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• (1540)

[English]

The Chair (Hon. Karina Gould (Burlington, Lib.)): Good afternoon, colleagues. I call this meeting to order.

Welcome to meeting number 42 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance.

In today's meeting, pursuant to the order of reference of Tuesday, May 26, 2026, and the motion adopted by the committee on Thursday, May 7, 2026, the committee is commencing consideration of Bill C-30, an act to implement certain provisions of the spring economic update tabled in Parliament on April 28, 2026.

I would like to welcome our many witnesses. I won't go through and list all of them because there are many from different departments. I invite committee members to look at the list of witnesses that we have from the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, the Department of Employment and Social Development, the Department of Finance, the Department of Health and the Department of Transport.

Given that we have many officials joining us, there won't be any opening statements. We'll go straight into questions from members.

If you have a question to address to a specific witness, we would ask that the witness comes up and that everyone is prepared to come up quickly to answer questions. For witnesses, I would ask that you state your name and your position, for the purposes of the interpreters, before you answer the question.

Without further ado, we will commence with Mr. Hallan, who I understand is sharing his time with Mr. Barlow, for six minutes.

Jasraj Hallan (Calgary East, CPC): Thanks, Chair.

I'm going to put a motion on notice, and then I'll pass the time on to Mr. Barlow.

The motion is as follows:

That, given that Canada's economy is in recession, the Standing Committee on Finance schedule a meeting with the Minister of Finance and National Revenue one time per month, as long as the Canadian economy remains in a recession.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Hallan.

Mr. Barlow, please go ahead.

John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

My questions will be mainly for CFIA and Health.

My first question is for CFIA. Certainly some changes in the Food and Drugs Act would allow for some decisions to be made through a food security lens. That is being proposed within the changes.

Can you point out any metrics or regulations specifically in Bill C-30 that would hold CFIA accountable to ensure that decisions are being made with that economic lens?

• (1545)

Jay Holmes (Executive Director, Business Enablement and Regulatory Services, Canadian Food Inspection Agency): I'm Jay Holmes from the Canadian Food Inspection Agency. I am the executive director of business enablement and regulatory services. Thank you for the question.

The amendments proposed in Bill C-30 respond to the recent parliamentary report and to stakeholder requests to broaden or to clarify the CFIA's mandate. In addition to reflecting in our decisions animal health, plant health and food safety, CFIA will also consider situations in which food security may be affected regionally or across the country and consider or formalize its consideration of economic factors when it's making decisions.

This will allow the CFIA to broaden out those considerations or formalize its consideration of those factors as it is making those decisions that keep, as a bedrock or as a foundation, the primacy of animal health, plant health and human safety.

John Barlow: I appreciate that, Mr. Holmes.

The reason for my question is that, when we had you at the agriculture committee a number of months ago, we asked you if there was any appetite at CFIA to change its mandate to include an economic lens. At that time you said no. You felt that CFIA was doing its job properly.

Although Bill C-30 is trying to give you consideration to make that, is there anything in Bill C-30 that holds CFIA accountable to ensure the decisions it's making use that economic lens and a lens on food security? Is it prescribed specifically that you must meet these decisions at this time?

Jay Holmes: The responses and the information that were provided previously at committee remain accurate in the sense that it noted that the preamble to the CFIA Act includes a mention of economic factors.

Bill C-30 will formalize that and clarify it in the text of the CFIA Act more properly to include factors such as supporting regulatory compliance, contributing to public awareness and consumer protection, and considering national and regional economic and food security factors. Those things will be formally included in the text of the bill rather than in the preamble.

John Barlow: Right. That's a big change, putting it in the text and not in the preamble. I think it's missing some metrics to hold the CFIA accountable and make sure that it makes decisions with that lens. I hope the minister will ensure that this happens.

Another big statement within all the testimony on the report that you are alluding to was a culture change within the CFIA. Is there anything within Bill C-30 to ensure that leadership makes that culture change within the CFIA to ensure that those decisions are made with that economic lens?

Jay Holmes: I'll start with the words that are in the bill, which I've mentioned, that formalize the factors we'll consider. Beyond that, and going beyond the words in the bill, I can tell you that today, the CFIA has already created the directorate that I'm a part of, called business enablement and regulatory services. It has three areas of focus that will put it into practice at the CFIA, which may get at the culture change that you allude to.

Number one is that this directorate is taking a very close and formalized look, when we're making regulatory changes, at whether we are considering all appropriate factors, such as economic factors. This directorate is also the focus at the CFIA of our work to formalize and to continue to look at red tape—

John Barlow: I'm sorry, Mr. Holmes.

Basically, the directorate is going to be established to try to enforce that culture change within the CFIA. I hope that more bureaucracy doesn't lead to a loss of focus.

Health Canada, I have a couple of questions for you as well.

In Bill C-30, you are also talking about making decisions through an economic and food security lens. Does Bill C-30 include any provisions on the harmonization of regulations with trusted jurisdictions?

Shannon Laforce (Director General, Department of Health): It doesn't explicitly include provisional changes related to foreign decisions in international jurisdictions. However, the pesticides program currently works very closely with other international partners on joint reviews.

• (1550)

John Barlow: There's nothing in there that...

The PMRA's decision-making is falling further and further behind in terms of the timeline. Companies do not want to come to Canada, because of the regulatory red tape they have to go through.

Is there anything within Bill C-30, including any regulations, that will expedite access for Canadian producers of vital crop protection products, veterinary medicine, fertilizer or seed varieties that are already approved in trusted jurisdictions?

Shannon Laforce: In Bill C-30, the explicit focus is on the inclusion of economic and food security in our mandate. That said,

on pesticides, Health Canada has a number of changes that we are undertaking as part of the red tape reduction, and they focus on improving performance and making sure that we're bringing in and supporting innovation in Canada.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Laforce.

Thank you, Mr. Barlow. That concludes your time.

We're going to continue now with Mr. Leitão for six minutes, please.

[*Translation*]

Carlos Leitão (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, Lib.): Thank you very much.

I would like to address the Department of Finance officials specifically about the economic update and the increase in revenue that has been observed.

[*English*]

The Chair: Could anyone from the Department of Finance come to the table?

[*Translation*]

Carlos Leitão: Thank you very much, gentlemen.

The economic update showed that the reported deficit was lower than what had been projected in the November budget. One reason for this decline in the deficit was that government revenues were higher than expected.

Could you tell us where that comes from, basically?

Gervais Coulombe (Director General, Legislation, Sales Tax Division, Department of Finance): Madam Chair, I thank the member for his question.

We are here primarily to answer questions about Bill C-30. I'm not sure if we have any officials on the witness panel who were involved in drafting schedule 1 and the tax framework.

My colleague tells me that we do not. Unfortunately, since this is not a question directly related to the content of Bill C-30, we'll have to provide you with a written response.

Carlos Leitão: The increase is mainly due to higher income tax revenues. If income tax revenues were higher than expected, it was because the economy was growing at a faster pace than anticipated. So, economically speaking, 2025 was still a reasonably good year.

Let's get back to the matter at hand. I'd like us to talk a bit about the Investment Canada Act and the changes we're going to make regarding the takeover of Canadian companies and the establishment of Canadian companies by non-Canadians.

We're going to amend the Bank Act, and we're going to ensure that foreign banks will have to do things differently.

Could you please explain to us briefly, but clearly, what these changes are?

Justin Brown (Senior Director, Financial Sector Integrity and National Security, Department of Finance): Section 1 of part 3 would amend the Bank Act to ensure that investments in non-financial activities made by foreign banks and their affiliates are subject to a national security review under the Investment Canada Act or federal laws governing financial institutions, thereby avoiding any potential gaps or overlaps.

• (1555)

Carlos Leitão: Would this apply only to lending activities, meaning loans, or would it also apply to direct investment by foreign banks?

Justin Brown: Yes, it would apply to any investment in non-financial activities, in particular. The goal is to ensure that investments are subject to review, either under the Investment Canada Act or under one of the financial institutions acts, such as the Bank Act.

Carlos Leitão: Okay, thank you.

So this is something that didn't exist until now, for example, when foreign banks financed the purchase of a Canadian company.

In the case of a change in ownership, we could determine whether it was in the national interest or not. The bank's activities themselves were not supervised. They weren't scrutinized. Now, we're adding that to the tool kit we have.

Isn't that right?

Justin Brown: There are currently national security reviews in place, for example, under the Bank Act or the Investment Canada Act. The problem that had been identified is that there are gaps in some cases. For example, certain investments might not be subject to one act or the other. In a few specific cases, the investment could be subject to two separate reviews.

The amendments to the bill therefore aim to provide greater clarity. We want to be very clear regarding an investment subject to review, either under the Investment Canada Act or under the Bank Act. It can't be subject to both acts. It must be subject to one or the other.

Carlos Leitão: Okay, thank you very much.

I also want to talk about the changes to the Bank of Canada Act. I don't know if I should ask you my question.

Justin Brown: It depends on the question.

Carlos Leitão: Okay.

This mainly concerns the Canadian Payments Act. The Bank of Canada is now being asked to be a key player in the payment system.

Can you quickly summarize for us what is being added to Bill C-30 in this regard?

The Chair: I would ask you to answer in 15 seconds, please.

Nicolas Marion (Senior Director, Payments Policy, Financial Services Division, Department of Finance): Thank you for the question.

Bill C-30 essentially shifts the cost recovery measures in various acts to consolidate them under the Bank of Canada Act.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Marion.

Thank you, Mr. Leitão.

[English]

Before I go to Mr. Lemire, I would like to say to Department of Finance officials—and it's not you, because you are here—it seems to be a recurring theme that we don't get the officials who can necessarily answer all the members' questions. I would ask that in the future, we make sure to have the officials who can answer all of those questions.

Thank you.

[Translation]

Mr. Lemire, you have the floor for six minutes.

Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Here's my first question.

Mr. Countryman, you're responsible for federal-provincial relations. In the spring economic update, the government provided \$6 billion for the team Canada strong initiative, which would put in place a workforce training program through a wage subsidy.

What is the nature of the prior consultations with the provinces in the development of this measure?

Did you consult primarily with the Government of Quebec before developing this measure?

Galen Countryman (Director General, Federal-Provincial Relations, Department of Finance): Unfortunately, I'm not responsible for that measure in the spring economic update. I can consult my colleagues and ask them to provide you with an answer.

• (1600)

Sébastien Lemire: Perfect. We would appreciate that. You can send it in writing.

From what I understand, no one in the room took care of that component.

Is that the case?

Galen Countryman: Indeed, no one in the room today took care of it.

Sébastien Lemire: Were you aware that there has been an agreement between Quebec and Ottawa on workforce training since 1997 and that this measure could raise conflicts with Quebec, because workforce training obviously falls under Quebec's jurisdiction?

Galen Countryman: Again, I'm not an expert in this area. So I don't have an answer for you today.

Sébastien Lemire: Okay.

I'm still proceeding in the spirit of federal-provincial relations. You did not personally inform the Minister of Finance or his staff of the sensitive nature of the measure related to intergovernmental relations with the Government of Quebec.

Is that correct?

Galen Countryman: It depends on the question. I deal with—

Sébastien Lemire: This is still related to the training program, as well as to adding money and interfering in Quebec's jurisdiction.

In your role as director general of federal-provincial relations at the Department of Finance, did you raise the red flag to say that it might provoke a reaction from the Quebec side?

Galen Countryman: At the Department of Finance, we deal mainly with transfers to the provinces and territories, such as the Canada health transfer, or CHT.

As for questions about other programs, you'd have to ask my other colleagues at the Department of Finance.

Sébastien Lemire: Were you personally surprised when Quebec's labour minister, Jean Boulet, who is known as a supporter of the independence movement and is therefore a staunch federalist in Quebec, said he was struck by the number of federal measures encroaching on his jurisdiction when he commented on the economic statement the day after your presentation?

Galen Countryman: Again, I'm not involved in that file, so I don't have an answer to that.

Sébastien Lemire: I'll move on.

Could you confirm for me that the government doesn't want to impose conditions on the provinces for the proportional payment of the amounts earmarked for the team Canada strong initiative?

In other words, will the government commit to allowing Quebec to exercise its right to opt out with full compensation?

Are you going to make that recommendation?

Galen Countryman: Again, I'm not the person responsible for that measure. I think it's a measure administered by Employment and Social Development Canada.

Sébastien Lemire: If you or someone in the room could pass on my questions to the appropriate people, that would be appreciated.

How do you intend to work with the Government of Quebec to ensure that the certifications it issues are recognized in the same way as your "Red Seal" certification?

One issue that is very sensitive in our region, as in many other regions of Quebec, is the issue of labour in relation to temporary foreign workers.

Measures are required, such as labour market impact assessments, or LMIA's. Since you're responsible for intergovernmental relations, you are no doubt aware that the Government of Quebec is already conducting this assessment to identify labour market issues, significant gaps and areas where gaps must be filled by using tem-

porary foreign workers. In this context, LMIA's are a federal government requirement that only makes the process more cumbersome.

I put myself in the shoes of a small or medium-sized business, or SME, that wants to continue to be productive, but has to wait three to six months before getting the LMIA and completing the entire administrative process that makes it possible to create just one job. Particularly in a region like Abitibi-Témiscamingue, it is possible to prove very quickly that there is no good Canadian who wants to go and work for a given company in a given circumstance. That's why people turn to immigration. However, the process is very cumbersome.

As the person responsible for intergovernmental relations, do you acknowledge that Quebec already assesses the labour market needs of labour market partners and that this assessment could be sufficient rather than forcing a cumbersome administrative process that takes time away from public servants and undermines business productivity?

By suspending LMIA authorizations for a few years, could the productivity of businesses be improved?

Are you aware of this problem?

Galen Countryman: Again, I believe it's a program administered by another department, so I don't know the details.

Sébastien Lemire: I'm sorry I overestimated your role a bit, but I'm counting on you to provide answers to my questions.

Thank you very much.

• (1605)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Lemire.

Mr. Mazier, you now have the floor for five minutes.

[English]

Dan Mazier (Riding Mountain, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

My questions are for Mr. Holmes from the Canadian Food Inspection Agency.

Mr. Holmes, Bill C-30 uses the term "food security". However, that term is not defined in the legislation. What is the definition of food security, according to the government?

Jay Holmes: In developing this, we noted that there are several definitions of food security used by different organizations. It was decided when drafting the bill to choose one that was more all-encompassing in order not to bind our hands.

Dan Mazier: What was that definition?

Jay Holmes: Considering food security, in terms of the CFIA's new mandate, means that we'll have to look at issues of having enough food to eat in a particular region or across the country in a specific situation. The foundation of it is having access to food for Canadians but noting, too, that there are a number of definitions of this term.

Dan Mazier: Can we get any more...? What does it mean to you? If you're reading that and have to defend it, as you are now, what speaks to Canadians when it comes to food security?

We have two million people lining up at food banks right now. I'll remind you that food is kind of scarce in Canada. It's unbelievably so.

What would the definition of food security be for this government?

Jay Holmes: I can give you two examples of when the CFIA dealt with food security issues in the past.

Number one was during the floods in B.C. The CFIA was made aware that there was the potential for a shortage of food in areas of British Columbia, and the CFIA took steps to make sure that there was enough food available to eat.

Dan Mazier: I have another definition for you.

Mr. Holmes, Bill C-30 uses the term "economic security". However, the term is not defined in the legislation. What is the definition of economic security according to the government?

Jay Holmes: When the CFIA has in the past...or in the future, when we do consider or bring economic—

Dan Mazier: Is it the past or the future? What are we talking about here? We're talking about Bill C-30.

Jay Holmes: With respect to Bill C-30, when the CFIA makes regulatory decisions, the CFIA will consider economic factors that are brought to our attention, such as the potential for a disproportionate effect of certain decisions on small businesses. That will be considered along with what are our paramount considerations—food safety, animal health and plant health—to make sure that the CFIA maintains a strong science and regulatory base to its decisions while also considering these relevant factors.

Dan Mazier: Okay. Mr. Holmes, Bill C-30 also uses the term "seriously detrimental infestation". However, the term is not defined. What is the definition of a seriously detrimental infestation according to the government?

Jay Holmes: Thank you, Chair. I'll have to defer to my colleagues at the Department of Health.

Shannon Laforce: Hello. I am Shannon Laforce from the pesticides program at Health Canada. Thank you for the question.

Right now, we have a definition in our legislation that defines it as part of our emergency registrations. However, in Bill C-30, we're currently in the process of more formally defining those. They will be defined in policy. It was intentional not to have put them in the wording of the legislation. We are currently working to make sure that they are defined in policy and have committed to putting that in writing.

Dan Mazier: Are they not defined right now?

Shannon Laforce: They are currently under development. They're not finalized.

Dan Mazier: You're asking us to make a decision on legislation when we have no definitions. We have a definition at least for one that we found out, but how many other definitions are not defined yet? Obviously, we have question marks around the other terms I've just asked about: economic security and food security. Are there no definitions for them?

• (1610)

Shannon Laforce: We're going to be building on the definitions in the policy and legislation that we currently have in place, but in the context of Bill C-30, we are refining those definitions in the new context of the bill.

Dan Mazier: Okay, thank you.

Ms. Laforce, the Canada disability benefit uses the same definition of disability as the Accessible Canada Act, which includes people with episodic disabilities like multiple sclerosis. However, the disability tax credit, which you need to access the Canada disability benefit, still requires that a person demonstrate, and I quote, a "marked restriction" 90% of the time.

You have a situation in which the government's own legislation says someone with MS qualifies for the Canada disability benefit, but the CRA's interpretation of the disability tax credit says they may not qualify for the very credential they need to access. Why is this not addressed?

Shannon Laforce: Unfortunately, I am from the pesticides regulatory program and not the pharmaceutical or another part of health. I am not the expert who can answer that question.

The Chair: Thanks, Ms. Laforce and Mr. Mazier. We're going to have to conclude there. That concludes your time. We can perhaps ask Health Canada to give you a written response for that.

Dan Mazier: Yes, that would be great. People with MS have come into my office and asked for that.

[Translation]

The Chair: Mr. Lavoie, you have the floor for five minutes.

Steeve Lavoie (Beauport—Limoulu, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

My first question is for the Department of Finance officials. I will then have questions for the Transport Canada officials.

[English]

The Chair: Could Department of Finance officials please make their way up as soon as possible? Thank you.

[Translation]

Steeve Lavoie: Good morning.

I'd like to thank the witnesses for being here.

We know that the government has made internal trade a priority. There has been talk of removing interprovincial trade barriers. This was also mentioned in the economic update, which identifies internal trade as a key driver of economic growth.

I would like an update. Where are we at with interprovincial barriers?

Is there any progress? Have there been any concrete advances?

Gervais Coulombe: I'm afraid, again, that we can't answer that question. This is a measure that is in the economic statement and that colleagues are currently working on, but it's not a measure included in Bill C-30.

Unfortunately, we couldn't bring the entire department here. To my knowledge, there is no official in the room who can answer that question.

Steeve Lavoie: In the economic update, however, internal trade is presented as an important lever for economic growth.

Aren't internal trade and interprovincial barriers the same thing?

Gervais Coulombe: The bill you have here implements some of the measures that are addressed in the economic update.

Steeve Lavoie: Could you tell me about those measures?

Gervais Coulombe: For example, part I includes measures related to the Income Tax Act. These measures amend the labour mobility deduction for eligible tradespeople.

There's also an extension for the lifetime capital gains exemption.

Steeve Lavoie: In terms of labour, how has that been going so far?

I find that interesting. Let's continue on labour.

What are the timelines, concretely, for businesses and for economic development?

Mark Maxson (Senior Director, Employment and Education, Personal Income Tax Division, Department of Finance): My name is Mark Maxson. I'm the senior director for employment and education in the personal income tax division.

The bill contains a labour mobility deduction. The limits for the deductions are being increased from \$4,000 to \$10,000. The distance threshold is also being reduced, from 150 kilometres to 120 kilometres, to make it easier for workers to access the deduction.

Steeve Lavoie: Thank you.

My next question has to do with affordability.

In my riding of Beauport—Limoilou, what worries people the most is the cost of living, of course.

In the economic update, what measure will have the most direct impact on households in my riding?

What is the most concrete, direct measure that people will quickly see the effects of?

• (1615)

Gervais Coulombe: Bill C-30 includes a fairly significant measure, namely, the temporary suspension of the excise tax on diesel and gasoline. This involves removing the excise tax of 10¢ per litre for a period of approximately 20 weeks. For example, for a family filling up with 50 litres, taking applicable sales taxes into account, this represents potential savings of \$5.75 per tank.

This is part of the measures already administered by the Canada Revenue Agency. They are also included in Bill C-30.

Steeve Lavoie: In one of the neighbourhoods in my riding, Limoilou, many people don't have a car. They get around by bike or on foot, or they use public transit.

What measures might be relevant for them?

Gervais Coulombe: That measure could still be relevant for them, insofar as transportation costs will decrease throughout the entire production chain. Or rather, I should say that they won't increase. The rather special circumstances in the Middle East have caused oil prices to rise significantly, which led the government to take this measure.

Among the other measures related to the excise tax is the extension of the reduction for microbrewery beer. That could be a relevant measure.

Steeve Lavoie: That doesn't help families.

Gervais Coulombe: As you know, there's been an ongoing legislative agenda over the years. There were, of course, other measures in the budget implementation bill for 2025 that was recently passed.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Lavoie.

Before we continue, I would like to ask members to ask their questions a little more slowly to help out the interpreters.

Mr. Lemire, you have the floor for two and a half minutes.

Sébastien Lemire: Thank you, Madam Chair.

My questions are for the representatives of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, or CFIA. They are Mr. Holmes and Ms. Wild.

Thank you both for being with us.

I hope that the exercise will give me more answers than for the previous questions. The bar is high. I'm being tongue-in-cheek.

Clause 48 of Bill C-30 seeks to replace subsections 11(4) and 11(5) of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency Act, which refer to promoting trade and considering economic security in the agency's mission.

Previously, it was only a matter of considering public health. This is a major breach. In the name of the economy, a public health loophole is being opened.

How will integrating trade and economic considerations into the CFIA's mission change the nature of your daily work, particularly when it comes to pesticide registration?

[*English*]

Jay Holmes: I'm sorry, Chair. The interpretation doesn't seem to be coming through the earpiece.

The Chair: Okay. You didn't hear any of that in the earpiece?

Jay Holmes: There was no interpretation.

[*Translation*]

Sébastien Lemire: I think you know the premise of the question, so I'll ask it again.

How will integrating—

The Chair: Mr. Lemire, wait a moment. Could you slow down a bit for the sake of the interpreters, please?

Sébastien Lemire: Okay.

The Chair: Thank you.

Sébastien Lemire: How will integrating trade and economic considerations into the CFIA's mission change the nature of your daily work, particularly when it comes to pesticide registration?

Shannon Laforce: Thank you for the question.

[*English*]

In relation to the day-to-day work around pesticides, these provisions in Bill C-30 will allow us to do.... We've always had the mandate to look at the value of a product when we review it and register it. This additional amendment will allow us to do the necessary economic analysis in order to ensure the review of decisions and to understand the impact of a crop or the loss of a crop, should a decision be negative.

From a day-to-day activity standpoint, this will ensure that we are broadening the scope of what we review, and the analysis that we put out as part of our decisions, to ensure that economics are more at the forefront, without compromising health and environment, because those are always paramount.

• (1620)

[*Translation*]

Sébastien Lemire: Obviously, the budget cuts to science and research, as well as those affecting the Longueuil laboratory, send the opposite message.

I'd like to hear your comments on market diversity.

The new pesticide regulations in the European Union are much stricter than those in Canada, and as a result, Europe's doors could close for a number of Canadian agricultural products.

While we talk about market diversification, why are we working to reduce our access to Europe, which is a reliable market?

Did you know that France's National Assembly is going to vote to ban the import of food products made with pesticides?

The Chair: Mr. Lemire, that concludes your time.

Sébastien Lemire: Madam Chair, you didn't listen. I repeated my question because it had not been interpreted. You asked me to repeat my question.

The Chair: We had stopped the clock.

Sébastien Lemire: I've been a member of Parliament for six years. I've never been interrupted like that.

The Chair: Mr. Lemire, we reset your time.

Sébastien Lemire: I would like you to show me that. I have two minutes and 20 seconds on my other clock, and I wanted to be able to at least get the witnesses' answer.

The Chair: I have three minutes and two seconds on mine. We reset your speaking time.

Sébastien Lemire: Does that also include the entire—

The Chair: Yes, we reset your time.

Thank you, Mr. Lemire.

Sébastien Lemire: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I find the exercise a bit.... I'm not sure if you did the same thing, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Mr. Lemire, thank you.

[*English*]

We'll continue now with Mr. Barlow for five minutes.

John Barlow: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. We can just leave everybody here.

My question is for the PMRA. Ms. Laforce, the approval times of PMRA have doubled. They have become worse under the transformation agenda. The AAFC puts that number at about a \$50-billion cost to Canadian agriculture. Canada is 32nd out of 38 OECD countries when it comes to agricultural regulatory burden. We are number 21 when it comes to active ingredient registration. Many companies do not want to come to Canada as a result of these numbers. It takes too long to access this market.

Is there anything within Bill C-30 that sets targets for PMRA, in terms of approving its decision-making process to improve those numbers, to come up from 32nd out of 38 in the OECD and to come up from number 21 in terms of active ingredient registrations in Canada? Are there any specific targets in Bill C-30 that hold PMRA accountable for the decisions it is making?

Shannon Laforce: Thank you for the question.

Bill C-30 includes, as stated, changing the mandate to have a provision that requires the pesticides regulatory directorate to consider economic considerations of food security.

John Barlow: Okay, thank you, but again...all these things about "consider". Is there a definitive target within Bill C-30 that says that you must meet this decision timeline or approval timeline or that we want to be, for example, number 32 out of 38? Are there specific targets set for the PMRA?

Jordan Hancey (Director, Policy and Regulatory Affairs, Department of Health): Hi, this is Jordan Hancey from the policy and regulatory affairs division.

Those targets are part of the Service Fees Act. They already exist for the PMRA. They're binding, and if we miss targets, then we have to refund a portion of the application fee. They do exist. They're not in Bill C-30, but they exist through the Service Fees Act.

John Barlow: Well, Mr. Hancey, the PMRA is making a lot of refunds then.

Last, to the CFIA and Mr. Holmes, the CFIA has not inspected the animal health protocols in the Mercosur countries since 2018. Has the CFIA done any impact analysis in terms of a potential animal disease outbreak in Canada as a result of the Liberal government's signing the Mercosur trade agreement, especially when it comes to Canadian livestock?

Jay Holmes: Thank you.

I note that the discussion today is focused on Bill C-30. This sort of treads outside of that.

John Barlow: Yes, but you're here, so I thought I'd ask you the question.

Jay Holmes: Our trade colleagues would be able to respond to that, and we can get back to you with an answer on that in due course.

John Barlow: Thank you.

I'll pass my remaining time to Mr. Mazier.

Dan Mazier: This question is for Health Canada.

The government provided 4.5 million tax dollars to an organization called MySafe Society. The purpose of this money was to fund vending machines that dispense opioid drugs across Canada. Are there any opioid vending machines still operating in Canada today?

• (1625)

Ryan Turnbull (Whitby, Lib.): I have a point of order.

Today's conversation is about Bill C-30. I don't believe this question is relevant. Maybe you could ask Mr. Mazier if he can pose a relevant question.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Turnbull.

I would ask Mr. Mazier to focus on the questions with regard to Bill C-30. Thank you.

Dan Mazier: We have Health Canada right in front of us, and we've been trying to find this out for a long time. I think they're free to answer it. Could they table that information?

Shannon Laforce: Thank you for the question. Unfortunately, it's outside the scope of Bill C-30, and I am not in a position to answer the question at this time.

Dan Mazier: Okay. I'll continue with my questions, then.

Health Canada has confirmed that at least one of these government-funded opioid machines was used to divert drugs to the black market. Did the government shut down these opioid vending machines as soon as they were made aware of the diversion?

Ryan Turnbull: I have a point of order on relevance, which is in the Standing Orders. I know that members opposite are used to being in committee, and we normally pose relevant questions on matters related to the actual bill that is under consideration. Bill C-30 doesn't deal with that measure, and I'm wondering, Madam Chair, whether you can bump our colleague back into his lane. It's called a lane assist.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Turnbull.

Mr. Mazier, I would remind you to stick to Bill C-30. I think the officials who are here are from the pesticides area of Health Canada, so it's probably difficult for them to answer that question.

Dan Mazier: How much time do I have left, Chair?

The Chair: You have one and a half minutes.

Dan Mazier: Okay.

Ms. Laforce, the Statutory Instruments Act does not apply to divisions 7 and 8 in Bill C-30. This means that cabinet can get around regulatory publication and parliamentary scrutiny. Is there any binding consultation requirement that exists for these divisions?

Jordan Hancey: Under the bill, there are two kinds of ordered powers. One is following a postmarket review. In that case, there is a notice that has to be issued at least 30 days before the order. Both the notice and the order do need to be published. There aren't consultations per se.

In the case of the emergency power, it also needs to be published, but that's in the context of these new order powers. Generally speaking, for the PMRA, we consult on all major regulatory decisions for registrations via public consultations.

Dan Mazier: There is or there isn't. Is there any binding consultation requirement?

Jordan Hancey: For these orders, they don't include a consultation, or a notice in the case of the postmarket power; in both cases, the order needs to be published.

Dan Mazier: Okay. Is there anything in Bill C-30 for drug diversion?

Shannon Laforce: No, not that I'm aware of, but it's outside of my...

The Chair: Okay, thank you very much.

Thank you, Mr. Mazier.

We'll continue now with Mr. Turnbull for five minutes.

Ryan Turnbull: Thanks, Chair.

I'll ask relevant questions on Bill C-30.

Division 8 of part 3 amends the Pest Control Products Act. There are amendments made to the purposes, which will now include national economic security, regional economic security and national food security—all of which would change how the act is interpreted and how decisions are made. It certainly appears that it adds in complexity to decision-making processes. Those economic factors are probably good things to consider, but I wondered if you could speak to how this will change decision-making.

Shannon Laforce: Thank you for the question.

As a matter of day-to-day practice, the pesticides regulatory directorate is anchored in the safety of health and environment, and these changes do not change the mandate of our minister. However, they do include provisions, at least in section 4, to ensure that as we run through our review processes, we include consideration of economic and food security at the national and regional levels. It will change things, in that our decisions will be more transparent around how we consider economic considerations in our decision-making process.

Ryan Turnbull: Okay. That's very helpful.

For those who may be interpreting the changes that are being proposed, when a pest control product is deemed to be unacceptable for environmental risk, it can still be used to help preserve human health in cases of crisis, so there are emergency powers. Can you help us understand how limited and narrow the scope will be to use those powers? There is some concern that others have raised. I really think that we need to assure people that this isn't a broad set of powers. It's very narrow and focused on very extreme circumstances. Can you speak to that?

• (1630)

Shannon Laforce: Yes, the emergency powers under the general order in council are intended to be used only in circumstances in which health is deemed acceptable. Under no scenarios would those powers be used in a situation in which health is deemed unacceptable.

At the very first, Health Canada would undergo its usual scientific assessment. Should that assessment deem that there are unacceptable risks related to the environment, and should there be a seriously detrimental infestation, only then can the government decide to use these powers, in a very limited time frame, to continue the use of a product under those very narrow circumstances.

Ryan Turnbull: What kind of a situation are we really talking about here? A “seriously detrimental infestation”—nothing comes to mind for me, but I only worked on a farm when I was younger. I'm not a farmer throughout generations or anything, so I don't know what specifically we're talking about. Can we talk about an example of a seriously detrimental infestation? Do you have an example in which this would apply?

Shannon Laforce: I don't have a specific example that I could use. We hope that these powers are used under rare and few circumstances.

There is always a possibility of a chemical that's been on the market for a very long time and is used in practice when there are no alternatives at all, and yet the outcome of review is negative. Under some circumstances, you could see that these powers would be used in order to continue for a limited time.

I can't give you a specific example, but perhaps my colleague would like to share more.

The Chair: Be very brief, please. You have 15 seconds.

Jordan Hancey: An example could be some sort of invasive species that could threaten a major crop like wheat or something. We process many “emergency registrations”, as we call them, each year. In some cases, it's possible that the result of that application could be that the environmental risks are not found to be acceptable, which could be because of a lack of data.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Hancey. That concludes the time.

Thank you, Mr. Turnbull.

I'm going to thank all of our witnesses and officials. There were a number of questions that were posed that we didn't get answers to. I'm going to ask that officials from those departments follow up and provide a timely response to the committee.

We will now suspend while we turn over for our next panel.

Thank you.

• (1630) _____ (Pause) _____

• (1640)

The Chair: Colleagues, welcome back. We will resume the meeting.

I would like to welcome our witnesses.

Joining us today we have the Honourable Heath MacDonald, the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food. We also have with us the Honourable Marjorie Michel, the Minister of Health.

You will each have five minutes for your opening statements.

Minister MacDonald, we will start with you.

Hon. Heath MacDonald (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food): Thank you, Chair.

It's great to be back at the finance committee. I sat through a few of these meetings for a period of time.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak to the measures in the bill supporting Canada's world-class agriculture and food sector. However you measure it, our agriculture and food industry is a core economic driver in this country.

In my home province of Prince Edward Island and right across the country, the sector drives one in nine jobs, more than \$100 billion of our exports and \$150 billion of our GDP. It also puts food on tables in Canada and in almost 200 countries around the world.

Whether it's a farm in Saskatchewan or a food processor in Ontario, agriculture is first and foremost a business. That's why we need to take an economic lens to every decision we make to advance the sector, just as our farmers and food processors do in their businesses. That's exactly the approach this bill is taking.

I'll briefly give you examples of agriculture in the food context.

On regulatory reform, the key measure that has been welcomed by everyone in the sector is the commitment to change the Canadian Food Inspection Agency's mandate to consider food security and food costs. This change in mandate acknowledges the dual role of the agency as an enabler for trade and a rigorous protector of health and safety. The CFIA does an outstanding job of building Canada's brand reputation for safe, high-quality food. That's the message I hear when I sit down with our customers in key markets around the world.

However, when I'm sitting down with farmers across the country, they always identify regulatory issues as one of the key barriers to our competitiveness. They are looking to us to streamline requirements, to modernize outdated rules and to identify unnecessary administrative burden.

There's no question that we need effective regulations to keep our food supply safe and to maintain our reputation around the world for outstanding food safety and food quality. Health and safety requirements are absolutely essential for market access. At the same time, we need to make sure that our regulations don't unnecessarily hamper our farmers' abilities to compete in the global marketplace. That's the balance that these proposed amendments to Bill C-30 are providing.

In closing, I'll touch on some other measures in the update that were very welcome news for the sector.

The first is up to \$7 billion in new capital for agritech innovation in the sector, which is committed by Farm Credit Canada and more than 20 investment organizations. Next is the development of a national food security strategy to strengthen domestic food production and improve access to affordable, nutritious food. There is also \$5 billion to modernize Canada's trade infrastructure to help exporters, including agri-food exporters, diversify their trade to new markets around the world.

Madam Chair, the agriculture measures in this bill are needed more urgently than ever, given the unprecedented challenges our producers are facing: high operating costs for fertilizer, fuel and other inputs; tariffs and other trade barriers with some of our key trading partners; and extreme weather conditions, from droughts to flooding.

Our hard-working farmers can compete with the best the world can throw at them, but they need us, as government, to give them the tools to do that. The kinds of tools we see in this bill and in the economic update are an effective and efficient regulatory system,

investments and innovation in the supply chain, and a food security strategy to help our farmers continue to feed Canada and the world.

Thank you, Madam Chair. I look forward to the discussion.

The Chair: Great. Thank you very much, Minister MacDonald.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Michel, you have the floor for five minutes.

Hon. Marjorie Michel (Minister of Health): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Honourable members, thank you for inviting me today.

I am pleased to appear before the Standing Committee on Finance to talk about Bill C-30 and, more broadly, about the economic aspect of health in Canada.

• (1645)

[*English*]

Health care is one of Canada's fastest-growing sectors. It has 3.5 million jobs across the country, and it was about 15% of Canada's labour force in 2024. Health care is a real investment in our economy and in Canadians, because we cannot build Canada strong without healthy Canadians.

[*Translation*]

The contribution of Health Canada, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency and other agencies goes beyond health. This is particularly so for agriculture. Farmers are now dealing with climate change, extreme weather events and infestations. One of our challenges is to reduce the administrative burden on farmers while ensuring the safety of our food chain.

By rethinking its authorization processes, Health Canada has become a preferred partner for farmers. The bill to implement certain provisions of the spring economic update includes amendments enabling the CFIA to take food and economic safety into account in its decisions. Similar amendments to the Pest Control Products Act are also suggested. These amendments aim to bring about cultural and operational change by requiring organizations to consider economic security and food security without compromising health and safety.

In addition, this review allows for the temporary use of some pesticides in extraordinary circumstances, particularly to avoid food shortages. The ultimate goal is to protect the health and food security of Canadians and preserve a safe, reliable and affordable food supply.

[English]

Madam Chair, we are at a turning point. We must make the right choices. We must build on our strengths to lead our country with confidence in its next chapter.

As we stake our claim in the global economy, our commitment to health care will be one of our greatest assets. By making wise investments, cutting red tape and focusing our efforts where the opportunities are greatest, we can make a real difference. That is exactly what we are doing. We are encouraging investment by reducing the administrative burden of doing business here.

[Translation]

We work with provinces and territories, as well as local and global partners, to strengthen food security and economic resilience. In addition, in partnership with the provinces and territories, we are modernizing our health care system so that it works effectively and can meet everyone's needs.

While managing health care costs is always a priority, we must view these costs as an investment that benefits all of us and our future. If we act now, we can ensure that Canada's agriculture and health sectors are a source of stability, a catalyst for productivity and a strong foundation for prosperity.

I look forward to your questions. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Minister.

Thank you, Minister MacDonald.

[English]

We are going to begin with Mr. Mazier for six minutes.

Dan Mazier: Thank you, Chair.

Welcome, ministers. My questions will be for the health minister.

We haven't seen you at the health committee for months, so I've had to come to the finance committee to ask you questions. I am wondering if you're available to testify on your government's failed \$300-million PrescribeIT program before the summer. Are you available to come to the health committee before the end of this—

The Chair: Mr. Mazier, I'd remind you to stick to Bill C-30, please.

Dan Mazier: She could answer, but she's choosing not to.

You mentioned the importance of health care in your opening statement and that Canadians need a strong health care system. With hundreds of thousands of people from around the world about to enter Canada for the FIFA World Cup, are you confident that your government's measures will ensure that Ebola will not enter and spread in Canada?

Ryan Turnbull: On a point of order, I'm sorry to have to keep doing this, but Mr. Mazier has already been told to focus on Bill C-30.

Dan Mazier: She mentioned it in her opening remarks.

Ryan Turnbull: I think I have the floor, Madam Chair.

Bill C-30 includes a number of measures relevant to the Minister of Health. I would ask the member to maybe pose some questions relevant to the legislation we're studying.

• (1650)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Turnbull.

Mr. Hallan, you have a point of order.

Jasraj Hallan: I think the minister mentioned keeping Canadians safe and protected in her opening statement. It's very fair that these questions be asked.

The Chair: I'm reviewing the opening statement.

Certainly, Mr. Mazier, you can ask the question, and the minister can decide whether she's going to answer.

Hon. Marjorie Michel: Can he repeat the question, please?

Dan Mazier: With hundreds of thousands of people from around the world about to enter Canada for the FIFA World Cup, are you confident that your government's measures will ensure that Ebola will not enter and spread in Canada?

[Translation]

Hon. Marjorie Michel: I think so, because we really took preventive measures. As I said before, the risk of Ebola arriving here in Canada is very low. We have taken a concerted approach with partners in the region.

As I said before, there is no game scheduled here in Canada between Canada and Congo or other affected countries. There are some in the United States and Mexico. We took a concerted regional approach. I think we've really taken the best steps we can.

[English]

Dan Mazier: You said that Canada's Ebola response is intended to align with that of the United States. However, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control issued an order, effective May 18, blocking non-U.S. citizens who had been in the DRC, South Sudan or Uganda within the past 21 days from entering the United States.

Is your government considering doing the same?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Marjorie Michel: People who come from those exact three countries and are not Canadians cannot come to Canada. I don't quite understand the difference.

Can you clarify your question?

As far as I'm concerned, I know that we've suspended visas for people from those three countries who are not Canadian citizens or Canadian residents. Canadians and Canadian residents will still be able to return home.

[*English*]

Dan Mazier: Are you going to follow America more? You mentioned an alignment with the U.S. Is that your intention?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Marjorie Michel: No. We issued a joint statement with the Americans and Mexicans after discussing our measures. One of the differences is that the Americans, as I understand it, are not letting green card holders return home. They're just letting in American citizens, whereas we in Canada are also letting in residents along with Canadians.

Aside from that, I think we are aligned with the measures taken by the United States.

[*English*]

Dan Mazier: Minister, can you name one federal target that was achieved by PrescribeIT?

The Chair: Mr. Mazier, I'll remind you to stick to Bill C-30, please.

Jasraj Hallan: On a point of order, Chair, this bill has everything to do with finances, and it's a so-called update. It should be very fair given the latitude that ministers usually have and that we should have for questions. I think it's very relevant.

The Chair: Thank you.

Did you have a following point of order, Mr. Mazier?

Dan Mazier: In her opening remarks, she talked about modernizing health care. Of course, that's fully about what PrescribeIT was supposed to do.

The Chair: Carry on, Mr. Mazier.

Dan Mazier: Thank you.

Did you want me to repeat the question?

Hon. Marjorie Michel: Yes, could you repeat it, please?

Dan Mazier: Can you name one federal target that was achieved by PrescribeIT?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Marjorie Michel: The results of the AI scribe program were very good. I don't think we should confuse things. You keep coming back to Canada Health Infoway. There have certainly been governance issues related to Canada Health Infoway. We've already discussed that.

It is true that the agency operates at arm's length from the government, but we are represented on its board of directors. I took the

necessary steps to speak to my representative on the board, and measures were taken.

That said, what we need to realize is that this agency has done some good things, such as the AI scribe program, which has over 10,000 enrollments across the country.

I should also tell you that Quebec, as you know, has signed an agreement with Canada Health Infoway for data sharing.

● (1655)

[*English*]

Dan Mazier: I'll ask the following question: Can you come to testify to the health committee before the end of the summer to clarify things on all of these questions we have about PrescribeIT?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Marjorie Michel: I'm not going to commit to that.

[*English*]

Dan Mazier: Oh. I might as well keep on asking here, then.

Minister, the Canada Health Infoway board voted to terminate PrescribeIT in November 2025. Your department spent another \$10.2 million on the program. Why did Canadians pay \$10 million to keep funding a program that was terminated?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Marjorie Michel: Mr. Mazier, you know very well that a program cannot be ended overnight. A dataset needs to be transferred. This is about data. That's what the program dealt with. Before the program is closed, a dataset has to be recovered. That is why the expenditure is ongoing.

[*English*]

Dan Mazier: That's fair.

Minister, your senior assistant deputy minister is a federally appointed member of the Canada Health Infoway board. Was there ever a time when she voted against giving Michael Green a performance award during his time managing PrescribeIT?

The Chair: We'll have a very brief response, please.

Dan Mazier: Is it yes or no?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Marjorie Michel: I don't know.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Mazier. That concludes your time.

We'll now continue with Ms. Tesser Derksen, please.

Kristina Tesser Derksen (Milton East—Halton Hills South, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thanks to the committee for giving me the indulgence of asking a question as a guest here today.

Minister Michel, you mentioned in your opening comments the importance of making wise investments, finding efficiencies and reducing administrative costs. I'm going to ask a question that literally affects every single person in this country directly—and in fact, every person on the planet who has ever lived or ever will live. We are all going to die.

Some of my colleagues would know that I worked as a funeral director. I'm also a board director of a non-profit foundation working to build a palliative care hospice in my riding of Milton East—Halton Hills South.

In the spirit of wise investments, I'll refer back to a study in 2012 that the Canadian Hospice Palliative Care Association published on the cost-effectiveness of palliative care. It found that in the current environment of rising health care costs and concerns about the sustainability of publicly funded health care, policy-makers were paying more attention to the high costs associated with the last year of life. Hospice Palliative Care Ontario in my home province offered that a hospice bed cost is about one-third of the cost of a hospital bed for a dying person. Specific funding and investment were also found by HPCO to reduce or possibly reduce system savings by \$200 million a year and up to \$2 billion over 10 years in Ontario alone. It's not insignificant.

I understand that health infrastructure funding is dealt with through housing and infrastructure and that health is delivered by the provinces, but we do have a national framework on palliative care in this country.

As Minister of Health, can you comment on how Health Canada sees palliative care's role in providing quality cost-effective health care to dying Canadians?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Marjorie Michel: Thank you for the question.

That actually falls under provincial jurisdiction. It's true that we have a strategy. It is also true that we have signed agreements with the provinces. In fact, I am currently negotiating with all the provinces, including Ontario, on “working together” bilateral agreements.

There used to be specific agreements on palliative care, but they no longer exist. However, we give other funds to the provinces. I am currently negotiating with each province. Then they will be able to choose how to spend the money based on their priorities. This is about services provided by the provinces.

As for the envelopes the federal government gives, in addition to the health transfers, we have, as I just said, the “working together” bilateral agreements, which will be renewed for seven years. They are usually renewed for three years, but I decided to go up to seven years to give the provinces more predictability. That way, they will know exactly how to plan for changes to their health care system.

[*English*]

Kristina Tesser Derksen: Thank you.

How's my time, Madam Chair?

The Chair: You have four minutes.

Kristina Tesser Derksen: Okay.

Thank you for your answer.

I'll take two quick minutes to ask Minister MacDonald a question.

My legislative assistant used to work in the Ministry of Agriculture. He comes from a farming family, and we talk regularly about agriculture. We recently discussed the interest-free limit under the advance payments program that has been increased to \$250,000 in 2026 for all non-canola advances. That was increased from a previous limit of \$100,000.

Minister, could you update us on how that's impacting producers and why it's important that our government committed to this increase?

• (1700)

Hon. Heath MacDonald: Thank you for that.

Anything we can do for producers right now to meet the moment they're being faced with, whether it be on climate change or on trade or non-trade barriers, is extremely important.

Industry has been asking to increase the advance payments program for a long time. We felt that this was an opportunity to help them, so we raised it to \$250,000. For canola farmers, with what they've gone through over the past few months relative to some of the trade barriers in some countries, we raised it to \$350,000, and we'll continue to look at that.

Kristina Tesser Derksen: Thanks so much.

I'll pass it back to you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Thank you.

My colleague has kindly offered to share her time with me.

[*Translation*]

I would like to ask the minister two questions about Bill C-30.

[*English*]

I'm going to ask both questions together and then allow you some time to answer.

The first is with regard to the Pest Control Products Act. The amendments in Bill C-30 refer to a situation in which the Governor in Council or cabinet can overturn the decision of the health minister. I'm wondering whether you could share a scenario in which the health minister would deny a pesticide use and the government would choose to overturn it, as well as at what point that would be made public.

The second question is with regard to the changes to the CFIA's mandate. Again, it's to understand this: What does it mean when the CFIA will be taking economic security and food security into account while not compromising on their mandate for human, animal and plant health?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Marjorie Michel: The first thing I'll say is that I'm the Minister of Health. Health is non-negotiable, and my role is to say no very clearly to any product that scientific evidence shows has a negative impact on health.

That said, there are imperatives. Of course, some products may have been taken off the market before their expiry date, perhaps because of their effect on the environment or animals, but not on human health.

The Chair: I'm sorry, you only have 10 seconds left.

Hon. Marjorie Michel: Okay.

I can say that I approve a product if there's no risk to human health. If I see there's a risk to human health and I say no, that's fine. However, there are other considerations that can—

The Chair: Thank you, Minister, the time is up.

I will now turn the floor over to Mr. Lemire for six minutes.

Sébastien Lemire: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Minister MacDonald, thank you for being here to answer our questions.

How much money does the government intend to save by closing Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's research centres?

[*English*]

Hon. Heath MacDonald: It will be approximately \$27 million after a three-year period, per year.

[*Translation*]

Sébastien Lemire: Added to the \$97 million on buildings, it comes to barely \$171 million over five years.

Is it worth it?

We can agree that is a pittance at the federal level.

[*English*]

Hon. Heath MacDonald: I think it is worth it. What we're learning, as we advance through this process, is that a revitalization of science in this country is certainly prevalent for any industry and stakeholders I've been meeting with across the country.

[*Translation*]

Sébastien Lemire: Last week, the committee heard from Charles-Félix Ross, executive director of the Union des producteurs

agricoles, who said: "Budget cuts and the closure of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada research centres are undermining the sector's ability to find concrete solutions to address climate change, improve practices and ensure the competitiveness of Canadian farms."

Minister, do you have the same concerns as the representatives of the Union des producteurs agricoles about the competitiveness of farm businesses?

[*English*]

Hon. Heath MacDonald: No, I think we need to act more quickly and to be precise in our decisions relevant to science and research in this country. It's more on the operational side that we're seeing changes. The science is going to get done one way or another, and we'll keep growing on that.

• (1705)

[*Translation*]

Sébastien Lemire: The Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food, of which I am a member, has just adopted a report on the closure of research centres. I imagine you've read it.

Basically, the committee is asking your government to reverse its decision, publish cost-benefit analyses to justify your measures, look at other ways to reduce spending, preserve existing research projects and table an action plan to ensure the sustainability of agricultural research. In short, the committee, which is now made up mostly of people from your party, is asking you to go back and do your homework.

Are you familiar with the report? Do you have any comments on it?

[*English*]

Hon. Heath MacDonald: As I said, I think that the more industry and stakeholders you talk to across the country, the more you start to see a shift saying that we need research that is being done for industry very specifically.

Just two weeks ago in Saskatchewan, I heard it right from the scientists themselves at the University of Saskatchewan, along with stakeholders sitting at the table. To be very blunt about it, they were aligned with what we're trying to do and our vision for research in this country. There will still be 17 establishments across the country. There are changes, and those changes are hard. They're not easy to do, but we're going to continue to do the research.

[Translation]

Sébastien Lemire: I don't want to contradict you, but that's not what we're hearing. On the contrary, I believe that about 97% of the witnesses, with the possible exception of only you, emphasized the fact that the ecosystem is being broken and that all this has a clear impact on the health of Canadians and on the productivity of farmland.

That created a great deal of concern, in particular for the people of the community of Swift Current and the people of Lacombe. In addition, the cumulative loss of data over several decades creates concerns for people in the industry, who rely on that data.

You feel justified in turning your back on science in this way and changing course. What matters are the savings to be made, as you said earlier. You mentioned \$27 million in savings over three years.

Knowing that the deficit is close to \$72 billion, you think that cuts to science and research in the agricultural sector are justified.

Is that correct?

[English]

Hon. Heath MacDonald: Basically, the research is going to get done. I'll continue to say that. I'll say it until I'm blue in the face. I will ensure that. I am not going to have a legacy on my behalf of sitting here and saying that I cut research. Research is too important when it's trade around the world, so we're going to continue to do research. There are 355 scientists across the country. There will likely be 25 fewer. Some of those will retire and so on and so forth.

The research is going to be done. It may be done in conjunction with academia and the provincial governments. That's the discussion we're into now in order to maintain some of these facilities. They may look a little different, and the research may look a little different, but certainly we're working with all provinces that are affected by this.

[Translation]

Sébastien Lemire: I imagine that you also intend to work with educational institutions, universities and college technology transfer centres in Quebec.

However, I am concerned about the relationship we have with researchers. Some researchers have been told that they can either stop all their research and receive a year's salary, or continue working to complete their research. Obviously, scientists want to complete their research, but that means they will no longer be paid. A year from now, after serving this country, they're going to be left with nothing.

Is this really the legacy we're leaving to scientists who wanted to work to improve the conditions of agricultural practices for humans, plants and animals across the country, on all types of soil, and to reduce the impact?

[English]

The Chair: Please give a very brief response.

Hon. Heath MacDonald: We'll continue to work with our researchers across the country. It will be a shared value. If research has to move from one facility to another, then that's the process we'll take.

[Translation]

Sébastien Lemire: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Lemire.

[English]

We'll continue now with Mr. Barlow for five minutes.

John Barlow: Thank you very much, Chair.

I'll go in a different direction, one that I wasn't expecting, because of the questions from my colleague and your responses, Minister.

You said the science is going to get done and you don't want your legacy to be cuts to science and research. Well, I've got bad news for you: That's already your legacy—shutting down seven research centres and experimental farms, with 600-plus scientists, researchers and specialists losing their jobs. That is just a fact.

You were saying that the research is going to get done by the private sector and universities, but your own quote in the House of Commons was that investment in research is down 15% on the public side; in the private sector and universities, it's down 77%; and for enterprises conducting research and development, it has shrunk by 30%.

Every single witness we had from the provinces, municipalities and universities said they do not have the resources to carry on this research. It's very clear that this research is not going to continue. These intergenerational libraries of knowledge will be lost. I don't know how you could possibly say that this isn't your legacy, because, very clearly, right now it is.

● (1710)

Hon. Heath MacDonald: I think you mentioned knowledge transfer. That has decreased over the past 20 years, very expeditiously. You're actually answering part of your own question. Research has to change in this country. The more we delve into this, sitting alongside researchers and sitting alongside stakeholders, from your province as well, we feel that there's an opportunity here to do research differently and to do research more precisely for the industry and stakeholders.

The times have changed. We need to move and meet the moment, and that's what we're trying to do.

John Barlow: I don't think doing research differently means closing critical research centres when you have a prison farm that's now \$40 million-plus over budget. I don't think that is a good use of taxpayer dollars when those dollars could have kept the La-combe research centre open for another three years, Quebec open for another three and a half years and the Nappan experimental farm open for another 20 years. That's where dollars would be much better spent.

Minister, you mentioned in your opening remarks the importance of trade. Have you done an economic analysis or an impact analysis on what signing the Mercosur trade agreement would mean for Canada's livestock industry? Obviously, these proponents are very concerned about the impact this would have. Have you personally told the Prime Minister to exempt agriculture from the Mercosur trade agreement because of the concerns raised by Canada's beef, pork and poultry producers?

Hon. Heath MacDonald: There have been many discussions on Mercosur. Certainly, I've had discussions with Manny Sidhu, the minister responsible. I recently had discussions with negotiators—

John Barlow: Have you spoken to the Prime Minister, though? Have you personally told him the concerns that this will have a detrimental impact on Canadian livestock producers?

Hon. Heath MacDonald: Relative to Manny Sidhu, as I told you, we've spoken to the—

John Barlow: I'll take that as a no.

Has the CFIA or AAFC done.... We haven't inspected the partners in Brazil and Argentina since 2018 in terms of their animal health and disease traceability protocols. Have you done an analysis of what the impact would be of BSE, African swine fever or foot-and-mouth disease coming into Canada as a result of this trade agreement?

Hon. Heath MacDonald: I believe, honourable member, there have been inspections done, maybe not in certain areas, but there have been inspections done in that country.

John Barlow: Lastly, you were talking about the importance of making decisions using an economic lens. We now know that the Alto high-speed rail will impact and possibly end 5,500 farms. Has an economic impact analysis on food security, food affordability or food sovereignty been done when high-speed rail is going to potentially lead to the loss of 5,500 farms in eastern and central Canada?

Hon. Heath MacDonald: That's the first time I have heard that there would be a loss of 5,500 farms.

John Barlow: You're cutting them in half, so that's likely going to end those farms.

Hon. Heath MacDonald: No. I think there are negotiations right now to ensure that farmers can get from one side of their field to the other, depending on where the rail goes. There's been lots of collaboration and co-operation with the UPA, with Martin Caron and with my office as well to ensure we are updated on a very frequent basis. There have also been very many conversations and many concerns from our own caucus relevant to the high-speed rail, and we'll continue to push the issue to ensure that farming continues in those areas.

John Barlow: I'm glad that other Liberal members are sharing concerns about the Alto rail. I hope that this is a wake-up call and that you abandon this boondoggle before it happens.

Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Barlow.

We'll continue now with MP MacDonald for five minutes.

Kent MacDonald (Cardigan, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Minister MacDonald, I'm going to be asking you some questions on Bill C-30.

We know that over the past several years, the CFIA has been modernizing its regulatory processes, all in support of Canada's agriculture and agri-food sector. About a year ago, I attended my first agriculture committee meeting, and we heard from stakeholders at that meeting about the necessity of speeding up the process of permitting and of speeding up the process of crop protection approval to keep up with technology. A lot of the discussion was around drones at that first meeting I attended. We know that drones are being used more and more throughout the world. Even our military is looking at drone use to monitor the Arctic.

The question I have for you, Minister, is this: Can you give us a report on the work that has been done to digitize export certificates and how that has been sped up, as well as how the delivery of services has been modernized to allow our exporters a faster track to markets?

● (1715)

Hon. Heath MacDonald: The important aspect of that goes back to ensuring that we're competitive with our trading partners. I know that the health minister has been a great benefit in her role to agriculture and agri-food. I certainly appreciate it, and I know many of our stakeholders do too.

As part of budget 2025, we invested about \$150 million in the Canadian Food Inspection Agency. We wanted to progress on digitization and export certificates, and we also wanted regulatory alignment with other countries, which is what we're continuing to work on. Since I've been around this place, I've heard many stories about containers being stuck at ports because of a misspelled word or something on that level. It was extremely important.

Innovation technology is going to play a significant role in agriculture going forward, and we need to make decisions quicker than we have in the past. We're catching up a little, but we still have a long way to go. Drones are certainly going to play a part in that. It's not just about spraying with drones; it's about planting seeds as well.

There are lots of opportunities there. We have to make sure that we get the trusted information and get it into farmers' hands to enable them to be competitive, especially when you see other countries that we're trading with or that we're importing food from utilizing this technology, for example.

In Canada, we need to step up, and that's what we're trying to do.

Kent MacDonald: Minister, we also know that there are amendments proposed in Bill C-30 that are going to allow for the lens to look at CFIA's actions in terms of food security, economic security and trade facilitation. Of course, all these considerations will be included in maintaining Canada's strong health and safety protocols, which have allowed us to market throughout the world.

You and I will both return to a province that exports about 90% of what we produce. You hear from producers and exporters all the time.

Can you elaborate on how these mandate changes are going to help farmers and processors in Atlantic Canada and throughout Canada?

Hon. Heath MacDonald: I touched on it in my first answer to you. When we have countries like the one to the south of us, we have to align ourselves better with their regulatory bodies, like APHIS—or SENASICA in Mexico—and ensure that we're on a competitive, level playing field. These changes will certainly expedite decisions while—and it's important to continue to say this—keeping Canadians safe.

Canada is known around the world for food safety, and it is a trusted trading partner. It's time that we leveraged both of those things. Regulatory decision-making is certainly something that we need to take a firm stance on and ensure, first and foremost, that Canadians are safe, and second, that an economic lens is used for some of our decisions so that we're being competitive with our trading partners. We're in a situation that has grown rapidly on the geopolitical front, and we need to ensure that we're doing everything possible to make our farmers sustainable and prosperous.

Kent MacDonald: Minister, I have one more quick question.

The Chair: You have 10 seconds.

Kent MacDonald: It's World Milk Day. Would you agree that supply management is perhaps the best food sovereignty program Canada could ever instill and maintain?

Give a yes-or-no answer.

Hon. Heath MacDonald: Yes, Mr. Dairy Farmer.

Voices: Oh, oh!

The Chair: Thank you very much, Minister MacDonald.

Thank you, Mr. MacDonald.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Lemire, you have the floor for two and a half minutes.

Sébastien Lemire: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'm delighted by what I just heard.

Ms. Michel, I'll turn to another topic. I would like to know more about the mandate of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency. In the past, it focused solely on public health issues. The agency's mission now also includes promoting trade and taking into account the country's economic health.

Is this your recommendation or the Minister of Finance's recommendation?

• (1720)

Hon. Marjorie Michel: Since I'm a member of the government, it's also my recommendation. It's a collaborative approach.

We're looking at the situation. You can clearly see what's happening in the world. Canada has to act much more agilely and quickly. We used to have a close trading relationship with the United States. Clearly, the situation is different now. So, we need to take a fresh look at how Canada can become self-sufficient and develop its own markets.

Sébastien Lemire: That's your narrative.

When we ask questions, we're told that these changes meet the demands of stakeholders. So this involves more people than just the cabinet.

However, I would like to know who these stakeholders are. Would you be willing to give the committee a list of the stakeholders consulted, along with their recommendations for changing the CFIA's mission?

Hon. Marjorie Michel: No. We came up with this idea ourselves. Moreover, many sectors support our decision.

Personally, I would say that the fact that some sectors called for this doesn't necessarily mean that we'll proceed in this direction. For me, the right course of action is to at least review our approach in the light of the current situation.

Sébastien Lemire: Is there any connection with your participation in the Spring Dialogue Days event organized by CropLife Canada last spring?

CropLife Canada is basically asking for these changes to bring more, shall we say, intrusive elements into Canadian agri-food products.

Hon. Marjorie Michel: When I became Minister of Health, I became responsible not only for the CFIA, but also for the Pest Management Regulatory Agency, or PMRA. I asked my team to give me responsibilities in the agricultural sector. It was a bit of a surprise because, apparently, people didn't usually do this. I personally preferred to keep these two entities under the Department of Health. I believe that this is the best way to protect people's health.

Mr. MacDonald knows. I could have—

The Chair: Thank you, Minister. The time is up.

[English]

We're going to continue now with Mr. Mazier for five minutes.

Please go ahead.

Dan Mazier: Thank you, Chair.

Minister of Health, your department spent \$300 million on PrescribeIT. Under 5% of prescriptions ever flowed through that program. Was that money well spent for taxpayers, yes or no?

[Translation]

Hon. Marjorie Michel: I said it before and I'll say it again. This project was launched in consultation with the provinces. The provinces asked to work with the federal government to set up this program. I believe that this was done with good intentions.

[English]

Dan Mazier: It was a straightforward yes-or-no question, so is it yes or no? Was it a good use of taxpayer money?

[Translation]

Hon. Marjorie Michel: I think that, as in many cases, these are pilot projects in a sense. They were launched, and they probably didn't produce the desired results. That's why we decided to stop funding this program.

[English]

Dan Mazier: The former CEO of Canada Health Infoway was paid nearly \$900,000 in compensation last year. Given his salary is funded by tax dollars, do you believe that was an appropriate amount, yes or no?

[Translation]

Hon. Marjorie Michel: You should be addressing this question to the company's board of directors, not to me.

[English]

Dan Mazier: Do you plan to provide any restrictions on compensation for executives at Canada Health Infoway in future contribution agreements?

[Translation]

Hon. Marjorie Michel: We asked the members of the board of directors to review the governance of the institution. We're waiting for their recommendations. For the time being, there's an interim president.

[English]

Dan Mazier: There is no plan to offer restrictions.

[Translation]

Hon. Marjorie Michel: I already told you. The board of directors makes the decision.

[English]

Dan Mazier: I'm going to revisit this question, because I didn't hear you at the very end.

Your senior deputy minister is a federally appointed member on the Canada Health Infoway board. Was there ever a time that she voted against giving Michael Green a performance award during his time managing PrescribeIT? I didn't hear your response.

• (1725)

[Translation]

Hon. Marjorie Michel: I told you that I didn't know because I don't take part in these meetings. Infoway's board of directors is an independent board. These reports don't come across my desk.

[English]

Dan Mazier: You don't even know if your own official was providing bonuses to the person who was responsible for the PrescribeIT program.

[Translation]

Hon. Marjorie Michel: I believe that the board of directors makes these decisions. I don't interfere with the board of directors of an independent entity.

[English]

Dan Mazier: Minister, you're spending lots of money, and there are lots of health issues, as we can tell. I can't understand why you can't spend some time and make sure that you come to the health committee to explain all these questions that we have.

Can you commit today that you'll come to the health committee before the summer break to explain all this?

[Translation]

Hon. Marjorie Michel: I already told you, Mr. Mazier, that I won't be making that commitment.

[English]

Dan Mazier: You have—

[Translation]

Hon. Marjorie Michel: It isn't as if I've never appeared before the Standing Committee on Health. I've appeared five times, I believe.

I can't tell you today that I'll commit to appearing before the end of the parliamentary year.

[English]

Dan Mazier: Why not?

[Translation]

Hon. Marjorie Michel: I won't commit to it, because I can't do that today. That's all. I've always appeared before the committee when invited to do so. However, I can't commit to it today or by the end of the month.

[English]

Dan Mazier: Have you read the entire agreement between Canadian Blood Services and Grifols?

[Translation]

Hon. Marjorie Michel: No. I mean, yes, I read it.

[English]

Dan Mazier: You have not.

[Translation]

Hon. Marjorie Michel: Yes, I read it.

[English]

Dan Mazier: Oh, you have. Does anything in the agreement concern you?

[Translation]

Hon. Marjorie Michel: First, there have certainly been issues with the agreement entered into with Grifols. Two people died recently in Manitoba. That's obviously very sad.

That said, there isn't yet a direct link with Grifols. This is still under investigation. We're monitoring the situation closely and working with the provinces.

You must also understand that the contract with Grifols is the result of an agreement with the provinces. The provinces have their part to play. It isn't just the federal government's responsibility.

[English]

Dan Mazier: I was asking about the agreement. When you read the agreement, was there anything that concerned you?

[Translation]

Hon. Marjorie Michel: No.

[English]

Dan Mazier: No.

Is there anything in the agreement that allows Canadian-donated plasma—

Jake Sawatzky (New Westminster—Burnaby—Maillardville, Lib.): I have a point of order.

The Chair: Mr. Sawatzky, go ahead with your point of order.

Jake Sawatzky: Madam Chair, I wanted to bring this back to relevance to Bill C-30. Once again, I think we've gone far off topic.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Sawatzky.

I'm going to allow the question, but you have about five seconds remaining in your time.

Dan Mazier: Is there anything in the agreement that allows Canadian-donated plasma to be used in products sold offshore?

The Chair: Give a very brief response.

Thank you. That concludes the time that we have for that round.

Dan Mazier: What was the answer? We didn't hear the answer, Chair.

The Chair: We'll go back to you. I'm sure we can watch the tape. Thank you, Mr. Mazier.

We will now go to Mr. Sawatzky, for five minutes.

Jake Sawatzky: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you, Minister MacDonald. It's nice to see you again after your visit to B.C.

Many residents in my riding of New Westminster—Burnaby—Maillardville will benefit from the Canada groceries and essentials benefit on June 5, from which a single person could receive up to \$950 in support to help address rising costs and affordability pressures, which we are hearing about.

We also know that ensuring long-term food security requires a strong and reliable food system. Our government has invested \$500 million through the strategic response fund and is establishing a new food security fund to strengthen domestic food production, improve food distribution networks and enhance food security across Canada.

Could you elaborate on how these investments will strengthen Canada's agricultural food sector and food supply chains?

Hon. Heath MacDonald: We're seeing an opportunity for investment across the country relevant to being more domestic, especially in our processing side, the agri-food side, the value-added chain. There's been part of a funding resource missing for small to medium-sized enterprises, so we're trying to create a route for them to scale up. When that happens, the other stuff that comes with it is creating an atmosphere for growth and creating infrastructure, making sure the infrastructure is in place to meet the needs for that growth. That's why you're seeing some of the build Canada strong projects—for example, the port of Montreal. I toured the Roberts Bank port with you in Vancouver.

These are the types of things. It's going to be an ecosystem of growth, but the opportunities are certainly available and right in front of us. Supporting those processors and farmers is certainly going to allow us to have that growth and that potential to become more domesticated in this country. I think we're seeing some excitement relevant to that, and we'll continue to pursue some of those projects.

• (1730)

Jake Sawatzky: Thank you.

You mentioned the port of Vancouver. It was a very informative tour.

Looking forward with expanding and building new relationships, how will these increase Canada's food sector and supply chain? What might be some things we can expect coming down the line?

Hon. Heath MacDonald: I think we can process more of the food that is grown right at home. That's one thing. A lot of our processing leaves this country to be processed in another country. That could be significant here, and not just on the food sovereignty side. On the economic side, you're creating jobs and you're becoming more independent as a country. It's extremely important. It's a supply chain that we need to work on.

If there's any silver lining in everything we're going through, it's allowing government and policy-makers to be bolder. It's allowing businesses to see that the potential they have in this country to grow from a small enterprise may be there, but they need financial assistance. They need some capital. That's where governments have to come into play to ensure they're providing resources for that initial capital funding.

You and I visited the plant-based project in B.C. You see the potential that's there. You see the excitement. They need a little help to continue to grow. The funding that we're trying to put in place for that is for those smaller types of operations that will benefit Canada as a whole: communities and rural Canada.

It's a point to the government that's well received. I think we're moving in the right direction.

Jake Sawatzky: Thank you.

Madam Chair, how long do I have?

The Chair: You have 30 seconds.

Jake Sawatzky: What tangible benefits can Canadians expect to see from these investments in terms of food security and affordability?

Hon. Heath MacDonald: Even if you look at the local food infrastructure fund, I think it was over \$100 million, and there were about 1,400 projects approved for it. Those types of funding projects allow people to have cold storage or freezers on site that they maybe couldn't afford prior to having access to some of the resources that governments are providing. When that happens, they can sell their products closer to home, they can keep them in storage longer, retailers are happier and we can cut out some of the transportation costs and possibly the middlemen.

These hubs—

The Chair: Thank you, Minister MacDonald. I'm sorry. We're going to have to end it there.

Hon. Heath MacDonald: Thank you.

The Chair: On behalf of the committee, I would like to thank Minister MacDonald and Minister Michel for their time today.

We're going to briefly suspend while we turn it over before we receive Minister Hajdu.

Thank you very much.

• (1730) _____ (Pause) _____

• (1740)

The Chair: Colleagues, we are going to resume our meeting. Welcome back.

I would like to welcome Minister Hajdu.

Minister Hajdu, you will have five minutes for your opening remarks.

I note that she is joined by Deputy Minister Paul Thompson and the associate deputy minister and chief operating officer for Service Canada, Cliff Groen, from the Department of Employment and Social Development.

Welcome and go ahead.

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Jobs and Families): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you, colleagues, for the invitation to appear in front of your committee. It's a pleasure to be with you here today on the unceded territory of the Algonquin Anishinabe people.

As you mentioned, Madam Chair, I'm here with two very esteemed deputies. I'm here to talk about what a pivotal moment this is for Canada and for Canadian workers in particular.

As we've noted and as many people have commented, Canadians are working very hard, and they're feeling the pressure as the labour market changes. Despite those uncertainties, Canadians have rolled up their sleeves to defend Canada, their communities and each other. The government is laser-focused on strengthening Canada's economic and social security networks, as well as on providing all Canadians with a fair chance to succeed at every stage of life. A fair chance relies on getting the skills needed for great-paying jobs in demand right now.

[Translation]

This is the reality that we need to acknowledge. Canada is facing a serious shortage of skilled workers.

[English]

The spring economic update sets a clear plan to meet the moment by strengthening today's workforce, by preparing Canadians for the jobs of tomorrow and by delivering the major projects that will shape our future and build Canada strong.

We're building more homes. We're modernizing infrastructure, and we're strengthening national defence. All of that work depends on skilled people.

[Translation]

The prosperity of Canada depends on the new generation of tradespeople.

[English]

Investing in skills and trades is about ensuring that we have the people to build up our economy, our communities and that long-term prosperity, so the spring economic update announced a \$6-billion nationwide effort to recruit, train and hire 100,000 new Red Seal workers over the next five years.

It's focused on three strategic pillars.

The first is recruitment. We need to help provinces and territories with their work to ensure that young Canadians and those considering a career change see the value of a career in the skilled trades: good wages; stable employment; often, pensions; and the opportunity to contribute to nation-building projects such as nuclear plants, stadiums and even Parliament. That's why we're investing \$2 billion through the team Canada strong program, which will support young Canadians in learning about and entering the skilled trades through experienced employer connections and targeted supports.

Second, our apprenticeship system is built on earning while you learn, and it needs to keep pace with modern industry needs. That's why we'll work with provinces and territories to modernize the Red Seal program and to expand the union training and innovation program to support certifications in Red Seal trades. This will be supported by \$331 million in funding over five years, starting in 2026-27. It's about the reduction of barriers that apprentices often face in training, in hours accumulation and in testing. We're also investing in the financial supports that keep apprentices in their training by making sure that we can help them manage the cost of lost earnings during training or in between opportunities. We'll do that by providing a \$400 weekly income top-up while they attend in-class training, in addition to the EI they're entitled to. This is a total of \$16,000 in potential income top-ups. Again, this is about reducing financial pressures that stand in the way of completion. We will also ensure a \$5,000 completion bonus for those apprentices who achieve Red Seal certification.

Finally, too often those who are ready to begin their apprenticeship face challenges with that first apprenticeship job, a placement that includes an employer that has a Red Seal journey person who can help them use those hours towards their certification. We're going to help cover up to \$10,000 of an apprentice's first-year salary, which will reduce hiring costs for these employers and encourage employers to invest in the talent that they say they need: the next generation of skilled workers.

• (1745)

[Translation]

The proposed measures will help us mobilize youth. At the end of the day, it comes down to affordability. So, we're ensuring that education is more affordable.

[English]

We're going to continue the other work that we've done, Madam Chair, by making sure that post-secondary education continues to be accessible. For the 2026-27 academic year, we've extended the temporary 40% increase to the Canada student grant and the temporary increase of the weekly Canada student loan limit to \$300.

This will support about 571,000 students through increased grants and 422,000 students through higher loan limits.

The Chair: Minister, could you wrap up in the next 10 seconds, please?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: I will wrap up, Madam Chair.

The spring economic update also continues the work we've been pursuing on EI modernization, by ensuring additional weeks of EI in 13 regions that struggle with seasonal employment.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Minister. That concludes your time.

We will now begin with six minutes for Mr. Genuis, please.

Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

It's good to see you again, Minister. I want to talk to you a bit about the skilled trades programming. You highlighted the reintroduction of apprenticeship grants.

Here is the timeline: Apprenticeship grants were introduced, for the first time, in 2006 by the Harper government's first budget—that was 20 years ago. Apprenticeship completion grants were introduced in 2009. All of those grants were cancelled by Liberals, with the last batch cancelled in 2025 by the Carney government.

There has been a lot of fanfare around the reintroduction of these grants, and I want to be very clear that we're glad they're back, but there hasn't been a lot of acknowledgement of the fact that you first cancelled them before reintroducing them. In fact, there wasn't the same level of announcement at the time when they were cancelled. I wonder whether you agree with or you dispute the timeline that I've laid out.

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Thank you for the question. I'm glad to hear about your interest in supporting the skilled trades.

In fact, this is one of the elements that people, like the Canada's Building Trades Unions and other skilled trades unions, have called for the reintroduction of. The last grant period expired, and the new grant period will be retroactive to make sure that no one goes without their completion grant.

Garnett Genuis: Minister, we're glad that it's retroactive. Of course, as you mentioned, building trades, various union organizations and Conservatives were opposed to the cancellation of these grants, and they advocated to bring them back. I wonder, can you explain why the government cancelled them initially?

• (1750)

Hon. Patty Hajdu: The completion grant wasn't cancelled. That funding expired. We are renewing that funding and, in fact, increasing the grants, as per the request of building trades professionals.

The other piece that is very important, and it comes directly from feedback from building trades professionals, is that the interim completion grants were not as helpful—quite frankly, to apprentices—as things like the \$400 top-up during training periods or like the supports during periods when they're not able to accumulate hours. In fact, what building trades—

Garnett Genuis: Thank you, Minister, but if I could jump in, the original policy—which was implemented 20 years ago by a Conservative government—was to have grants throughout the process of earning your apprenticeship, as well as completion grants, which were added in 2009.

You have previously criticized the completion grants, actually. On February 5, you were before the human resources committee, at which you were asked by my colleague Colin Reynolds about the decision to cancel the grants. You said, at the time, “It's not driving completion in the way that it was designed.”

I'm glad the grants are back. It's just that there was no announcement when you cancelled them, and you're communicating about this as if it were something entirely new. Instead, it was a decision you made—and defended—to cancel grants, and you have now decided to reinstate them.

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Actually, we're communicating this in alignment with the advice and feedback that we'd received from building trades professionals, including unions, which said that the way the grant and completion contributions are designed is critically important to helping people through the Red Seal skilled trades.

Indeed, I did say that. I said that there was a relatively low take-up of completion grants. This redesign is really focused on what building trades professionals and trainers have told us will be most useful to helping people through the pipeline of training.

We want to make sure that what we're doing works—

Garnett Genuis: I'll jump in again, Minister, because I have a couple of questions more that I want to ask.

Hon. Patty Hajdu: —and that's how we designed it, in partnership with stakeholders.

Garnett Genuis: I think that, in the future, it would be better for people who are pursuing these careers not to have to deal with this abruptness. If you want to change the program, I think there's logic to that. However, having it end and then announcing it as if it's

something new, I think, causes confusion and disruption for people who are trying to plan.

I also want to ask about trades workers. I'm very concerned about the jobs numbers as they relate to the areas in which trades workers are working. We need more trades workers, and we also need opportunities, places for apprentices to work.

You talked about how apprentices are struggling to find jobs. I'd draw your attention to the fact that, in the latest jobs numbers, in one month we lost 16,000 jobs in construction alone. Generally, we're seeing very heavy job losses in goods-producing sectors and natural resources, despite promises and announcements from government. We're shedding jobs in these key areas.

On this side of the table, we want to see more training opportunities and we want to see more work for apprentices. What's your reaction to the significant losses in jobs—for instance, in construction—that we're seeing?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: In fact, what we're largely hearing—especially from major projects proponents like the Canadian Home Builders' Association and a number of employers across the country that are getting big projects off the ground—is that one limiting factor will be skilled trades workers. We have worked very closely not only with unions and labour groups but also with employer groups, including for major projects, to understand what that pattern of employment looks like.

This is clear: We have a shortage of skilled tradespeople across this country. This has been noted a number of times, including by members of your party. This particular approach is about ensuring that small and medium-sized businesses, which often—

Garnett Genuis: Minister, could I clarify, in the brief time I have left, that I'm not disagreeing with you that we need more trades workers? However, we also need more trades work, because apprentices need opportunities and places to use their skills so that they're ready to fill the workforce gaps we are going to see, especially as many older trades workers retire.

What's your response to the fact that we lost 16,000 construction jobs in the last month? What are the challenges we're going to see around apprentices' finding opportunities, in light of how, under your watch, youth unemployment is at 14.3%, especially in these goods-producing sectors? It's a high level of unemployment.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Genuis. That concludes your time.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Lavoie, you now have the floor for six minutes.

Steeve Lavoie: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Minister, Mr. Groen and Mr. Thompson, thank you for joining us. I'm happy to see you here today.

I would like to talk about companies, artificial intelligence and the fast-changing trades.

In my former life, I sometimes noticed gaps within small and medium-sized businesses. Companies that use artificial intelligence are using it more and more, while others aren't using it at all. So there are gaps. Some jobs will need to take a different shape or will disappear, while others will emerge.

Which sectors or professions do you think will need to change, or which sectors will need to adapt or create new trades?

New jobs are being created in connection with artificial intelligence. When computers first appeared, some jobs disappeared, but others were created. Tell me a bit about this evolution.

First, I would like to ask you another question. We've just been hearing about the Red Seal.

Can you explain to the average person what the Red Seal is? You can then answer my first question.

• (1755)

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Thank you for the question.

Red Seal endorsements are granted to designated professions in all provinces and territories. There are 54 Red Seal designations. They range from construction occupations to automotive, aviation and other transportation technician occupations.

[*English*]

There are other Red Seals as well. There are a number of Red Seals that are very specific in terms of technical trades. These are all occupations that are agreed upon by provinces and territories, and they allow for the designate to have better labour mobility across provincial territories, as those Red Seals are recognized by each other's provinces as being proficient.

For example, if you're a heavy equipment operator or a crane operator in Ontario and you have your Red Seal designation, you can also work in Quebec, Alberta or Manitoba. Your designation declares that you are a professional in that area.

They are complex positions. They often take three to five years to complete. It's a combination of in-class study and hours that you achieve on the work site with a designated journey person, who supervises you and teaches you increasingly complex skills. That's what a Red Seal professional is.

Thank you for the question. Many people don't know that, and it's an important question. You can see all the designated Red Seals online at the Government of Canada website.

In reference to your first question, it's difficult to project which jobs are going to be fully displaced and which jobs are going to be

changed. There are a bunch of different conjectures out there in terms of what is happening. Regardless, what we're seeing is that every job is seeing some introduction of the use of artificial intelligence and technological skills, even in the Red Seals.

I'll give you an example. In days gone by, a crane operator would have to manually calculate his load and then manually figure out how to lift that load, using complex skills way beyond my ability. Now much of the equipment that construction workers might use as heavy equipment operators has an element of automation and an element of computation that's happening on a computer within that particular machinery. Does that mean that the individual is not needed? No, it does not, but it does mean that the job is changing and that the skills that person is training for are changing. We're seeing that across a number of different sectors.

The last thing I'll say is that this is why our programs, especially around skilled work placements for young people whose course of study is matched with a paid work experience, are so valuable. It's because employers say that they give them an opportunity to train for what they need at the moment, and this is often way ahead of what the curriculum says. In fact, young people will say that they sometimes go back to the classroom and say, "That's not quite how it's happening in real life", so it provides a good feedback loop for trainers as well.

[*Translation*]

Thank you for the question.

Steeve Lavoie: Thank you.

In your introduction, you spoke of 100,000 new workers, 100,000 positions and many new trades.

I'm asking the question as a father of two children, one aged 19 and the other aged 20. They're trying to find their way in their career and lives.

How can we ensure that all this money, for all these positions, for all the support being provided, won't just sit on the shelf and that we'll be able to reach young people?

I'm talking about young people, but it can also be people going through a career change.

• (1800)

Hon. Patty Hajdu: We need to work with the provinces, territories, employers, unions and institutions that provide the workforce for young people such as your children. It's the same for me.

[*English*]

My youngest son found his way into trades in a partnership with the high school and the local community college—

The Chair: I apologize, Minister. That concludes the time.

[Translation]

Thank you, Mr. Lavoie.

Steeve Lavoie: Congratulations, Ms. Hajdu. Thank you for responding in French. I appreciate it.

Hon. Patty Hajdu: I'm trying.

Steeve Lavoie: It's great.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Lavoie.

Mr. Lemire, you now have the floor for six minutes.

Sébastien Lemire: Good evening, Ms. Hajdu.

Thank you for joining us to answer our questions.

In the economic update, specifically in chapter 2, on page 110, a section explains in detail what “improving services to Canadians” means. The section states as follows:

Funding proposed for ESDC to support the day-to-day operation of the new old age security platform and to increase old age security processing capacity, helping ensure seniors receive their benefits accurately and on time, and for CRA to maintain a complement of agents at its call centres, and to implement a new telephony platform, which will allow Canadians to more easily connect with the CRA on enquiries related to their benefits and taxes.

I would like to ask you a question that I've asked you in question period on more than one occasion.

Should this amount be added to the \$6.6 billion already earmarked for the Cúram program?

[English]

Hon. Patty Hajdu: No. Quite frankly, this is a separate amount that helps with the modernization of the function of these benefits but, ultimately, the process of modernization is under budget and is moving along according to plan.

[Translation]

Sébastien Lemire: You said that the funding is going well and that additional amounts are still planned. I attended the technical briefing a number of weeks ago.

How many cases are still in the pipeline and awaiting a response from your department?

[English]

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Of the 7.7 million Canadians who are receiving benefits, we still have 48,000 new applicants who are waiting for their claims to be processed. These 48,000 applicants, though, are not a monolithic group of people. In some cases, they are people who are working very hard to establish residency in Canada, because there are periods of time when residency is required to be eligible. It will affect people's OAS periods. The department and the staff are working diligently with the cases that are still waiting for assessment, and that number continues to track downwards.

[Translation]

Sébastien Lemire: In a previous response, Mr. Groen, you said that 97.5% of payments were accurate. If we're talking about \$7.7 million in payments each month for old age security, this means that 192,500 payments contain errors each month.

Who corrects these errors? Is this accounted for in the operating costs of the old age security program?

Is this what accounts for the additional \$473 million?

Cliff Groen (Associate Deputy Minister and Chief Operating Officer for Service Canada, Department of Employment and Social Development): Thank you for the question.

We have accuracy targets for all our benefit programs. This process has been in place for decades. The Office of the Auditor General of Canada audits it every year.

These targets, which we have for each of the major benefit programs—employment insurance, Canada pension plan and old age security—seek to obtain an accuracy rate of 95%. That's our target.

As you said, we managed to obtain a rate of 97.4% for old age security. It's a bit higher for the Canada pension plan, and a bit lower for the employment insurance program. However, it's still quite close to our target. This process is based on how other countries pay out these major benefits.

Payment errors can occur for a number of reasons.

First, Service Canada may make errors. However, the vast majority of errors are the result of a lack of information. Some clients also make errors, even though they don't mean to.

When we discover a payment error, we take the necessary steps to have it corrected.

• (1805)

Sébastien Lemire: Could you give us a list of the Cúram-related computer issues that you resolved and the issues that remain unresolved and that are still causing problems?

Cliff Groen: Yes, but I need to make one key point.

You just asked me a question about the accuracy rate.

I think that the committee must understand that the vast majority of errors that occurred before and after the introduction of the new computer program weren't caused by the management of the system.

We can certainly give the committee information on the types of errors that we find in the system.

Sébastien Lemire: Basically, the biggest errors in benefit payments date back to at least June of last year. We were talking about 90,000 cases, 80,000 cases, over 60,000 cases as well.

How many cases remain unresolved? Since last June, how many people have been waiting a year for their benefits?

Cliff Groen: You're talking about the number of people who have been waiting over a year to receive their benefits.

Is that right?

Sébastien Lemire: Yes.

Cliff Groen: Hardly any. We're still looking into some cases. We're working with clients to obtain further information, but the number is really minimal. These are really exceptional cases.

As the minister said, currently 48,000 clients are waiting over a month after their benefit eligibility date. That's 48,000 clients. These aren't people who have been waiting for a year. The vast majority of clients are waiting one or two months after their eligibility date.

Sébastien Lemire: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Lemire.

[*English*]

We'll continue now with Mr. Seeback for five minutes, please.

Kyle Seeback (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Minister, thank you for being here today. I share your passion for the skilled trades. My son's in the skilled trades. He's a carpenter's apprentice.

I have some real concerns about what's happening in Canada, and I'm hoping we can talk about that a bit today. You were the minister of employment, workforce development and labour from 2017 to 2019. In 2018, your government made a very troubling decision—at least, I find it deeply troubling. You decided to remove union consultation from the issuance of temporary foreign worker permits.

Can you give the rationale for why your government chose to remove this safeguard?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: First of all, I want to say congratulations to your son. What a fantastic opportunity he has to pursue a skilled trade. I hope he is as successful as my son is. It's certainly turned out to be a very profitable journey for my family and my children. Obviously, we'll be there to support your son through the process.

It's very important that we work with unions on the issues of who's doing what work and where. I can't speak to those decisions, but I can say there's a commitment on—

Kyle Seeback: Minister, you were part of the cabinet that made that decision.

Hon. Patty Hajdu: I can say there's a commitment on behalf of our government to make sure that we build good union jobs across this country.

Kyle Seeback: I can only assume that either you don't know why your government made that decision or you won't answer.

In 2025, there were 126,000 unemployed skilled trades workers in Canada. Meanwhile, at the exact same time, your government issued 125,000 temporary foreign worker permits in TEERs 0 to 3,

which include skilled trades. Can you not see that there is a major problem with having removed union consultation from the issuance of TFW permits?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Our government has taken significant action in reducing temporary foreign workers across the country. First of all, we're down 70% in low-wage positions and 50% overall in the use of temporary foreign workers. We've worked really closely with unions and trainers, as well, to make sure that we understand the nature of where that unemployment is in the skilled trades.

• (1810)

Kyle Seeback: You're not concerned—

Hon. Patty Hajdu: You're anxiously jumping in, but I will say that we are also working, as you know, with the provinces and territories on breaking down labour mobility barriers that allow for people who have those skills to take advantage of—

Kyle Seeback: You can't move if your job has been taken by a temporary foreign worker. I gave you the numbers. They almost match.

This is deeply concerning to me. You can be concerned too. You could say, "You raise a very good point. That shouldn't happen, and our government is going to commit today to commencing an investigation into why we are allowing skilled temporary foreign workers in at almost the same number as there are unemployed Canadian skilled trades workers." You could say that, and it would be welcome news to me and the construction building trade unions in this country.

Are you prepared to do that today?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: The construction building trades unions are actually very thrilled with the spring economic update. As you would know, the—

Kyle Seeback: They're happy with that. That's not my question.

Canada's Building Trades Unions called the temporary foreign worker program a low-wage way to exclude Canadian workers. Why don't you commit to us today? You can say, "I agree. This is a major problem, and our government is going to look into it to make sure that it doesn't happen again."

It seems pretty simple to me.

Hon. Patty Hajdu: First of all, Mr. Seeback, I don't think you should tell me what I should say, but I will say this: We have committed to working with building trades to make sure that it's Canadian talent that builds Canadian projects. That's why we have invested \$6 billion in the trades.

Since we're talking about the CBTU, in fact, Sean Strickland said, "We've never seen anything like that from any government in terms of support for skilled trades and skilled trades training in Canada." He also said, "Our union halls are full of resumes and folks trying to get in, [and] one of the challenges we have is...how...we retain them".

He's so excited about this new investment, particularly around helping people once they become apprentices to complete that apprenticeship, that he—

Kyle Seeback: He can be happy about one thing and unhappy about another. That exists in reality.

I'm pointing out a problem. You're pointing to something that's totally different. I don't understand why you can't say, "I agree that it's a problem. We shouldn't have 126,000 unemployed skilled trades workers while we bring in 125,000 temporary foreign workers."

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Well, what I have a problem with is your alleging that those people are exactly the same people. I would agree that we need to have Canadian talent building Canadian major projects. That's the point of this investment. We're going to continue to work with the building trades to ensure that this is the case.

The Chair: Thank you, Minister.

That concludes the time. Thank you, Mr. Seeback.

Mr. MacDonald, you have five minutes.

Kent MacDonald: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you, Minister, for coming today as a witness.

The first thing we have to identify is that across Canada, the workforce issues aren't always the same. I come from rural Canada. There are workforce issues in rural Canada, some of them tied to the temporary foreign worker program and issues surrounding that. One thing we've done, and it's not necessarily in the spring economic statement, is to expand the Canada student jobs program this year. It's something that resonates in my riding office every weekend I'm home. We're matching up students with employers. In my riding of Cardigan alone, there's a benefit of almost \$1 million to employers to hire students for that experience, for that first job.

Do you want to summarize what you're hearing across the country with the Canada student jobs program, Minister?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Yes. Thanks for the question. In my riding as well, employers and young people look forward to this every year.

This year, in 100,000 Canada summer jobs across the country, young people get an opportunity to work for employers, not-for-profit organizations, small businesses, medium-sized businesses, the public sector and the private sector. Young people earn money. Employers get the opportunity to test-run great talent and to help a young person refine and develop skills. Oftentimes, the biggest barrier for a young person is that first job. Ironically, getting that first job is a really hard thing to do. It prevents people from securing the next job.

Canada summer jobs gives young people that first employer, that first reference and that first experience. It also gives young people an opportunity to test-run a sector that they think they might like to

pursue. Maybe they'll confirm their interest in that sector. I've also heard young people say, "I worked in that sector for four months. At three months, I decided it really wasn't right for me. Now I want to try something else."

We consider Canada summer jobs an essential component to young people. It's not only in terms of their earnings; it's also their experiences and determining for themselves what their future looks like.

● (1815)

Kent MacDonald: Thank you for that answer.

There's a second thing in the economic update that I want to point out. We identified a labour gap in the EI program for snow crab plants, for example, that can process crabs for only so long. Can you speak to how the five weeks' extension in the spring economic update helps these regional economies? They need trained skilled workers too. If the EI runs out, those people have to move on to other parts of the country.

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Absolutely. We've spent a lot of time trying to get EI modernized to the degree that it will help people with economic shock and help ensure that labour mobility is not the only answer to a solution for the seasonal workers you're talking about. That's why we have extended EI for seasonal workers in 13 targeted regions until October 2028. This is five additional weeks, as you point out, to help people get through those difficult weeks, but with a light at the end of the tunnel, knowing that their job is coming back.

My mother was a seasonal worker, by the way, as a school bus driver when I was a young person. It's very stressful for people if they don't know that they're going to be supported through that period of time. It might be difficult for them to get another job, but there is a good job waiting at the end of that particular time. Thank you for raising that.

I will also point out that we've been working on ensuring that the EI program can keep up with the pace of change we're seeing, in particular with tariff-impacted industries; that people can get rapid access to EI; that they can keep their separations earnings; and that they have the support, in partnership with provinces, to get the training that you're talking about for the next job.

Kent MacDonald: Minister, we want everyone to find a job and work. That's our goal. We see the labour market improvements to the deduction amount going from \$4,000 to \$10,000. That may not be directly in your department, but can you speak to how that's helping?

Everyone I talk to who's working in the electricity grid, or in start-up companies in the modular business—they're all going to need a mobile workforce. As we train these Red Seals, and the jobs are in community A instead of community B, we have to give them benefits so that they'll be transferable.

The Chair: You have about 10 seconds for a response.

Hon. Patty Hajdu: We have increased the labour mobility deduction for tradespeople from \$4,000 to \$10,000, indexed to inflation, and importantly, reduced the distance from 150 to 120 kilometres.

The Chair: Thank you, Minister.

Thank you, Mr. MacDonald.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Lemire, you have the floor for two and a half minutes.

Sébastien Lemire: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Minister, in the first hour of this committee meeting, I remained unimpressed with the responses provided by Mr. Countryman, the director general of federal-provincial relations at the Department of Finance. By way of context, I was asking him questions about one aspect of the economic update, which includes \$6 billion for the team Canada strong initiative. This measure involves setting up a workforce training program through a wage subsidy. I'm sure that you're well aware of this program.

Did you consult the Quebec government before developing this measure?

Were you aware that, since 1997, Quebec and Ottawa have had an agreement on workforce training and that this measure could lead to conflicts with Quebec?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: We worked very closely with the provinces and territories. Our next meeting is in July, in Halifax, and we'll be discussing the approach. The Quebec government is doing a particularly good job.

[*English*]

They have the best outcomes for skilled trades workers across the country. We're looking forward to hearing some of their lessons learned in terms of the work we're doing, in particular, in building trades unions across the country.

[*Translation*]

Sébastien Lemire: After seeing the economic update, Quebec's labour minister and a well-known federalist, Jean Boulet, said he was impressed by how many federal measures infringed on his jurisdiction.

Your answer leads me to believe you'd be open to the idea of letting Quebec exercise its right to opt out with full compensation, if you truly want to respect the spirit of the 1997 agreement.

Is that the case?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: We will work with Quebec. I think the economic update contains measures that are very helpful to Quebec. I'll be speaking with Mr. Boulet, Quebec's minister, and the other provincial and territorial ministers in July, in Halifax.

• (1820)

Sébastien Lemire: You introduced temporary measures to address the EI gap.

Why didn't you make them permanent?

[*English*]

The Chair: Give a 10-second response, please.

Hon. Patty Hajdu: These measures are in place until 2028, and we'll continually assess the need for the measures on an ongoing basis.

[*Translation*]

Sébastien Lemire: Thank you.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Lemire.

We'll continue now with Mr. Hallan for five minutes.

Jasraj Hallan: Thank you, Chair.

Minister, you said that you will “drive forward an agenda to grow the strongest economy in the G7, and that is exactly what we are doing”. Your government just drove Canada into a recession. In fact, Canada is the only G7 country in a recession now, due to your government. It's a full-blown Liberal recession. Can you tell us why?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: First of all, I want to be very clear. My role here today is to make sure that the employers who are telling me on a regular and ongoing basis that we have a skilled trade shortage in this country can get the labour they need. This is an actual limiting factor. When I look at the major projects list and the projects approved, for example—

Jasraj Hallan: Minister, I'll get to the employment part, but can you answer why Canada is in a recession today when you and your government promised we would have the strongest economy in the G7, and you said that you would grow the economy? We found out on Friday that, due to your Liberal policies, Canada is in a recession. Can you tell us why? The Prime Minister refuses to answer any questions.

Hon. Patty Hajdu: That is a dog's breakfast of a question, I will say.

Jasraj Hallan: Why are we in a recession, Minister?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: I think the Prime Minister has regularly answered questions in question period, as well as in the media.

Jasraj Hallan: That's why I have to ask them again: because you don't answer questions.

Hon. Patty Hajdu: I will say that conflating the situation that Canadians are facing—

Jasraj Hallan: It is because of the government.

Hon. Patty Hajdu: —when I think Canadians are wise enough.... Certainly the Canadians in my riding come up to me all the time and talk about not only the concerns they have but the opportunities that they see in terms of a strong Canada. I think that the important piece to remember is that every step of the way—

Jasraj Hallan: Minister, you mentioned a strong Canada, but now Canada is in a recession, and you can't answer why. Can you tell us why?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: —as we support Canadians through this time and build Canada strong.

The Chair: Can you just let the minister respond quickly, and then we'll go to the questions? It's for the interpreters.

Hon. Patty Hajdu: I would say that we're doing three things. One is that we have our mind on the pain that some Canadians are feeling—

Jasraj Hallan: Minister, I have a limited amount of time, but you refuse to answer why we're in a recession.

Hon. Patty Hajdu: I haven't been able to—

Jasraj Hallan: You are talking about growing a strong economy, which we know is not true, because now Canada is in a recession. Can you tell us why other G7 countries are not in a recession, even though they are facing the exact same external factors as Canada?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: I would say that our focus has been very clearly on affordability for Canadians. My question back to you is, why do you keep voting against the very Canadians who are utilizing—

Jasraj Hallan: Can you mention one part of affordability?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: I'll name one. You're from Ontario. I'm sorry that I don't know exactly where you're from. In Ontario, a family that has a child in child care is now saving an average of \$13,000 per year, per child. Maybe you've never had to pay for child care, but I certainly did as a single mother, and I can tell you this makes a giant difference.

Jasraj Hallan: Minister, I'm actually from Alberta and we are the province that your government has repeatedly attacked—especially our resources. Thank you.

I have to ask you something, because you keep saying “build Canada strong”. In just the first three months of this year, 120,000 full-time jobs were lost. Can you tell us why?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Since you're from Alberta—I apologize for not knowing that—I will say that in your province—

Jasraj Hallan: I've moved on. There's another question.

Hon. Patty Hajdu: In your province, under early learning and child care, families are saving \$13,000 per child—

Jasraj Hallan: There were 120,000 jobs lost in the first few months of this year. Can you tell us why?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: —per year in Alberta as well. Every step of the way, as we've worked for people in Alberta and as we've worked for people in Ontario, we have seen your party vote down measures—

Jasraj Hallan: Minister, in the first three months of this year, 120,000 jobs were lost. Can you tell us why, please?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: As I have said repeatedly, we are here for two important reasons. The first is to support Canadians with affordability—

Jasraj Hallan: What about the 120,000 workers who lost their jobs because of your government?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: I'm sorry, Madam Chair. I can't seem to get an answer out without being interrupted.

The Chair: Please go ahead, Minister.

Hon. Patty Hajdu: The second is to make sure that we have in place the measures that will grow our Canadian economy even stronger—

Jasraj Hallan: I'll take that as a non-answer.

Minister, in your opening statement—

Hon. Patty Hajdu: For example, the Shell Polaris project—

Jasraj Hallan: It's my time.

• (1825)

The Chair: I'm sorry, Minister. Can you allow MP Hallan to ask his question?

Jasraj Hallan: Minister, in your opening statement, you claimed that you guys are going to be building more homes. Your government promised to build 500,000 homes a year. Your own housing agency says that's not true, because housing starts will decline and 280,000 homes are needed just to get to affordability.

Can you give us a date on when 500,000 homes a year will be built? We just need a date.

The Chair: You have about 10 seconds left.

Hon. Patty Hajdu: In Alberta, housing has received over \$75 million for homelessness services.

Jasraj Hallan: You guys made the promise. When will it be fulfilled?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, I'm sorry. I can't even answer.

Jasraj Hallan: It's because there is no answer.

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Wow.

The Chair: Thank you. That concludes your time.

We'll continue now with Mr. Sawatzky for five minutes.

Jake Sawatzky: Thank you, Minister, for being here. I really appreciate all the great work you're doing for Canadians.

In my riding of New Westminster—Burnaby—Maillardville, I have the privilege of representing many union workers, apprentices and families that have helped build our communities and, of course, this economy.

The spring economic update proposes \$225 million over five years for the union training and innovation program to help union-run training centres upgrade facilities, expand capacity and invest in modern equipment. How will this investment strengthen Canada's training infrastructure and help ensure that workers have the skills needed to deliver the housing, infrastructure, energy and nation-building projects that Canadians are counting on?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Thank you very much for the question and for giving me a few moments to answer it.

It's really important that we work closely with unions and union training organizations, as well as polytechnic institutions that are doing this really incredible work of not only recruiting people to the trades but making sure they get through that skilled trades training.

Nonetheless, even with all of that support, many apprentices say that it's difficult to get to the completion. Partly that's because hours can come and go. People are oftentimes reluctant to hire that first-year apprentice. During periods of slowdown through training, when people are losing earnings or in the case of layoffs in the construction sector, apprentices can find it very challenging financially to stick with their training.

What unions have been calling for is exactly what you found in the spring economic update. That's why we've received such accolades from colleagues across the country—union colleagues, polytechnics, institutions and trainers who are saying we can do a better job of not just attracting people to the trades but making sure they get through that pipeline of training.

We have a lot of apprentices right now who are really looking forward to getting these financial supports, which will help stabilize their income so that they don't have to worry about how they're going to pay their mortgage or their truck payment. Rather, they can focus on that next block of learning that's going to get them that much closer to their Red Seal. The Red Seal is really the ticket that allows someone to continue not only to earn a great living for themselves and their families but also build the major projects, such as the ones we were just talking about in Alberta, which I would have mentioned if I had the chance to.

Jake Sawatzky: Thank you, Minister.

With the direction of the government, one of the things I'm most happy about right now is the extent to which we're investing in young people. We're helping their education, skills development and pathways into good jobs. With programs like Canada summer jobs, the student work placement program, the youth employment and skills strategy, and enhanced Canada student financial assistance program, we're helping them with experience, training and job opportunities. Can you tell us how these investments are creating opportunities and setting young people up for long-term success?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Thanks. It's great to get a question from a young member of Parliament like you. On a personal note, it's really affirming to see so many young elected members of Parliament in the House of Commons, because you have such relevant experience and really lived experience right now.

In terms of the work that we do to support young people, I would say that the first thing to note is that we transfer \$3 billion to provinces and territories every year to help with this work. We're not the only game in town.

We add to those transfers to very specifically focus on a few different categories of youth. One is youth who might be having a really hard time getting their first work experience or who, in some cases, haven't completed their education. There are not-for-profit organizations and public institutions that do really important work to make sure that people don't... I really believe that everybody deserves a second chance and that sometimes people leave school because of circumstances in their life that are really hard to handle. There's nothing worse than seeing someone who hasn't had that second chance get further and further away from employment. The work we do with those groups is critically important, not just for their outcomes but also for the outcomes of Canada, to help make sure that these people get to their full potential and the promise they hold for our country.

Second, we also make sure to support young people with things like Canada student loans and grants, as well as other experiences, such as youth work experiences like the Canada summer jobs program and the student work placements I talked about for post-secondary students. They are really looking to home in on what they're learning and match that with what is really happening in the workforce.

● (1830)

Jake Sawatzky: Just to expand on your point about how the government is extending enhanced Canada student grants and interest-free Canada student loans for the 2026-27 academic year, that's expected to help hundreds of thousands of students across the country. I know a lot of people are really struggling with—

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Sawatzky—

Jake Sawatzky: It's a good job, doing that.

Voices: Oh, oh!

The Chair: —that concludes your time.

[*Translation*]

We are now starting the last round. We have about eight minutes left.

Mr. Lefebvre, you may go ahead for four minutes.

Eric Lefebvre (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you, Minister, for being here.

Thank you for being here, gentlemen.

Minister, naturally I want to talk to you about Cúram again, as I'm sure you know. The IT modernization project was supposed to cost \$1.75 billion initially, but that number is up to \$6.6 billion now.

In its spring economic update, the government allocated another half a billion dollars to the project. It's going to cost more than \$7 billion. It's the biggest financial scandal in Canada's history, and the system doesn't even work.

We met on March 26, Minister, and I offered you my help. I wanted us to meet with employees who are using Cúram to see what the problems are. You said you would think about it.

Have you had a chance to think about it? Will you accept my offer?

[*English*]

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Thank you very much.

In fact, I did one better. I met with Service Canada employees in my own riding. I was in Marathon, Ontario, just a few weeks ago, where I stopped at the Service Canada office. Now, Marathon is a very small community, with only 6,000 people, but they have an incredible team of Service Canada employees who not only help with issues that—

[*Translation*]

Eric Lefebvre: Minister, I'm talking about employees who are using the system, who are using the Cúram software.

I'm not sure whether you noticed, but I left the meeting a few minutes ago. I don't know whether you saw that.

[*English*]

Hon. Patty Hajdu: I am sorry, but I am not aware of your whereabouts. I will say that in fact Service Canada—

[*Translation*]

Eric Lefebvre: Just a moment, Minister. I'm not finished.

I left the meeting a few minutes ago because I was on the phone with one of your employees who uses the Cúram system. The employee told me the system doesn't work. Staff want to meet with you to explain why it doesn't work and share their ideas on how to fix it. They told me they aren't being listened to. They wrote to me. I got a letter yesterday, and I was just on the phone with one of your employees who said that the system doesn't work and that there are ways to fix the problem. They're ready to meet with you. I'm offering my help, so you and I can meet with them together.

This is the biggest financial scandal in history, Minister. You should show leadership.

Do you think this is funny, Minister? As we speak, 48,000 seniors are not getting their benefits. They've been waiting eight or nine months for their benefits. Minister, you have the gall to laugh, when—

[*English*]

Ryan Turnbull: I have a point of order.

The Chair: Monsieur Lefebvre, I'm sorry.

Go ahead, Mr. Turnbull.

Ryan Turnbull: I'm sorry to interrupt.

I know my colleague is very passionate, but he's raising his voice to a level that may cause acoustic shock for our interpreters. I know

he values the work of our interpreters, but we try not to yell into the microphone. I've made this mistake a couple of times, being very passionate myself.

I just wanted to caution the member through the chair. We really value our interpreters.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Turnbull.

I would like to remind you, Mr. Lefebvre.... I understand there's passion here, but keep the tone low for our interpreters.

[*Translation*]

Eric Lefebvre: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I want to thank the honourable member and apologize to the interpreters.

The Chair: I'm not finished, Mr. Lefebvre.

[*English*]

Also, maintain a respectful tone. Thank you, Mr. Lefebvre.

[*Translation*]

Eric Lefebvre: All right.

Minister, obviously it boils my blood to hear you laughing.

Some 48,000 seniors have been waiting eight or nine months for their benefits, struggling to pay their rent and buy groceries. Service Canada employees—I've spoken to some of them on the phone—are ready to provide answers and offer up solutions. Meanwhile, the minister is laughing.

I'm talking about our seniors, Minister, the people who built this country, people who've paid taxes their whole lives. The minister finds this funny. I'm sorry to say, but that is unworthy of the office you hold. You should be bigger than that. You should show leadership and take charge of the matter.

Again, I'm offering my help, Minister. Let's meet with the people who are calling me, let's meet with your employees.

● (1835)

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Madam Chair, does the member have a question for me?

Eric Lefebvre: Yes, I have a question for you.

Do you accept my offer for you and me to meet with your employees together?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: I meet with my employees all the time.

Eric Lefebvre: No, Minister. The employees told me you haven't met with them.

Hon. Patty Hajdu: I've spoken with the employees and the team at Employment and Social Development Canada.

Eric Lefebvre: That's not true, Minister.

[*English*]

Ryan Turnbull: I have a point of order.

The Chair: Mr. Turnbull.

Ryan Turnbull: I'm sorry that I have to interrupt.

Mr. Lefebvre is talking over the witness. The minister is here trying to answer the question he asked. The interpreters have a very hard time interpreting when people are talking over one another. I can't even make out what anyone is saying, as an anglophone. I know we often consider the various languages spoken in committee, and I'd like to understand what the minister is saying in response to the question.

If the member could not speak over her, I would appreciate it.

The Chair: Do you have a point of order, Mr. Garon?

[*Translation*]

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

I'll make this quick. Someone was filling in for me at the beginning of the meeting, so I don't know how we got here.

Generally speaking, isn't it considered a lack of deference to a parliamentarian when the committee meets with a witness—a minister or whoever else—and the witness laughs at a parliamentarian or at a question?

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Garon. I don't think that's a point of order.

Wait one second, Minister.

I would like to ask everyone not to talk over one another for the sake of the interpreters and for committee members who want to understand in either official language.

Monsieur Lefebvre, you have about six seconds left in this round.

[*Translation*]

Eric Lefebvre: Minister, I can assure you that your employees told me that you did not meet with them. They have solutions they want to share with you. Again, I am offering to meet them with you.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Lefebvre.

[*English*]

We will now conclude this hour with Mr. Leitão for four minutes.

[*Translation*]

Carlos Leitão: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Good evening, Minister. Thank you for being here.

[*English*]

I think we should go back to the business at hand and talk about Bill C-30.

Before we get there, I'd just like to say that Canada is not in a recession. We will have plenty of time to discuss that tomorrow, I believe, with the motion of the Conservative Party. The huge consensus on Bay Street, for example, among economists, is that this is

not a recession. In fact, on a per capita basis, GDP was up 0.9% in Q1, but let's go back to Bill C-30.

Let's go back to construction. We talked about that as well. As my colleague Mr. MacDonald mentioned when he was discussing issues with you, Minister, the situation in Canada is different from province to province. Construction is a great example of that. In my own province of Quebec, in fact, construction is doing very well, not just on the residential side but also on the institutional side. We see a lot of projects going on. Hydro-Québec, the provincial utility, is investing heavily in expanding its network. There's a great demand for construction workers.

We understand that in Ontario, there are some specific issues with the high-rise condo market, but in other provinces, there's a great demand for construction workers. Also, there's a lack of skilled labour in construction. That's why we have all of those apprenticeship programs.

You didn't have time before to really explore this, I think, but particularly in construction, on the measures announced in the update, how do you think they will accelerate the pace of training young Canadians to work in construction?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Thank you for the question.

Certainly, it's our hope that, with the combination of the work that provinces and territories are doing, these additional measures could speed up the completion by up to 50%.

Ultimately, what we're trying to do.... By the way, this is not cutting corners on training. It's not reducing training or ratios or anything like that. There has been some concern expressed about that. This is not at all going to interfere with the jurisdiction of provinces and territories on training hours or ratios.

We think we can support the modernization of the Red Seal process. In Ontario, for example, in my son's trade, it's hard to believe, but people still carry a paper logbook to account for the hours they're accumulating toward their Red Seal certification. Sometimes those logbooks get damaged or lost and, believe it or not, people have to start over in accumulating those hours. That's a huge blow to somebody's journey. In fact, it really can set people back years in some cases if that unfortunate occurrence happens.

There are other things, though. People talk about how challenging it is to do the testing. If you're not in a major centre and you're not near a test centre, you may have to drive for hours. You may have to stay overnight, in fact, to go to a testing centre in northern Ontario. You may have to go to Thunder Bay or perhaps one of the other larger small towns to do your testing.

We're proposing to examine, with provinces and territories, things like some online learning and some online testing and ways in which we can streamline getting a national apprenticeship number, so that if people are studying in Alberta, they don't need a new apprenticeship number in Ontario. They can carry on their apprenticeship training in the province they're moving to.

There are a number of different ways that we can do this, but it all requires good collaboration with provinces and territories.

• (1840)

Carlos Leitão: Thank you, Minister.

Do we have any time left?

The Chair: No. That's it. Thank you very much.

Minister, on behalf of the committee, thank you very much for your time today.

Colleagues, we're going to take a brief suspension and start the next panel at 6:45 sharp.

• (1840)

(Pause)

• (1845)

The Chair: Welcome back.

We are going to resume this meeting for our final hour.

I would like to begin by welcoming our witnesses.

We have with us, from the Canadian Centre for Caregiving Excellence, Mr. James Janeiro, director of policy and government relations; from the Canadian Council on Rehabilitation and Work, Maureen Haan, president and CEO; from Community Living Toronto, Brad Saunders, chief executive officer; and from March of Dimes Canada, Amanda MacKenzie, national director, public affairs, advocacy and strategic communications, and Jeff Willbond, chief accessibility officer.

I would like to remind participants of the following points.

Please wait until I recognize you by name before speaking.

For those participating via video conference, click on the microphone icon to activate your microphone, and please mute yourself when you are not speaking. For those on Zoom, at the bottom of your screen you can select the appropriate channel for interpretation: floor, English or French. For those in the room, you can use the earpiece and select the desired channel.

I will remind you that questions can be posed in either official language. Therefore, if you require interpretation, please set up your earpiece now so that we can use the time we have effectively.

As a reminder, all comments should be addressed through the chair.

You will each have five minutes for your opening remarks.

We will begin with Mr. Janeiro from the Canadian Centre for Caregiving Excellence.

James Janeiro (Director, Policy and Government Relations, Canadian Centre for Caregiving Excellence): Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Ladies and gentlemen, I appreciate the opportunity to speak with you today as part of your study of Bill C-30 on the spring economic update.

My name is James Janeiro. I'm with the Canadian Centre for Caregiving Excellence. We are a pan-Canadian organization focused on caregivers, which is to say parents, siblings, friends and

neighbours, as well as care providers such as personal support workers and direct support professionals.

We cover the full spectrum of care, from supporting children with disabilities to lifelong mental health challenges, aging and end-of-life care. Our goal is to make Canada the best place in the world to give and receive care.

My commentary today will focus on the proposed amendments to the disability tax credit, colloquially known as the DTC. These include, but are not limited to, allowing more medical professionals to certify DTC applications and critically simplifying and streamlining certification for certain long-lasting or lifelong medical conditions, including amputation, significant autism and Alzheimer's disease. These measures are a significant step forward for people receiving the DTC and the caregivers in their lives. My organization has been advocating for precisely this and similar reforms for years. We are very happy to see these measures being considered.

One in four Canadians is a caregiver today, and half of us will be a caregiver at some point in our lives. Our recent report, "Caring in Canada 2026", showed in, frankly, hard numbers what caregivers and recipients of care know far too well. Caregivers are not doing well, and they are in urgent need of support from their government. Caregivers' number one need from our report is for financial support.

Nearly half of caregivers have experienced financial strain due to their care responsibilities. About one-fifth of caregivers are spending \$1,000 or more every month on out-of-pocket costs, such as nutritional supplements, paid care work and incontinence supplies. Moreover, approximately 20% of caregivers have stopped saving entirely, which jeopardizes their ability to manage personal financial shocks, such as a lost job, as well as their long-term prospects for retirement. Unfortunately, the impact of this financial strain, alongside the physical, emotional and psychological toll of caregiving, is that 77% of caregivers say their well-being has suffered as a result. Moreover, 61% of caregivers say they do not feel supported by their government, and 44% are disappointed in progress to date on caregiving issues.

Measures such as those being studied today respond to many of the felt needs caregivers tell us they experience every day. Nearly one-third of caregivers manage the tax and financial administration of the care recipients in their lives, the vast majority of whom would benefit from the DTC. Unfortunately, though, more than half of caregivers are unaware of tax supports like the DTC, and only 13% have accessed them.

Delving deeper into our data, it becomes clear that the administrative burden underneath the DTC is a major barrier to caregivers accessing the credit themselves or on behalf of a loved one. Now, though it may seem pedantic to talk about administrative burden, remember that caregivers and the people they support are dealing with the DTC in addition to reams of other paperwork attached to federal and provincial credits, benefits and other programs. Although all of this is well intentioned and essential, the combined impact is a never-ending series of nearly identical forms, unnecessary medical appointments and subsequent waiting periods as people wait for one program to unlock another.

The changes you're debating will make it easier for current and potential beneficiaries of the DTC to access this important support and eliminate some of the administrivia that comes from being a caregiver or person with a disability in Canada. Critically, this will also unlock the Canada disability benefit for many people who need financial support.

This is truly an important step forward for caregivers and recipients of care, and it has my full support. My hope though is that this is just the beginning and that comprehensive work will be undertaken to reform the other tax measures that tend to go hand in hand with the DTC, including the medical expenses tax credits and, of course, making the Canada caregiver credit refundable. All of these measures taken together could be the basis of a national caregiving strategy, as promised by this government in the last election. Such a strategy would provide a coordinated framework to better support the one in four Canadians who are caregivers today.

Caregivers are essential to our health and social systems, as well as to our overall productivity and long-term economic growth. Better is both necessary and possible. I look forward to the committee's work on this bill.

Thank you for your time, and I welcome your questions.

Back to you, Madam Chair.

• (1850)

The Chair: Great. Thank you very much, Mr. Janeiro.

Before we continue, I've been informed by the interpreters that, unfortunately, Mr. Saunders, because you weren't able to do the mandatory check, you won't be able to present. I'm sorry. We have to do a mandatory sound check, and without our having done that, the interpreters won't do the interpretation.

Brad Saunders (Chief Executive Officer, Community Living Toronto): Okay. I did resolve the issue. I'm sorry about that.

The Chair: I apologize. You're certainly welcome to stay and watch. We just won't be able to hear from you.

We will now continue with Ms. Haan from the Canadian Council on Rehabilitation and Work.

Maureen Haan (President and Chief Executive Officer, Canadian Council on Rehabilitation and Work): Thank you very much, Madam Chair and honourable members of the committee, for the opportunity to appear before you today.

My name is Maureen Haan. I am the president and CEO of the Canadian Council on Rehabilitation and Work, or CCRW. We work

with folks with disabilities to ensure inclusive, meaningful employment across Canada.

You're going to hear two things from me today that may at first seem contradictory.

First, I want to express genuine appreciation for the measures in the spring economic statement to improve the disability tax credit. Second, and more fundamentally, I will submit that the DTC has functionally evolved, out of necessity, into the entry point for disability-related programs and benefits. We believe that eligibility should take a different, modern, comprehensive approach to federal disability eligibility—outside the tax system.

The changes proposed in the spring economic statement are meaningful. Streamlining the application process, creating faster pathways for certain long-standing conditions and expanding the range of professionals who can certify eligibility will reduce administrative burden and improve access. These improvements reflect long-standing concerns raised by the disability community, and they will make a difference.

However, the DTC is not designed to be, and was never designed to be, a system for determining disability or eligibility for social programs. It is a tax measure, a non-refundable tax credit intended to provide modest tax relief. However, today it plays a much larger role: A valid DTC certificate is required to access multiple core federal programs, including the Canada disability benefit, the registered disability savings plan, the child disability benefit and the disability supplement to the Canada workers benefit.

In effect, the DTC has become the front door to the Government of Canada's disability support programs, and it is a barrier, because the DTC is administered through the Income Tax Act. The Canada Revenue Agency tax policy is now functioning as disability policy. Decisions about who can access income supports and essential benefits are being filtered through a tax-based instrument. Put plainly, tax-based criteria are deciding who is disabled enough.

This is not aligned with modern disability policy approaches. It is inconsistent with the legislated definition of "disability" in the Accessible Canada Act and with Canada's commitments under the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

The DTC relies on a narrow, highly structured concept of disability. This model does not reflect how disability is understood today. It does not adequately capture episodic disabilities, mental health conditions or cumulative limitations. As a result, people with real needs and legitimate disabilities are excluded, and when this narrow test becomes the gateway to multiple programs, the consequences are compounded. A denial of the DTC does not just restrict a tax credit: It can block access to income supports and other essential benefits.

This is why the national disability network has identified this issue as a key priority for engagement with the federal government. In its document titled “The Disability Agenda: National Advocacy Priorities for the Government of Canada”, released today during National AccessAbility Week, the NDN identifies this as priority number two: a new approach to federal disability program eligibility. Priority two points to a different path.

First, disability policy should not be anchored in the tax system. Eligibility for disability programs and benefits should be determined through a system designed for that purpose, not through a tax credit. The DTC should be an end, not a means. It should be a way of delivering tax relief, not the mechanism that determines who can access essential supports.

Second, the federal government should apply a consistent, modern definition of disability that is aligned with the Accessible Canada Act. I'm encouraged to report that Accessibility Standards Canada—of which I am proud to be a board member—is working with disability community partners to develop a standard with a common definition of “disability”, grounded in both the ACA and the CRPD, for use across the Government of Canada.

The DTC reflects an older, medicalized model, creating a clear disconnect across programs.

I see that my time is coming to an end, so I'll end there.

I'm open for any questions. Thank you.

• (1855)

The Chair: You still have 45 seconds.

Maureen Haan: Do I? I can do it.

The solution, we think, is clear: comprehensive reform of the federal disability eligibility process that includes the development of a government-wide disability-status determination process outside the Canada Revenue Agency.

Let me close where I began. If we are serious about building an inclusive and effective disability support system, we must create a comprehensive reform. The improvements to the DTC are welcome and needed now. At the same time, we need to commit to supporting an inclusive system that is based on need, grounded in modern policy and accessible to those it is intended to serve.

Thank you very much. I look forward to your questions.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Go ahead, Mr. Garon.

[*Translation*]

Jean-Denis Garon: Madam Chair, the parties spoke and agreed that it would be fine to suspend the meeting, so the witness who couldn't do the sound check can do it, with your permission, of course. The witness prepared for the meeting and has a brief.

We'd like to suspend the meeting, so we can take advantage of his expertise when we resume.

The Chair: Do the committee members agree?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Very good.

[*English*]

We will take a brief suspension so that our other witness can do a sound check. Please don't wander far. As soon as that's complete, we'll resume.

Thank you.

• (1855)

(Pause)

• (1900)

The Chair: We're resuming the meeting.

First of all, I'd like to thank committee members for accommodating Mr. Saunders.

Mr. Saunders, you now have five minutes for your opening remarks.

Brad Saunders: Thank you, and I apologize for the confusion.

Good evening, Madam Chair and members of the committee. I want to thank you for the opportunity to speak to you all today. I'm Brad Saunders, the CEO of Community Living Toronto.

Community Living Toronto is one of the largest developmental services organizations in Ontario, and we support children, youth and adults with a developmental disability across the city of Toronto through housing and community supports, employment and other programs. We operate out of more than 80 sites, manage over 200 leases and support approximately 4,000 people and their families. Our work is delivered by 1,200 dedicated and passionate staff who support people throughout their lifespan.

For Canadians, one thing that truly speaks to who we are as a nation is our willingness to care for one another regardless of race, religion, ability or circumstance. Organizations like ours are on the front line of delivering these essential services. We are entrusted with public dollars, 80% of which come from the Province of Ontario, and we use these carefully and responsibly to help improve the lives of some of the province's most vulnerable people.

A life lived with an intellectual disability is a full life. It is a life of relationships, contributions, milestones and meaning, shaped by the same hopes and everyday moments that define all of our lives. It can also come with some real challenges: navigating systems that weren't always designed with you in mind, advocating for supports that should simply be there and working harder than most to access what others take for granted. That's why incremental progress matters. Not every change reshapes the landscape overnight, but the right changes made with intention move us meaningfully in the right direction.

The disability tax credit was created to help ease these challenges. It's a federal measure to recognize the added costs of living with a disability and to put a little support back in families' hands. It's a small shift in policy that carries real weight for families and individuals who spent years navigating recertification processes, medical appointments, and paperwork that asks them to justify their lives. Until now, accessing that credit has required families to repeatedly document what everyone already knows: that an intellectual disability doesn't go away. Parents and caregivers had to re-explain, year after year, the permanent realities of their loved one's life, not because anything had changed but because the system required it.

The changes that are proposed in the measures in the 2026 spring economic update are great. These are important and compassionate changes. Under the reforms, a doctor or allied health professional will only need to confirm the diagnosis, not fill out 16 pages of documentation documenting how the condition affects a person's daily life. For conditions like intellectual disabilities, Down syndrome and some forms of autism, the diagnosis itself will be recognized as meeting the eligibility criteria.

Community Living Toronto welcomes the introduction of a life-long certification under the DTC. A permanent diagnosis does not change over time, and this reform removes an unnecessary and burdensome requirement. This is meaningful progress. As always, more needs to be done, but these are meaningful practical changes that treat a person with a disability with greater dignity and make life a little easier. They signal that government is listening. They free up time, energy and resources that a person can put towards living, not just qualifying to live. We are proud to stand with the government in supporting these reforms, and we encourage the government to keep going. For the families of the people we serve, every barrier removed and every support given makes a difference.

Thank you.

• (1905)

The Chair: That's great. Thank you very much, Mr. Saunders.

I'll now turn to the March of Dimes. You have five minutes.

Jeff Willbond (Chief Accessibility Officer, March of Dimes Canada): Thank you, Madam Chair and members of the committee, for inviting us to speak about the disability tax credit changes in Bill C-30. We appreciate the opportunity to address this really important issue.

Madam Chair, so you know, my colleague and I will be sharing the five minutes. We understand that we have five minutes as an organization.

My name is Jeff Willbond, and I am the chief accessibility officer at the March of Dimes Canada, the country's largest disability service provider. For more than 70 years, we have supported people with disabilities to live independently in their communities. Each year, we work with over 30,000 people with disabilities, along with family, caregivers, community partners, advocates and governments.

Financial security remains one of the most pressing issues facing people with disabilities in Canada. The disability tax credit is a critical gateway to federal benefits and tax credits that can materially improve dignity, autonomy and independence—that is, if people can access it.

I first began benefiting personally from the disability tax credit more than 30 years ago. Since then, I've worked hard to ensure that others in our community know about it and can receive it as well.

I want to state clearly that the reforms to the disability tax credit in the spring economic update are a step in the right direction. We welcome them, and we want to work with the government to go further.

The disability tax credit was originally designed to recognize the higher cost of living with a disability, but for too long, it has been more of a burden than a benefit for many of the people it's meant to serve. The Canada Revenue Agency reports that over 96% of completed disability tax credit applications are approved, yet only 25% of people with disabilities have ever applied. That gap is not about eligibility, but access. People don't apply because they don't know the disability tax credit exists, the forms are complex, the eligibility criteria are not clear, accessing a primary care practitioner is difficult and uninsured fees of \$150 to \$400 to complete an application form create a barrier, with no guarantee of approval. The result is over \$2 billion in unclaimed disability tax credit benefits every year, as well as billions more in downstream benefits like the RDSP and the Canada disability benefit, which require disability tax credit eligibility.

The announced reforms—particularly those expanding the list of conditions requiring only a confirmation of diagnosis—represent meaningful progress. For someone with Down syndrome or cerebral palsy, like me, being able to confirm a diagnosis once and receive the disability tax credit for life is a profound change. It reduces cost; it reduces burden, and it treats people with dignity.

These are good first steps, and first steps really matter.

It's back to you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: I understand that you're continuing. You have just under two minutes.

Amanda MacKenzie (National Director, Public Affairs, Advocacy, and Strategic Communications, March of Dimes Canada): Thank you.

My name is Amanda MacKenzie. I work with Jeff at March of Dimes Canada. I want to talk about how this issue is personal for me.

I am both the parent and a sibling of people with disabilities, and I have applied for the disability tax credit twice. I was really lucky. Our family doctor understood my brother and my son, and I know the system and how it works. I know that the changes in the spring economic update will have a very positive impact.

I also know how much work the Canada Revenue Agency has done to make the DTC applications easier. I want to thank and recognize the entire DTC team at the CRA for their hard work and partnership in working towards the reforms that we see.

At the same time, though, there's a lot of ground to make up. We're calling on government to go further in three areas.

First, we need to reimburse practitioners directly for completing DTC applications. Partial reimbursement after the fact does not help someone who cannot afford to pay the fees up front.

Second, we need to align the DTC's definition of disability with the Accessible Canada Act. The ACA definition is the federal government's definition of disability, so wherever there's a definition of disability in federal legislation or policy, simply put, it should apply.

Further to that, changing the ACA definition, as my colleagues have discussed, will facilitate future reform and provincial and territorial alignment.

Last, Canada needs a federal disability status that lives in our social system, not in the tax system. People who really need what the DTC unlocks, like the people who we serve every day, don't access it, because they say that they don't make enough money to require a tax credit.

The tax system is the wrong home for disability status in Canada. We need a single, portable status that a person establishes by telling their story once and that unlocks access to all applicable federal benefits and more. Our friends in the European Union and Japan can show us the way.

Our disability community in Canada has been clear and united on this issue. The national disability network has put forward concrete recommendations that reflect the priorities of people with disabilities across the country. We're committed to working all together to get this right.

Thank you. We look forward to questions.

• (1910)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I just want to take a quick temperature check of the members. If we're to end at 7:30, we have time for one full round of questions. Is that okay with everyone?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Okay, that's perfect.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Lefebvre, you may go ahead for six minutes.

Eric Lefebvre: Good evening, and thank you, Madam Chair.

I have four daughters. My youngest is different. She is a young woman of 20 with an intellectual disability. I have her in my life. I'm glad to have you with us today.

I want to take a moment to recognize the many organizations we have. In my riding, in Victoriaville, we have caring people who look after our children. I want to recognize the Bâtisseurs group at La Myriade school—the kids in the Incomparables group, I adore you to the moon and back—and the Serviabes group at Le Tandem high school. These kids have challenges, but they are beyond endearing. I want to acknowledge all the educators who work with the kids, directly and indirectly.

Marie-Éden is now starting adult training, in the Artisans class at the Monseigneur-Côté centre. It's a social integration class. The kids participate in workshops at job sites.

I also want to recognize the Bois-Francs/Érable chamber of commerce and industry. I worked with them last year on an award to recognize businesses that provide inclusive employability workshops. At the chamber of commerce's gala, we present an award to a business that integrates these individuals into its workforce.

I want to recognize the Brunet Plus pharmacy in Victoriaville and the wonderful Sarah-Ève, who came on stage to accept the award. I also want to recognize Créations de Cathou.

Thank you, Madam Chair, for letting me do that. It is so important to recognize efforts to integrate children like my daughter Marie-Éden.

Madam Chair, as you can see, I have a conflict of interest when it comes to our witnesses today. From the bottom of my heart, I want to thank each and every one of them for the work they do.

Mr. Willbond, you said that, for a variety of reasons, only 25% of people living with a disability apply for the tax credit, unfortunately. Some don't know about it, while others don't apply because it can cost them \$150 to \$400 to have their family doctor fill out the form, when they don't even know whether they'll get the credit.

What do you recommend to bring up that percentage, so that more people with a disability can benefit from the credit?

The program is available, and the whole point is to help them.

[*English*]

Jeff Willbond: Thank you for the question, and thank you for sharing your personal story about your kids. I hope your daughters are doing well.

It's an important question you raise. I don't think there's just one solution. There's a combination of things. The application package process itself is not easy to go through. We need to simplify the application so people can actually get through it, and get the benefits they really require.

At the same time, we put the onus on practitioners, on doctors, to take their time out of supporting their patients, and that's why there's a cost. The cost is not being covered by government, so it's out-of-pocket for those individuals who need to pay for it. It is significant, and it's been climbing for a number of years. It's becoming more and more cumbersome for physicians to take that time to do it and, therefore, it becomes more expensive for the family or the individual.

• (1915)

[*Translation*]

Eric Lefebvre: Thank you for that answer.

As you said, when someone has an intellectual disability—like Marie-Éden, who's had hers for 21 years—they have it for life. They shouldn't have to fill out a form every year to confirm that they have an intellectual disability.

Do you think the form could be a lot shorter?

[*English*]

Jeff Willbond: In fact, aside from shortening the form, as you said, I think we need to put it into plain language. We talk about easy language in Canadian society. We talk about plain language. Sometimes the way we communicate with the public is at an academic level in terms of language, as well as in terms of interpretation and understanding things. I think it's a combination of shortening the application package and putting it in much simpler language so that everyone can understand it, not just the doctors.

[*Translation*]

Eric Lefebvre: Thank you.

I criticize the government a lot. It's said that it has made recognizing a person's intellectual disability easier, so people don't have to prove it every single time. I'm happy about that.

I made an offer to the minister earlier to help with another matter. Now I am again offering to help the government, and this is very sincere. I'd really like to work with the government, so we can find a solution together.

What can we do to support people with disabilities and make it easier for them to access programming?

I'm repeating myself, but we don't want only 25% of people with disabilities to benefit from programming. I just learned that today.

What we want is to increase the number of people with disabilities who benefit from programming.

Again, I am reaching out to the government in the hope of forming a small committee, with representation from the organizations, to consider the matter and come up with solutions to help us help this population.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Lefebvre.

Your time is up.

Mr. Turnbull, you may go ahead for six minutes.

[*English*]

Ryan Turnbull: Thanks, Chair, and thanks to all the witnesses who are here today.

I come from the riding of Whitby. We have the Abilities Centre in my riding, which we're really proud of, because it is an organization that is recognized nationally as specializing in ensuring that people with different abilities can live the fullest lives possible, which I think is what we all want to support. I know it's an incremental process. We've done some things, and we constantly want to do more.

The changes we've heard about are good ones—making the disability tax credit more accessible, as well as simplifying and streamlining the application process. Notwithstanding the limitations that have been mentioned—that we need to go further, that it's narrow, that the tax system may not be the best entry point; I agree with lots of those sentiments and comments—from a user perspective, these changes strike me as really being meaningful. I know they're relatively small, but they are pretty meaningful for individuals I've worked with through my office who have struggled to access the disability tax credit. We've had to help them for years—often going back over and over again for years—to help them get a disability tax credit.

Could one of you speak to this? I'm not sure who the best person is.

Maybe I could ask you, Mr. Willbond, or Ms. Haan, what does this really mean for our disability community?

Maureen Haan: The disability tax credit and the changes suggested in the bill are fantastic, and I think that all of my colleagues have said today that they're definitely a step in the right direction.

What needs to be considered is this: Is it the right home for a social program for people with disabilities to make sure that people with disabilities do not live in poverty? I don't know that it belongs in a tax system. I think it belongs in a social welfare system.

I believe my colleague Brad Saunders talked about the fact that many people don't think they make enough income to apply for the DTC. That's one of the issues—why there's such a low uptake. It's not designed to get people out of poverty.

This is why the suggestion is absolutely phenomenal...reform in the bill. We can move further.

● (1920)

Ryan Turnbull: Thank you for that.

I'm going to—

The Chair: Mr. Janeiro wants to jump in.

Ryan Turnbull: Yes, but quickly, please, because I want to share my time with Mr. Sawatzky, if there's any time.

The Chair: I'm sorry. Hold on one second, Mr. Janeiro.

We have three minutes left, so perhaps give a brief response, Mr. Janeiro, and then we'll turn it over to Mr. Sawatzky.

James Janeiro: Madam Chair, I appreciate your indulging my impertinence in putting my hand up to answer Mr. Turnbull's question.

Mr. Turnbull, I receive the disability tax credit myself. I was born missing an arm, and I've worn a prosthetic my whole life. My parents did the paperwork a long time ago. I receive the DTC. It has very little effect on me because my income is quite high, so there's not much of a material impact. However, it is from birth, and I don't have to reapply every year.

I have a friend whose name is Joe. He is in a very similar situation. Since birth, he has been missing a leg rather than an arm. In his case, every couple of years the CRA asks him to reapply for the disability tax credit. I was in the lock-up when all of these measures were announced. My first call was to my home office. My second call was to Joe to say, "Joe, once these measures are passed, you will no longer have to go through this rigmarole." This is one very specific, small example, but it has an impact on the lives of people with disabilities.

Jake Sawatzky: Thank you, Chair.

Thank you to the witnesses.

Ms. Haan, I'm glad to see that the DTC has been well received, the progress there. You mentioned, in your opening remarks, eligibility in modernizing that process, and you mentioned how mental health conditions are not considered for DTC. I was just wondering, could you provide any recommendations for potential steps forward in that regard?

Maureen Haan: Thank you. I don't have anything with me right now, but I'd be happy to get that information for you.

Jake Sawatzky: That would be great. Thank you very much.

Also, I'd like to congratulate you and your organization on celebrating 50 years of advancing disability inclusion and helping in building a more accessible workforce across Canada. That's huge. That's almost twice as long as I've been on the earth, so that's pretty cool.

In your annual report for 2024-25, you reported that 311 youth, including youth with disabilities, gained employment; your organization supported apprentices with disabilities facing barriers to Red Seal certification; and 88% of the clients reported increased job competitiveness at the end of the service. Given that success, from your perspective, how would the measures contained in the spring economic statement improve employment opportunities for Canadians with disabilities, particularly in the skilled trades?

The Chair: You have about 30 seconds.

Maureen Haan: I can reply to you in written form. I think that's a fantastic question, and I can give you a very comprehensive response to that.

There are some amazing things happening within the government right now, within the opportunities fund, within the workforce alliances. We're desperately trying to make sure disability has representation within those workforce alliances so that disability is considered at the very beginning. I'd love to have that conversation with you.

Thank you.

Jake Sawatzky: That would be great. Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

[*Translation*]

Wrapping up the hour is Mr. Garon.

Mr. Garon, please go ahead. You have six minutes.

Jean-Denis Garon: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you to the witnesses for being here today.

Broadly speaking, I think everyone here is sensitive to the fact that the disability tax credit meets a need. However, the design leaves a lot to be desired. It has all kinds of flaws, and eventually, it will need to be replaced by something better. That's what I'm hearing.

Ms. Haan, you said the tax system isn't the right entry point for someone who needs help. That reminds me of the saga surrounding the last budget, when the government decreased the marginal tax rate. Basically, it reduced the tax rate for one bracket, and since the tax credit is proportional to the tax rate applicable to that bracket, people with certain income ended up paying more than what they saved with the lower tax rate. That shows the need is there but isn't proportional to the tax rate. The government had to address the matter and partly corrected the problem. It did so, and the opposition pushed for it.

To some extent, you're asking for a complete overhaul of the support provided to people with disabilities. Wouldn't it be better to have just one benefit?

The payment would depend on the person's situation. It could be funded by one department and administered by the Canada Revenue Agency, as one of its responsibilities. It would be totally independent. The criteria could include income, similar to the Canada child benefit. It could be something like that.

• (1925)

[English]

Maureen Haan: That's a great question.

I think we need to look at the barriers for people getting into any type of employment, school, education or training. It's not the person; it's the barriers that the person faces. It's that modernized understanding of disability, instead of a medicalized model, when we take a modern approach and looking at the barriers around us that stop us from bringing the best talent we have, the realness everybody has inside them, into whatever it is they want to do. Looking at those barriers, I think, is the answer to your question.

[Translation]

Jean-Denis Garon: I want to talk about barriers, because I have a question about the medical certification that's required. First, though, let's say the government took the funding allocated to the tax credit, as though it was being claimed by everyone, and put that money towards a benefit. I imagine that would be a good start.

You talked about the burden on doctors and the cost associated with applying. Obviously, that's a problem. We heard from doctors about that and how awful the form is to fill out.

That said, what do we replace it with? The public demands accountability, and sometimes that ends up hurting people with disabilities. It can be a problem if people no longer feel that only those who deserve the benefit are getting it.

Instead of the medical certification and the forms doctors have to fill out, what do we use? What is the alternative?

[English]

Amanda MacKenzie: Our position on this is that there should be a federal disability status that goes through the social system as opposed to the tax system. Obviously, there's going to be some kind of gate that people are going to have to go through, but that gateway doesn't have to be what the disability tax credit gateway looks like right now, which is a highly barriered process. We see in other jurisdictions, like in the European Union and in Japan, that they have different systems in which there is a national or even an international....

[Translation]

Jean-Denis Garon: You already said that. Sorry, but I have two minutes left. Time is a rare commodity.

The provinces are also part of the equation. In a former life, I used to work with businesses in Quebec that provide employment adapted to people with disabilities. Businesses that integrate people with disabilities receive wage subsidies. All sorts of criteria are taken into account, including the person's status and the sector. There are provincial programs, in addition to the federal ones.

How do we give that status portability, with Revenu Québec, for instance?

Do any provinces do what you're suggesting?

Do we have any formulas here we can follow?

[English]

Amanda MacKenzie: The answer is no, not really. However, if the federal definition of disability was the Accessible Canada Act definition, that would encompass all the different provincial and territorial definitions across the country, which would facilitate alignment as the reforms that we're all working toward continue.

[Translation]

Jean-Denis Garon: Can you talk about the models in place elsewhere? You've mentioned that a couple of times. In places with a successful model, how does it work?

[English]

Amanda MacKenzie: In Japan it's been around for decades, and it works very well. The European Union has not had their model in place for as long. It's still under development. Countries are still joining in. However, it's a status that people are taking advantage of and are using across the different countries of the European Union.

I would imagine that a confederation like ours could handle it if the EU can.

• (1930)

[Translation]

Jean-Denis Garon: I have 20 seconds left.

Would anyone else care to add anything?

[English]

The Chair: I think Mr. Janeiro would like to jump in.

James Janeiro: Yes. Thank you.

Monsieur Garon, I'd point you toward Germany, another federated country, in which they've taken some steps around what is effectively a guaranteed basic income for people with disabilities. Once you go through one gate, it unlocks all sorts of other things for you, including a lifelong income as long as you need it. I'd point you toward that example as well.

[Translation]

Jean-Denis Garon: Madam Chair, if possible and if they'd like, could the witnesses work with the clerk to put together some information for the committee members on models that work?

That would be helpful to us.

The Chair: Absolutely.

If the witnesses would like, you can send something to the committee.

[English]

With that, I would like to thank the witnesses.

Committee members, before you leave, we have three small items to approve. Don't go anywhere.

Witnesses, you are more than welcome to log off and step away. Thank you very much for your time.

Members, we have received a budget request regarding the study of Bill C-30. The amount requested is \$16,750.

Is it the pleasure of the committee to adopt this budget?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I want to remind everybody that for Bill C-30, the deadline to submit amendments to the clerks is Thursday, June 4, at 2 p.m. Clause-by-clause consideration of the bill is scheduled for Monday, June 8, 2026, at 3:30 p.m.

Finally, with regard to the pre-budget consultations, I would like to give the clerks and analysts some direction for the report, which I hope will be both concise and substantial.

I understand that there is a suggestion.

Go ahead, Mr. Turnbull.

Ryan Turnbull: Yes.

I spoke to Jasraj Hallan and Jean-Denis, representatives from both opposition parties, prior to this meeting. I suggested that perhaps we could give light instructions to the analysts to start working on a “what we heard” version of a report on pre-budget consultations. I think we will likely have only one or two more meetings on pre-budget consultations with witness testimony.

With regard to the day on which recommendations could be submitted by all the parties for the pre-budget consultations report, which could get compiled, we had discussed the last day that the House sits. We've since talked about this. We thought maybe it would be better to give a bit more time. Perhaps July 3 would be a more amicable deadline for all the parties. That gives us a bit of time beyond when the House rises for the summer. That's just in case we need more time.

I wanted to put that out there for consideration. It seemed as though parties were generally in agreement. I don't know whether

people have changed their minds—I hope not—but that's what I wanted to suggest.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Garon.

Jean-Denis Garon: Yes, Mr. Turnbull, Mr. Hallan and I did indeed speak, and that approach is fine with us.

I have a question, though. We're getting a lot of calls from people saying that submissions provided in English aren't available in French. The process is stalled at the translation bureau. There are a good many.

In any case, a lot of people are contacting us about that. It's delaying our work. I'm wondering how we should manage that and how we'll be able to work to that timeline given the translation constraint.

We gave our word—it's fine, we won't go back on it—but the problem remains.

I have nothing against the translation bureau, but the faster we go, the more it becomes a problem for us.

The Chair: According to the clerks and the analysts, the translation bureau pledged to have all the translations done by the time the House rises for the summer. That's why you have to wait until July 3 to submit your recommendations to the clerk. That way, we'll be sure to have all the briefs in both languages.

Jean-Denis Garon: That's great.

Thank you.

The Chair: Does that timetable work for everyone?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Excellent.

Thank you everyone.

[*English*]

The committee is adjourned. We'll see you tomorrow.

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