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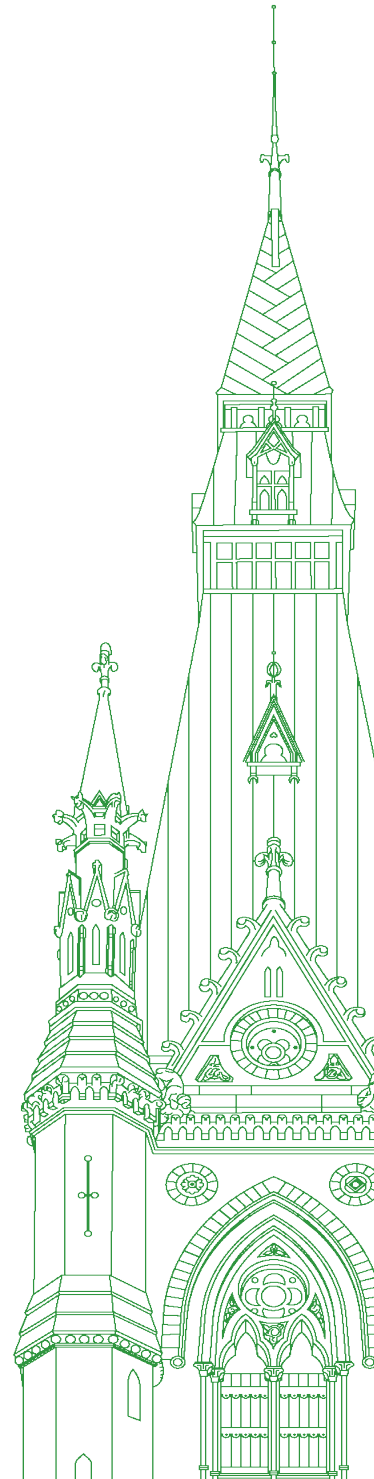
Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities

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Chair: Robert Morrissey



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• (1100)

[English]

The Chair (Robert Morrissey (Egmont, Lib.)): I call the meeting to order.

Welcome to meeting number 46 of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities. Pursuant to the order of reference received on Wednesday, September 23, 2026, the committee is meeting on Bill C-266, an act to establish a national framework respecting skilled trades and labour mobility.

Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format, meaning that some people are participating in the room and some are participating virtually, pursuant to the Standing Orders of the House.

Before we begin, I have a few notes.

To those of you in the room, please ensure that your devices are on silent mode and please refrain from tapping on the microphone boom. This is for the benefit and protection of the translators.

You also have the option of choosing to participate in today's meeting in the official language of your choice. Please ensure that you're on the right channel if you require interpretation in the room. If you're appearing virtually, click on the globe icon at the bottom of your Surface and choose the official language of your choice. If there is an interruption in translation services, please get my attention. We'll suspend while they are being corrected.

As a reminder to all—you are well aware, being seasoned members of this committee—please direct all questions through me, the chair. Wait until I recognize you by name before proceeding and we'll get along fabulously.

I would like to now welcome our witness today on Bill C-266, and congratulate MP Parm Bains on his private member's bill.

Mr. Bains, you will have five minutes for your opening statement. You have the floor.

Parm Bains (Richmond East—Steveston, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[Translation]

Good morning.

[English]

This is Bill C-266. When I received the opportunity to introduce a private member's bill, my first one in the House, I knew immedi-

ately that I wanted to champion something that could make a real difference for skilled trades workers across Canada.

As a former aircraft maintenance engineer, I have seen first-hand the dedication, expertise and hard work that tradespeople bring to their professions every single day. I've also witnessed the frustrations they face when workplace circumstances change unexpectedly, when economic opportunities arise in another province or when bureaucratic barriers make it difficult to take their skills where they are needed most.

My own experience, combined with countless conversations with trades workers, apprentices, young professionals, employers and industry leaders, many of whom are family, friends and colleagues, inspired me to introduce Bill C-266, an act to establish a national framework respecting skilled trades and labour mobility.

At the core of this bill, it's about solving a problem that has existed for far too long. Since tabling this legislation, I've met with trade associations, unions, employers, industry organizations and educational institutions from every region of our country. Despite representing different sectors and perspectives, they consistently identify the same challenge: Canada needs a more streamlined, coordinated and harmonized approach to recognizing skilled trades credentials across provinces and territories.

Today, too many workers encounter unnecessary hurdles when pursuing opportunities outside their home jurisdiction. These barriers limit career growth, create inefficiencies for employers and contribute to labour shortages that impact communities and industries from coast to coast to coast.

At a time when Canada urgently needs skilled trades workers to build homes, modernize infrastructure, strengthen supply chains and drive economic growth, we cannot afford a system that prevents qualified Canadians from putting their skills to work where they are needed most. That's why support for Bill C-266 has continued to grow.

Polytechnics Canada has endorsed this effort, recognizing that improving harmonization and credential recognition will help workers move more freely to meet labour demands across the country. Their support reflects a broader understanding that labour mobility is not simply a workforce issue. It's an economic imperative.

As someone who spent years working in aerospace, I'm also encouraged by the support of the executive director of the B.C. Aviation Council, who has described Bill C-266 as a positive step toward improving labour mobility in Canada. The council is now engaging with counterpart organizations across the country, further demonstrating that the need for action extends across multiple sectors of our economy.

Importantly, this bill recognizes that even where national standards already exist, opportunities remain to improve consistency and portability. The British Columbia Institute of Technology, BCIT, in my hometown of Richmond, has highlighted that while trades such as instrumentation and control technicians are nationally harmonized through the Red Seal program, elements of apprenticeship governance and implementation still vary across jurisdictions. This bill presents an opportunity by encouraging greater collaboration among governments, educational institutions, apprenticeship authorities, employers and labour organizations. We can develop a framework that respects provincial and territorial responsibilities, while making it easier for Canadians to build careers wherever opportunity calls.

The goal is not uniformity for its own sake. The goal is to create a system that maintains excellence, responds to regional economic needs and gives workers confidence that their qualifications will be recognized across Canada. The unions I spoke with, including CUPE and Unifor, have been broadly supportive because they see the potential benefits for workers. They have also raised an important concern, one that I share wholeheartedly. Enhanced mobility must never come at the expense of wages, safety, training quality or worker protections.

Let me be absolutely clear: Bill C-266 is not about lowering standards. It's about strengthening and harmonizing standards while removing unnecessary barriers. It's about ensuring that workers can pursue opportunities with confidence and employers can access the skilled talent they need without compromising quality and safety.

• (1105)

Canada's future depends on our ability to build. We need skilled workers to construct homes, maintain critical infrastructure, power our economy, support major projects and strengthen our country's competitiveness. We cannot fully unlock our economic potential if qualified tradespeople face obstacles when moving from one province or territory to another.

That's why the Government of Canada's team Canada strong skilled trades strategy is such an important step forward. Through investments of up to \$6 billion over five years, including support for apprenticeship training, recruitment and retention, Canada is making significant investments in the next generation of skilled workers, and Bill C-266 complements these efforts.

Thank you.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Bains.

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

[English]

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

Thank you, Mr. Bains, for being here.

The objectives of the bill are very good, and they are ones we agree with and have certainly been talking about for a very long time.

Does this bill give the government any new powers?

Parm Bains: Does it give the government any new powers?

I think, ultimately, what the bill would do is.... If you look at something the BCIT mentioned—

Garnett Genuis: It's a simple question. I'll ask you fairly simple and short questions, if that's okay.

Does the bill provide the government with the power to do anything that it's not presently able to do?

Parm Bains: Yes. It allows the government to continue to pursue stronger governance instrumentation of the regulations and standards of many of the Red Seal programs and other programs that are out there that tradespeople have. If you look at—

• (1110)

Garnett Genuis: Okay, but you started your response by saying, "It allows the government to continue". My question is a simple question: Does this bill give the government any new powers?

Parm Bains: It does, because it—

Garnett Genuis: What will the Government of Canada be able to do after this bill passes that it's not presently able to do?

Parm Bains: The government will.... With regard to the internal trade barriers we have, for example, it will allow them to streamline and harmonize across all provinces. That work needs to be done, and—

Garnett Genuis: You're saying that this bill provides the government with new legal authority to address trade barriers. Is that what you're saying?

Parm Bains: Yes.

Garnett Genuis: Okay.

What part or section of the bill can you point me to that provides the government with that new authority? I don't actually see in the bill at all what you're saying, so tell me where it says that the government has new legal authority to address trade barriers.

Parm Bains: If you look at the work that's being done right now—

Garnett Genuis: I'm sorry. The question is this: Where in the bill is the government given new legal authorities to address issues around trade barriers?

Parm Bains: I would have to double-check where exactly in the bill I can point to.

Garnett Genuis: Okay. You're sure that the bill provides the government with new legal authority to address trade barriers, but you're not sure where it is in the bill. Is that right?

Parm Bains: I can provide that information to you in writing after.

Garnett Genuis: Okay.

I'll have another round later, because I've read the bill—I've been through it several times—and I don't see any evidence that it provides the government with new powers whatsoever.

Would the minister have been able to create a framework without this bill? If the bill had not been put forward, would the minister have been able to do a framework absent that?

Parm Bains: I think what this bill ultimately does is formalize that work. When we are asking provinces to harmonize the standards across the country, this bill gives the government more opportunity to make sure that it's a framework that each province can follow. It allows for more accountability and reporting.

Garnett Genuis: Okay.

Could the minister not simply convene tomorrow a meeting of federal and provincial leaders and say, "I would like to create a framework," and do all of the things that are in the bill? Could the minister not do it?

Parm Bains: The minister could, but this is the opportunity that's actually formalizing that work. This bill formalizes that work. He could say that. However, the fact that now we've all voted—you voted on it, or this side of the House has voted on it.... This actually formalizes it, adds the accountability, adds reporting structures to it and allows for that work to not only continue but also come back in a way where.... There are measures in here that tell each jurisdiction to ensure that they're reporting within a year.

Garnett Genuis: That's right. However, I guess the point—and you've agreed—is that, with regard to the framework, the minister does have the power to do those things anyway.

Suppose this bill passed and the minister either didn't comply with the framework in general or missed one of the timelines set out. What are the consequences for a minister or for the government if some part of this new law is not followed? What are the consequences?

Parm Bains: The consequences if it's not followed would be that you have to potentially request an extension if the work is not done. If the work needs to be completed and the reporting and the harmonization across the jurisdictions, whether that's language issues in

certain jurisdictions or other standards.... If the work is not complete, there's potentially an opportunity for the minister to ask for an extension.

Garnett Genuis: Right now, if this bill.... Before this bill passes, the minister can create a framework. After this bill passes, the minister must create a framework, but if the minister does not comply with the timelines, there are no consequences. Is that correct?

Parm Bains: The consequences have not been outlined in this.

Garnett Genuis: If the consequences are not in the bill, then there are no consequences.

Do you think the minister should implement this framework now, instead of waiting for the bill to pass first? Do you think it would be better if the minister just started this work tomorrow, instead of waiting for it to go all the way through the process?

• (1115)

Parm Bains: Repeat that, please. Do I think the minister should start the work right now?

Garnett Genuis: Do you think the minister should do this framework now, instead of waiting for the bill to pass?

Parm Bains: I think this work is extremely important. We haven't done this for over 30 years, so if we look at.... If all of the provinces have come online to talk about removing internal trade barriers and the federal government trade barriers have been removed—

Garnett Genuis: It's a simple question. Would you like the minister to do this work now?

The Chair: Thank you. You're well over your time. A member can follow up on that.

[Translation]

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

Louis Villeneuve (Brome—Missisquoi, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Good morning, Mr. Bains.

Parm Bains: Good morning.

Louis Villeneuve: Welcome. Thank you for being here this morning and for bringing this bill forward.

In your opening remarks, you said that our development depends on our ability to build. Your bill appears designed to help achieve that objective.

You talked a lot about meeting with tradespeople and professional peers. What can you tell Canadians about their thoughts on what the government is doing about labour mobility right now?

[English]

Parm Bains: At this point, they understand that some work is being done and they're working.... As you know, many of the institutions are under the jurisdiction of each province. They understand that the work is being done. However, they're hopeful that the work is being done in a way whereby there are actual deadlines so that it can be done quicker.

They're encouraged by the fact that there are other measures being taken to support skilled trades across the country. For example, I spoke about the British Columbia Institute of Technology. They talked about how it may appear on paper that certain harmonization and standards are being done, but then there's certain governance of those trades that are not being harmonized. There's more work that needs to be done.

[Translation]

Louis Villeneuve: Thank you.

You may have somewhat answered my next question.

More broadly, what is currently preventing labour mobility in Canada?

[English]

Parm Bains: What prevents workers from having mobility at this time is, again, if you look at each province, they may have some standards, even minor ones, that they view differently when they govern a Red Seal profession or another skilled trade. However, certain standards may be lower in certain provinces. I heard from a union member specifically that we can't have a race to the bottom when it comes to certain standards.

It would be a lot of technical work to go through rules and regulations for whichever trade we're talking about, whether it's avionics or.... Some specific trades fall under Transport Canada regulations, while others fall under other areas. The work that needs to be done is to make sure that in every single province we find the gold standard, and every province then streamlines it to that level.

• (1120)

[Translation]

Louis Villeneuve: Thank you, Mr. Bains.

Mr. Chair, can I give the rest of my time to Mr. Joseph? He has a question.

The Chair: Yes.

Mr. Joseph, you have the floor for two minutes.

Natilien Joseph (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Good afternoon, Mr. Bains. Congratulations on your bill. I was the first to rise in the House yesterday to support it. It was quite an honour.

Mr. Bains, as you know, French is at the heart of our identity in Quebec. It's also the language of work on our construction sites. How can Bill C-266 promote labour mobility across Canada while ensuring that French remains fully respected and valued as a language of work in Quebec's construction industry?

[English]

Parm Bains: That's exactly why a bill of this nature should be implemented, because we have two official languages in the country. If we're looking at major projects that we've introduced as a country and we need to ensure that we can actually build those, this would allow that work to happen. Again, it's a harmonizing and streamlining not only of governance standards, industry standards and health and safety standards, but also of the language. That is an important part of why we should have something like this.

We may look at a province like British Columbia, where a national transmission line has been introduced to electrify not only homes but also the large industries that are in northern British Columbia. Do we have enough people in the skilled trades to meet the demands of building those things? We may not. We would have to look to Quebec and other regions across the country where maybe more French-speaking skilled trades workers are coming from. They would need to help us build in British Columbia, which is primarily an English-speaking province. That is a key piece. If they're looking at their log books and looking at the other things they're going to be working on, and the health and safety of the actual occupational—

The Chair: Thank you. We're a little over time.

[Translation]

Ms. Larouche, you have the floor for six minutes.

Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

First of all, I would like to congratulate Mr. Bains on introducing his bill. Having tabled a private member's bill myself, I know it's quite a process. He's here to advocate for his bill today knowing that some people are for it and others are against it, and I want to commend him for doing so. In a democracy, we have to be able to defend a point of view on an issue that matters to us, but we also have to be receptive to feedback, whether favourable or not. If everyone's approach is constructive, I think we can have some good discussions.

Mr. Bains, when you were coming up with your bill, did you start by holding consultations? Workforce training falls exclusively within Quebec's jurisdiction under the Canada-Quebec Labour Market Agreement in Principle, which was signed in 1997 by Lucien Bouchard, then Premier of Quebec, and Jean Chrétien, who was Prime Minister of Canada.

[English]

Parm Bains: I didn't hear the question. Did I miss something there? It ended at Jean Chrétien.

[Translation]

Andréanne Larouche: In your bill, did you take into account the Canada-Quebec Labour Market Agreement in Principle, which was signed in 1997 by Lucien Bouchard, then Premier of Quebec, and Jean Chrétien, then Prime Minister of Canada?

• (1125)

[English]

Parm Bains: I did not reflect back on the 1997 consultation. However, if we look at Quebec, at this time it is in agreement with removing internal trade barriers. We are working across the country. The government is working across the country with all provinces.

On the consultation, I myself spoke to institutions and Polytechnics Canada and talked about the language pieces that you may be concerned about. As I mentioned to my colleague on this side, if there are projects that are taking place in other jurisdictions, one of the key pieces of doing this work is to respect the language and ensure that if any workers are moving across different work sites across the country, the French language is available to them. It also ensures that all the information in terms of health occupation regulations and standards is available to them in both languages.

[Translation]

Andréanne Larouche: In fact, when the bill was introduced, Quebec's labour minister, Jean Boulet, stood firm on protecting Quebec's exclusive jurisdiction over labour law, training and the regulation of trades. In his view, the bill raises concerns about jurisdiction and Quebec's authority, so he wants to protect the Quebec model. He wants Quebec to have its own regulatory bodies, such as the Commission de la construction du Québec, the CCQ, and the Commission des normes, de l'équité, de la santé et de la sécurité du travail, the CNESST.

The Government of Quebec also opposes any attempt by the federal government to interfere and impose a single national framework. For Jean Boulet, the issue is regulatory autonomy. He says that workforce management and skills assessment criteria fall exclusively within provincial jurisdiction. The creation of a national framework is perceived as an encroachment on Quebec's jurisdiction. Conditional mobility is another issue. Quebec is certainly open to attracting talent, but it insists that it be done in accordance with Quebec's professional qualification and French-language standards.

I know you've said there's no issue here and that both official languages will be respected. However, these concerns were raised.

How did you respond to them?

[English]

Parm Bains: I think that's a misrepresentation. There's no encroachment. If you look at Quebec, currently they're a partner in the internal trade process of removing barriers. The purpose of the bill, as it clearly outlines, is to consult. Each province and academic institution from each province and each jurisdiction would be involved in this process.

It's not an encroachment in any way. It's a consultation. It's work that will be done to ensure that the harmonization and the standards

are being met. As I mentioned in my previous answers, it's ultimately to reach a stronger standard. If certain provinces may have potentially lower standards and Quebec is not happy with the fact that they're not meeting a higher standard, then those consultations and that harmonization work would need to take place.

[Translation]

Andréanne Larouche: Mr. Bains, despite what you're telling me, the Government of Quebec has criticized these encroachments and reminded the federal government that workforce training is a provincial jurisdiction and that Quebec has its own programs.

I think my six minutes are up, but that's okay. I'll have another turn, Mr. Bains.

Thank you.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Madame Larouche.

We will now go to Ms. Falk for five minutes.

Rosemarie Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster—Meadow Lake, CPC): Thank you very much, Chair.

Thank you, MP Bains. I know that private members' bills are a lot of work. Thank you for taking the time and being here to answer our questions.

I just want to follow up on where my colleague left off. We know that Canada needs more people entering the skilled trades. Workers need to be able to move where the work is and where the jobs are. Labour mobility is an important part of addressing our skilled trades and workforce needs. That's something that this committee has heard repeatedly, not only in this Parliament but I would say over the last few parliaments. We've heard that this is a necessity.

You have identified a number of barriers facing skilled trades workers in this legislation, including challenges with credential recognition and labour mobility. Why did you feel it was necessary to bring forward legislation to address these issues now?

• (1130)

Parm Bains: I think, in a way, it's an easy answer. If you look at this government's approach to what we need to do at this time to produce more energy, build more infrastructure and strengthen our supply chains, we need to also work really hard on training and making—

Rosemarie Falk: Why now? This committee has heard these concerns for the past three.... Well, ever since I've been here we've heard these concerns at this committee. I'm just wondering why it now takes a private member, such as you, to bring it forward to get the government to take it as an important issue.

Parm Bains: It's an interesting question. Why didn't we do it 30 years ago? I mean, I'm bringing this forward because—

Rosemarie Falk: I know, but I'm not saying 30 years ago; I'm saying five years ago. We went through COVID. COVID definitely shifted things. Canadians felt the need to be able to manufacture here and to have workers go where they needed to go, so I'm just wondering—why now? I'm just trying to understand. Why now? I'm not referencing 30 years ago. I don't want that to be misunderstood. You see it as important, but why hasn't the government taken the initiative?

Parm Bains: Well, I think the government has. This is a complementary bill that pinpoints one area, looking at skilled trades specifically. The government, in 1995, had the agreement on internal trade, which is now the Canadian Free Trade Agreement. Then our government took the step to reduce internal trade barriers by 100%.

How can we also complement the work that the government's doing? We need to do more. We have to continue to do more. This bill, then, does a little more. If we're going to do that, we need the people to do it, so this allows for that.

Rosemarie Falk: This bill doesn't actually remove those barriers, though. It directs the government to consult, develop a framework and then make recommendations on how those barriers could be addressed. If there's already knowledge of these barriers, why are we making a framework and consulting more instead of just getting it done?

Parm Bains: It's because we have to respect every jurisdiction. If we look at—

Rosemarie Falk: Are you saying, though, that the government hasn't been consulting on this?

Parm Bains: No. The government has begun some work. If you look at, as I mentioned, reducing the internal trade barriers by 100%, that's work. I'm picking a specific area: the Canadians who will support that work. That means we need people, skilled trades workers, to continue to support that work.

Then, as you mentioned, why would we consult? Why would we not just do this? I'm sure that our friends from Quebec could look at that and say why—

Rosemarie Falk: I just expect the government's always doing that work and not taking a break from that.

I think my time's running out, so I have just one last thing. Subclause 3(2) of the bill requires, at least, nine months of consultation. Given that we know these barriers have already existed for years—we've heard it in this committee, and I'm pretty sure we've even had reports go to the House addressing these concerns—why does the government need another consultation process before addressing this? That's what I'm struggling with.

Parm Bains: It's because it formalizes that work. I think that if you look at what the bill does, it allows for having some accountability added to it. It strengthens the work. It tells—

Rosemarie Falk: What happens if the consultation isn't finished within that time? I think you've mentioned to my colleague that there isn't anything formally in the bill to hold that accountability to a timeline, so what are the accountability measures, then, that would—

Parm Bains: There have been previous bills.... That could apply to every private member's bill—

Rosemarie Falk: Yes, and it should, absolutely. We need to make sure that we are accountable to the taxpayers.

Thank you, Chair.

The Chair: Madame Falk, your time is over.

[Translation]

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

Annie Koutrakis (Vimy, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I will be sharing my time with my colleague, Ms. Harrison.

[English]

Thank you, Mr. Bains, for bringing this private member's bill forward. As you mentioned in your opening remarks and in an answer to one of our colleagues, it's been 30 years in the making. I know that a lot of work is being done already to ensure that we don't duplicate efforts.

As you know, provinces and territories are the ones that predominantly deal with skilled trades certification. From the conversations you've had with workers, employers and training institutions, where are the gaps that require greater federal leadership? What would this bill allow us to accomplish that we aren't accomplishing today? Where are the gaps? What are you hearing from workers in your riding and from stakeholders you have spoken with?

• (1135)

Parm Bains: Thank you for the question.

The biggest key gaps are in many of the standards. Many—up to 54 Red Seal skilled trades—are, let's say, compliant across different jurisdictions. However, the governance of them and the implementation of them still vary in every jurisdiction.

What I've heard most is that we still need to go in, look at all of the standards—at the governance of them and how they're applied and implemented—and make sure the work is being done still. That's because of certifications. If someone is working in one area and they're moving into a different province, they still may need...they will lose time just to be certified. That's a gap that we need to remove.

Annie Koutrakis: What would you say to some critics who may ask if this bill will help provinces work together and will make sure we're not adding another layer of bureaucracy? We may hear that maybe we're duplicating efforts across all the provinces and territories. Will your private member's bill help to reduce that or to eliminate that altogether?

Parm Bains: Ultimately, that is the goal. The goal is to ensure that, in simpler terms, everyone is on the same page, and people can freely and easily move between jurisdictions. We can do that only if all of those standards are being met. That work needs to be done to allow for that free movement.

Annie Koutrakis: Thank you.

The Chair: Ms. Harrison is next.

Emma Harrison (Peterborough, Lib.): Thank you very much.

Thank you, MP Bains.

This bill is incredibly important. I come from a skilled trades family. The riding of Peterborough, which I represent, is full of skilled tradespeople.

In your opening statement, you mentioned that people need to follow where opportunity exists. I think your private member's bill is meeting the moment that the government is also meeting, which is that we need to build big and we need to build big coast to coast to coast, but that can't possibly happen without skilled trades workers.

I would like to know and give you the opportunity to discuss a bit more who you spoke with and with what businesses and workers. What did you hear from them when you were consulting?

Parm Bains: It's a long list. I met with every industry you can think of, with the Canadian Construction Association, and, of course, with my alma mater. I did my aerospace training at BCIT, one of the premier aerospace institutions in this country, and I have a strong relationship there.

To complement some of the work that government is doing with respect to supporting our skilled trades institutions through different apprenticeship pieces, along the way I've continued to have a lot of conversations with them to help develop this.

As I mentioned to our colleague before this, much of the conversation I had was about the varying challenges that are happening between industry standards in different jurisdictions. Again, it's ensuring that people have that ability. It came from so many different trades industries: electrical, mechanical workers and plumbers. If you look at some of the big pieces we're working on in British Columbia, such as the expansion of the port there, there are several skilled trades that work at the port, such as mechanics, etc.

I've had several conversations along the way and, really, many of the pieces in this bill come from those conversations.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Harrison. Your combined time is up.

● (1140)

[Translation]

Ms. Larouche, you have the floor for two and a half minutes.

Andréanne Larouche: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Bains, I have some more questions about your bill and I'm going to tell you a bit about why I voted the way I did yesterday.

Chapter 7 of the Canadian Free Trade Agreement, which covers labour mobility, already provides for the recognition of diplomas and trades. These arrangements are negotiated in good faith between the provinces with federal participation. From that perspective, your bill could be seen as centralizing because it would enable the federal government to assume powers it doesn't have. It could also be seen as paternalistic towards Quebec because it would prescribe an approach for a province that already possesses the expertise required to train workers.

Lastly, the Government of Quebec is asking for what it has previously requested: an unconditional transfer of the funding announced in the 2026 spring economic update and the team Canada strong initiative for training skilled trades workers. The 2026 spring economic update allocates \$2 billion over five years starting in 2026-27 and \$262 million per year after that.

What are your thoughts on Quebec's request for an unconditional transfer?

[English]

Parm Bains: The translation cut out at the final part.

[Translation]

The Chair: Ms. Larouche, can you repeat your question?

[English]

Parm Bains: Just repeat that final part.

[Translation]

Andréanne Larouche: In light of my two comments, first, what are your thoughts on chapter 7, which already covers labour mobility?

Second, what are your thoughts on Quebec's request for an unconditional transfer?

[English]

Parm Bains: I think if we go back to a previous answer I provided to you.... You're continuing to indicate that there's no level of respect there. The consultation in itself allows for the work to be done together and for making sure that not only the standards but, if you look at the funding you're talking about—the apprenticeship program, etc.—it's available for everyone and not just unionized, but non-unionized. Any employer can provide that. The Government of Quebec, even in 1995, acknowledged in the Canada-Quebec labour market agreement at that time that this was needed.

This is not an intrusive piece of legislation, which is what you're trying to indicate.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Larouche.

[English]

Mr. Bexte, you have five minutes.

David Bexte (Bow River, CPC): Thank you, Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to sub in today on the HUMA committee. I look forward to an interesting discussion on this private member's bill.

Congratulations, MP Bains, for presenting a bill. That is a milestone in any parliament.

I do have questions, though. Regardless of the nobility or the objectivity of the work, I'm very concerned about accountability and unintended consequences. Often what we do and what we implement results in exactly the opposite happening, so I would like to dig into that a little.

I would suppose your effort is to look at differences or at least provide a forum across provinces to address the differences in their accreditation systems, but provincial standards are often designed for their specific local needs and requirements, or at least we can presuppose that. You want to avoid a race to the bottom. That would not be a good thing either.

By harmonizing to a higher standard, might we not introduce a barrier to labour mobility by overshooting the requirements?

Parm Bains: That's a possibility for sure if we're looking at a higher standard, but ultimately, if the goal is to ensure that different jurisdictions can meet occupational safety or health standards, whatever the industry standards are for whichever profession we're talking about, it's not about overshooting. It's about complementing one another. I think that's the key.

• (1145)

David Bexte: I appreciate that, but that again is the nature of an unintended consequence. We haven't accounted for that. We haven't looked at that specifically to see how we're going to attend to it.

I guess it comes down to another question about how you are going to measure success. Are there any particular metrics on current mobility versus new mobility and what happens if we don't reach that target?

Parm Bains: At this moment, if we're trying to build the things we're trying to build as a nation, we understand the challenges that we're facing and we have to meet the moment. The objective for us

right now is to ensure that we can build the things we need to build. We have to respect and look not only at jurisdictions but at each industry, and the leaders of those industries will be participating in the process.

David Bexte: We're diverting from the thrust of the question, which is measurability. You have a technical background. I assume you can appreciate the notion that you can't improve what you don't measure. This is an axiom in engineering, science and other areas of applied research. What are we going to measure to evaluate the success of this legislation? What are we going to measure to say that our efforts were worth it or not?

Parm Bains: I think that's a fair question. It requires careful monitoring. What you're asking may be an outcome of the consultation. I mean, ultimately, I think a failure to the imminent is sort of a self-defeating thing. We have to keep working towards this. That's why consultations are important. I think if you look at the different people who will be working towards this, we'll need to meet those standards.

David Bexte: If this doesn't work or achieve any measurable success, or if the conflicts that arise out of it interprovincially are insurmountable, then what? What are the consequences?

Parm Bains: Do you know what? I think the key thing to look at here is that we need to find the strength in leadership and ensure that it does work.

David Bexte: Fair enough.

I'll cede my time, Chair. Thank you.

The Chair: You have 21 seconds left.

David Bexte: I'll cede my time to Mr. Genuis.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Genuis.

Garnett Genuis: What's your position on the decision of the government to cancel completion grants for trades workers earlier this year, introduce uncertainty and then reinstate them later?

Parm Bains: Are you talking about completion grants for apprentices?

Garnett Genuis: Exactly...yes.

Parm Bains: Again, to Mr. Bexte's comments, we need to ensure that we're rewarding people who are completing things.

Garnett Genuis: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Genuis. We're debating the bill.

Garnett Genuis: It was about trade work.

The Chair: That's why I gave you flexibility, but Mr. Bains is here promoting his bill.

[Translation]

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

Caroline Desrochers (Trois-Rivières, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you very much, Mr. Bains, for your leadership in bringing this bill to the House.

[English]

I think it's a very important project. As parliamentary secretary for housing and infrastructure, I think it's very timely. We know that we are looking to double the rate of construction in the housing sector over the next 10 years. To do that, we'll need to have all the available skilled trades workers we can. This is why we launched the team Canada strong fund, as you pointed out in your earlier comments, to train 100,000 skilled trades workers across Canada over the coming years. It's also why we introduced the One Canadian Economy Act—to reduce trade barriers—and labour mobility is definitely a part of that.

I think this bill is a call to action to mobilize all of us across the aisle and across party lines so that we can facilitate opportunities for trades workers. We can make sure that trades workers can go where the job opportunities are. That's why I'd like to spend maybe a little bit of time talking about what a worker actually faces today when they're trying to go and work in a different province. How long does that take? How much does that cost? Can you talk about that a little bit, please?

• (1150)

Parm Bains: I want to thank you for your leadership and the work you're doing on team Canada strong, especially on the building side.

We know if we need to build anything with respect to homes, we need 51 different trades to complete just one home. It's important work and, again, this ultimately complements that work.

If we can reflect back on something I mentioned earlier, you may have to go where the work is. When you do that, you face an industry standard in a different jurisdiction that may require you to get more certifications. That is time. That's money. It's up to \$5,000 out of your pocket if you need to get some certification in a different jurisdiction. Each different trade has different costs involved with that. That time can be a year to 18 months.

For certain carpenters.... If you look at British Columbia, it has its own building codes. Often, some codes differ even in different jurisdictions within the province. That's the immense level of work that needs to take place.

One of the other colleague's questions was why we can't just go and whip through that and get it done right away. It's because we have to respect each industry and its standards. I could even go back to how, in the 1990s in British Columbia, we had a leaky condo issue. There was a mass need to build more homes very quickly, and those standards weren't there, and then 10 years later, it was a major problem within the province.

Those are mistakes that we can't make when we're trying to rapidly do things and build them quickly. We have to ensure that the standards are there.

Caroline Desrochers: Would you say this bill is also about bringing efficiencies, not to the construction but to the building industry at large and the skilled trades workers?

Parm Bains: This is not to oversimplify it, but if we're looking at processes when we're trying to do any work, we have to plan, then we prepare and then we follow procedural guidelines, standards and things that are listed, in order for us to complete a project. If we don't do this work in advance, mistakes can be made. This is a goal to get to a more efficient workplace.

Caroline Desrochers: Would you say that in this uncertain environment we're facing, this is going to make sure that skilled trades workers have every opportunity to pursue work across Canada and not be limited to one province?

Parm Bains: Absolutely. Again, it allows for them to not only pursue work.... I'd like to use a different example. I can work....

Maybe I'll add it later.

The Chair: For the benefit of the committee members, I'm going to conclude with two minutes for each party. There will be two minutes for the official opposition, two minutes for the government and two minutes for Madame Larouche.

Mr. Genuis, I believe you're taking the two minutes.

Garnett Genuis: Mr. Bains, if the minister came to you today and asked, "Do you want me to implement this framework right now, or do you want me to wait until the bill passes before the framework is implemented?", what would your answer be?

Parm Bains: My answer would be, "I'd be encouraged if you're already doing this work and it's under way." These consultations should already be taking place. It's been introduced. The timelines that exist—

• (1155)

Garnett Genuis: To give a simple answer, you would tell the minister that you'd prefer that the work begins now, before the bill is passed. Is that what you're saying?

Parm Bains: Yes, ultimately, because I'd like this bill to pass and I'd like the work to be done.

Garnett Genuis: The minister can, and you would prefer it if the minister began this work before the bill passes. If the bill passes and a hypothetical future minister doesn't do the work, there are no consequences.

In that context, what does the bill change? What is different after the bill passes?

Parm Bains: “What is different after the bill passes?” I’m a little confused by the way you phrased that question.

Garnett Genuis: How does the bill’s passing...? What change happens in the real world after the bill passes?

Parm Bains: Again, as I mentioned, there’s accountability in this bill. Then the—

Garnett Genuis: What is that accountability? The bill says that you should follow this process within this timeline, but what is the actual accountability? What happens if that doesn’t happen? You said, “Nothing”, so where is the accountability?

Parm Bains: I didn’t say nothing happens.

It never looks good to fail to do something—I’m sure you understand that. The accountability piece here is that every jurisdiction is involved and every industry is involved, so those are the consequences. If the work is not being done, the consequences are that people can’t move around, and we’re back in the same position we’re in right now.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Genuis.

Mr. Saini, you have two minutes, and then we’ll conclude with Madame Larouche.

Gurbux Saini (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Bains.

Thank you for the leadership you have taken. We heard a lot from the opposition. Things didn’t happen in the last 10 or 15 years, so you took the leadership to make it happen through a private member’s bill, and I commend you for that.

Could you tell us what workers actually face when an electrician or a plumber tries to go from one place to another?

Parm Bains: Thank you for the question. I talked a bit about this in previous answers as well.

Specifically, I’ll tell you right now that there’s going to be a great demand for electricians and plumbers. Part of the reason I’ve introduced this—and a key piece to it—is respecting the skilled trades.

To answer the question at the beginning, one issue is that they’re having to recertify. After already having the skills, doing the work and moving to a different jurisdiction, there’s a risk of their having to recertify, taking time and money out of actually doing the work before they get on with whatever project they’re assigned to. However, I also want to mention that the key piece to a lot of this is to bring back respect for the skilled trades so that we can encourage the next generation of workers to follow these extremely important jobs and make sure that we get kids enrolled in these programs.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Saini.

[Translation]

Ms. Larouche, you have the floor for two minutes.

Andréanne Larouche: Mr. Bains, if there’s one thing we can agree on here, it’s that these trades are important. I’m also from a family with people in the construction industry on both my father’s and my mother’s side. I’ve heard people talk about bricks, mortar and wood my whole life. It’s true that these people do very important work.

Having said that, Mr. Bains, I want to address a few other things that we’ve heard in response to the bill. We’ve heard that the bill does not provide for any veto mechanism or formal consent from the provinces. While it provides for at least nine months of consultation, that in no way guarantees that Quebec will be able to block, amend or attach conditions to the application of this framework within its territory. Quebec will be consulted but has no decision-making power.

How do you respond to that?

● (1200)

[English]

Parm Bains: When you look at the consultations respecting each jurisdiction, they do have decision-making power. That is part of negotiating the standards with their counterparts from the other jurisdictions.

[Translation]

Andréanne Larouche: Okay.

Also, based on what we’ve heard, the definition of “skilled trades”, which focuses on Red Seal and Blue Seal programs, strengthens pan-Canadian tools that do not always align with Quebec’s specific linguistic, cultural, regulatory and institutional characteristics in the areas of professional training and regulations. In addition, these tools tend to standardize the Quebec system according to the Canadian model.

Finally, if this bill is enacted, it may encourage the provinces to lower qualification standards in the name of facilitating mobility, potentially undermining public protection, workplace safety, working conditions and recognition of Quebec’s sector-specific realities.

You may have a few seconds left to respond, Mr. Bains.

[English]

The Chair: We need a short answer, Mr. Bains.

Parm Bains: I think that’s an opinion you may have. I don’t see it that way.

The Chair: Thank you. That concludes the questioning round for Mr. Bains.

Thank you for coming in.

As the chair, I have just a few observations from comments made. Actually, I was a signatory to that internal trade agreement in 1995 that you referenced.

Parm Bains: Thank you for your leadership, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: As we all know, members use their bills, those who get the privilege—and I have never had that privilege, Mr. Bains, of introducing a private member's bill—to highlight an area that's important to them. They're not binding on government, but they do highlight an area. I commend you for this particular one, because I deal as well with people frustrated over minor items that allow them to practise their trade in jurisdictions. Hopefully, it highlights this issue, and there will be some particular changes.

With that, you're free to go, Mr. Bains.

I want to go through two housekeeping items before we conclude. For the study of this bill, we were considering scheduling the clause-by-clause consideration for Tuesday, October 20. This would mean a deadline for amendments of Thursday, October 15, at noon.

Garnett Genuis: Chair, I think that timeline is fine. What I would suggest is that we have two meetings with external witnesses, which we can have in the next sitting week, which would be October 6 and October 8. Then, on October 20, we would like a chance to ask officials questions about this bill as well. We think you can do an hour of just questions with officials and then go straight into clause-by-clause the same day. That way, the officials are already here, and I think an hour will be sufficient for clause-by-clause.

The Chair: That was my plan in discussion with the clerk. The officials could not prepare to be here today. That's why we didn't do it.

That's fine with me. You've heard Mr. Genuis's observations. Are we all in agreement? Good.

We have a little time today. For our upcoming studies on the national school food program and the EI parental leave, would members be amiable to Friday, November 27, for the deadline for written briefs for both of those?

Garnett Genuis: I'm not sure we need the deadline to be.... I mean, it's still two months from now. Given that we have a bunch of different things on our agenda, I don't think we will have completed those studies by then.

The Chair: It's a deadline to notify people so that they can begin doing it. As in the past, if something is a problem, we can extend it. At this time, I would recommend to the committee that we set November 27 as a deadline for written briefs to be submitted on those two studies.

Rosemarie Falk: Could we add to that the provision that if we do have other legislation coming to us...? Part of what we had agreed to was making sure that bills that come here are made a priority, so—

The Chair: Yes, and they will be.

Rosemarie Falk: —it's with the understanding of that flexibility, in case we're halfway through or something or not even....

• (1205)

The Chair: That's always been our practice.

Rosemarie Falk: Perfect. Yes, that's great.

Garnett Genuis: I think that makes sense. We'll set that as the deadline, and if by the end of November we have barely started those studies because we've been working on bills or something else, at that point we can make a decision to extend.

The Chair: As I said, this committee can change whatever it agrees to one day on the next day by majority, so I don't put too much effort into it.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: We're adjourned.

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