendment is to increase the time so that we can listen to the witnesses.

The Chair: You have the floor, Ms. Ferreri.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Again, we're just confirming what I'm saying about the Liberals not listening so that we can get these things done properly to protect Canadian families. People are waiting. This is an opportunity to fix a bill to really make an impact for the rest of humanity here—for the Canadian future.

We've been talking about child care since I was in child care. This is one of the most important bills put forth on the floor of the House of Commons. I want to work with my colleagues as the critic.

The Chair: Ms. Ferreri, could I just interrupt for a moment? Ms. Moser, who is one of the witnesses, has her hand up.

Ms. Moser, was there a clarification that you required?

Maggie Moser (Director, Board of Directors, Ontario Association of Independent Childcare Centres): Yes. Thank you. I want to thank everyone for having invited me here as a witness.

I just wanted to ask, after an hour and 15 minutes of listening to this discussion, if I can leave at this point. It looks like you don't have any intention of hearing the witnesses this evening. Is this true?

Mrs. Tracy Gray: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Ms. Moser, I want to hear the point of order from Mrs. Gray, and then I'll get back to you.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

We're still in committee business. Is that correct? We're still discussing the amendment?

The Chair: Yes.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Therefore, we're discussing the amendment, and that is the sole focus of this.

With all due respect, that's still what we're discussing. Is that correct, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: That's correct. We're on the amendment, but I recognized Ms. Moser, because she had her hand up. I wasn't sure if she had an issue.

Ms. Moser, the committee is scheduled to go until 8:30—

Mrs. Tracy Gray: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mrs. Gray.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: I just wanted to clarify that this committee was actually going until eight o'clock, because we were expecting bells to be ringing, originally, at eight o'clock. Perhaps the witnesses weren't informed of that.

The Chair: No, it was scheduled to 8:30.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Yes, because bells are at eight.... Just for clarification, this committee was ending earlier because of the votes the government has chosen to do in the House of Commons, so this committee was unfortunately going to be ending earlier than scheduled.

Mr. Michael Coteau: I have a point of order.

Chair—

Mrs. Tracy Gray: I'm sorry, but I have the point of order.

The Chair: Just a moment.

Ms. Moser, I will get back to you.

I have Ms. Falk, and then Mr. Coteau, but the bells are ringing. I cannot continue the committee unless there's unanimous consent to continue.

Do I have unanimous consent to continue?

Mr. Wayne Long (Saint John—Rothesay, Lib.): No.

The Chair: We do not have unanimous consent to continue.

With that, I will adjourn the meeting.

The meeting is adjourned.

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