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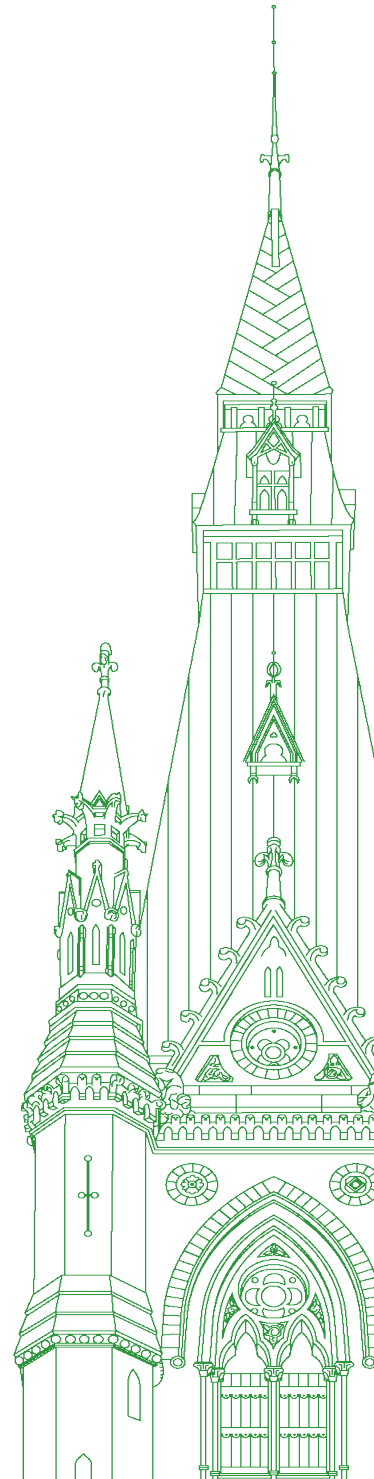
Standing Committee on Finance

EVIDENCE

NUMBER 048

Tuesday, June 16, 2026

Chair: Karina Gould



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• (0905)

[English]

The Chair (Hon. Karina Gould (Burlington, Lib.)): Colleagues, I call this meeting to order. Welcome to meeting.... It can't be number 48. That was Thursday, I think.

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

Pursuant to the order of reference of Tuesday, May 26, 2026, the motion adopted by the committee on Thursday, May 7, 2026, and the motion adopted by the House on Monday, June 15, 2026, the committee will resume consideration of Bill C-30, an act to implement certain provisions of the spring economic update tabled in Parliament on April 28, 2026.

Does anyone need me to read the motion? No. We're good.

I would like to welcome our witnesses back to the committee. Members have a list of the departmental officials who are here and to whom they can ask technical questions.

Before we get started, I'd like to do one item of committee business. Committee members received a supplementary budget request regarding the study of Bill C-30. The amount requested is \$1,000. Is it the pleasure of the committee to adopt this supplementary budget?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: That's excellent. Thank you very much, everyone.

Mr. Turnbull.

Ryan Turnbull (Whitby, Lib.): I have one quick question, and then I'd like to seek unanimous consent to give some time to my colleague Elizabeth May, who's been waiting patiently.

Before we get to that, I want to ask a clarifying question. We have roughly 23 minutes until 9:30, at which time all questions will be posed. I understand the Conservatives may have a suggestion as well, so maybe we can deal with that up front here.

There are a couple of clauses that were stayed. There were Conservative amendments to them, and we said we'd.... I don't know whether we're going to start on those or whether we're going to go from the place we left off. It's just a point of clarification.

The Chair: We would go in chronological order from the place we left off, and then we'll get to the last ones at the end.

Ryan Turnbull: That's great.

I'd like to seek unanimous consent to allow my colleague Elizabeth May some time to speak to some of her concerns and to introduce her amendments. I think there was consent from all parties previously, so I'm hoping that I'll get my colleagues' support on that.

The Chair: Thanks. Do we have unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Ms. May, you have the floor.

Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Thank you, Madam Chair.

I want to start by thanking all members of this committee for allowing me to speak now. In the normal course of things, without the programming motion, my amendments would come up in order. My first amendment occurs at clause 52.

I have eight amendments. They speak specifically and only to division 8 of Bill C-30. Division 8 relates to pesticides.

[Translation]

I would like to start by thanking my colleagues from the Bloc Québécois, the member of Parliament for Mirabel, Mr. Garon, and the member of Parliament for Rimouski—La Matapédia, who raised the same issues and concerns in the House.

[English]

I'm very grateful for their help, and also, as we sit around this table, to Jas, to everybody and obviously to Ryan and to you, Madam Chair, for the opportunity for me to have time to speak to my concerns outside the normal programming motion.

Given that this bill, Bill C-30, is the implementation bill for the spring economic statement and that the only part of the spring economic statement that relates to division 8 are these simple lines on page 96: "Announces the government's intention to amend the Canadian Food Inspection Agency Act and the Pest Control Products Act to include consideration of food security and cost of food".

I would submit, Madam Chair, that if we'd had enough time in the House at the very beginning of this bill, we should have moved to have this entire division 8 removed as being far beyond the scope of what was set out and what we are now implementing.

I recognize that most of Bill C-30 does aim to implement specific financial measures, such as excise tax changes, CPP measures and so on, and would directly implement what was in the spring economic statement, but I submit to you and to all members of this committee, as you may notice very quickly, that this is a last-minute Hail Mary pass begging my colleagues to accept my amendment so that this wrong is not done.

I think the government will live to regret the inclusion of something as significant and regressive as division 8 in an omnibus budget bill if they insist on continuing down this course of a massive change in pesticide regulation placing economic considerations above human health and environmental risks.

There were no independent witnesses before committee, because it moved very quickly.

• (0910)

[Translation]

I'm not accusing anyone on the committee, but I'm speaking now on behalf of the Association pour la santé publique du Québec and its Quebec victims of pesticides initiative. I'm also speaking on behalf of the following organizations.

[English]

This includes Breast Cancer Action Quebec, the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment, the Canadian Biotechnology Action Network, the Canadian Environmental Law Association, the Canadian Partnership for Children's Health and Environment, Children's Health Defense Canada, Council of Canadians Edmonton Chapter, the David Suzuki Foundation, Earth Education League, Ecojustice, Environmental Defence, Équiterre, Evidence for Democracy, Fondation Rivières, Friends of the Earth Canada, National Farmers Union, Nature Canada, Pesticide Free Edmonton, Prevent Cancer Now, Quebec Environmental Law Centre, Safe Food Matters, the Saskatchewan Network for Alternatives to Pesticides, Vigilance OGM and West Coast Environmental Law.

Who am I to say that I can speak for these people? I do so because they submitted briefs, but their words were not heard before the finance committee.

I submit again the review of Bill C-30 and division 8 in the chamber itself, where we had this bill tabled on April 29. After three hours of debate, the time allocation motion came down on May 25. I don't think anyone feeling confident in their own personal integrity could say that this section, division 8, had anything like adequate time before the House before it went on division to a second reading at this table.

I'm so grateful for this chance. I've written some of you to say that my background.... I know I'm only 72 years old, but for 51 years I've worked on pesticide issues. I was briefly the chair—it was for a couple of years, but when you're 72, it's brief—of the environmental law subsection for the Canadian Bar Association, and I personally handled a number of pesticide cases in my career before politics.

Briefly, to the committee then, I'll explain why this is a substantial change and why it should be resisted. Then, I'll describe my amendments as briefly as I can.

In 1969, the Pest Control Products Act was passed in this country. It gave the regulation of pesticides—pesticides being a category that includes insecticides, fungicides, rodenticides and herbicides—to Agriculture Canada, pretty much exclusively. The now defunct pest management regulatory agency had to accept advice and sometimes vetoes from the health department. I won't go through step by step the different changes that occurred.

The most significant change that occurred was when then Liberal leader Jean Chrétien put in the Liberal platform in 1993 that the Pest Control Products Act would be moved from Agriculture Canada and moved to Health Canada. That was done in 1995 with a lot of credit to someone who visited the chamber recently, former member of Parliament, former minister of the environment for Quebec, Mr. Clifford Lincoln.

[Translation]

For me, he's a real hero.

[English]

Clifford Lincoln was the Liberal MP who made the change that was in the Liberal red book to say that the Pest Management Regulatory Agency reports to the Minister of Health, and that human health would take a more prominent role in the review of pesticides.

Another significant event, which I mention only because I think division 8 of Bill C-30 will run into trouble in court, is that in 2001 the Supreme Court of Canada ruled in the Hudson, Quebec, case that the precautionary principle under which the little municipality of Hudson banned the use of cosmetic pesticides on lawns.... That was upheld by the Supreme Court of Canada because the Supreme Court said that the precautionary principle was now fundamental to federal pesticide regulation and Canadian law in general. The precautionary principle can be summed up as “look both ways before you cross the street.”

Again, briefly I'll just say that we often hear from whoever's in charge of pesticides at the time, regardless of party, and they all have the same talking point that says that Canada has the most rigorous pest-management regime in the world. That's just nonsense. To this day, Richard Nixon's FIFRA—the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act—is stronger and better constructed than Canadian pesticide regulation.

Here's a case in point. If I can find any reason that this has come forward, in the guise of something to do with food costs and food security, it's the episode that occurred last year when the Pest Management Regulatory Agency, for the period of one month only, said it would not be okay to use liquid strychnine on farm fields in Alberta and Saskatchewan to deal with ground squirrels, also known as gophers. It was one month but the industry appealed and PMRA granted them the appeal with careful conditions because, as you can imagine, liquid strychnine is rather dangerous to be used in any uncontrolled environment.

In any case, it seems that this may have given impetus to this quite wrong-headed idea that the federal cabinet should, as is described here in division 8 of Bill C-30, allow the federal cabinet to overturn a decision by a minister. This is proposed subsection 28.1(1). It says, “because the Minister does not consider that the environmental risks of the pest control product are acceptable,” the Governor in Council may, by order, amend the registration “if the Governor in Council considers it necessary to do so to protect national economic security, regional economic security, or national food security.”

Again, there are many things wrong with this, including that the timelines provided would allow extensions that would mean that something like liquid strychnine in an emergency consideration could be used for up to nine years before being reviewed.

Whoever drafted this section of Bill C-30 wasn't considering the implications for human health or the environment, or even the economy at all. Some of the evidence we would have heard, had we had witnesses here, is that in terms of the European Union, Canadians need to diversify markets. Our farmers don't need their products to be rejected because of excessive pesticide use, but lentils from Canada have been rejected from a number of EU countries because we allow more glyphosate, trade name Roundup, than the EU will allow. We've had crops rejected at the border. We don't need this. We need to work in harmony with allies, particularly within the European Union, to make sure that Canadian food exports don't face rejection at the border.

● (0915)

In any case, the groups I've mentioned have told me that as much as my amendments may improve things, they actually think that even if all of my amendments were accepted, it would be far preferable to delete division 8 altogether.

Nevertheless, I do want to thank the environmental law group, Ecojustice, for their assistance, and my team. I particularly thank Steve Parkinson, who is a very hard worker. He worked until two in the morning to make sure we could get these in by the deadline created by the motion that allows me to be here at all. I know the clock is ticking.

My first amendment speaks to the fact that Bill C-30 doesn't define.... In saying the cabinet can overturn a minister, it uses terms like “national economic security” and “national food security” without defining them and without providing any requirement for evidence, research or any kind of independent panel to review what the cabinet is doing. This appears to be a permission to overturn a decision that is reasoned and based on evidence with one that is purely political discretion.

I won't go through these in great detail because I know that time is ticking. I'm so grateful to the Bloc and the Conservatives for all of this time.

If anyone is watching this, I would not be able to do this without the Conservative Party members here—each and every one of them—the Bloc member here at the table and all of the Liberals here at the table. Thank you. I can't thank you enough for at least allowing me to present these. I really hope you'll find it in your hearts to carry at least some of them.

I should mention that my colleague and friend, Steven Guilbeault, has a number of amendments here that speak to the issue of transparency. Those amendments, if accepted, will not deal with the problem created—the real offence to the precautionary principle—which is the notion that this government cares more about human health and the environment than it does about brief economic pressures from lobbyists.

My first amendment attempts to define “national economic security” to include “long-term sustainability” and not create unacceptable risks to human health and the environment. I won't go through each definition, but the first amendment is to create definitions around terms that are used to justify overturning a decision by saying that a pesticide is too dangerous to be used by the agency in charge.

The second amendment adds that cabinet can only overturn a decision of a minister if the minister agrees that the risks to human health from the use of that product are not non-negotiable. You can't change the decision if the minister has decided that, really, the human health risks are unacceptable.

My third amendment says that cabinet must not make an order to overturn the decision if the minister responsible has “determined that the health risks or the combined environmental risks and health risks are not acceptable”. The second consideration is that “the pest control product does not have sufficient value for the control of an infestation”.

Another thing that must be considered in decisions like this, which isn't mentioned in Bill C-30, is whether reasonable alternatives are available. Is there another way to handle this emergency that requires...? For instance, to go back to the prairie gophers, is another reasonable alternative available?

Rather ironically, the reason the prairie gophers have become so much more prevalent and destructive is what is described in all of the government documents as “abnormally dry conditions”. In other words, it's the climate crisis and persistent drought.

My fourth amendment is that emergency orders specifically must not have extensions. It would limit the emergency order to one year and no extensions. Currently, as I mentioned briefly earlier, the three-year duration in the bill is extendable by another three years, followed by a phase-out period, so the prolonged use of a product that has been determined by the minister responsible as unacceptable could be allowed, by cabinet override, to continue for up to nine years.

The fifth amendment I have removed—pardon me for returning to it—because we replaced it with another one, with consent of the clerk.

I'll just go to the sixth amendment, which is replacing lines 7 and 8 on page 31. It is to change so that the minister must not allow the product to be used if it is unsafe. Without this amendment, public confidence will be undermined and regulatory decisions will have no effect.

● (0920)

I can't really pick one—they come as a package—but if someone on the Liberal benches felt that there was one thing that might make this less appalling, it would be this one.

[Translation]

It's amendment PV-7. I'll read it to you.

That Bill C-30, in clause 57, be amended by adding after line 2 on page 32 the following:

“(2.1) Despite subsections (1) and (2), the Governor in Council must not make an order under this section if

(a) the Minister has determined that the health risks or the combined environmental risks and health risks are unacceptable;

(b) the pest control product does not have sufficient value for the protection of national economic security, regional economic security or national food security; or

(c) reasonable alternatives are available.”

[English]

I have more amendments, but I will plead with my friends across the way.

In the 51 years I've worked on pesticides in this country, this is the single most regressive proposal I've ever seen. Stephen Harper's government never touched toxic chemicals. I will say that the Harper administration did massive damage to environmental impact assessment law and the Fisheries Act, but those were repaired subsequently. Nobody of any government of any political stripe, in my experience, has ever proposed anything as appalling as this.

I beg my colleagues around the table. I know that I've had the great generosity of time. I'm deeply grateful.

There are trade implications. Our products could be rejected over and over again. Even looking just at the economics of this, whoever drafted this didn't look at the facts. They didn't look at the economics. They certainly didn't look at the environmental risks, and they didn't consider that pesticides.... The Canadian Cancer Society has been clear for years that pesticides carry risks, depending on the pesticide.

What kind of economic argument is used?

I recall this one, because I was in the Mulroney government as an adviser, and I was the lawyer for Friends of the Earth in the alachlor case. The moment that Monsanto's economic argument for why their carcinogenic herbicide, alachlor, must not be banned.... The agriculture minister at the time was prepared to accept this argument. Monsanto and Agriculture Canada said that it would be unfair to ban alachlor because its next closest competitor also caused cancer.

It took Jake Epp, as former minister of health, saying that he'd have to stand up in the House of Commons after the Minister of Agriculture licensed this project and, if asked, say that this herbicide, alachlor, causes cancer. The economic arguments at the time were seen to override Jake Epp's argument. Fortunately, the cabinet didn't buy it.

I don't see any criteria in Bill C-30 that would prevent a known carcinogen to continue to be used in dangerous and certainly risky circumstances, with no economic case having to be made.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you, my colleagues.

Again, I'm pleading with you, particularly the Liberal and Conservative members in this place. I know the Bloc Québécois is supporting my position, and I'm deeply grateful. If we had NDP members at the table...but of course, they're not a recognized party.

I'm grateful that I, as a representative of an unrecognized party, was given this latitude.

Thank you again, Madam Chair.

● (0925)

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. May.

Go ahead, Mr. Hallan.

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

Do I have to seek unanimous consent to pull our amendments?

We'll just pull our amendments then.

The Chair: All Conservative amendments are pulled.

Jasraj Hallan: That is correct.

The Chair: Does that include the ones that we stayed earlier?

Jasraj Hallan: Yes.

The Chair: Okay.

I'm not seeing anyone else on the speakers list. We will continue on with clause 44.

(Clause 44 agreed to on division)

The Chair: Shall clause 45 carry?

[Translation]

Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): No, Madam Chair. I'm asking for a vote.

[English]

The Chair: We'll take a recorded vote.

(Clause 45 agreed to: yeas 10; nays 1)

(Clause 46 agreed to: yeas 10; nays 1)

(Clause 47 agreed to: yeas 10; nays 1)

The Chair: Mr. Garon.

● (0930)

[Translation]

Jean-Denis Garon: I would like to ask that the results of this vote be applied to the rest of part 3, division 7.

If there were a way to apply the results up to clause 51, I would be willing to do so.

The Chair: We can't, because there's an amendment to clause 50.

Jean-Denis Garon: Okay. If we could at least do this for clauses 48 and 49, it would save time.

[English]

The Chair: Is there unanimous consent to group clauses 48 and 49?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Translation]

Jean-Denis Garon: I'm asking for a vote, Madam Chair.

[English]

The Chair: No. Then you have to do them individually, but we've already grouped them.

[Translation]

Jean-Denis Garon: If they're grouped together and we proceed to the vote, it means that we're voting on clauses 48 and 49.

[English]

The Chair: It's not the usual practice to do that.

[Translation]

Normally, if you wanted us to proceed to a vote, we would go clause by clause, and not by group. However, we'll agree to do so this time.

[English]

(Clauses 48 and 49 agreed to: yeas 10; nays 1)

(On clause 50)

The Chair: Shall the Liberal amendment LIB-1 carry?

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

The Chair: Shall LIB-2 carry?

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

(Clause 50 as amended agreed to on division)

(Clause 51 agreed to: yeas 10; nays 1)

(On clause 52)

The Chair: Shall the Green Party amendment PV-1 carry?

(Amendment negated: nays 10; yeas 1)

(Clause 52 agreed to: yeas 10; nays 1)

(On clause 53)

The Chair: Shall PV-2 carry?

(Amendment negated: nays 10; yeas 1 [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

(Clause 53 agreed to: yeas 10; nays 1)

(On clause 54)

The Chair: Does PV-3 carry?

(Amendment negated: nays 10; yeas 1 [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: Shall PV-4 carry?

(Amendment negated: nays 10; yeas 1 [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

● (0935)

The Chair: Shall LIB-3 carry?

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

The Chair: Shall LIB-4 carry?

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

(Clause 54 as amended agreed to: yeas 10; nays 1)

(Clause 55 agreed to: yeas 10; nays 1)

(On clause 56)

The Chair: Shall PV-6 carry?

(Amendment negated: nays 10; yeas 1 [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

(Clause 56 agreed to: yeas 10; nays 1)

(On clause 57)

The Chair: Shall PV-7 carry?

(Amendment negated: nays 10; yeas 1 [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: Shall PV-7.1 carry?

● (0940)

Ryan Turnbull: I'm sorry. I don't have the PV-7.1 amendment. I don't even see it on the agenda.

The Chair: Does everyone else have Green Party amendment PV-7.1?

Some hon. members: No.

The Chair: We're going to take a brief moment then and circulate it to the members.

● (0940)

(Pause)

● (0940)

The Chair: Now that members have received PV-7.1 and have had a chance to read it, are we good to carry on with the vote? That's great.

(Amendment negated: nays 10; yeas 1 [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

(Clause 57 agreed to: yeas 10; nays 1)

(Clause 58 agreed to: yeas 10; nays 1)

(On clause 59)

The Chair: Moving on to clause 59, shall PV-8 carry?

(Amendment negatived: nays 10; yeas 1 [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

(Clause 59 agreed to: yeas 10; nays 1)

(Clause 60 agreed to: yeas 10; nays 1)

● (0945)

The Chair: Shall clause 2 carry?

Ryan Turnbull: Are we back to the beginning?

The Chair: We're back to the beginning.

Ryan Turnbull: Is it unamended, Chair?

The Chair: Yes, it is, because the amendments were withdrawn.

(Clause 2 agreed to on division)

(Clause 6 agreed to on division)

(Clause 7 agreed to on division)

The Chair: Shall the short title carry?

[*Translation*]

Jean-Denis Garon: I'm asking for a vote, Madam Chair.

[*English*]

The Chair: You want to vote on the short title. Okay, why not? We've gotten this far.

(Clause 1 agreed to: yeas 10; nays 0)

(Title agreed to: yeas 10; nays 0)

(Bill C-30 as amended agreed to: yeas 10; nays 1)

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

(Reporting of bill to the House agreed to: yeas 10; nays 1)

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

(Reprint of the bill agreed to: yeas 10; nays 1)

The Chair: Colleagues, thank you very much. It's been wonderful to spend so much time with you, particularly over the last week. I hope everybody has a lovely summer.

I'll give one final reminder that recommendations for the pre-budget consultations in advance of the 2026 budget must be submitted to the committee clerk by Friday, July 3, 2026.

With that, is it the will of the committee to adjourn?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Have a great summer.

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