



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

45th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

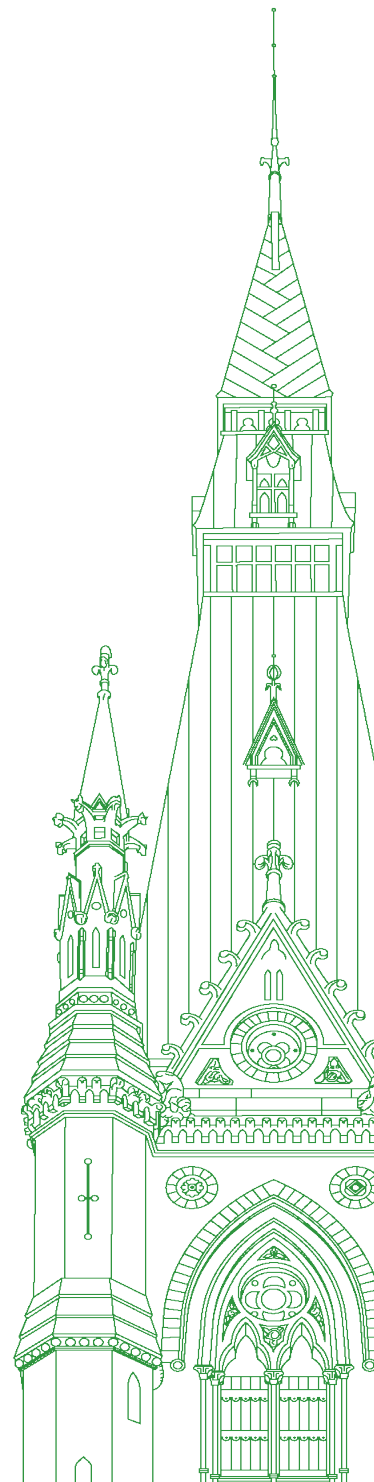
Standing Committee on Finance

EVIDENCE

NUMBER 053

Thursday, October 8, 2026

Chair: Karina Gould



Standing Committee on Finance

Thursday, October 8, 2026

• (1000)

[English]

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

Welcome to meeting number 53 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance. Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format, pursuant to the Standing Orders. Members are attending in person in the room and remotely using the Zoom app.

I would like to remind participants of the following points.

Please wait until I recognize you by name before speaking. For those participating by video conference, which is all of our witnesses this hour, click on the microphone icon to activate your mic, 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 a channel.

Pursuant to the order of reference of Wednesday, June 3, 2026, and the motion adopted by the committee on Tuesday, September 22, 2026, the committee will resume consideration of Bill C-31, a second act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on November 4, 2025.

I would now like to welcome our witnesses for this hour.

From Ecojustice Canada, we have Bronwyn Roe, lawyer and program director, healthy communities. From March of Dimes Canada, we have Amanda MacKenzie, director, public affairs, advocacy and strategic communications. From United Way Centraide Canada, we have Anita Khanna, vice-president, government relations and public policy.

You will each have five minutes for your opening remarks.

Ms. Roe, we will begin with you.

Bronwyn Roe (Lawyer and Program Director, Healthy Communities, Ecojustice Canada): Thank you, Madam Chair, and good morning, honourable committee members.

My name is Bronwyn Roe. I'm a lawyer and the director of the healthy communities program at Ecojustice, Canada's largest environmental law charity. I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today to highlight Ecojustice's concerns about the proposed amendments to the Pest Control Products Act in Bill C-31. I would also refer you to our written brief, which was submitted jointly with 19 other Canadian health and environmental organizations.

The proposed amendments would eliminate mandatory 15-year cyclical re-evaluations of pesticides and replace them with weaker assessments, relying only on available information and applying an undefined standard. Removing the mandatory requirement for cyclical re-evaluations would weaken federal oversight of pesticides and undermine the primary purpose of the act, which is to prevent unacceptable risks to health, future generations and the environment from the use of pesticides.

Re-evaluations are the primary mechanism under the act for comprehensive postmarket review of pesticide risks. Scientific knowledge and methods evolve, patterns of use change and long-term or cumulative harms may become apparent only over time. Cyclical re-evaluations provide a mandatory checkpoint to ensure that the health and environmental risks of registered pesticides remain acceptable based on up-to-date scientific evidence and methods and according to the standards set out in the PCPA. Re-evaluations regularly identify health and environmental risks that were not recognized in earlier risk assessments, leading to restrictions on the use of the pesticide, additional risk mitigation measures and, in some cases, cancellations to protect human health and the environment.

There are several weaknesses in the proposed assessment scheme in comparison to mandatory re-evaluations. For one, an assessment is limited to available information, and there appears to be no requirement for Health Canada to request or gather information. Emerging science about health and environmental risks could be missed entirely. In contrast, on a re-evaluation, the minister is empowered to request up-to-date scientific information from the registrant of the pesticide and from other federal and provincial government departments and agencies.

It has been suggested that the pesticides regulatory directorate's continuous oversight policy may answer this concern at least in part, but it's important to note that the continuous oversight policy was designed to complement and improve, not replace, re-evaluations. Continuous oversight is far from being fully implemented. Health Canada has initiated continuous oversight monitoring for only nine pesticide active ingredients out of over 650 registered active ingredients.

On a re-evaluation, Health Canada is required by the act to follow a scientifically based approach, to make a determination about whether the risks of a pesticide are acceptable based on the legal standard in the act, to consider aggregate exposures and cumulative health risks, to engage in public consultation on a proposed decision, to publish final re-evaluation decisions with reasons and to respond to any notices of objection that may be made. The proposed assessments have none of these requirements. Where it is determined that a re-evaluation is required, the additional step of an assessment prior to initiating a re-evaluation will almost certainly result in further delays of necessary risk mitigation.

These proposed amendments come at a time when pesticide use in Canada is rapidly increasing. Over the 20 years for which annual pesticide sales data have been available, pesticide sales in Canada have increased a staggering 453%, from 26 million kilograms of active ingredients sold in 2005 to more than 144 million kilograms in 2024. They also follow amendments to the PCPA that were passed this spring in Bill C-30, further weakening Canada's pesticide oversight. Combined, these amendments may make it more difficult for Canada to meet our international obligations in the Kunming-Montreal global biodiversity framework to reduce the overall risk from pesticides by 50% by 2030.

Cyclical re-evaluations are not just bureaucratic exercises. They are vital mechanisms for public transparency, for accountability and for scientific scrutiny. They ensure that Canadians have a voice in decisions that affect their health, food and ecosystems. I urge this committee to reject the amendments to the Pest Control Products Act in Bill C-31 and reaffirm Canada's commitment to strong, science-based pesticide regulation that Canadians can have confidence in.

Thank you.

• (1005)

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Roe.

We will now continue with Ms. MacKenzie, from March of Dimes Canada, for five minutes.

Amanda MacKenzie (Director, Public Affairs, Advocacy and Strategic Communications, March of Dimes Canada): Good morning. Thank you so much, Madam Chair and committee members, for the invitation to appear this morning.

My name is Amanda MacKenzie, and I'm the director of public affairs, advocacy and strategic communications at March of Dimes Canada. I was here in June, but I'll remind you that for 75 years, March of Dimes Canada has worked alongside people with disabilities and their families and caregivers to deliver attendant care, employment services, children's programs, home and vehicle modification programs, and much more across the country.

When I'm talking today about some unclaimed federal benefits, I'm talking about the actual people we serve. We very much support the automatic tax filing measures in Bill C-31. We welcomed them when they were announced, and we told the Canada Revenue Agency so last year. We undertook a consultation with our community, and there is a huge amount of support for this measure in the bill.

I want to explain why this matters for people with disabilities and what we're asking the committee to strengthen. For people with severe disabilities, the risk of living in poverty is twice as high as for people without disabilities. Much of the federal government's disability income support is built on a tax return. The Canada disability benefit, the disability tax credit, the Canada workers benefit disability supplement, the child disability benefit, and government grants and bonds in a registered disability savings plan all depend on a filed return. When a person with a disability does not file, they don't just miss a refund; they miss the benefits that were designed for them.

In our 2023 report with Prosper Canada, called "A Benefit without Barriers", people told us that filing feels like a low priority when you rely on income supports at the provincial level, unless a benefit actually depends on it. Billions of dollars in disability benefits go unclaimed each year as a result of people not having access to tax filing. Automatic tax filing is one of the most practical tools that the government has for changing that, but how it's done will decide whether it works. We have four recommendations.

The first is to tell people very clearly and protect their benefits. Notices must be repeated and accessible in plain language, large print, braille, audio and sign language. People must know that a return will be filed for them and must be able to opt out. We share the concerns the taxpayers' ombudsperson raised, including that the bill sets no dates for notice or filing. We ask the committee to fix this through amendments rather than lose a pathway for people who have fallen out of the system and cannot easily use an online account.

The second is to have no cliff. The ombudsperson also pointed out that people with disabilities could eventually lose eligibility. For a person with a disability, a benefit that quietly stops is not ideal. People need a supported transition before eligibility ends, and the rules must allow for changing circumstances.

Third, keep a human being in the system. Automation cannot replace a conversation. People need agency staff who are trained to support many different kinds of disability, with no time limit on the call—by phone, in person and online. Trusted community organizations, including disability organizations, must be resourced to help. ESDC's social development partnerships program's disability stream, or SDPP-D, is right now funding benefit navigation services where automatic tax filing could be added.

Fourth, use what government already knows and measure results. The CRA knows who holds a DTC certificate. Those people should be a priority for outreach. The agency should be reporting publicly on uptake, opt-outs and benefit increases, including for people with a disability, and should have people with living and lived experience helping to design and test the system. March of Dimes Canada already works with Service Canada in user-testing its products. We'd be delighted to do so with the CRA on automatic tax filing.

We support this measure in the bill. Done right, automatic tax filing is how a benefit reaches the person it was written for. We'd be glad to work with the committee to get it right.

Thank you so much. I welcome your questions.

• (1010)

The Chair: Great. Thank you very much, Ms. MacKenzie.

Ms. Khanna, we'll continue now with you for five minutes.

Anita Khanna (Vice-President, Government Relations and Public Policy, United Way Centraide Canada): Thank you, Madam Chair and honourable committee members, for inviting United Way Centraide Canada to the committee today. We serve as the national office for Canada's United Way Centraide network.

United Way Centraide is Canada's largest non-government funder of community services. With deep local expertise and trust, we fundraise annually over \$600 million and invest in 3,800 partner agencies to serve eight million people. We work in 5,000 communities to address immediate needs and tackle the toughest social issues so that everyone in every community can reach their full potential. This includes supporting and delivering financial literacy and personal financial counselling programs. In 2025, we invested \$8 million in serving 155,000 people.

We welcome the provisions in Bill C-31 to automate tax filing by the CRA for those who are eligible.

I have three main points that I will cover today. First is underscoring the importance of this initiative. Second is the opportunities for even more people to benefit. Third is the importance of community service infrastructure so that no one falls through the cracks.

The tax system is certainly a critical gateway to income supports like the CCB, the Canada groceries and essentials benefit and the Canada workers benefit. According to StatsCan, systemic and personal barriers prevent about one in five people with low incomes from tax filing and accessing income benefits and credits. This is alarming, given that these benefits and credits are the main source of income for 62% of low-income households.

Recent national United Way Centraide research conducted by Leger showed that 60% of respondents reported feeling financially

anxious due to the high cost of living, which has been impacted by the trade war and economic uncertainty. Financial pressures are taking a measurable toll on basic well-being and daily function in our communities. In our research, 38% struggled with food insecurity, 40% reported difficulty sleeping and 34% said financial stress made it harder to concentrate at work or school. Rates of financial anxiety are even higher among those in low-income, lone-parent households, among newcomers and among youth.

This is the time for governments at all levels to take proactive steps to improve income supports, to improve access to in-demand careers, including within the care economy, and to reduce poverty. Automated benefits will help to ensure that people living with low incomes are not leaving any of the benefits they're entitled to on the table.

We support all avenues that will improve program design. United Way Centraide Canada and partner organizations like Maytree, Prosper Canada and Momentum have recommended improving eligibility for the program so that it reaches more people, ensuring easier access to the program for those receiving social assistance and investing sufficiently in the delivery of this program, including in public education in multiple languages and in accessible formats.

The success of the automated benefits program will only be further bolstered by investing in community-based supports so that no one falls through our social safety net. The government's investment in the community volunteer income tax program is a great example. It is important because it is a real-life touchpoint for hard-to-reach community members and people with complex tax situations.

Sustained collaboration with frontline providers can bring critical design questions to the surface, identify service gaps and inform program adaptation so that it can be even more effective. Relatedly, further investment in vital community service infrastructure—services, programs and community navigation—will only enhance outcomes for people in vulnerable circumstances.

Our national survey on financial anxiety highlighted the critical importance of a strong community safety net, showing that when people access community organizations for support, they do receive real relief, as 40% reported a positive impact on their financial situation, 36% said the organizations helped them manage their anxiety and 76% of those who accessed community housing assistance found it extremely helpful. Right now, Canada's community service infrastructure is under strain due to a trilemma of high service demand, financial instability and an overburdened workforce. Resourcing support within these organizations so that tax filing can be undertaken and people can access the benefits they are entitled to will be very important for the success of the program and in moving individuals and families from poverty to possibility.

● (1015)

Thank you for the time today and for considering my three points.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Khanna.

We will begin now with Ms. Jansen for six minutes, please.

Tamara Jansen (Cloverdale—Langley City, CPC): Thank you so much.

Ms. MacKenzie, Canadians living with disabilities should absolutely receive the benefits they're entitled to without having to fight their way through a complicated tax system. Your organization has raised some important issues about how automatic filing would actually work for people whose lives aren't always straightforward.

I'd like to better understand what happens when the information that CRA has doesn't match the reality of someone's life. You talked about people with disabilities who may be moving between temporary housing, dealing with changing income or struggling to maintain a fixed address. Isn't it quite possible that CRA could prepare a tax return using information that's already out of date?

Amanda MacKenzie: I suppose it is possible that it would happen, but there is the opt-in. People are getting a letter saying that they're being asked to participate in the program. I think we could find a way to make sure out-of-date information isn't being used.

It's a really good question. I think that's something that would need to be worked out in the details of the program.

Tamara Jansen: How would that person even know there was a mistake if they don't have, say, reliable Internet access or a permanent address?

Amanda MacKenzie: Those are two really important issues that we see in our community and that I'm sure Anita sees in the community that the United Way serves.

Anita is probably in a better position to answer that question than I am. We don't have a lot of folks with a non-permanent address or who are getting lost in that system, as it were. I think Anita is probably better equipped to answer that.

Tamara Jansen: I'm going to keep on going, but I appreciate that.

For someone living on a very limited income, even a small interruption in benefits could mean not having enough money for groceries, rent or medication. If CRA prepares an incorrect return, could that result in someone losing the benefits they're entitled to receive?

Amanda MacKenzie: Yes, I suppose it could, and I think the details of this program have to be worked out to make sure we account for all the issues you're bringing up. There are solutions in other programs and in other jurisdictions as well. Automatic tax filing is new to Canada, but it's not new to countries around the world. We can take some lessons from other countries, other jurisdictions, that are doing this and doing it really well.

● (1020)

Tamara Jansen: Who should be responsible for ensuring that a person doesn't suffer financially while CRA corrects its mistakes?

Amanda MacKenzie: Who should be the person responsible? I don't know the answer to that question.

Tamara Jansen: I'm just worried there's not nearly enough detail in the way the program is written and that it's headed for a train wreck.

Amanda MacKenzie: Passing the measure is really important for making sure the program continues. Pilot programming is beginning I believe this tax year, and I think we need to take lessons from that for the full program.

Tamara Jansen: One of your recommendations was that CRA should continue providing trained staff who can actually help people. Why is that so important? I know there's a senior in my riding who has been fighting with CRA for four years. Let me tell you, she has spent so much time on the phone. This lady is amazing. She's willing to just sit on the phone and wait, as many Canadians have to do when there are mistakes in their filings. Maybe explain to us why having actual staff, a person and not just a phone line, is necessary.

Amanda MacKenzie: Having actual staff matters a huge amount for people with disabilities, given the different types of circumstances in which an automated system like an AI-based system—and I'm going to be very careful of that—could have barriers attached to it. People are able to break down barriers and solve problems in those types of phone call situations. It's also really important for people with communication disabilities, such as aphasia, or with intellectual disabilities to speak to an actual human being who can resolve the issues.

One thing that is very important about this is that there's a positive obligation for the staff who are on the phone to be very well trained and to be there to say yes and resolve issues instead of saying no and creating more barriers.

Tamara Jansen: Were you aware of what the Auditor General's report said about phone calls to CRA and the level of errors that people were receiving?

Amanda MacKenzie: I read about it in the news, actually. That has been a big issue. In my view, CRA staff training, particularly to support seniors and people with disabilities, is incredibly important.

Tamara Jansen: You've recommended that CRA publicly report on how automatic filing is working. Would you agree those reports should tell Parliament not only how many returns CRA processes but also how many contain errors, how long corrections take and whether anyone loses benefits in the meantime?

Amanda MacKenzie: I totally agree with that, yes.

Tamara Jansen: Should there be a specific service standard for correcting mistakes that affect someone's benefits?

Amanda MacKenzie: Yes. I think we have service standards across all different types of sectors and industries. There's no reason why, particularly for a program that could potentially fulfill millions of tax filings every year, there should be—

Tamara Jansen: I'm short on time, so I want to finish with something very simple.

We're talking about Canadians who may already be struggling to make ends meet and do not have the resources to challenge the CRA when something goes wrong. Before the program is expanded, shouldn't we require evidence that the CRA can get these returns right, correct mistakes promptly and make sure vulnerable Canadians aren't left paying the price for government errors?

Amanda MacKenzie: That's a really good question. We should all be working together with the community and other organizations to make sure that the details of the program are designed—

The Chair: Thanks, Ms. MacKenzie. We're going to have to end it there.

Thank you, Ms. Jansen.

Mr. Leitão, go ahead for six minutes, please.

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

[Translation]

Good morning.

Thank you to the witnesses for joining us today.

[English]

I would like to continue on the topic of automatic tax filing. Perhaps I will start by highlighting that what the government is trying to address here is people who currently miss out on getting the government supports to which they are entitled. They miss out because they have not, for whatever reason, filed their taxes. It's not that there is a mistake or no mistake; for whatever reason, they have not submitted their tax filing, and the benefits are based on the tax filing. The tax filing is the entry door.

Ms. MacKenzie, you pointed out that your organization supports this measure. You also mentioned that automatic tax filing is not new in the OECD. Other countries have done it. Would you have an example of what other jurisdictions similar to ours have accomplished with automatic tax filing processes?

• (1025)

Amanda MacKenzie: I wish I had that at hand. That's something we can follow up with and provide a bit of a jurisdictional analysis on, but we know that writ large, countries similar to ours in the OECD do this and they do it very well.

Carlos Leitão: That's fine. Thank you.

I agree with you as well that we need to make sure staff are able to answer questions when questions arise. Talking to a machine is not exactly very productive. Talking to a human being certainly is the way to go, so we have to make sure that happens.

Ms. Khanna, you also spoke about the issue of automatic tax filing. From your perspective at United Way Centraide, you brought up an issue that is hugely important, which is the role of community-based organizations in continuing to help citizens.

Perhaps you could tell us how you view that. What is the role of government in continuing to make sure that community-based groups are able to assist people navigating the system?

Anita Khanna: Community-based groups are essential frontline social responders. They are the first line of connection for people living with a low income and for community members in many difficult circumstances. Equipping these organizations and this sector with the funds required to create supports to help community members navigate the system, both to access community-based services and local services to deal with their immediate food or housing needs and to connect to benefits and government programs that can help lift them out of poverty, will be essential. United Way Centraide supports the 211 community navigation service, which is available in most parts of Canada 24-7, 365 days a year in 150 languages, to do this—to support people in accessing local services to meet their needs as quickly as possible.

We've also had a partnership with Service Canada to help with the navigation of these systems. Certainly, equipping these community organizations with funding and support to deliver these services will be essential given that they're already under extreme strain from high demand.

Carlos Leitão: I remember that in the case of Quebec, there have been some interesting pilot projects between its revenue agency—the equivalent to Revenue Canada—and Centraide to make sure that particularly people in the more vulnerable segments.... We mentioned today and in previous meetings of this committee homeless people and people without a fixed address. They are entitled to receive government assistance, and sometimes they just fall off the system. The organizations with which you work, that Centraide works with, know how to reach these folks. Therefore, I also think that continued support to them is essential to making this system work.

You also mentioned improving accessibility. On that front, I think we still have work to do.

Perhaps I will ask for your opinion about the root of the problem. Both federally and provincially, the tax system is the entry door to this process. Should we think of other ways to have people access social programs?

The Chair: Answer in 10 seconds or less, please.

Anita Khanna: The community sector and social policy experts would be open to continually innovating to ensure that there are easier ways to access. In fact, there's—

• (1030)

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Khanna. Unfortunately, that concludes the time for that round.

[Translation]

We now go to Mr. Garon for six minutes.

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

Good morning to my fellow members and to the witnesses.

I'll start with you Ms. Roe. I want to talk about pesticides.

I was a bit taken aback this week, when the committee heard from members of the pesticide lobby, representatives of CropLife Canada. They basically compared Canada's pesticide assessment and approval process to Europe's, telling us that the application of the precautionary principle had made Europe's system so complicated that, in the end, nothing ever got approved. To justify what's being proposed in this legislation, they warned that Canada should not drift towards the European system.

It seems to me that they're exaggerating, that Canada's system in no way blocks the approval of pesticides and that all this does is weaken the system to help the pesticide lobby and the companies it represents.

Do you agree with my assessment?

[English]

Bronwyn Roe: I certainly agree that these changes would amount to a weakening of Canada's pesticide oversight. I don't agree that Canada has a problem with not approving enough pesticides, or not getting pesticides to market quickly enough.

As we noted in our written brief, Canada is regarded as one of the most lenient jurisdictions in the OECD with respect to pesticide approvals. In Canada, we still authorize 120 highly hazardous pesticides that have been banned in other jurisdictions, such as the EU.

Of the 146 pesticides that are classified as highly hazardous according to Pesticide Action Network International, only 25 are banned in Canada.

[Translation]

Jean-Denis Garon: Thank you.

I too was surprised to hear what the Minister of Health's new friends had to say when they appeared before the committee. I had a hard time buying what they were selling, factually speaking.

My next question has more to do with the democratic process.

This is the Standing Committee on Finance. I'm an economist. We have committee members who have worked in banks, another who has held the position of finance minister and one who is a doctor. The government is adding these provisions to the pesticide regulations as part of an omnibus bill, when we've heard from very few witnesses. The government is partially bypassing the work of Parliament. My sense is that these measures should have been proposed in a stand-alone bill and referred to the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food for thorough examination.

Do you think this committee is the right place to deal with these measures, to rush through them so very, very quickly?

[English]

Bronwyn Roe: I absolutely agree that the changes to the Pest Control Products Act, which is health and environmental protection legislation, would be best placed in stand-alone legislation that could be adequately studied and understood before the health committee and the environment committee.

Certainly, we know that the amendments to the Pest Control Products Act in Bill C-30 also came through omnibus budget legislation. That did not allow for adequate scrutiny. The changes in Bill C-31 and Bill C-30 would be the largest overhaul of our Pest Control Products Act since it was updated and modernized in 2022.

[Translation]

Jean-Denis Garon: It does make you wonder whether this isn't exactly what the government wanted: to push through the legislation without letting parliamentarians hear from enough witnesses, get to the facts or base their decisions on science? I think the government's objective is to make decisions that are not based on science and to use the Standing Committee on Finance to do it. Everyone has their own view, I guess.

I have some questions about the review of the Pest Control Products Act. The government is delaying the application of section 80.1. The act is supposed to be reviewed every seven years. The seven-year deadline was in 2015. It's 2026. What do you make of the fact that the government didn't review or respect its own act, that before carrying out the review and respecting the act, it ultimately decided to riddle it with holes by inviting members of the pesticide lobby to appear before the committee?

[English]

Bronwyn Roe: Health Canada underwent what it called a transformation agenda process over the past several years where it considered potential changes to the legislation. Many stakeholders were involved in that process, including the pesticide industry and health, environmental and agricultural groups. That process ended without any updates to the act. It did result in the introduction of two new policies: a continuous oversight policy and a proportional effort policy. We haven't seen either of those policies be implemented, so I think it would be premature to implement these proposed amendments without allowing those policies to be implemented.

• (1035)

[Translation]

Jean-Denis Garon: The CropLife Canada people told us that their job was to protect seeds, to protect crops, and that not passing this bill would likely jeopardize farmers' crops. I have just 30 seconds left, so very quickly if you can, tell us what you have to say to farmers.

[English]

Bronwyn Roe: The United Nations special rapporteur on the right to food has rejected the pesticide industry's claim that heavy pesticide use is necessary for food security. They've stated, actually, that pesticides are a global human rights concern and their use can have detrimental consequences on the human right to food.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

[Translation]

Thank you, Mr. Garon.

We now go to Mr. Lefebvre for five minutes.

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

Good morning to my fellow members, and thank you to the witnesses for being with us.

Ms. MacKenzie, in your opening statement, you talked about keeping humans in the system, saying that there shouldn't be a time limit on calls. I understand that people with disabilities—I'm in contact with many of them—need time. They especially need to feel that they're not being rushed, that people are there to listen to them, however long it takes.

Could you explain what you mean about the time limit on calls? Are calls timed? Are callers hung up on after a certain amount of time? How does it work?

[English]

Amanda MacKenzie: We know from the work we did for our report "A Benefit without Barriers" that the Canada Revenue Agency does measure the amount of time that agents are on the phone with people and that the desired outcome is the least amount of time possible to address a question. I'm not sure if that's something staff are actively measured on and if it's a performance issue for staff, but we know there is a limit per se that staff are encouraged to meet.

That simply can't be the case with people with disabilities, seniors and others across the country who need to spend time to resolve the issues they have with the Canada Revenue Agency, either for automatic tax filing reasons or for any other taxation requirements. These are complex issues, and people with disabilities are often living in complex circumstances. We need to make sure that staff are well trained and well equipped to answer and address all of the issues that are brought forward to them.

[Translation]

Eric Lefebvre: Do you think that, when people with disabilities call the CRA, the duration of those calls should not factor into performance assessment or be used as a performance indicator? That would ensure that people with disabilities were given the time they needed to receive adequate service. Do you think that's a good alternative?

[English]

Amanda MacKenzie: It would be really difficult in the general flow of things to know that it's a person with a disability or a senior on a call, so they're not required to meet a benchmark there. I think the benchmarking is fundamentally what needs to be looked at, and the Canada Revenue Agency should provide their staff with the encouragement and the culture to fully address the issues that Canadians are bringing forward to them, in whatever time it takes to do so. It shouldn't be timed, and it shouldn't be that the culture is about saying no and not resolving issues or being punitive. This very much needs to be about supporting Canadians in their interactions with the Canada Revenue Agency, whether they're a person with a disability, a senior or somebody like me.

• (1040)

[Translation]

Eric Lefebvre: Thank you very much.

Do you think automatic tax filing will solve the problem of a person with a disability being unable to obtain the disability tax credit, which ultimately gives them access to other benefits? Instead, shouldn't the government change its priorities and simplify the system?

[English]

Amanda MacKenzie: You see a big smile. Thank you very much for that question.

I think it's important to get on the record that simplifying the benefit system writ large, especially the disability tax credit, is so important. I was here back in June, and we talked about it then.

One of the things we included in our pre-budget submission this year—and I know many other organizations in the disability community and beyond did as well—is the concept of a federal disability status. We would like the federal government to study taking the adjudication of disability out of the tax system and putting it into the ESDC system where it belongs, where there are people, human beings, who understand what it is like living with a disability in this country at whatever age, or being a parent of a child with a disability, and who can address the issues.

There is no reason to be adjudicating disability within our tax system. It's been several decades of using a tool that was made available, and we've built an entire system on it. It very much needs to be simplified. The federal government is funding—

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. MacKenzie. I'm going to have to cut you off there.

[Translation]

Thank you, Mr. Lefebvre.

[English]

We will continue now with Mr. MacDonald for five minutes.

Kent MacDonald (Cardigan, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to the witnesses today.

Ms. MacKenzie, I'm going to follow along with the discussion on disability. It was shocking to hear that two times more people with a disability are living in poverty than the rest of Canadians.

In our government, since being elected, we've worked hard to streamline the disability tax credit application process. I know we've heard lots of interventions from groups like yours that have made recommendations.

In the spring budget of 2026, in the economic update, we were able to expand the list of medical conditions that were going to get automatic disability certification. Can you speak to how we may be able to improve that process further if we're going to tie this into automatic tax filing? The two things should work hand in hand and get money to Canadians who are most vulnerable.

Amanda MacKenzie: They absolutely should, and thank you so much for that question.

I have to say that over the last several months, it's been a joy to communicate with our community about the changes that are coming to the disability tax credit, especially the 45 conditions that will be eligible for that streamlined access. I just did a webinar last week with parents of children with disabilities, especially parents of children with autism and Down's syndrome, and they were absolutely over the moon that they don't have to go through a difficult DTC certification process now. Thank you very much for undertaking that.

These two things work hand in hand if we are going to get benefits into the hands of people. Let's remember that we're talking about thousands and thousands of dollars a year. Whether it's the Canada disability benefit, the benefits that people get from employment income if they are with a disability tax credit, the Canada workers benefit or a disability supplement, these are huge benefits that make a really big difference in the lives of people with disabili-

ties, especially in the economic environment that we're in right now. Making it as easy as possible and including automatic tax filing in it is a huge step in the right direction.

Kent MacDonald: Recently, the taxpayers' ombudsperson warned about our reliance on the three-year eligibility rule system and how that could impact future eligibility. Do you have any suggestions there to avoid people being disqualified because of that eligibility system?

Amanda MacKenzie: Proactivity needs to be built into the system. We need to be engaging with people with disabilities through organizations like ours and Anita's organization and the many other organizations and sectors that touch the lives of people with disabilities every single day across this country, whether it's a disability service organization or the bank they go to. There is any number of different ways to communicate with people with disabilities to bring them into the system. That's going to be the biggest lift: bringing people into the system in the first place.

As to the details of the three years, I'm not sure if it should be three or five years or what it should be. I think we have to work that out, with lots of other organizations providing input into that question, when the time comes for program design.

● (1045)

Kent MacDonald: Thank you for what you do for Canadians.

Moving on to the United Way, I know you offer tax clinic services. You're involved in that quite a bit in a lot of communities across Canada.

In the most rural, hard-to-reach communities where automatic tax filing happens, is there advice you could give us on how we can get the process started properly? I'm thinking of someone who hasn't filed for a while. We have to get the correct information on the first return. Is that going to take a human touch or a community tax clinic so that the first time they opt in, we get the right information to the CRA? Do you have any ideas on that?

Anita Khanna: Absolutely, the human touch, the trusted connection with community service organizations, will be essential to getting things right the first time—to filing and then easing access to benefits and tax credits. United Way Perth-Huron, a rural community, as you've mentioned, in Ontario, is leading in this area and is very attuned to how to make this process as painless as possible.

The Chair: I apologize, Ms. Khanna, but I'm going to have to cut you off there.

Thank you, Mr. MacDonald.

[Translation]

We now go to Mr. Garon for two and a half minutes.

Jean-Denis Garon: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Ms. Roe, I hadn't thought to ask this question, but I was thinking about it during the break. The government's refrain is that all the opposition does is oppose everything. For instance, Ms. May and the Green Party are understandably suspicious about the pesticide measures being proposed, and the Bloc Québécois sees them as a big step backward. Now, the government is accusing us of being against a strong Canada and against a stronger economy, arguing that Parliament must pass this legislation.

I listened to what you said today. Ecojustice Canada clearly has very strong arguments against this bill. Are the Green Party, the Bloc Québécois and your organization the only ones opposed to this bill? Pesticide lobbyists and companies aside, is there a consensus in Canada that this may be one of the biggest setbacks in pesticide approval and oversight in Canadian history?

[English]

Bronwyn Roe: Our written statement was submitted with 19 other organizations, including the Canadian Public Health Association, the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment, the National Farmers Union, Birds Canada and other environmental groups.

This is an issue that really cuts across issues. It's important for the environment and important for human health. I think most Canadians want a pesticide regulation system that they can have confidence in and that allows them to see and understand the decisions being made.

[Translation]

Jean-Denis Garon: Recently, we've seen a case where the American company Driscoll's sold strawberries containing high levels of non-compliant pesticides in Canada. If a whistle-blower hadn't come forward, the media wouldn't have found out about it and we would've never known.

Under the current circumstances, do you think Canadians have enough confidence in the current oversight system? Do you think this is the right time to punch more holes in the system?

[English]

Bronwyn Roe: Yes, I would agree that we need stronger oversight, not weaker oversight. We're all exposed to pesticides through the food we eat, the air we breathe and the water we drink. Canadians are entitled to stronger health and environmental protections.

[Translation]

Jean-Denis Garon: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Garon.

[English]

I will continue now with Mr. Guglielmin for five minutes, please.

Michael Guglielmin (Vaughan—Woodbridge, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

Thank you to the witnesses for your testimony today.

Ms. Khanna, thanks go to you and your organization for all the important work you do.

The United Way works directly with organizations that truly see the impacts of the cost of living every single day. From what you're hearing across your network, are more Canadians turning to food banks, housing supports or other community services simply because they can't keep up with basic necessities?

• (1050)

Anita Khanna: Yes, unfortunately, we are hearing that. Those with the lowest income are especially concerned about food and housing and are making tough choices when it comes to their expenses.

Michael Guglielmin: When we look at the organizations that help administer some of these services, would you say that they themselves are also facing higher costs and at the same time greater demand?

Anita Khanna: Yes, absolutely. The cost of primary goods—food for programs, supplies and the rest—is up. They're feeling the crunch. Seventy per cent of those who were surveyed by Carleton University are reporting excess demand and limited capacity to meet the needs in the community.

Michael Guglielmin: Some would make the claim that sometimes government can be a bit of a leviathan. Oftentimes, we see billions of dollars of new programs being announced. Can you talk briefly about how important it is to measure whether that money is actually reaching the people on the ground and improving outcomes?

Anita Khanna: We would fully agree with the need for transparency, data and evidence about the value of investments in the community. I fully welcome that.

In our own experience serving as an intermediary for the federal government to deliver support during the COVID-19 pandemic, we were pleased that there was a rigorous evaluation that helped identify what was learned and what was successful about delivering \$289 million to the community to serve over 10 million people.

Michael Guglielmin: Oftentimes, we see the constant push to create new programs. I was curious to know if you had any examples where the focus is on simplifying or improving access to existing programs rather than creating new ones.

Anita Khanna: That's a great question.

The disability tax credit is a place where we could go again. Ms. MacKenzie spoke well about that. There have been some very positive changes to make access to the benefit more inclusive and available. I think we could go further to ensure that no one living with a disability in Canada is forced to live in poverty and is not accessing the benefits they're entitled to.

Michael Guglielmin: In my riding, we have great organizations. Bridges of Love is one example. They're an organization for seniors and they're doing truly remarkable work. Basically, they are entirely volunteer-focused and entirely run by volunteers. They help seniors stay in their own homes. They help them with safety, food hampers, home safety, safety in their own homes and things like that.

Statistics Canada has found that volunteer participation and charity are actually on the decline in this country. I'm just curious to know if the United Way is seeing something similar.

Anita Khanna: Absolutely, we have. We've recently conducted research that has highlighted the significant loss of volunteer hours in the last several years. There are barriers to participation, to recruitment. We are supportive of Volunteer Canada's work to develop a national volunteer strategy to raise up the lost time and support the sector.

There's a need for greater attention on the community services sector, including on the workers and the labour force delivering the vital services, which in many cases are delivered by charities and non-profits. These are important jobs that require skills and education, and recognizing the value of that work is essential, especially, as you mentioned, for seniors, given the aging population and demographics that we have in this country, where seniors will quickly come to outnumber those of working age. We need sufficient capacity in the non-profit community services sector to meet those needs and take the pressure off the health care system and other systems.

Michael Guglielmin: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you, MP Guglielmin.

[Translation]

Now it's over to Mr. Lavoie for five minutes.

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

Ms. Khanna, I want to start by taking a quick moment to thank the United Way. For those of us in the greater Quebec City area, and even in my riding of Beauport—Limoilou, the United Way is really making people's lives better. More than \$20 million is supporting more than 225 organizations, helping some 200,000 people. The United Way really makes a difference.

In preparation for today's meeting, I met with representatives of organizations that are making a real difference in their communities thanks to the funding they receive from United Way. They include Entraide Agapè, Maison de la famille de Québec and Patro Roc-Amadour. I can tell you the money is going to the right place, to the right people. I wanted to take this opportunity to thank you for the work you do.

You talked about infrastructure in your opening remarks. It is that one of your three priorities? When you say infrastructure, are you talking about services, programs or physical infrastructure? Tell me a bit more about your infrastructure priorities.

• (1055)

[English]

Anita Khanna: Thank you so much for your support of your local Centraide and its excellent work.

When I speak about infrastructure, I'm speaking about community services navigation to access benefits and supports. Crucial to that is also the infrastructure of space for community programming. You could think of it as physical infrastructure, such as the space and resources required to deliver supports and the social infrastructure, which is really the operationalization and functioning of those supports so that there are services, staff and skilled people available to assist residents.

[Translation]

Steeve Lavoie: Thank you.

I also noticed that you stressed the point that vulnerable people aren't always aware of the programs they're entitled to and don't know how to access them. What can we do to better communicate that information and raise that awareness, so people don't fall through the cracks and miss out on the services they are entitled to and, above all, need?

[English]

Anita Khanna: That's a wonderful question.

It's important to leverage trusted relationships with community organizations and partners such as banks and labour networks and to ensure all communications are multilingual and target communities that are diverse and will benefit from that information. As well, accessible formats, as my colleague Ms. MacKenzie has described with braille, large print, etc., are important.

The other thing is equipping community organizations to assist members to navigate to these services. Our 211 community information and navigation service can help ease the burden on the CRA or Service Canada by being an early connection to help people understand what is available in terms of services and benefits and to build and maintain trust with individuals so they can take the next step to connect with government services and opportunities.

[Translation]

Steeve Lavoie: I was just going to ask about the 211 service. You talked about it briefly, and you've often referred to it.

In practical terms, how does the 211 service make it easier to connect with people? How could it play a bigger role in communicating information, to foster access?

[English]

Anita Khanna: The number 211 can be dialed in most regions of Canada to reach a skilled human navigator to assist with the presenting issue. Say someone calls because they need food. Because the navigator is skilled and trained, they can help the caller identify needs they might have related to housing, tax filing and the rest to have a fulsome level of support around them.

The 211 system can also be leveraged by government as a first stop and a front door to these community services and community information. We would certainly recommend that the government look into leveraging the infrastructure that has been built and supported by other provinces and territories and by the federal government during the pandemic—and further—to support access.

The 211 system takes inbound phone calls and makes outbound calls to contact people. In some regions, we have partnerships with the health care system and other social service organizations so that there is a coordinated—

• (1100)

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Khanna. We're going to have to end it there.

[Translation]

Thank you, Mr. Lavoie.

On behalf of the committee, I'd like to thank all the witnesses for being with us today.

We're going to take a quick five-minute break to get ready for our next hour.

• (1100)

(Pause)

• (1105)

[English]

The Chair: Colleagues, we are going to resume our meeting. At the top of the hour, because we have new witnesses with us, I would like to remind participants of the following points.

Please wait until I recognize you by name before speaking. Those of you who are participating by video conference, click on the microphone icon to activate your mic, and please mute yourself when you are not speaking. You can, at the bottom of your screen, select the appropriate channel for interpretation: floor, English or French. Also, I'll just give a reminder that all comments should be addressed through the chair.

I'd like to take a moment to welcome our next set of witnesses. We have appearing with us Mr. John Stapleton, principal, Open Policy; Ms. Jasmine Toor, vice-president of public affairs, Mortgage Professionals Canada; and Mr. Peter Drobina, vice-chair, tax and incentives committee, the National Apartment Council.

You will each have five minutes for your opening remarks.

Mr. Stapleton, we will begin with you.

John Stapleton (Principal, Open Policy, As an Individual): Thank you very much, Madam Chair and members of the committee, for inviting me. It's a privilege.

I want to speak about automatic income tax filing, but from a slightly different perspective than usual.

As we know, for most Canadians, filing a tax return is about determining how much money we owe government, but for many low-income Canadians, again as you know, it is about determining how much money the government owes them, and that distinction is crucial.

Over several decades—actually, since 1978—we have constructed an income security system in which filing an income tax return has become the gateway to benefits. People who owe no income tax must nevertheless file a return to receive money intended to help them meet their basic needs. We've made tax filing a condition of receiving benefits, even when there is no tax to pay.

I have four observations over the next four minutes.

The first is in the form of a question: How much does government already know? I've prepared an inventory, which you have, of 43 information items. This is like the normal income tax return that we all do, or that most of us do. It's the simple return that Canadians encounter in navigating the tax and benefit filing process. Not all items apply to everyone, as we know, and some overlap, but many involve information that governments already possess: age, pension income, employment income reported on various T-slips, government benefits and taxes deducted at source. In other words, we frequently require people to tell government what it's already been told, not always to the CRA but to government in general.

Of course, there are circumstances that government cannot know about without asking, but surely we can distinguish between information we genuinely need from individuals and information already sitting in government records. Please look at the 43 items. For people with little income and straightforward circumstances, that distinction should be the starting point for automatic filing.

Second, complexity is not the answer. We're told by some that we have too complex a tax system to bring in automatic filing. C.D. Howe has done that, and they have a point.

Our tax system contains an extraordinary collection of deductions, credits, exemptions and discussion of family circumstances. Not every return can be prepared from the information already available, but I'd like to turn that argument around: If our tax system is too complicated to administer automatically for people whose financial circumstances are simple, perhaps the problem we're looking at is not automatic filing but the tax system itself. The existence of complicated tax returns is no reason to require people with uncomplicated circumstances to complete them.

The third comment is again in the form of a question: What does government really need to know, and when do they need to know it? Governments increasingly expect people to report changes in marital status, address, household composition and other personal circumstances. Some of this information is essential. Marital status can affect benefits and an address is necessary to communicate with people, but we should distinguish three questions: What does government genuinely need to know, when does it need to know it and what should happen when someone fails to report a change on time?

Of course, these are not the same questions. Someone who has moved, separated from a spouse, lost employment or experienced a family crisis may not regard updating government records as their first priority. Government understandably wants accurate information, but that does not justify imposing an unnecessarily continuous reporting obligation on people who may already be struggling. We should examine whether every reporting requirement is necessary. Certainly, the 43 questions on the tax return are not necessary for refundable credits. We should examine whether the timing is proportionate and whether the consequences of non-compliance are fair.

Finally, I'm concerned about the allocation of responsibility for errors. Who is responsible when government gets it wrong? Bill C-31 would allow the CRA to prepare returns for certain eligible individuals who have not filed, and that is a welcome direction, but proposed subsection 150(1.6) also raises a concern about treating errors or omissions as misrepresentations attributable to an individual who fails to correct information on a CRA-prepared return. Think about what that means. Government prepares a return using information available to them. It sends a notice to the individual, who may bear the consequences for failing to identify and correct an error.

There are safeguards and opportunities to respond, but those safeguards must be meaningful for people who need to move frequently, have difficulty receiving mail, struggle with official correspondence or simply don't understand that government may, in some instances, make a mistake. If government takes responsibility for preparing a tax return, it must also accept an appropriate share of responsibility for getting it right.

• (1110)

In closing, I support automatic filing, but its success should not be measured simply by the number of additional returns CRA processes or produces. It should be measured by whether people—

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Stapleton. I'm going to have to end it there. That was five minutes.

We're going to continue now with Ms. Toor for five minutes.

Jasmine Toor (Vice-President, Public Affairs, Mortgage Professionals Canada): Thank you, Chair and members of the committee.

My name is Jasmine Toor. I'm here on behalf of Mortgage Professionals Canada, representing mortgage brokers, lenders, insurers and other professionals who help Canadians access housing finance.

We welcome several measures in the spring economic update and Bill C-31 that strengthen Canada's housing finance system and expand choice for consumers. In particular, we support the decision to allow private mortgage insurers to insure residential properties of up to eight units, changing the definition of a residential home from four units to eight.

Current federal regulations for mortgage insurance set the maximum number of units on a property that can be insured at four. When purchasing buildings with more than four residential units, buyers therefore do not have access to insured mortgages, which typically offer lower interest rates than the commercial mortgages to which those buyers are limited.

As the government seeks to increase housing supply and reduce the cost of bringing new housing online, increasing the maximum number of units that can be mortgage-insured on a property will make residential properties more financially attractive to build and own by granting owners access to the lower interest rates of insured mortgages. This is a practical change that can help unlock financing for smaller multi-unit housing projects—the kind of “missing middle” housing options that Canada urgently needs. It gives lenders and borrowers more options that can make smaller-scale rental and multi-unit development more viable.

We also support the increased mortgage funding and insurance capacity proposed in division 7 of Bill C-31.

Clause 266 increases the securities guarantee ceiling. Not every mortgage lender funds itself through deposits. Many lenders rely on securitization to compete. Greater capacity can support a more diverse lender market, greater competition and more choice for Canadians. Greater competition can ultimately help Canadians access more competitive financing.

Clause 267 increases the aggregate protected loan limit from \$300 billion to \$500 billion. This provides greater capacity for privately insured mortgages and supports competition among mortgage insurers and the lenders that rely on their coverage.

These are all positive steps towards a mortgage market with more competition, more capacity and more choice for Canadians.

I also want to thank this committee for its continued leadership, and in particular for recommendation 44 in its recent pre-budget report. The recommendation recognizes the need to “Strengthen efforts to combat fraud, money laundering, and financial crime through better coordination between governments, law enforcement, and financial institutions.” We would add mortgage brokers to that list, as brokers serve as a critical component of mortgage financing in Canada.

The report also recognized the need for the federal government to deliver a CRA-enabled, taxpayer-consented income verification tool to help prevent mortgage fraud. Mortgage Professionals Canada, alongside other associations such as the Canadian Bankers Association, the Mortgage and Title Insurance Industry Association and the Canadian Credit Union Association, has advocated this for years. We appreciate the committee specifically recognizing the importance of moving it forward.

The federal government first committed to advancing income verification in the 2024 fall economic statement. One of the most practical steps that the federal government can take is to deliver a secure digital system that allows income to be verified with the CRA, with the consent of the borrower and appropriate privacy safeguards. This would make the mortgage process more reliable. It would help combat mortgage fraud, reduce reliance on documents that can be altered or falsified, reduce unnecessary paperwork for Canadians and give lenders greater confidence in the information they use to make lending decisions.

• (1115)

Our message today is simple: Mortgage Professionals Canada supports measures that increase mortgage funding and insurance capacity. A strong housing finance system needs a diverse range of lenders and insurers so that Canadians have access to competitive financing and meaningful choice. We encourage the government to complete these measures by acting on the committee's recommendation on income verification.

• (1120)

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Toor. That concludes the five minutes.

We will continue now with Mr. Drobin for five minutes.

Peter Drobin (Vice-Chair, Tax and Incentives Committee, National Apartment Council): Thank you, Madam Chair and members of the committee, for the opportunity to appear today.

My name is Peter Drobin. I'm a director of federal real estate taxation with Ryan ULC and the vice-chair of the National Apartment Council's tax and incentives committee. I'm appearing on behalf of the NAC, which represents the providers of private sector rental housing in Canada.

My professional background is in GST self-assessment, real estate evaluation and tax disputes. I have spent almost 13 years with the CRA real estate appraisal program, and for the past four years with Ryan ULC I've advised rental developers across Canada on their GST self-assessment requirements, rental rebates, CRA reassessments and tax disputes.

My and NAC's central message is simple. Private rental providers deliver the majority of Canadian rental housing supply and play a vital and central role in meeting our current and future housing needs. To deliver the number of homes that the CMHC has identified as necessary, the industry needs clear, predictable and consistent administrative tax rules so that private capital can continue to flow into new housing.

First, we need more consistency and transparency in GST self-assessment and CRA valuation practices.

Members are seeing significant differences in how CRA appraisers determine fair market value for newly constructed rental buildings, including different legislative interpretations, valuation methods and assumptions in comparable circumstances. These differences are a significant source of reassessment disputes. They can take years to resolve, tie up substantial capital and require significant resources from both the taxpayer and the CRA. Clearer rules, more consistent practices and greater consultation on valuation policy changes are needed to reduce those costs and resolve fair market value GST disputes sooner.

We see a similar issue with the enhanced rental rebate that was announced in September 2023. Uncertainty over CRA's interpretation of when construction begins can lead to materially different outcomes depending on when CRA determines the project started. To avoid that tax cliff, the NAC supports clear and objective eligibility laws and interpretations, including phased-in transition rules where necessary.

These are not simply technical tax issues. Large GST liabilities arise at the worst point in a rental project's lifetime: when construction is complete, capital is fully committed and the building has not yet reached stabilized occupancy. When those liabilities remain in dispute for years, they tie up capital and consumer resources that could otherwise support more rental housing development.

Second, we recognize the need for effective CRA audit and information-gathering powers, but stronger CRA powers should also come with greater transparency and accountability from CRA.

Rental housing providers need clear and timely communication when CRA changes its policies, legislative interpretations or valuation approaches so they can understand and fully comply with the tax legislation. Significant changes should also be developed with appropriate consultation with the rental housing industry and valuation professionals. The goal should be effective enforcement, but also transparent processes, greater consistency and higher-quality standards in CRA assessments.

My third point is on Bill C-31, which proposes to raise the Tax Court's informal procedure thresholds. That may be helpful, but it will have a limited implication to the larger GST disputes common in rental housing. The industry is asking for an applicable informal dispute resolution process with GST fair market value disputes, allowing differences between taxpayer and CRA valuations to be addressed and reasonably resolved earlier without requiring lengthy and costly formal tax dispute proceedings.

Finally, these circumstances and administrative issues need to be considered in the broader context of housing supply in Canada. The NAC is advocating for a modernized MURB-style investment program, a targeted capital gains deferral program for reinvestment in rental housing and more predictable CMHC financing programs. These measures are intended to improve project feasibility and keep private capital flowing into new rental supply.

I would leave the committee with four practical asks. First, improve transparency and consistency in CRA's GST administration and valuation practices. Second, establish clear and objective eligibility rules for rental housing rebates, with appropriate transition or phase-in measures. Third, ensure expended CRA information-gathering powers are accompanied by greater consistency, accountability and quality in CRA audits and reassessments. Fourth, continue to improve federal tax and financing measures so that more private capital can be directed towards new purpose-built rental housing.

The common thread is certainty. Rental housing requires long-term investment and planning. Predictable tax administration reduces risk, supports investment decisions and ultimately enables more housing supply to be delivered.

Thank you, Chair.

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

● (1125)

[Translation]

We now go to Mr. Lefebvre for six minutes.

Eric Lefebvre: Thank you, Madam Chair.

My thanks to the three witnesses for being with us today.

Mr. Drobina, you worked at the CRA. Now you work with rental housing developers. I want to know what needs to change to improve CRA processes, transparency and accountability in the handling of GST/HST disputes and reassessments, especially when the CRA's real estate appraisal program is involved.

[English]

Peter Drobina: From my perspective—and I've been in the industry for 17 years dealing with GST issues on both sides—there is a lack of accountability and quality controls once the legislation is interpreted and appraisal standards are applied to the legislation. I think that creates the issue of applying legislation to appraisal standards and matching it with market information that's derived from transactions in the market.

I have an issue where, say, an auditor creates an incorrect \$1-million reassessment. If that reassessment is disputed over the next three years and the Tax Court decides that it was wrong, the original auditor or team leader has no feedback loop where they can improve their processes or interpretations to eliminate the next problem assessment. Therefore, an audit file needs to have a time issue and associated costs all the way through the audit, appeal and tax procedures until the issue is resolved. That way we would have statistics on who creates those issues and how they can be resolved quicker, eliminating the time wasted on these disputes and the significant costs borne by both the taxpayer and the federal government.

[Translation]

Eric Lefebvre: Thank you very much.

How should the CRA's real estate appraisal program work with appraisal professionals and rental housing stakeholders when developing or changing appraisal methods? What can the CRA do to work with them more?

[English]

Peter Drobina: It starts with any kind of collaboration or consultation. In my last 17 years, I'm aware of one public real estate appraisal program presentation to the Appraisal Institute regarding GST issues on seniors homes. I welcome them to participate in appraisal standards committees or with the industry and to be involved in what the industry is experiencing today, what the market is saying today, because their valuations, assumptions and methodologies are driven more by their lack of market knowledge than by their consultations with the industry and their knowledge of what is happening today in a tough rental market environment.

[Translation]

Eric Lefebvre: Mr. Drobina, you have a lot of appraisal and assessment experience. What should the CRA consider to determine the fair market value of new rental buildings in the case of an assumed sale under section 191 of the Excise Tax Act?

[English]

Peter Drobina: The challenge is that the current legislation has provisions of deemed sales when a rental building has to be self-supplied, and that occurs, by the court's definition, in the primary market where that property is taxable. Because of the lack of transactions in the primary market, CRA appraisals and outside appraisals have to reach to the secondary market and utilize exempt used residential sales in their application and estimate of value for new rental projects. There are adjustments that come in that have to be applied between a primary and a secondary market, and those adjustments create a lot of issues with the industry.

Also, the CRA appears to be lacking any knowledge that the risk associated with deemed supply when a rental building is new and not occupied is much higher than it is with fully occupied, used residential with no tax liability attached to it. There's a difference in looking at the market transactions from one market and applying them to the deemed legislation, which explains that the self-supply has to occur when the first occupancy is triggered.

[Translation]

Eric Lefebvre: How much time do I have left, Madam Chair?

The Chair: You have a minute and a half.

Eric Lefebvre: Thank you.

Ms. Toor, do you think the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation's, CMHC's, current limit is really a major barrier to home ownership today?

[English]

Jasmine Toor: With the way mortgages are financed, particularly at the moment, we're seeing.... It used to be that in many instances—I've done mortgages at a bank—we would see some rate competition from non-bank lenders. At the moment, there is a decreased ability of non-bank lenders to compete. Ultimately, that results in less choice for Canadians and oftentimes higher interest rates. That's what we're seeing on the ground and what I'm hearing from brokers across the country as well.

● (1130)

[Translation]

Eric Lefebvre: Do you think that raising mortgage financing capacity without adequately increasing housing supply creates a risk that too much borrowing capacity could translate into higher prices, rather than more housing supply?

[English]

Jasmine Toor: I don't think the two would relate to one another in that way. I think the government is taking the right actions, such as increases on the private insured mortgage side, to increase housing capacity as well as the—

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Toor. We have to end it there.

[Translation]

Thank you, Mr. Lefebvre.

[English]

Dr. Martin, we'll continue with you for six minutes, please.

[Translation]

Danielle Martin (University—Rosedale, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you to the witnesses for being with us today.

[English]

I'd like to begin with Professor Stapleton.

Thank you for being with us. I'm happy to be getting into the weeds a bit around automatic tax filing, which is such an important intervention for low-income people across the country.

I want to make sure I understand your point around the many data points that are collected in a tax filing. Are you suggesting that when it comes to automatic tax filing, there should be some kind of further simplified file that gets submitted, particularly in the case of deemed filing? Could you get a little detailed for us about what you're suggesting? Do you think taking that approach would require any changes to what's being proposed in the legislation versus more on the implementation side?

John Stapleton: I'll answer the last question first. I think it's mostly on the implementation side, save for the issues of what happens when there are errors and who will clear that up.

Yes, because we ask those 43 questions leading up to line 236 of the tax form, which is adjusted family net income.... AFNI, of course, is the line on which refundable credits are calculated and computed for each person. We're asking a number of questions. We're asking very low-income people whether they're taking money out of RRIFs that they don't have. We're asking a lot of very marginal questions about whether they have other deductions. I do a lot of tax filing with low-income people. I can tell you that with a lot of the language and a lot of the questions, they have no idea what the questions are really asking. You have to interpret the form for them.

For my second point, which I think is a more important point, let's look for a second at just social assistance recipients across Canada. Each one gets a T5007 slip that tells them exactly how much social assistance has been paid. I can tell you that right now governments—I'm not necessarily saying CRA, but governments—know the answers. For all social assistance or income assistance recipients, they know the answers to 41 of the 43 questions that are being asked. They know them in a more timely fashion than the federal government does. There's so much that could be cleared up just through information sharing that could deal with the privacy issues and actually bring a large swath of people into the system who don't file.

Again, as you asked, there's an awful lot—we can go through each one on the list in front of you, if you wish—that doesn't need to be asked of low-income people.

Danielle Martin: These are really important points. The question of interjurisdictional data sharing has been raised by more than one witness—with respect to disability adjudication, for example. Presumably, other pieces of legislation might need to be looked at in order for that information to be transmitted reciprocally between provincial and federal governments. Your point is well taken. I find it intriguing to consider what a simplified version could look like that would ensure that government gets the necessary information but only the necessary information. Thank you.

Mr. Drobina, I represent an urban riding with a lot of renters. One thing I've been noting as I've been speaking with people who are renting is that there doesn't seem to be a lot of clarity as to where we have a supply problem when it comes to rental housing and where it's mostly an affordability problem. I'm talking about downtown Toronto right now. I can't speak for the rest of the country.

I'm wondering if you could speak a bit about ensuring that in rental housing we don't just build a lot of supply that people can't afford; we actually ensure that we have adequate affordable rental housing. Are there tax changes or other federal policy and regulatory changes that you think would help us ensure that when we build rental housing it's affordable and that we have incentives to repurpose housing through creative mechanisms? I'm thinking about community land trusts. I'm thinking about co-ops that effectively take housing supply that's already out there and ensure that it can be made affordable for renters.

• (1135)

Peter Drobina: On the supply side, rental providers have responded to the enhanced rebate announced in September 2023. It was also a market where lending capital was relatively inexpensive. There was a high demand for rental units. The industry responded by building more units, to the point where today—and for the last year or year and a half—there is an oversupply of current rental units in large cities and smaller communities.

The affordability problem is another question. It's not just about the ability to supply units. You need to supply them at affordable rents, where the GST and any taxation, development cost charges or levies play a big role. There have been studies showing that approximately 30% of the cost of delivering rental units in Canada can be attributed to some kind of fee or taxation.

I applaud the enhanced rental rebate. I would love for that rebate to apply to rental units coming to market today and—

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Drobina. We're going to have to end it there.

Thank you, Dr. Martin.

[Translation]

We now go to Mr. Garon for six minutes.

Jean-Denis Garon: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Mr. Stapleton, my sense is that many countries in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, or OECD, have some process or another for prepopulating or autofilling tax return forms. Generally speaking, we've seen movement towards prepopulation measures in recent years. Now the government is looking to implement automatic tax filing for a certain portion of the population. There seems to be a lot of consensus around that policy.

Do you know how many countries have an autofill system? Why is Canada behind on that front?

[English]

John Stapleton: I don't know the number. I do know that in the U.K. and Denmark especially, they send prepopulated forms out to people. They populate all 43 questions, let's say, or their similar list of questions—the ones they know the answer to. They send them out to the tax filer and ask them one question: Is this right? Is there anywhere we made a mistake? It gives an opportunity to the tax filer to then simply deal with it by exception. We don't do that in Canada.

Is there a reason we couldn't do it? There are two real reasons. The first is the number of questions and the need to answer a lot of questions that are not applicable in the first place, but that's in the act. We have to ask them and answer them. The second is timing. When do we really need to know these items? Other countries are more lax. They are more flexible in terms of saying, "Well, let us know within a certain period of time what has changed." There doesn't have to be the immediacy that seems to be built into our system: "If your marital status has changed, we need to know immediately", etc.

Those are the two big things: too many questions that are not relevant to refundable credits, and being a bit too timely in our approach.

• (1140)

[Translation]

Jean-Denis Garon: Thank you.

Recently, the CRA had some problems, let's just say. It made a lot of mistakes. We have people coming to our offices who are having major issues with the CRA. Some private companies have told me that they are responsible for what they put on their tax returns when they file. They sometimes worry about the fact that the CRA can make mistakes, do some sort of audit to correct its own mistake after the fact, and recalculate the allowances and tax credits they're entitled to.

Here's my question: If prepopulated or autofilled tax forms are used, what happens when the agency makes an autofill error? Is there some sort of amnesty for the person using the autofill feature?

[English]

John Stapleton: Other countries, I believe, have a joint onus. In our system, the onus is all on the individual. For example, if you happen to not get your T5 in the mail or distributed to you by email but CRA has it, then of course there's an error. You didn't have the opportunity to correct it because you never received the information in the first instance. We can work together. In other words, if CRA takes its role seriously, sends out what it has to and does the best job it can possibly do, the individual then has the onus to come up with the information.

The other part of your question is this, really: What if CRA's interpretation is different from the interpretation you have? We see this all the time with cash.

[Translation]

Jean-Denis Garon: If I may, I'd say it's not even about that. It's about the fact that the CRA makes a lot of mistakes. My fear is that it can autofill certain information, certain answers to questions, only to realize afterwards that it made a mistake and recalculate the amounts people are entitled to.

I'm worried that the agency will fill in the wrong information and then punish taxpayers for its own mistake. What I want to know is whether there are any protections for taxpayers, especially the vulnerable ones benefiting from the policy. Are there any such safeguards?

[English]

John Stapleton: Absolutely. There should be those mechanisms to write things off in some cases, or, if somebody owes the Canada Revenue Agency money, to do it over a very extended period of time so that they don't run into those types of hardships.

Also, there's the issue of standards—for example, the standards, as I said, for cash. If a babysitter takes the cash they received and then buys groceries on the way home, the CRA will not count that because they'll say they have no record of it. I think they need to get a lot more flexible in terms of what they're able to accept and what their standards are for people, especially low-income people—

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Stapleton. I'm going to have to end it there.

[Translation]

Thank you, Mr. Garon.

[English]

We will continue now with Mr. Guglielmin for five minutes, please.

Michael Guglielmin: Thank you, Chair.

Thank you, witnesses, for your testimony so far.

Housing affordability is a super important topic. You can't make it through a bakery or a grocery store—certainly in Vaughan, and I'm sure in the rest of the country—without this topic being top of mind, especially for young people or growing families trying to find suitable homes.

Ms. Toor, a new Remax survey found that 65% of Canadians say they would make at least one major compromise to afford a more sustainable home. We see that 63% would relocate. More than 60% cite affordability as a consideration for where to buy, and people are taking second jobs or asking family for help.

From what your members are seeing, are Canadians now being forced to make increased financial sacrifices to qualify for mortgages?

• (1145)

Jasmine Toor: Qualifying for a mortgage—I can speak from experience, having purchased a home and qualified for it, and even having done mortgages myself—requires a great amount of sacrifice, especially if you're putting down a 20% down payment.

Fortunately, we have vehicles such as insured mortgages. I think the government has made some very critical changes in that regard. We were one of the associations that pushed for an increase in the insured mortgage cap to \$1.5 million and for 30-year amortizations. We would love to see 30-year amortizations across the board for insured borrowers. Those have had some very meaningful impacts and have hopefully helped some people enter the housing market who had been struggling to enter it. They've allowed them to put a lower down payment on the purchase of a home. In Ontario specifically, we're seeing that the HST relief has had a meaningful impact for borrowers.

We hope to see more of these policies coming forward. I think we are on the right track. Obviously, it takes some time for the true impact of all of these changes to be felt.

Michael Guglielmin: For your members, when they see a young person or a young couple rejected for a first-time mortgage, what is the primary reason? Is it the stress test or household debts, or is their income not keeping pace with housing costs?

Jasmine Toor: I would say the primary.... Qualifying for a mortgage in Canada is extremely difficult. The stress test is certainly in place for a reason. It has protected borrowers, especially from the high interest rate increases we saw in the postpandemic period. It actually prevented people from losing their homes, so it is a valuable measure.

When qualifying for a home, you have to have the income that matches the pricing of a home. This is often an impediment, but at the same time, the stress test has protected many borrowers who would have potentially lost their home if they hadn't been able to manage the price increases.

Michael Guglielmin: The general cost of living keeps a lot of people from qualifying.

Jasmine Toor: I would say so, yes.

Michael Guglielmin: Thank you.

Mr. Drobina, your organization has repeatedly asked the government to bring back a modernized MURB incentive. Why do you believe that would generate more rental housing?

Peter Drobina: The old 1970s and early 1980s MURB incentive program created an environment where investment in rental housing was somewhat of a tax benefit. Someone could invest, on a tax-deferred basis, any capital gains into new rental housing. It was pretty much a capital recycling program whereby capital that was made on the construction of new rental housing could be applied to another rental housing project on a tax-deferred basis. Any situation where tax is deferred or eliminated gives the opportunity for the industry to provide more rental housing at more affordable rates.

Michael Guglielmin: Really quickly, the CMHC has warned that we would need to double the rate of homebuilding to restore affordability to 2019 levels, yet it's also forecasting that housing construction will slow down. What are we missing?

Peter Drobina: We're missing a lot of housing supply in probably the next 18 to 36 months. The current supply is sufficient for the demand, but because of uncertainties in taxation, rebate application and high interest rates, the industry has a feasibility problem. It cannot start new projects today that will deliver the housing needed in three to four years. That's when the CMHC is projecting we will need those units. It takes three to four years to deliver them. If we start now, we might be able to get those numbers a bit higher in a couple of years.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Drobina. We're going to have to cut it off there.

[Translation]

Mr. Lavoie, it's your turn for five minutes.

Steeve Lavoie: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you to the witnesses for being with us this morning.

My first question is for you, Mr. Stapleton. I wholeheartedly support anything that makes tax filing easier for low-income taxpayers. It makes you wonder why we haven't done this yet. You said the CRA already knows the answers to 41 of the 43 questions being asked.

The first thing that popped into my head when I heard the proposal is that it's too easy. I'm a cautious person by nature, so that may be why I'm questioning it. Why wasn't this done before? Why is it going to work now? Could automating the process lead to more fraud? Where there is money, there are scammers. What are the blind spots? When I'm being told that we know the answers to 41 of the 43 questions, it sounds straightforward and I think we should go ahead. Before we do, though, I want to know whether there are any blind spots we should pay attention to, so that the money goes to the right place and helps the right people?

• (1150)

[English]

John Stapleton: The first and best answer is to do what other countries do, which is prepopulate the tax form, send it out to people and ask them whether it's right, so they have that opportunity.

How did we get here? We started with refundable credits in 1978, when the first child benefit was brought in, and then over time, we brought in the GST credit, child benefits and the Canada workers benefit. It slowly grew until, between 1978 and 2020—you have 42 years—the refundable credit system became a major part of our income security system.

It was always based on this linchpin of filing your taxes, and we haven't really taken a good look at what's involved in doing that. Let me give you one example of where we could simplify things.

We know that anybody who is filing a return where the amount of income they made is below the basic personal amount—which is about \$12,000, \$13,000 or \$14,000—cannot benefit from any non-refundable credits. They cannot benefit from the charitable credit or the medical credit—that sort of thing. Why do we continue to take all those people with those very low incomes through a gauntlet of questions on credits that simply don't apply to them? They can't get them. There's no refund for them. It's like taking a coupon into the grocery store, handing it to the cashier and expecting something in return.

In terms of the prevention of fraud, I think we have a greater opportunity to prevent fraud, because the government, with what it has and what it knows, can tell people what that is and give the tax filer the opportunity to change it. If the tax filer makes a mistake in the return, then you deal with it, but you're dealing with it as an exceptionality as opposed to the rule.

[Translation]

Steeve Lavoie: Thank you, Mr. Stapleton.

Ms. Toor, the real estate market tends to be volatile, making it hard to plan. It goes through cycles. Some cycles are much longer than others and drive home prices up, as we've seen over the last 10 or 15 years.

You made some recommendations at the beginning of the meeting. If you could pick only one, what measure would you prioritize to bring long-term predictability, stability and certainty to the market, in the face of all the potential volatility? I want to hear the measure you think would make a difference in housing affordability going forward.

[English]

Jasmine Toor: The government's actions on GST relief have signalled meaningful change. We're currently in a situation in which the government is doing a lot of things to incentivize home ownership. However, we have a trade situation. Generally, when people feel fearful for their jobs, they're less inclined to go out and buy a new home. These are problems we have to contend with, but I think GST relief is very meaningful, and we're hopeful that we'll see some long-term GST relief on housing.

I was just at a conference with developers, and they were talking about the meaningful impact they're seeing on the ground in the housing market. I think the government is up to some great work on this, and we hope to see more of it in the future.

[Translation]

Steeve Lavoie: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Lavoie.

Now it's over to Mr. Garon for two and a half minutes.

Jean-Denis Garon: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Mr. Drobina, I think there's a consensus that we need more rental housing built. Obviously, when vacancy rates are low, those who rent new apartments pay a lot more. There are also those in existing rental apartments who feel trapped; they're afraid to leave because it will cost more to live somewhere else. That reduces mobility. It reduces productivity as well, because it keeps someone from accepting a better-paying job. That's a problem.

On top of that, what we've seen in recent years is that the market has wrongly favoured the construction of new condos over rental units. I'm aware that your organization has long been calling on the government to reinstate the multi-unit residential building tax incentive. I believe the Liberals had even made it one of their campaign promises or commitments in the last election.

I'd like you to tell us why the incentive works, why it would work if the government restored it and how it would help the construction of rental housing. Why is it taking the government so long to reinstate it?

• (1155)

[English]

Peter Drobina: Affordability and rental supply are huge issues across Canada. What I see from my perspective is that the federal government is providing incentives, but the other side of the government, the CRA, is still aggressively pursuing additional GST, even on fully affordable components and co-ops, and applying en-

hanced rebate eligibility rules in an aggressive manner to reject the rebate versus looking into ways to apply the rebate to providers that provide today's rental product and will provide rental product in the future.

[Translation]

Jean-Denis Garon: You're saying that, at this point, we have more of an enforcement problem than a legislative problem. Is that what you're saying?

[English]

Peter Drobina: A legislation issue on the enhanced rebate is having the start of construction be on one day. If the CRA determines that you started your project at 11:59 p.m. on September 12, you're on the hook for the full HST. If you started two minutes later, on September 13, your full rebate applies. There are also issues with interpretations of the word "intent" as defined in the legislation, which the CRA uses heavily to reject rebates today on affordable housing, on co-op housing and for any other provider that is struggling.

[Translation]

Jean-Denis Garon: Thank you very much.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Garon.

[English]

Ms. Jansen, you have five minutes.

Tamara Jansen: Ms. Toor, Bill C-31 proposes increasing the CMHC's mortgage guarantee ceiling from \$800 billion to \$1 trillion—that's another \$200 billion in potential capacity—yet the CMHC currently has only \$577 billion in guarantees outstanding. If we're nowhere near the existing ceiling, what exactly is the additional \$200 billion going to accomplish? Is the CMHC increasing it because developers are struggling to secure private financing?

Jasmine Toor: No. I mentioned in my remarks that many lenders rely on the securitization of their mortgages in order to offer lower-cost solutions for Canadians on their mortgages. This would help with that. It would also help with some of the changes on multi-unit housing. That's what I think the increased funding would be for.

Tamara Jansen: Are they perhaps increasing it because they anticipate more mortgage defaults and financial distress?

Jasmine Toor: When we talk about mortgage defaults in Canada, we have to take them with a grain of salt. We still have the lowest default rates among the G20 countries. We have very low default rates relative to other comparative countries, so defaults in Canada—

Tamara Jansen: Are they increasing it to allow the CMHC to guarantee riskier mortgages that private lenders might otherwise avoid?

Jasmine Toor: I don't think the mortgages would be.... We're not referring to private mortgages and the securitization of mortgages. We're referring to mortgages by.... Some banks rely upon the securitization of these mortgages, as do non-bank lenders. Oftentimes, these are very secure investments.

Tamara Jansen: Are they increasing it to shift more mortgage financing risk from private financial institutions onto taxpayers?

Jasmine Toor: I would not characterize it in that manner. I think this is a well-established way that mortgage financing is done in Canada. I don't think it's the government assuming more risk.

Tamara Jansen: I'd like to bring it back to the area where I am from. The CMHC reports that metro Vancouver condo construction starts fell 40% in the first half of this year. WorkBC reports that construction employment fell by 4,800 jobs across B.C. in August alone.

When construction is slowing this dramatically, what does that tell you about the financial viability of building homes in B.C.?

• (1200)

Jasmine Toor: One thing that would have helped very much in British Columbia is GST relief. This is something we were really pushing the provincial government in B.C. to introduce. Unfortunately—

Tamara Jansen: My question was more about viability. If projects aren't financially viable, will expanding mortgage guarantees actually get those projects built?

Jasmine Toor: I saw a report that counters some of the evidence that you've brought forward. Banks are actually increasingly confident in investing in real estate projects in British Columbia, in Vancouver specifically, versus Toronto. Some of those things have a lot to do with which parts of the country are most impacted by tariffs as well, so—

Tamara Jansen: Can I go to the next question?

When you previously appeared, you identified “taxes”, “red tape” and insufficient housing supply as major contributors to unaffordable housing. Have those underlying problems improved significantly under the Liberals' new plan to build at speeds not seen in generations?

Jasmine Toor: The GST relief has really been meaningful. There are other things that the government is working on. Obviously, we position ourselves as a partner with government to help move the policy needle. I think in one year, there has been quite demonstrable progress and—

Tamara Jansen: Thank you. That is what I was asking.

We're hearing about billions more in financing capacity, yet we're watching new ownership housing constructions decline. Would you

agree that we should measure the success of government housing policies by homes actually completed and by what families can afford rather than by how much additional financing the government announces?

Jasmine Toor: I think these are very complex issues, and I would be reluctant to diminish them into very binary arguments.

Tamara Jansen: Shouldn't we check on how many houses are being built? Wouldn't that be a helpful way of seeing whether housing is actually being built?

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Jansen. That concludes your time.

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

Ryan Turnbull (Whitby, Lib.): I want to say thanks to all the witnesses.

Mr. Stapleton, I have some questions for you.

Before I start, I want to acknowledge your 28 years' worth of service to the Ontario government. About 20 years ago, I got to sit in a meeting with you when you were part of a panel that was reviewing Ontario's social assistance program. We talked about “million dollar Murray” and “zero dollar Linda” in a case study you had done. It was quite brilliant work.

I want to say thank you for your many years of service and all the work you've done with the Metcalf Foundation and others. I want to pay my respects to you for a great career and lots of contributions. I really respect your point of view.

Now that I've buttered you up, I want to disagree with you.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Ryan Turnbull: I'm just joking.

I got your point at the outset that in some ways, the people with the most interest in making a simple tax filing are often the ones who don't or can't file. Those who owe taxes to the government are the ones who more often than not actually file, so it's a bit of a conundrum.

I empathize with that position. In some ways, the intention of the government is to try to take on some of the responsibility that would normally fall on individuals when filing their taxes, in order to open a gateway so they can access the benefits they're entitled to. I just want you to be aware—because from some of your remarks, I felt you might not be fully aware of this—that part of what we implemented with budget 2025 were prepopulated tax returns in the My Account portal for one million Canadians. That starts this year, for 2026, and it will continue year over year. It ensures that the review, confirmation and submission of those returns is done by those Canadians in the My Account portal. The plan is to ramp that up to 5.5 million Canadians by the 2028 tax year. That's similar to what you were describing in other jurisdictions, and I think it is progress.

The initiative we're talking about today is part of BIA number two. We're talking about the deemed filings or the automated tax benefits. The way this is designed seems to limit, in my view, the chance of having a lot of errors, and I'll say why I believe that. First, you have to be below the personal income tax amount. Second, you need to have income from third party reported sources—T4, CPP, QPP, OAS, GIS or social assistance. Third, you would not have filed for the last three years and didn't file for the current year. After 45 days, the government would essentially compile that information and produce a simple tax filing.

There have been concerns raised at this committee by some of the opposition members. You also raised who is responsible for errors. I think the way it's been designed is going to limit the possibility of errors. I want to see whether you agree with me on that.

• (1205)

John Stapleton: I agree 100% on that. We're talking about very low-income people.

You start getting into areas where there are more errors and the possibility of mistaken or fraudulent returns at higher income levels. We're talking about somebody putting in a phony charitable amount, for example. A low-income person can't benefit from a non-refundable credit because they don't make enough money to pay taxes.

The same is true for all the different types of deductions. For example, there are deductions somebody could get for child care or for putting money into an RRSP—there was an overcontribution or an incorrect contribution. If you're a low-income person, you don't get any money back because you don't pay tax in the first place. The same is true for the long series of non-refundable credits.

I agree with you completely on that point.

Ryan Turnbull: That's great. That reassures us a bit.

You mentioned—it is included in my notes—that marital status is one question that needs to be confirmed in order to figure out the benefit level that Canadians are entitled to. Even with those very simple....

Am I out of time, Madam Chair?

The Chair: Yes.

Ryan Turnbull: Wow, that went fast.

I'm sorry, Mr. Stapleton. I guess I'm cut off.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Turnbull.

On behalf of the committee, I would like to thank all three of our witnesses for their time and contributions.

With that, we'll take a brief suspension while we turn over for our final panel of today. Thanks.

• (1205)

(Pause)

• (1210)

The Chair: Colleagues, we will get started for our final hour today.

I would like to take a minute to welcome our witnesses. We have a lot, but they're doubled up, so it's not like we're going to have 40 minutes of opening remarks.

From the Association pour la santé publique du Québec, we have Marianne Dessureault, director, legal affairs; and Pascal Priori, coordinator, pesticide victims of Quebec. From FP Canada, we have Tashia Batstone, president and CEO; and Craig MacLennan, national head of policy and government relations. From the Mining Association of Canada, we have Pierre Gratton, president and CEO; and Photinie Koutsavlis, vice-president, economic affairs and climate change. Finally, from Prosper Canada, we have Adam Fair, vice-president, strategy and development.

I'd like to take a moment to remind participants of a few points.

Please wait until I recognize you by name before you speak. For those participating by video conference, click on the microphone icon to activate your mic, and please mute yourself when you're not speaking. For those on Zoom, at the bottom of your screen, you may 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 would like to remind participants and witnesses that committee members may ask questions in either English or French. Please have your earpiece on if you require translation so that we can move as smoothly as possible. I will remind you that all comments should be addressed through the chair.

With that, we will begin.

[Translation]

We'll start with the Association pour la santé publique du Québec. Mr. Priori, you have five minutes.

Pascal Priori (Coordinator, Pesticide Victims of Quebec, Association pour la santé publique du Québec): Good afternoon.

Madam Chair and esteemed members of the committee, thank you for welcoming us today.

My name is Pascal Priori. I coordinate Victimes des pesticides du Québec, an initiative for pesticide victims by the Association pour la santé publique du Québec, or ASPQ. I am accompanied by Marianne Dessureault, director of legal affairs.

The ASPQ has been making preventive health care a priority for over 80 years. The coalition of pesticide victims that we represent brings together people who are ill and a dozen organizations, including Myeloma Canada, Parkinson Québec and the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society of Canada.

Every year, we are supporting more and more sick farmers. Very solid scientific data demonstrates strong links between pesticide use and serious illnesses such as birth defects, Parkinson's disease, blood cancers, prostate cancers and respiratory diseases. Since 2021, Quebec has officially recognized Parkinson's disease as an occupational illness linked to pesticides.

The changes proposed in division 13 of part 4 of Bill C-31 weaken the pesticide regulatory framework, even though it needs to be strengthened to protect public health. Like Canada's leading scientists working on pesticides have written to you, we ask that you remove this division from Bill C-31. Failing that, we ask that you amend it by defining the assessment and the trigger threshold, publishing all the data and conclusions related to the assessments, prioritizing independent data and maintaining mandatory re-evaluation for highly hazardous pesticides.

These legislative proposals are part of a specific context. Canadian pesticide practices have not kept pace with the science and lag behind the practices in other jurisdictions. For example, pesticide sales in Canada have increased fivefold since 2005. Canada still permits the use of 121 highly hazardous pesticides that are banned in the European Union. At the same time, the branch at Health Canada responsible for registering pesticides is set to reduce its workforce by 31%, or approximately 190 positions. Thus, this bill adds to a regulatory framework that has long been deficient and was recently further weakened by Bill C-30.

Division 13 of part 4 of Bill C-31 further reduces the requirements. It makes it optional to re-evaluate pesticides every 15 years. It replaces that re-evaluation with an assessment of available information. A full re-evaluation would be carried out only if the risks have increased significantly. However, this poses three problems. First, this threshold associated with the phrase "increased significantly" does not correspond to any definition provided in the act. Second, the text doesn't specify what data will be used or what weight will be given to independent studies during the assessments. A re-evaluation, on the other hand, makes it possible to require new data from the manufacturer. Third, regarding transparency, the bill provides for the publication of the findings of an assessment only in the event of a re-evaluation. There is no requirement to publish detailed reasons when the minister decides not to re-evaluate pesticides. The government cites simplification, but Bill C-31 proposes

replacing the predictable 15-year period with a discretionary decision on a case-by-case basis.

We would also like the Standing Committee on Health to examine these changes, given their repercussions.

Now let's talk about the economy. Health comes at a cost. First, there are health care costs. Endocrine disruptors alone, many of which are pesticides, cost Canada nearly \$36 billion annually, not counting cancers and neurodegenerative diseases. Our health care systems are paying for that.

Second, there is market access. A European proposal to ban products containing residues of prohibited pesticides threatens up to \$1.4 billion in Canadian exports. In fact, since January, France has been blocking agricultural products containing residues of five substances banned in Europe, four of which are commonly used in Canada.

Finally, there is dependence. In 2023, Canada imported \$2 billion worth of pesticides, three-quarters of which came from the United States. Deregulation does not strengthen our agricultural sovereignty or competitiveness. On the contrary, it weakens them.

In the face of the agrochemical lobby's influence, a transparent and robust process is essential to ensure public trust and the health of pesticide users.

So we ask you: What do you say to agricultural workers with Parkinson's disease or blood cancer, who have worked their entire lives to feed Canada, when they see that pesticides deemed too hazardous elsewhere are still permitted in Canada? The government claims that health remains the priority. We'd like to understand how.

Thank you.

• (1215)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Priori.

[English]

We will continue now with FP Canada for five minutes.

Tashia Batstone (President and Chief Executive Officer, FP Canada): Thank you, Madam Chair.

FP Canada is a public interest organization focused on helping Canadians build financial well-being and confidence in their financial decisions. We certify and oversee financial planning professionals who help people make informed decisions across their full range of financial lives, including budgeting, debt management, savings, retirement planning, and tax and insurance needs.

Significant research has been undertaken. It reinforces what many Canadians are already feeling: Financial vulnerability is no longer a marginal issue. More than half of Canadians say they are not getting ahead financially, and nearly three in four show some level of financial vulnerability. Bill C-31 addresses a number of important programs, incentives and benefits, but it does not address the critical question of whether Canadians have access to the guidance they need to make these supports work together and build long-term financial resilience.

Financial resilience is not built through a single benefit, account or tax measure. It is built through the decisions that people make over time, often when they are navigating competing priorities and complex choices. We see an opportunity to help Canadians move beyond accessing individual programs and toward building a coordinated plan for their financial future. That is why FP Canada is proposing a phased federal financial planning grant to help low- and middle-income Canadians access and implement a comprehensive first financial plan delivered by a qualified financial planning professional.

Our proposed program structure is as follows. Eligible Canadians work with a qualified financial planner to develop a comprehensive financial plan and identify appropriate savings vehicles aligned with their life goals. That could be, for example, buying a first home, paying off student debt or planning for a family. To be eligible, the individual would attest that this is their first financial plan. The planner would provide the individual with evidence that the financial plan received met the program eligibility requirements. Following receipt of the confirmation through tax filing, government would deposit the grant directly into a registered account that supports the implementation of their financial plan using existing government payment infrastructure. This could include a TFSA or RRSP, for example, or a first home savings account.

We recommend that this process be structured over three separate phases, as the benefits of financial planning are strengthened through the development of good financial habits that require consistent support over multiple years. This approach supports plan implementation, including periodic plan reviews and adjustments as life circumstances change. A proposed lifetime maximum of \$3,000 would be distributed across the three phases, encouraging long-term participation and implementation. Discussions have been ongoing with government, financial institutions, professional financial planners and other delivery partners using existing infrastructure wherever possible to support efficient administration and strong consumer protection.

Why does this matter? FP Canada conducted consumer research in 2023, 2025 and 2026. It consistently showed that over 50% of Canadians are falling behind or barely getting by, with no savings. Consumer research by the Financial Resilience Institute in 2026 found that 74% of Canadians exhibit some level of financial vulnerability. It also found that Canadians who work with a financial planner demonstrate stronger financial resilience than those who do not. This was consistent across all income levels. Separate research going back to 2015 confirmed that Canadians working with a financial planning professional have shown stronger outcomes across many economic categories, including wealth accumulation, savings, debt management, retirement preparedness, insurance coverage and education savings.

As part of our work, we undertook research to estimate potential program costs, uptake by Canadians and cost offsets for government. Based on research conducted using various program parameters, our modelling suggests that anywhere from 800,000 to 1.6 million eligible Canadians could benefit from the program to start. Estimated costs of approximately \$2.1 billion could generate between \$23.9 billion and \$47.8 billion of net-worth growth over 10 years for program participants. Economic modelling also suggests

that a substantial portion of program costs could be offset through increased consumer spending, GDP growth and tax revenues associated with stronger financial resilience.

● (1220)

Finally, we conducted research to indicate consumer support. I would like to note that this research was only completed within the past two months. It indicates that approximately 67% of Canadians support a federal grant to help Canadians access professional financial planning and develop their first financial plan. Support rises to 75% among Canadians aged 18 to 34, which represents an opportunity to make generational change for younger Canadians.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Batstone. We're going to have to conclude there.

We will continue now with the Mining Association of Canada.

Pierre Gratton (President and Chief Executive Officer, Mining Association of Canada): Thank you, Madam Chair.

I want to begin by recognizing the traditional and unceded territory of the Anishinabe Algonquin nation and the hundreds of indigenous communities across the country with which we work closely.

Today I will focus on Bill C-31's proposed change to the Canadian exploration expense, or CEE. I would note that this matter is most relevant to the junior mining sector, represented by groups such as PDAC. We have been supporting PDAC in its advocacy on this issue, but would encourage the committee to meet with them directly.

This change follows a Supreme Court of British Columbia decision that found determining a mineral resource's quality could include assessing its economic viability, allowing most of the disputed engineering and technical study costs to qualify for the provincial mining exploration tax credit. Budget 2025 cited this decision and proposed clarifying that federal CEE eligibility excludes economic viability and engineering feasibility expenses. Clause 9 of Bill C-31 implements that approach by replacing "quality" with "inherent natural qualities", referring only to the deposit's underlying physical characteristics, such as grade, mineral composition and geology.

In other words, the federal government is not accepting the court's ruling. In so doing, the government is exacerbating a financing gap at precisely the stage when companies must determine whether a discovery can become a viable mine. It also goes against the Liberal Party's election promise to include these costs, at least for critical mineral projects.

Canada has developed one of the world's most successful systems for financing mineral exploration through CEE and flow-through shares. CEE identifies exploration costs that qualify for a tax deduction. Junior companies have no operating revenue and little to no taxable income, so a deduction offers no benefit to the company. Instead, through flow-through shares, juniors raise money to pay for eligible work. Investors buy shares. The company uses that money for exploration. The company then passes on the deductions for eligible expenses to those investors, who can use them to reduce their taxable income. The investor receives a tax benefit. The junior receives cash to carry out the work.

Flow-through shares provide approximately 70% of the funds raised on Canadian stock exchanges for domestic exploration. Junior companies also accounted for half of Canada's \$4.3 billion in exploration and deposit appraisal spending in 2024. Their ability to finance the next stage of technical work is critical to our future mine development pipeline.

However, discovering the deposit is only the beginning. Companies must complete preliminary economic assessments, prefeasibility studies and feasibility studies. These progressively establish how a deposit can be mined and processed, what infrastructure would be needed, what development would cost and whether a project is economically viable.

This work is essential to making sound investment decisions. It provides the evidence that lenders and investors need before committing construction capital. It is also expensive and has become more expensive over time as requirements have increased. It could be anywhere from \$5 million to \$25 million for larger or complex projects. These costs arise before a project generates revenue, and often before it can access the financing needed to proceed. The result is that projects fall into the so-called valley of death, and Bill C-31 is essentially condemning them to that.

We therefore recommend that you reverse this amendment, respect the decision of the B.C. Supreme Court and follow through on the government's election promise to include these studies. We would prefer that you extend it beyond just critical mineral projects to include the entire mining sector. The financing challenge extends across base, precious and critical minerals, and many Canadian deposits contain multiple commodities.

Expanding CEE would help viable projects advance towards production at a time when our smelting and refining capacity has declined. A stronger pipeline of Canadian mines would provide reliable feedstock to help sustain our remaining facilities and support investment in domestic processing.

Thanks very much.

• (1225)

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

We will conclude the opening remarks with Mr. Fair from Prosper Canada.

Adam Fair (Vice-President, Strategy and Development, Prosper Canada): Thank you, Madam Chair and members of the committee.

My name is Adam Fair, and I am the vice-president of strategy and development at Prosper Canada, a national charity driving bold change that enables more people to prosper. For almost 20 years, I've worked alongside community organizations that are helping people improve their financial security.

We welcome the government's commitment to ensuring that Canadians receive all the benefits they're entitled to. That goal must guide the automatic tax filing design.

Prosper Canada leads Resilient Futures, a federally funded, \$60-million initiative working with 97 community-based organizations from coast to coast to coast. In its 15-month initial start, the program reached over 500,000 Canadians with low incomes and helped participants access over \$600 million in additional income through tax filings, benefits navigation and financial counselling. It's becoming a Canadian success story of government and community collaboration. Our partners see every day where the system works, where it fails and what those failures cost people.

I want to ground my remarks today in a personal story. My dad trained as an engineer at the University of Toronto and ran a small business. Today, he lives alone in a small Toronto apartment on a low retirement income and faces mental health challenges. Memory difficulties and limited digital literacy make filing taxes very difficult. Questions about his past marital status have made maintaining his benefits a reoccurring struggle. He depends on old age security and the guaranteed income supplement. He worked most of his life, but now he worries about food and housing. Navigating these systems is one of his greatest stresses, and I worry about his health. I've been fighting alongside him. Even with that support, it's exhausting.

Our partners across the country are helping people through the very same struggles every day. These challenges are widespread. One in five Canadians on low income is not filing. According to Statistics Canada, 62% of low-income families have named income supports as their main source of income. Prosper Canada strongly supports SimpleFile, prefilled returns and deemed filing. Some people cannot reliably complete a simplified process or approve a prefilled return, so deemed filing is essential to reaching them. Automatic filing is a critical step forward, but its design and administration will determine whether it removes barriers or unintentionally creates new ones.

We ask the committee to address four priorities.

First, enable ongoing eligibility. Remove the requirement to have missed a return in the preceding three years. People should not lose this service, because it has successfully helped them to file. For someone like my father, predictable annual support is essential.

Second, protect timely access to benefits. The proposed timetable risks payment interruptions. Notices, review periods and filing must happen early enough to protect continuity. Receiving money months later does not undo the hardship of missed groceries or rent today.

Third, make help and correction accessible. Do not assume everyone can access their CRA My Account. Give participants and authorized support like community representatives direct channels to CRA to correct information and resolve problems quickly. Protect accuracy without requiring an active response from anyone, including those least able to respond.

Fourth, expand eligibility and work with provinces and territories. With appropriate consent and privacy protection, use information that governments already collect to identify what people are missing out on, establish eligibility and support filing. This can connect people to both federal and provincial benefits.

Community organizations must be partners through this work. Continued investment in volunteer tax clinics and year-round financial help, such as our financial resilience partners, are critical. Equip frontline staff with training, reliable information and effective routes to resolve problems on behalf of struggling Canadians. There's no single solution. Success requires sustained collaboration among government and community organizations, alongside innovation, monitoring and improvement.

CRA should report on benefits received, payment continuity, errors and who remains excluded, and then work with partners to close that gap. For my father, success means less fear of losing the income he relies on. When the system works together, the difference is profound: food on the table, secure housing, and relief from constant stress. Let us deliver the benefits Canadians are entitled to consistently and with dignity.

Thank you.

● (1230)

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

We are going to begin this round of questioning with Mr. Guglielmin for six minutes.

Michael Guglielmin: Thank you, Chair.

Thank you to the witnesses for their opening testimonies.

Mr. Gratton, Canada has one of the strongest mineral endowments in the world. We produce more than 60 minerals and metals, and we have many of the critical minerals that many of our allies require and depend on. The question is whether we can get them out of the ground fast enough and to market in due course.

Are lengthy approval timelines in the mining sector now a competitive problem for the industry writ large?

Pierre Gratton: I'd say that the two big issues are the fiscal environment and the regulatory environment, but I would say that we're seeing improvements in both areas now.

On the regulatory side, we are seeing timelines improve through the Impact Assessment Act. There was a project in Quebec that reached a critical milestone a year earlier than the previous project, which is really good news. We now have 10 agreements in place between the federal government and the provinces, which we never thought we'd see. We're heading in the right direction, but without a doubt, the regulatory system has been duplicative historically and very lengthy.

● (1235)

Michael Guglielmin: Would you have an idea of how many mining projects are facing a backlog right now or facing delays?

Pierre Gratton: What do you mean by "facing delays"?

Michael Guglielmin: I mean delays for approval.

Pierre Gratton: I'd have to look at the agency's website, so no.

Michael Guglielmin: We're increasingly, in this country, talking about critical minerals as a national security asset. Do you think we should maintain a strategic reserve of the key minerals needed for the defence strategy and essential supply chains?

Pierre Gratton: Probably at this current point in time there are reasons to do so for a subset of commodities that China, for example, may have a current stranglehold on. There's no question that where there is Chinese dominance, the ability for projects to come online and be competitive is questionable. Instruments that we've started to see deployed in Canada now around offtake agreements, direct investments and stockpiling are tools that I think make sense for certain commodities.

Michael Guglielmin: On that exact frame, a lot of our allies have been raising concerns about the dependence on China for strategic reserves or for their own access to critical minerals. If we had a strategic reserve, could that potentially strengthen our leverage and increase our reliability as a supplier to many of our allies?

Pierre Gratton: Yes, I would say so.

Michael Guglielmin: Are we currently moving from discovery to production quickly enough to take advantage of the geopolitical opportunities?

Pierre Gratton: Historically, no. We've seen our reserves for certain critical minerals decline by as much as 97% over the last 25 years. The exploration into base metals—which are largely what critical minerals are—has not been there for the past 25 to 30 years. We've built more gold mines, which is great because gold is very valuable these days, but we haven't been building critical mineral properties. We need to turn that around. It has compromised, as well, our downstream processing industry. We've closed seven smelters and refineries in the last 10 years. Why? It's because they don't have domestic feed. We definitely need to turn this around.

I am increasingly encouraged by the steps being taken in Bill C-39, which is before Parliament. There are additional measures in there, plus the things I mentioned earlier. We're starting to see improvements at Fisheries and Oceans Canada, which has always been a problem department when it comes to timeliness of decisions, at Transport Canada and, as I mentioned earlier, through the Impact Assessment Act.

Michael Guglielmin: Thank you.

I have a question for FP Canada, for either of you.

Oftentimes, financial planners see Canadian households in a very different light than the government does with respect to their finances. What are planners today seeing families dealing with when it comes to mortgage costs, consumer debt and the rising costs of everyday essentials?

The Chair: Mr. Guglielmin, I'm sorry. You have gotten to the end of your time.

Oh, it's six minutes. I apologize.

Go ahead.

Craig MacLennan (National Head, Policy and Government Relations, FP Canada): What we've seen in the data.... We went back to 2015 to look at all of these microeconomic categories. What we see when we look at Canadians engaged with a financial planner versus non-engaged Canadians is that non-engaged Canadians are accruing a significant amount of debt, almost 38% more than engaged Canadians. We see that Canadians engaged with a fi-

ancial planner are able to turn a dollar of income into almost two times as much wealth creation.

• (1240)

Michael Guglielmin: I'm going to interject because I have one last question.

Oftentimes, the people who can't afford financial planners are the ones who need them most. Is that the central problem you proposed for the financial planning tax credit? Is that the one you're trying to solve?

Craig MacLennan: Yes.

Tashia Batstone: Yes.

The Chair: I apologize. I was too quick on the jump there.

Go ahead, Mr. Sawatzky, for six minutes.

Jake Sawatzky (New Westminster—Burnaby—Maillardville, Lib.): Thank you, Chair.

Mr. Gratton, thank you so much for being here today.

You mentioned some improvements in timelines. I was wondering if you could elaborate on what you've been seeing recently in terms of the improvement of timelines.

Pierre Gratton: The more recent projects that have been entering the assessment process are being better tailored. Tailoring has always been a big issue for us. It means focusing on issues that are unique to a project and not asking for information about every imaginable feature, many of which are common from one mine to the next. We have often questioned why the agency would need this information yet again when it knows from experience what it's looking at.

We have started to see that tailoring in the last couple of years. It took a while. It was one of the promises of the original act, and we didn't see it materialize until the last couple of years. As a result of the tailoring and the agreements between jurisdictions, we are seeing improvements in efficiency.

There's a promise, particularly with the new legislation before Parliament, that we will get to permitting decisions faster. We're hopeful that this will also be the case. Sometimes, such as for a Fisheries Act authorization, it can take two or two and a half years. That's after your impact assessment. If that can be reduced, that will also make a big difference.

Jake Sawatzky: Of course, time is of the essence when you're talking about these large projects.

You also mentioned flow-through shares in the context of mineral exploration. Could you explain to the committee what flow-through shares are, how they work and how mineral exploration activities will create more jobs and strengthen reliable supply chains?

Pierre Gratton: Flow-through shares have been a mechanism for a long time, and for the last 20-some years there has been the METC, or the mineral exploration tax credit. What happens is that a junior exploration company that needs to raise money because they don't have revenue of their own will go to the market and say that they need \$3 million to do their next fieldwork. Investors will invest in that project, and in return, they get a credit from the federal government—a tax credit—and possibly from the provincial government as well. Some provinces have supplementary credits and some don't. That's what lures in the investors, and it allows exploration companies to compete against Bitcoin, AI or the things that are dominating risk capital at any given time. Then the explorers have that money, and they're able to do their fieldwork. They're able to employ northerners and indigenous people and hopefully find the next generation of mines that our pipeline needs.

The METC was first established by the government of Jean Chrétien. It's been renewed every year since. Once, under a previous government, it was renewed for five years, and we were delighted, but usually it's an annual renewal. It expires in March 2027. It's not the subject of this bill, but we're certainly hopeful that the government will renew it once again, preferably for another five years.

Thanks for giving me the opportunity to say that.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Jake Sawatzky: Yes, of course.

Chair, how much time do I have left?

The Chair: You have two minutes.

Jake Sawatzky: Thank you very much.

My next questions are for Mr. Fair.

I was reading Prosper Canada's news release following the release of budget 2025. Your CEO, Elizabeth Mulholland, said, "As more and more families struggle to make ends meet, we welcome these measures to ensure the most vulnerable are able to access critical income benefits and accompanying commitments to reduce bank fees and better protect financial consumers."

Could you please expand on the measures in Bill C-31 that are aimed at reducing bank fees and strengthening consumer protections, and the impact you expect these measures to have on Canadians?

• (1245)

Adam Fair: I think there are a few things she was commenting on in terms of this particular bill. Our focus has been on automatic tax filing. There is a cost component to this for individuals who don't have access to free volunteer income tax filing support in their communities. They often have to pay a significant amount of money out of pocket to cover those costs. That is often cost-prohibitive for individuals, so anything that simplifies filing, deemed filing, reduces costs for households at a time when they need every dollar.

Jake Sawatzky: Absolutely.

In your opening remarks, you also mentioned some of your main goals: enabling ongoing eligibility, having timely access to benefits, making help and correction accessible, and expanding eligibility

and working with provinces and territories. In our last 20 seconds, maybe you could briefly speak to expanding eligibility and working with provinces and territories.

Adam Fair: The provinces and the feds have all of the data between them that they need to figure out who's not filing. Previously, we worked with Ontario. They can overlap their social assistance roles with filing data to see who's missing out. A single mother, for example, who's not—

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

Thank you, Mr. Sawatzky.

[Translation]

We will now continue with Mr. Garon for six minutes.

Jean-Denis Garon: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I would have been happy to give Mr. Sawatzky some time, but I've noticed that the Liberals never want to ask questions about reforming the pesticide control regime, except when they're talking to lobbyists from the pesticide industry. I would feel bad if Mr. Priori got bored with us today. So I'll ask him a question.

Mr. Priori, we saw the Driscoll's scandal recently. We saw what happened. I would like you to tell us about the registration process for chlorpyrifos—I wrote it down; I didn't memorize it—in Canada. That was the pesticide in question. I'd like you to explain to us what happened with this product. Why is it relevant for committee members to know this, given the changes proposed by Bill C-31? It's a long story, but we'd like to hear the short version.

What happened with that product?

Pascal Priori: Thank you for allowing me to speak.

This is very interesting, as the case of chlorpyrifos is emblematic of the shortcomings in the pesticide regulatory framework and the risks it poses to the public health of all Canadians.

Chlorpyrifos is a neurotoxic pesticide that has been in use for a long time. There were early scientific warnings, particularly in the United States, which began to restrict its use. It was only during its re-evaluation that it was finally banned in Canada. This is a perfect example of how re-evaluation is an essential step in analyzing the data. We're talking about a substance that was commonly found on all citrus fruits and on many other fruits, including in Canada—a substance that is neurotoxic and poses risks to brain development, particularly in children. This is well documented.

Why did Canada wait so long to ban this product, and even did so after the United States? It's really—

Jean-Denis Garon: Wait a second. You just said something that interests me. Pesticide lobbyists came to see us and told us that our control regime was terrible. We know that's not true, and you don't have to comment on any of that. However, they said that Europe had a precautionary principle that meant that we were almost like them and never authorized anything.

Are you telling me that Donald Trump's United States has exercised better control than Canada and that, compared to the United States, with what's before us, we'll sink even deeper? Did I understand that correctly?

Pascal Priori: Indeed, the United States has been more proactive than Canada when it comes to certain active ingredients. Canada has always lagged behind the United States. Unfortunately, with Trump's changes and the massive deregulation he is implementing, there is reason to fear that Canada will fall even further behind. The problem is that, in Canada, we don't have a legal system that protects people as much as it does in the United States. In the United States, Bayer has paid over \$7 billion in settlement agreements to victims with blood cancers linked to the use of Roundup.

Here, the amount is zero, for now. How much money has been paid? Not a single penny. How much money is ultimately lost to the Canadian health care system? Companies are willing to pay. Bayer has budgeted for that, and it's part of its financial report.

Jean-Denis Garon: Basically, Canada is an open bar for these pesticide companies.

You said something in your opening remarks that struck me. You know, the Prime Minister of Canada, Mr. Carney, went to Europe recently. He went there with the Minister of Finance, saying that he wanted to be an associate member of the European Union, increase trade, open borders and boost bilateral trade.

We know that agriculture is central to our identity. It may be the most important industry in Canada. It's what feeds us. I'm the member for Mirabel, and I interact with farmers every day.

I'd like to understand what you're telling me. With the standards we have—which are getting worse compared to European standards—here's what could happen: Europeans will send us tonnes of safe products, but when they see Canadian products, they'll say they don't want our junk. Ultimately, we are potentially harming our agricultural producers here at home when it comes to international trade. Have I understood that correctly?

• (1250)

Pascal Priori: Yes, the harm is real, and it has already been demonstrated in the cases of wheat and lentils. Canadian exports are currently at risk from sanitary measures imposed by the European Union that are justified based on scientific data. So that's really it: There is a risk for agriculture. The primary risk that worries us concerns the farmers—the people who produce the food in Canada. They trust Health Canada to approve the use of certain products, but when they realize years later that they're sick and that they've been misinformed, that's the dismay we face on a fairly regular basis.

Jean-Denis Garon: In my own riding, I know a number of farmers who have developed very rare forms of cancer. Obviously, it's not always easy to establish a causal link, but I know of some cas-

es. This bill will give the Minister of Health a significant degree of discretion. I know that she has a department behind her, but, at the end of the day, the Minister of Health will personally have significant discretion over the process. I looked at the Minister of Health's résumé, and she knows nothing about this—absolutely nothing. Is there anything in the legislation that requires the Minister of Health to have even a basic understanding of science or health before she makes a decision, especially in the case of a minister who attends CropLife parties in her spare time?

Pascal Priori: Yes, that is our concern. The proposal in Bill C-31 replaces a mandatory re-evaluation with an assessment that is not defined at all and is not tied to any definition in the act, which is otherwise quite well structured. Thus, a discretionary framework is being created, and the authorization of more than half of the pesticides may be extended without even a serious analysis of the scientific data.

Jean-Denis Garon: So we're potentially putting the health of Canadians at risk.

Pascal Priori: Oh, yes.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Garon. Thank you, Mr. Priori.

[English]

We'll continue now with Ms. Jansen for five minutes.

Tamara Jansen: Mr. Gratton, I have a question for you. Of the mining projects you mentioned that have been recently announced, how many were already in development before the election of March 2025?

Pierre Gratton: I didn't announce any projects. What do you mean?

Tamara Jansen: You mentioned just now the amazing projects that are going forward.

Pierre Gratton: There was a project in Quebec that reached a milestone a year earlier than the previous project that was in the queue.

Tamara Jansen: Of the mining projects you mentioned, how many of them were already in the queue before the election?

Pierre Gratton: Off the top of my head, I don't know.

Tamara Jansen: It's my understanding that it was all of them.

How many had received their principal environmental approvals prior to the election?

Pierre Gratton: I didn't come prepared for these sorts of questions because they are not relevant to the bill.

Tamara Jansen: You were just mentioning that you're seeing a lot of movement, and I'm just wondering—

Pierre Gratton: There are all types of movements you need to take into account. The agency is actually increasingly screening projects out, meaning leaving them entirely to the provinces. There are fewer projects on the way—

Tamara Jansen: Thank you, but I'm really short on time. I have more questions. I'm sorry.

How many mines were already under construction or producing minerals, of the ones you mentioned?

Pierre Gratton: I didn't mention any, so I don't quite know what you're—

Tamara Jansen: Earlier, you mentioned 10 mines that were going forward. You were very impressed with the government's progress. I'm wondering how many of those that are progressing were under construction or producing minerals prior to the election. I think there are quite a few, like Red Chris and so forth. These are amazing projects that are moving forward.

Pierre Gratton: I didn't mention 10 projects, but the McIlvenna Bay project is now in production.

• (1255)

Tamara Jansen: How many received their final investment decisions specifically because of a new federal approval or policy change?

Pierre Gratton: McIlvenna is an example. We're anticipating a positive decision on Red Chris pretty soon, which will be really important for British Columbia and for the copper sector.

Tamara Jansen: How much of Red Chris might also have something to do with the \$500 million that the government has taken of taxpayer money to put towards that? Do you think some of that might be making a difference?

Pierre Gratton: I'm sure the support of the federal government is very welcome.

Tamara Jansen: Can you identify a mining project that was stalled before March 2025—the election—and has since moved into construction because the federal government removed a regulatory obstacle?

Pierre Gratton: I'm sorry, but this is not how the system works. For any project that's having an impact assessment, it's an iterative process, and there are steps along the way. We are seeing, as I said, improvements being made in real time in terms of how the agency is managing projects.

What you need to measure are new projects coming in against the projects that were there before. That is going to take experience, and it's going to take—

Tamara Jansen: A lot of the projects that we are seeing move forward have already been there for quite some time. I think that was my main question.

I understand that there was one—and I forget which one it was, but I think it was Sisson's tungsten and molybdenum project—that got \$8.2 million in federal funding for feasibility studies and basic engineering. That's exactly what you're talking about. Why would they have given them federal funding for that and yet kept it out of Bill C-31? What are your thoughts on that?

Pierre Gratton: I've made the point that the government should not be making this particular amendment to the CEEs. It would be nice if they didn't.

Tamara Jansen: Clearly, they think so too, because they put money towards Sisson.

A larger mining company can afford teams of accountants and tax lawyers. What about a small Canadian exploration company?

Will the changes we see make any difference for them, or will they need a really big team to be able to access all of that?

Pierre Gratton: Which change in particular are you referring to?

Tamara Jansen: It's in Bill C-31. You tell me. I don't know what it takes to get a mining company off the ground, especially a small one.

Pierre Gratton: The matter we're referring to here in the bill that's relevant to us is a tax issue.

Tamara Jansen: Does that help a small mining company?

Pierre Gratton: What the bill is proposing would take away from the ability of a junior exploration company to raise money, and that's our concern, which is why we're asking that it not be done.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Gratton.

Thank you, Ms. Jansen.

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

Ryan Turnbull: Mr. Gratton, I'm going to ask you some questions too, and hopefully help clarify.

I understand the points you made at the outset. I understand the B.C. Supreme Court decision and how it seems inconsistent with the change we're making.

I empathize, and I've heard the feedback that, first of all, flow-through shares work really well in Canada and that exploration costs are able to be financed with that risk capital effectively in Canada—quite effectively, I think. The desire is to somehow scope in the scoping studies on prefeasibility and feasibility. Those expenses are barriers to getting viable projects through the life cycle to the point of development. I also understand that there's that valley of death, and we want to help solve that.

What I want to ask you is whether you are agnostic on which tool we use to help with those costs. If, for example, the federal government were considering some desire to do that through the critical mineral exploration tax credit, would that be another option for doing this that is different from using CEEs? I don't know whether PDAC would disagree with this, but do you really believe it has to be through CEEs and the flow-through shares?

Pierre Gratton: The change would enable junior mining companies to raise more funds through flow-through by being able to include technical studies and feasibility studies, so yes, it would help them get out of the valley of death.

This goes back to the other member's question about the government giving money to Sisson. You can give money to junior exploration companies, but then the government is in the business of picking winners and losers, as opposed to letting the market decide through CEEs and flow-through shares which companies should advance.

Our preference would be to use the tax system itself rather than government handouts. That's not to say that we don't appreciate them, but using the market is a better mechanism.

• (1300)

Ryan Turnbull: I completely agree with that, and I realize that wherever possible, government should not be picking winners and losers. I think that's a good principle.

I see your point about using the tax system, but what I was suggesting is that there are other exploration tax credits that could.... If the costs or expenses you're referring to for scoping studies—prefeasibility and feasibility—were scoped into the expenses for those, would that not be an alternative path to helping with costs to get mines to the development stage?

Pierre Gratton: Yes. If I'm understanding you correctly, I think we're saying the same thing. Without this amendment, if we were respecting the B.C. Supreme Court's decision, junior mining companies would be able to include these expenses as part of their raise when they go to market. They would be eligible as flow-through share expenses. Instead of being able to raise \$3 million for an exploration project, they might be able to raise \$25 million to do their economic and feasibility studies.

Ryan Turnbull: I think we're coming to an agreement here, but I'm saying that this amendment is going to stay. What if the government were to look at the mineral exploration tax credit and critical mineral exploration tax credit? This is not that. This is the Canadian exploration expense. It's a different tax-related policy or tool.

If we were to use the tax credit system to address the gap or concern that you're pointing to, would that not be an alternative path to getting to the same place?

Pierre Gratton: My understanding is that the two are linked. One works off the other. I don't know if there's another way to get there that you're suggesting. Maybe officials at Finance or maybe some tax specialists might know, but my understanding is that the definitions in the CEEs inform what you're able to raise using flow-through shares.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Gratton.

Thank you, Mr. Turnbull.

[Translation]

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

Jean-Denis Garon: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Mr. Priori, I'll follow up on what was said earlier. Could you just remind me what health issues related to pesticides cost the government? Could you repeat the number you gave me at the beginning?

Pascal Priori: Yes, but it's actually just for endocrine disruptors, and it's \$35.8 billion a year. So that's an official estimate.

Jean-Denis Garon: Excellent.

We have a government that talks to us about public finances, about efficiency and about human productivity. We understand that these health issues are a disaster for human productivity. Who's to say that's the government's priority? Today, the government is coming to us with a reform that does the exact opposite when it comes to pesticides.

I get the impression that we have a government that wants to fast-track mining projects and oil projects. You know, these are all things that enable the government to get money quickly. They want

to do it quickly, whereas these health issues unfold over 10, 15, 20 or 25 years, and the consequences are serious. What's more, it's the provinces that end up paying.

Don't you think there's a kind of inconsistency in the government's rhetoric between wanting to be more productive and efficient and saying that it's going to put the health of workers and people in the agricultural sector at risk? What do you think of this type of doublespeak?

Pascal Priori: Indeed, the government is creating long-term debt by not investing in preventive health care. That's our message: We must invest in prevention. It's better for farmers, it's better for exports, it's better for the soil, and ultimately, it's better for the entire supply chain. It's also essential to think from this perspective. Investing in preventive health care yields far greater benefits than investing in other models associated with fossil fuels such as—

• (1305)

Jean-Denis Garon: I'm sorry for interrupting, but I have only about 35 to 40 seconds of speaking time left.

What do you say to CropLife Canada? CropLife representatives came here this week to tell us that their objective, their goal, is simply to protect crops and seeds. You listen to them speak, and it's as if they were the great protectors of the universe.

What do you say to those people?

Pascal Priori: I think we need to be clear: Their goal is to make a profit. Most of them are foreign multinational corporations that are taking advantage of Canadian farmers at the expense of their health. Their goal is not to serve agriculture, and that's normal. We can't blame them for that. They are private companies. They have to make a profit.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Priori.

Thank you, Mr. Garon.

[English]

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

David Bexte (Bow River, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

Thank you, witnesses, for being here today. I really appreciate the opportunity to dig into some of these issues.

I have a quick question for Mr. Priori. Do farmers and agriculturalists in Canada deserve...? Should they be enabled to use crop protection products of some sort?

[Translation]

Pascal Priori: Absolutely, it's essential today, but we must support them to reduce their dependence. This is a task that will take time and commitment on the part of the government.

[English]

David Bexte: I have a very short time, so I'm going to be pretty punchy with this.

I've introduced a bill called the FARM act, which looks to modernize the regime for agricultural products, among other things. It looks to other jurisdictions and assessments that they've made to inform approvals in Canada.

Could this help the circumstance you're talking about where there are products that are not ideal in Canada? If there are products in other jurisdictions, should we improve, lubricate or accelerate the pathway to getting them approved for use in Canada to displace products that maybe aren't ideal?

[Translation]

Pascal Priori: Today, the problem isn't new products that need to be registered; the problem is the overuse of pesticides. We need to use more active ingredients because we're using far too many pesticides, and that creates resistance. So, we need—

[English]

David Bexte: That's a false equivalency, and that's not the question I was asking. I understand the root cause or discussion you're getting at, but that's separate from what I was asking. I appreciate your time. Thank you.

I'm going to turn to Mr. Gratton and this notion of the resource industry at large. There are a bunch of things that have to happen before there's any economic benefit. Could you speak to us about the sequence of exploration, discovery, evaluation and commercialization when the tax measures we're talking about today come into play and about where the gaps are?

Pierre Gratton: Sure.

The very front end of the business is the exploration side. They rely on geological surveys provided by federal and provincial governments that allow them to identify where they want to explore. The majors also explore. For most of the majors—when I say majors, I mean the ones that have operating mines—a lot of the exploration is in and around their mine sites because of—

David Bexte: Brownfield development.

Pierre Gratton: —brownfield development. The best place to look for a new deposit is where your existing one is.

The juniors do a lot of greenfield. They go all over the place, and one in every 1,000 discoveries becomes a mine.

David Bexte: That's a very interesting statistic.

Would it be fair to say that most juniors ultimately then feed into the production stream or the enterprise of the large companies? They get acquired along the way to develop equity.

Pierre Gratton: Agnico Eagle was once a single mine operator and a small company. Now they're Canada's largest. Juniors do become big, but most juniors sell their properties to majors that then develop them.

David Bexte: [Inaudible—Editor], and they're exclusively in that exploration activity.

Pierre Gratton: That's right.

David Bexte: How far do you think we are from where we should be in terms of tax incentivization and regulatory reform?

Pierre Gratton: The measures in the last few years have been very positive. The mega deduction of a couple of weeks ago is another very [Inaudible—Editor]—

David Bexte: On a point of order, the mic isn't on.

Pierre Gratton: Do I have time?

David Bexte: Yes.

Pierre Gratton: There are a couple of gaps. One of them is the very one we've been talking about, which is CEE, or the valley of death. Juniors can't get to the next stage to do the feasibility study and then enter the approval process and move on to construction. That's one area.

The other is that, even with the mega deduction of a couple of weeks ago, for the companies that are most vulnerable to China and are therefore struggling to make a profit, the mega deduction doesn't help, so we still have vulnerability.

Those are the two areas.

● (1310)

David Bexte: I appreciate that.

We have a short period of time. The question, fundamentally, was, how far away are we from where we should be?

Pierre Gratton: Not too far.

David Bexte: That's fair enough.

What is the scale of the opportunity if we get it right?

Pierre Gratton: It's huge.

David Bexte: Is it double, triple or quadruple?

Pierre Gratton: There's tremendous potential across Canada, but we need to get back to where we were, first of all. We need to start building new mines. We need to start opening new smelters.

David Bexte: We need to start exploring.

Pierre Gratton: We have a long way to go, because we have declined over the last 25 to 30 years while China was growing.

David Bexte: Will it take 25 to 30 years to get back to that?

Pierre Gratton: No, because we have a base to build on and because we are still a strong mining nation. We didn't lose it all, but we do—

David Bexte: It's only if we get the regulations and incentives right.

Pierre Gratton: That's right.

David Bexte: Thank you very much.

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

We will conclude this hour with Dr. Martin for five minutes.

Danielle Martin: Thank you.

I have some questions for our friends Ms. Batstone and Mr. MacLennan.

What you're proposing is an interesting proposal, and as I understand it, it links to two problems. The first is the absence of financial planning, probably for many Canadians in general but specifically for low-income Canadians. Of course, it's hard to make a plan when the future feels very uncertain. The second is saving, which is really hard to do when you're having trouble making ends meet. I hear that you're trying to bring forward solutions to both of those problems.

I wonder if you could speak about the way in which jobs and the economy are changing that would require us to think about this. The most well-used mechanism for forced saving is the Canada pension plan. As we see the rise of the gig economy and the number of people in this country—young people, newcomers, all kinds of people—who are working on contracts, working short-term and moving between jobs, increasingly there are people who will never really have access to a public pension or any pension. In my area of health care, people in that category also don't have access to benefits, so employer-based health insurance, for example, that covers people's medications and other essential services also falls through the cracks.

Could you speak about that trend? Do you think what you are proposing addresses it, and does this speak to a way that government needs to think differently about the kinds of services we support people with in this new economy?

Tashia Batstone: That's a great question.

For me, what we're proposing transitions from when a difficult situation exists to giving somebody a cash outflow to help them through that difficult situation, whether that's a loss of employment or a health care issue. It's shifting the narrative to one that's more about how to prepare for those challenges in advance.

I take your point about saving. It is very difficult for a young person today to save, but it is possible with the right support and the right guidance. That's what a lot of our young people are missing today, and we feel that a financial planner can provide an opportunity to come in and have a conversation about their financial management. It's a fundamental competency that financial planners are taught to deliver to their clients, and we think that can make a real difference.

It comes down to the notion of giving somebody a fish versus teaching somebody how to fish. What we're proposing is the element of building up long-term financial resilience so that when life circumstances hit, whether that's an economic hit or a health care issue, they are prepared to manage them.

Craig MacLennan: To your point about the gig economy and the changing nature of work, it's no longer about someone starting a

career and staying in it for 40 years. What we're proposing to do, in times that are uncertain and unclear globally, domestically and in households, and as people engage with work and different types of work, is to help them build up their capacity to understand how to make good financial decisions to be able to navigate future shocks and uncertainty.

It's interesting. Every time we ask consumers about this, as Tashia touched on in her remarks, the highest priority and the highest likelihood of participating is from 18- to 35-year-olds.

• (1315)

Danielle Martin: Thank you. I apologize for cutting you off. That was helpful, but I want to make sure I ask one question of Mr. Fair before I run out of time.

Mr. Fair, I heard you say that you feel that deemed filing is essential. I think it's important for us to hear that at this committee. I want to be clear that it seems to me that of all your recommendations, the only one that is not already possible within the existing wording is the one around missed returns in the last three years.

Am I correct in understanding that's the only one of your recommendations that is not in the current wording? If you need to send us an answer to that in writing, that would be okay too, because I'm out of time.

The Chair: Give a very brief response in five seconds.

Adam Fair: The other one is that I think there's a risk in benefit cut-off for the time in the legislation right now—needing 45 days after filing and then 90—

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Fair. I'm sorry.

Thank you, Dr. Martin.

On behalf of the committee, I would like to thank all of our witnesses for their time and contributions today.

Colleagues, before I let you go, I have a couple of housekeeping reminders.

The first one is that you would have all received during the last break a budget for the study of Bill C-31. Do I have approval from the committee to approve the budget?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

[English]

There are two final reminders. First, amendments to Bill C-31 are due at noon on October 22. Second, we will be meeting on Monday, October 19, and Tuesday, October 20, and we'll be hearing from the remaining witnesses, who are the ministers.

With that, I wish everybody a very happy Thanksgiving. See you soon.

The committee is adjourned.

Published under the authority of the Speaker of
the House of Commons

SPEAKER'S PERMISSION

The proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees are hereby made available to provide greater public access. The parliamentary privilege of the House of Commons to control the publication and broadcast of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees is nonetheless reserved. All copyrights therein are also reserved.

Reproduction of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees, in whole or in part and in any medium, is hereby permitted provided that the reproduction is accurate and is not presented as official. This permission does not extend to reproduction, distribution or use for commercial purpose of financial gain. Reproduction or use outside this permission or without authorization may be treated as copyright infringement in accordance with the Copyright Act. Authorization may be obtained on written application to the Office of the Speaker of the House of Commons.

Reproduction in accordance with this permission does not constitute publication under the authority of the House of Commons. The absolute privilege that applies to the proceedings of the House of Commons does not extend to these permitted reproductions. Where a reproduction includes briefs to a committee of the House of Commons, authorization for reproduction may be required from the authors in accordance with the Copyright Act.

Nothing in this permission abrogates or derogates from the privileges, powers, immunities and rights of the House of Commons and its committees. For greater certainty, this permission does not affect the prohibition against impeaching or questioning the proceedings of the House of Commons in courts or otherwise. The House of Commons retains the right and privilege to find users in contempt of Parliament if a reproduction or use is not in accordance with this permission.

Also available on the House of Commons website at the following address: <https://www.ourcommons.ca>

Publié en conformité de l'autorité
du Président de la Chambre des communes

PERMISSION DU PRÉSIDENT

Les délibérations de la Chambre des communes et de ses comités sont mises à la disposition du public pour mieux le renseigner. La Chambre conserve néanmoins son privilège parlementaire de contrôler la publication et la diffusion des délibérations et elle possède tous les droits d'auteur sur celles-ci.

Il est permis de reproduire les délibérations de la Chambre et de ses comités, en tout ou en partie, sur n'importe quel support, pourvu que la reproduction soit exacte et qu'elle ne soit pas présentée comme version officielle. Il n'est toutefois pas permis de reproduire, de distribuer ou d'utiliser les délibérations à des fins commerciales visant la réalisation d'un profit financier. Toute reproduction ou utilisation non permise ou non formellement autorisée peut être considérée comme une violation du droit d'auteur aux termes de la Loi sur le droit d'auteur. Une autorisation formelle peut être obtenue sur présentation d'une demande écrite au Bureau du Président de la Chambre des communes.

La reproduction conforme à la présente permission ne constitue pas une publication sous l'autorité de la Chambre. Le privilège absolu qui s'applique aux délibérations de la Chambre ne s'étend pas aux reproductions permises. Lorsqu'une reproduction comprend des mémoires présentés à un comité de la Chambre, il peut être nécessaire d'obtenir de leurs auteurs l'autorisation de les reproduire, conformément à la Loi sur le droit d'auteur.

La présente permission ne porte pas atteinte aux privilèges, pouvoirs, immunités et droits de la Chambre et de ses comités. Il est entendu que cette permission ne touche pas l'interdiction de contester ou de mettre en cause les délibérations de la Chambre devant les tribunaux ou autrement. La Chambre conserve le droit et le privilège de déclarer l'utilisateur coupable d'outrage au Parlement lorsque la reproduction ou l'utilisation n'est pas conforme à la présente permission.

Aussi disponible sur le site Web de la Chambre des communes à l'adresse suivante :
<https://www.noscommunes.ca>