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Chair: Mr. Robert Morrissey

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

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• (0815)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Robert Morrissey (Egmont, Lib.)): Good morning, committee members.

[Translation]

Welcome, everyone.

[English]

We will begin.

The clerk has advised me that the sound of everybody appearing virtually has been tested and is fine.

We have a quorum, so with that I will call to order meeting number 116 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities.

I assume you've familiarized yourself with the new technology in the room. Before we begin, I would ask members appearing in the room to respect the translators by doing that. Please don't touch the microphone boom if you do not have to. As well, when you're not using the earpiece, please keep it in the assigned location to prevent feedback and sound popping that can cause hearing damage to the interpreters.

Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format, with members appearing virtually as well as in the room.

You have the option of choosing to participate in the official language of your choice. For those in the room, translation services are available using the headset provided. For those appearing virtually, click on the globe icon at the bottom of your Surface and choose the official language of your choice.

If there's an interruption in translation services, please get my attention by raising your hand in the room. If you're appearing virtually, use the "raise hand" icon. We will suspend while it is being corrected.

Again, I would remind those participating to please direct any questions or inquiries through me, the chair. Wait until I recognize you before proceeding.

Pursuant to the order of reference of December 6, 2023, the committee is commencing its clause-by-clause consideration of Bill C-322, an act to develop a national framework to establish a school food program.

In case members have technical questions, we have with us today two officials from the Department of Employment and Social Development: Erin Gillespie, director, social policy directorate; and Hugues Vaillancourt, director general, social policy directorate. I understand that Mr. Vaillancourt has to leave at 9:30 to attend another committee meeting.

We also have with us this morning Mr. Cormier, the sponsor of the bill. He is replacing Mr. Long for today's meeting.

Now we will begin with the formal part of reviewing the bill.

Pursuant to Standing Order 75(1), consideration of clause 1 and of the preamble are postponed until we get to the end.

We'll now go directly into the clause-by-clause.

Shall clause 2 carry?

(Clause 2 agreed to: yeas 7; nays 4)

(On clause 3)

The Chair: We have an amendment.

Mrs. Gray, do you wish to move the amendment?

• (0820)

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

I would like to move the following amendment, that Bill C-322 in clause 3, be amended by adding after line 15 on page 3 the following:

(i) examine the applicability of the Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act to food and the transportation of food sourced under the school food program and, where applicable, examine ways to exempt them from the application of that Act.

Mr. Chair, this really is about bringing down the price of food. We know that food costs have gone up. There was a very recent Food Banks Canada poverty report card that talked about the price of food and how much more families are paying.

We also heard at a previous study from not-for-profits—it was specifically from food banks, but this would really be for any not-for-profits that are serving food—as to how much their costs have gone up in terms of actually being able to serve the clients they serve.

This is a way of looking to actually bring down the cost of food and to analyze how that could be applied, both for the cost of the food and also for the transportation of the food that is utilized for a program.

Thank you.

The Chair: The amendment is in order to be tabled. We now will have a discussion on the amendment that has been moved.

I have Mr. Fragiskatos, on the amendment.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (London North Centre, Lib.): With all due respect to our colleague, Mr. Chair, that's not the intent of the Conservative amendment here.

If it were the intent, the amendment would include—and actually it would be prominent in the amendment—a focus on climate change and its impact on the rising cost of food, which in fact is going down but has increased in recent years. We know, because of analysis after analysis, that climate change is the key factor in all of that.

It's no surprise, but I see nothing on climate change in the amendment. For that reason, our side will not support it.

The Chair: Is there further discussion on the amendment of Ms. Gray?

Ms. Ferreri on the amendment.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

Just to my colleague's point about climate change, farming being what it is and as challenging as it is, I think most of us have farmers in our riding, and we know that it determines the cost and availability of food for sure.

This amendment, however, is actually not prohibiting or hurting farmers in any way. In fact, it's probably helping them to do their job better and to make food more affordable, which is the basis of this bill: to allow children to have access to food in our cost of living crisis, as my colleague Ms. Gray has said.

Given the dire circumstances and the Food Banks Canada report card—we've never seen these numbers, ever, in history—I think this would be a very fair amendment. Perhaps our colleagues across the way would be open to something, but this is a very important amendment to help make food more affordable. I'm not sure why we're not getting support from the other side.

● (0825)

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Ferreri.

Seeing no further discussion, I'm going to ask the clerk to call a recorded vote on the amendment of Ms. Gray.

(Amendment negatived: nays 7; yeas 4 [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: Seeing no further discussion, shall clause 3 carry? We will have a recorded vote on clause 3.

(Clause 3 agreed to: yeas 7; nays 4)

The Chair: We have a new clause 3.1.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Chabot, you have the floor.

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Good evening, colleagues.

You won't be surprised by our amendment, which enhances the bill while respecting the jurisdictions of Quebec and the provinces. In fact, the preamble to the bill reminds us that health and education fall under provincial jurisdiction, even though the debate surrounding this bill focuses on a national framework.

No one wants children to go to school hungry, to use the words being used to promote the bill. It's an important principle, and that's why Quebec has a school nutrition program.

I'm surprised that I'm the one who has to do this, but, to show that this subject falls under the exclusive jurisdiction of the provinces, I'm going to quote from the Constitution of Canada. It's not my daily bedside book, but it's clear on the responsibilities of each level of government. It states in section 93 that “In and for each province the legislature may exclusively make laws in relation to education...”.

Once again, in this bill, we have the wrong sphere of jurisdiction. That's why our amendment aims to add the following new article:

3.1 In recognition of the provincial jurisdiction with regard to health and education, the government of a province may choose to be exempted from any obligation that may arise out of the implementation of the national framework.

In other words, given that this is not an area of federal jurisdiction, it must be made very clear that the provinces will be able to opt out of any obligations that may arise from the implementation of this national framework. For us, it's fundamental to make this amendment to the national framework bill, otherwise the Bloc Québécois won't be able to support it.

● (0830)

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Madame Chabot.

As chair, my responsibility is to ensure that the committee proceeds according to procedures outlined by the House of Commons. Based on that, I must rule on all proposed amendments.

Bill C-322 provides for the development of a national framework to establish a school food program. In developing the framework, the minister consulted various stakeholders, including representatives of provincial governments. The bill does not provide for the possibility of a province being exempted from any obligation that may arise out of the implementation of the national framework. As *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition—adopted by the House of Commons—states on page 770, “An amendment to a bill that was referred to the committee after second reading is out of order if it is beyond the scope and principle of the bill.”

Therefore, for the above-stated reason, I rule the amendment inadmissible. No debate is allowed, but my ruling can be challenged.

Mrs. Gray.

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

I would like to challenge the chair. I believe Ms. Chabot's amendment is very reasonable and...

Oh, no debate is allowed. Okay. I challenge the chair.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you.

The chair's ruling has been challenged. You can vote on my ruling.

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Ariane Calvert): Members, the question is, shall the chair's decision be sustained?

If you vote in the affirmative, you're voting in favour of the chair's ruling. If you vote in the negative, you're voting against the chair's ruling.

(Ruling of the chair sustained: yeas 6; nays 5)

(On clause 4)

The Chair: We have an amendment on clause 4 from Mrs. Gray.

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

I would like to move the following amendment, that Bill C-322, in clause 4, be amended by replacing line 18 on page 3 with the following:

ting out the national framework and that includes a projection of transportation and production costs that would be incurred by the school food program under the Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act, and cause the report to

This aligns with the further amendment to look at costs that go into food that could potentially be used by a food program. The rationale is in order to look at how to bring down the cost of food.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: The amendment is in order and is now debatable.

Is there any discussion on the amendment of Mrs. Gray?

Go ahead Mrs. Falk.

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

This is something that I definitely see as a no-brainer, given the fact that our country is so big. There are areas of our country that are only actually accessible by air, and sometimes by ice roads in the wintertime.

It's important and sensible that transportation and production costs that would be incurred should be included in the projection cost. If this PMB were to pass, it would also give the opportunity for cost projections. Canadians would know what they're paying specifically for this school food program, even though we know that something like the carbon tax does cost Canadians more to feed their families.

This would provide transparency with the bill.

• (0835)

The Chair: Thank you, Mrs. Falk.

Next, we have Mr. Fragiskatos.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: It's no surprise, Mr. Chair, that my comments from CPC-1 also apply here. In fact, they will apply to the rest of Mrs. Gray's amendments.

They are incomplete, to be polite about it. If one is serious about dealing with the costs of food, one has to focus on climate change. There's no way around it.

To the point raised by Ms. Ferreri before, we've been to farms, even though we represent urban areas. I was at a bean farm a few weeks ago. We talked about climate change there. Climate change is the key factor when it comes to the rising cost of food. Any amendment that is serious will include that point.

I see nothing of the sort here. For that reason, our side will not support what has been proposed.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Fragiskatos.

Go ahead, Mrs. Falk.

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: Thank you, Chair.

I would just state that anybody who is in this place, who is serious about the price of food and the fact that food has become unaffordable for Canadians and for families to put on the table.... It's actually very naive and ignorant to not take into account the taxes that have been put on farmers by this Liberal government.

Our farmers sequester carbon in astronomical amounts in Saskatchewan. We know that. We know they are getting taxed at every end, basically from before seed planting all the way to production. That cost is then relayed to the consumer.

To state that this is about climate change.... It is absolutely foolish that these Liberals and the NDP are not recognizing what our farmers are already doing to sequester the carbon in the ground. It is absolutely foolish to not recognize that the carbon tax is costing Canadians in being able to put food on the table. I just think that is very foolish.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Ferreri.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Thanks, Mr. Chair.

We're here today talking about the national school food program that the Liberals and NDP have put forward to provide food for kids. We have the highest usage in food bank history. One in four of those people accessing a food bank, which is two million people per month—we've never seen this, ever, in the history of Canada—are children.

The Liberals and NDP have put forward this bill. It sounds great. It sounds really good: Let's give kids breakfast; let's give kids access to food at school. As my colleague Ms. Chabot has said, nobody can disagree with that.

The problem is that, like every other bill they've put forward, the devil is in the details. That's been proven yet again by my Liberal colleague's comments. He had the audacity to respond today by saying, "I've been to a farm."

● (0840)

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: I've been to many farms.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: You said "a farm". Good for you. I'm so glad you've been to a farm.

Do you know what? This is unbelievable. We have an amendment, put forward by my colleague Ms. Gray, that is doing the groundwork for accountability and transparency in terms of where money is going.

You have seen this over and over again with the Liberal-NDP government. You've seen it in housing: They don't build houses; they build bureaucracy. You've seen it in child care, and now child care facilities across this country are closing down because they cannot afford to stay open. They are going bankrupt because of the administrative fees in the agreement signed by the federal government. There wasn't transparency. There wasn't accountability. We tried to do that in this committee. We put forward amendments asking for transparency and accountability in terms of where the money is going.

This is taxpayer money. This is actually just asking how much fuel it is going to cost. When we live in the largest geographical country and have rural northern communities where kids are actually starving, this is a very reasonable amendment. If my Liberal colleague is so serious about visiting a farm and wants to know how they're doing, then add that in here. Let's negotiate. If they are serious about people going hungry, then change it.

However, this amendment is so common sense: Where's the money going? How is it being spent? How much money will actually feed children as opposed to paying for gas and the cost of producing the food?

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Van Bynen, do you want to interject?

Then I have Ms. Zarrillo.

Mr. Tony Van Bynen (Newmarket—Aurora, Lib.): Just briefly, Mr. Chair...

To enlighten Ms. Ferrari, I grew up on a farm—I didn't just visit it; I grew up on a farm—so I think I understand that situation. If there's a concern about housing and it not going forward, I would invite her to come to my constituency. There are 400 apartment units that have gone up on Davis Drive, and we broke ground for an additional 600 apartment units that are now going forward because the GST has been waived and the business case makes it feasible for that apartment unit to go forward.

However, my question is this: If we have this information, what are we going to do? If we find out that there's a higher transportation cost for rural and northern areas, does that mean we're not going to supply food to schools in those areas? What are we going to do with this information? Why do you want to differentiate and ex-

clude some remote communities, simply because the cost is so high?

The Chair: Thanks, Mr. Van Bynen.

Ms. Zarrillo.

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo: Mr. Chair, if I could just get some clarity, please, I'm under the impression that we're looking at a PMB right now, that we're not looking at the government bill on the national school food program. I understand that with private members' bills, there's no spending attached to or allowed in those bills.

I would ask maybe our witnesses or even the clerk if they could just clarify what we're looking at today, because I think the Conservatives are confused.

The Chair: Does anybody want to take that question?

Mr. Hugues Vaillancourt (Director General, Social Policy Directorate, Department of Employment and Social Development): Yes.

My understanding of the private member's bill is to develop a national framework—working with provinces, territories and indigenous partners—and to report back and table that report. I have a similar understanding. The bill, in and of itself, doesn't have program funding associated with it.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Zarrillo, is that the answer you were looking for?

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo: That's fine, Mr. Chair. Thank you.

The Chair: Mrs. Falk.

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

It's unfortunate that some members around this table don't know what we are actually doing today. We are going through a private member's bill to develop a framework. I would suggest that frameworks are the bones of something.

I wouldn't make the assumption, because I feel this government likes to consult in hindsight....

We've heard, especially on the disability benefit, that disability advocates and those with disabilities were not properly consulted, and nor were the provinces and the territories, which would follow up on the previous amendment by our colleague Ms. Chabot at this table.

With any common-sense piece of legislation we're looking at, we want to make sure that all of the areas are looked at. There have been a lot of points made.

Some of us sitting around this table represent large, rural ridings, where it takes four hours by vehicle just to get from one area to another. Some of our colleagues who are not around this table but are in this House have to fly to places. I think it's absolutely in order and it makes sense for us to be discussing transportation or to have the projection of transportation put in the bill, as well as the production costs of food, especially if this is the framework of the bill that the government wants to flag and advocate for as its national school food program.

I'll go back to the farming comments that have been made around this table. If that many members from every party in this place have been to a farm.... I have yet to meet a single farmer who supports the carbon tax. I have hundreds or thousands of farmers in my riding and whom I have met across this country, and I have yet to meet one who says, "Yes, government. Tax me more."

I've received phone calls from farmers in a mixed operation. They have cattle and grain. They're running on no sleep, because cows don't come when you tell them to come. They're born when they want to be born, so the farmers are running on no sleep.

Bankers are calling and bills are due. I talked to one farmer who has to settle a \$1-million bill. Do you know how much he's paying on the carbon tax, for which this government has shown no decrease in emissions? I don't know what's being done with that money. I know there's a lot of money that goes to consultants and to other scandals coming up with this government.

I just don't understand how this is a framework bill that is—again, as it was said by a few colleagues around this table—to feed children, which we are all on board with. We discussed this at the last meeting we had. Absolutely, children need to be well nourished, but if you are taxing the farmer who grows the food and the trucker who ships the food—Mr. Van Bynen, you can do this, but it's true—consumers and Canadians are the ones who are going to pay for it.

If we're looking at a bill that's going to supply food for schools and the taxpayer is paying for it, and the federal government is attempting to champion this, why would we not look at the transportation costs? It's just common sense.

● (0845)

The Chair: Thank you, Mrs. Falk.

I have Mrs. Gray on her amendment.

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

I just want to point out that, again, this amendment is looking at transportation and production costs. We know this private member's bill is, basically, setting up a framework to put together a plan for a plan, which will then report on that plan.

What are you going to be reporting on?

It's been reported that this year, the average family is going to spend another \$700 on food for their family. We know costs are going up. It includes the farm, but it also includes transportation and production costs, which are in the amendment. I think what we quite often forget is that not everything we consume is farm to table.

Quite often, farming products are turned into value-added products. I just had a group of business owners in my office the other day who are food producers. They take food from the farm and turn it into other products, and there are costs all along the way.

On April 1, the carbon tax went up 23%, and it affects the entire value chain. For us, a private member's bill that is, in fact, putting together a plan to not be looking at these kinds of things.... It really should. This opens up transparency and allows for a better analysis

on the actual cost of food all the way along the value chain, and that's the intention of this particular amendment.

Thank you.

The Chair: Seeing no further discussion, Madam Clerk, we'll call a recorded vote on the amendment of Mrs. Gray to clause 4.

(Amendment negatived: nays 7; yeas 4 [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: We'll now go to a recorded vote on clause 4.

(Clause 4 agreed to: yeas 6; nays 5 [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

(On clause 5)

The Chair: We'll now move to clause 5.

We have an amendment from Mrs. Gray.

● (0850)

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

I'd like to move that Bill C-322, in clause 5, be amended by adding after line 33 on page 3 the following:

(1.1) The report must include a comprehensive breakdown of costs incurred under the Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act for each item of food provided under the school food program.

This goes back to looking at the cost of food and what is attributed to the cost of food. We know that inflation has been high. In fact, food inflation is higher than the actual inflation rate. This is important so we can better understand the costs that are going into the cost of food.

As I said earlier, the Canada's food price report, recently released, said that the average family will be spending \$700 more this year on food. Since this private member's bill is to put together a plan, we should be looking at all aspects of the plan and the costs that are going into the plan. That can lead to how we might be able to mitigate some of those costs, so we think this is important to put into the bill.

Thank you.

The Chair: Is there any discussion on the amendment?

Ms. Ferreri, go ahead.

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

Again, we've put forward another amendment here. We're looking at the national school program put forward by the Liberals and the NDP. What we've seen in this committee today....

The Conservatives put forward amendments saying that we would like to add in reasonable, common-sense pieces of this legislation that ask, "How much does it cost? How much does it cost to transport the food? How much does it cost to produce the food?" That makes sense when you're budgeting for something. It's honestly the most common-sense thing. If I'm going to buy something, I want to know how much it is. We have a member on the opposite side saying, "Why would you want to know that? Does that mean you're not going to do it? Why would you want to know the costs?"

I'm sorry. Excuse me? There's something missing here, Mr. Chair. Through you, that makes zero sense. For this carbon tax, they told the people.... I've had this conversation multiple times. Canadians are pretty amazing people. They'll say, "You know what? I don't have a problem helping out. Tell me where the money is going." You go to a grocery checkout and somebody says, "Hey, can you donate a buck or two for this cause?" Most Canadians will say, "Yes, where's my money going?" The Prime Minister told Canadians that the carbon tax was revenue-neutral. We now know that was not true. In fact, it's \$1 billion that they've generated in revenue. Where is that money? Nobody seems to know, yet we've put forward amendments.

This is another one of their wonderful marketing schemes. "We're going to feed children. We're going to make sure the kids are fed, even though we put kids in the most food-insecure position they've ever been in, in history." This is not dramatic. This is not rage farming. This is the worst it has ever been in Canadian history. Food Banks Canada says this has never happened, ever.

We put forward an amendment saying, "Hey, we are asking if we can make sure that, when this rolls out, we know how much it costs." Guess what's going to happen? It's the exact same thing that has happened with housing and the exact same thing that has happened with child care. You are not going to have enough money because you are not budgeting. You are not accounting for where the money is going. Guess what? The kids are going to get zero food. Why? Because you do not know the cost before you. This is so simple, yet they are proud to sit on the other side and say, "We're not voting in support of any of these amendments." Okay. Then what do you want here? You just want people to blindly follow you and say, "Yeah, for sure. I mean, that's great. Just take my money. Tax me harder." Is that right?

I think this is exactly what they've done. It is *Groundhog Day* every day. They wade into provincial jurisdiction. They say, "We're going to come and save you. We're going to come and help you." Then they pull it back. They turn the tap off and leave people high and dry. They've done it with child care. They've done it with housing. Now they're going to do it with this national food program, which will not feed any children.

Mark my words. Write this date down today. We will come back to this clip in a year, two years or three years, when every province is saying, "We don't have enough money. It's not feeding the children. It's not being disbursed properly. The gas charges are too high. Food production prices are too high. We didn't budget for this properly." That is exactly what will happen if they don't approve these amendments and take this seriously.

• (0855)

The Chair: Thank you.

We have Mrs. Falk, Mr. Aitchison and, I believe, Mrs. Gray.

Mrs. Falk.

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

This amendment is saying that this report "must include a comprehensive breakdown of costs incurred under the Greenhouse Gas

Pollution Pricing Act, for each item of food provided under the school food program." I think that's important also.

Just to break this down, there are families out there now at this time of year that are budgeting to see if they can go on a summer vacation, if they can take their kids to the lake, if they can go camping and if they can do these things. They're sitting down and having these conversations before they spend the money. They're literally making the plan to see if it can work.

This type of behaviour is expected of businesses. In order for a business to actually stay afloat, they have to know what their incurred costs are and what their projected expenses will be to know if they can stay in business or not.

This is the same with families. There are so many families that are having these very difficult, stressed conversations, which are then actually affecting the children, because they're carrying around this weight that their parents can't pay the bills. They hear them arguing about this. They hear the stress of, "Oh, we can't have that. We can't do this. We can't afford it."

I would, at minimum, expect government to have the same thoughtful planning in this. At the end of the day, we already know that this NDP-Liberal government has riddled the next generations with debt. We know that. We know that my children and their children's children are going to be paying the debt that the NDP-Liberal government has incurred.

I would just think that, at minimum—especially for these kids—in the framework we would have a projection. The ironic part of this is who is going to be paying for it. It's the kids who are getting the food.

At a minimum, I just don't see why we wouldn't have this reporting in there, unless this NDP-Liberal government wants to continue covering up scandals and covering up where money goes.

The Chair: Thank you, Mrs. Falk.

Mr. Aitchison, go ahead on the amendment.

Mr. Scott Aitchison (Parry Sound—Muskoka, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I must admit, the arguments being made by my capable colleagues here about understanding how much money it's going to cost and the tracking are quite compelling.

I keep seeing a theme here, actually. I think back to some of the other things we've discussed in this committee, whether it's the homelessness strategy, where they weren't really measuring that.... These are the kinds of things that, unless you're able to measure them, you don't know if you're succeeding or not.

I had an epiphany. I realized that maybe, despite the fact that feeding children is obviously crucially important—we want to make sure that kids are nourished and they can learn—you always want to do it with the best value for dollar possible. I keep thinking back to this moment when the Prime Minister said that budgets balance themselves. Maybe the problem is that the whole team is infected with this notion that it doesn't matter how much money it costs, because it just doesn't matter, yet it does. I think this is why we're struggling a bit with why they are so opposed to this amendment.

If it's about carbon tax, and they're worried about what we might find out about what the carbon tax actually costs for the amount of food... I can't imagine that they would be, because we keep hearing that people are better off because of the rebate. They take the money; they give them some back, and people are better off. If that's the case and if it is better, then I just don't understand why there's a problem with tracking the costs and knowing what we're spending.

I don't know. I'm just really perplexed at why they don't like tracking the costs of anything.

● (0900)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Aitchison.

Mrs. Gray, go ahead on your amendment.

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

Just to be clear, this amendment talks about a comprehensive breakdown of costs incurred under the Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act for each item of food. This refers to the costs of the items.

We know the Liberals don't like looking at numbers. We know, after nine years of the NDP-Liberal government, that they don't like looking at the causes of their policies and how they have affected people. You can see why they don't want to support this, because they don't want to step back and do, as it says, a comprehensive breakdown of costs. They are not interested in looking at the causes and being transparent. They don't want to look at the numbers.

We know the carbon tax went up 23% on April 1. We know it's on track to go up 61¢ a litre, and we know that across the entire value chain for food—from the farmer, to transportation, to processing and operations, to transportation again, to warehousing, to retailing—there are costs incurred, and they don't want to analyze this. It's really obvious. They do not want to look into this.

Again, this amendment is to look at a comprehensive breakdown of costs. They don't want to do this. They don't want to look at the numbers. Forget the numbers. They'd rather just have a tag line and have a title. They don't want to break down and look at the causes of how things are affecting people, why the average family's food costs are going up \$700 or why food banks and other not-for-profits are struggling because their costs are going up on what they have to buy. They don't want to analyze this. It's really evident that they don't want transparency and that they want to stay away from the numbers. It's more about photo ops.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Mrs. Gray.

I see no further discussion.

Madam Clerk, we'll have a recorded vote on the amendment of Mrs. Gray to clause 5.

(Amendment negatived: nays 7; yeas 4 [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

(Clauses 5 and 6 agreed to: yeas 6; nays 5)

● (0905)

The Chair: That concludes the clauses, so we'll now move to the administrative part of the bill.

Shall the short title carry?

(Clause 1 agreed to: yeas 6; nays 5)

The Chair: Shall the preamble carry?

Let's have a recorded vote on the preamble.

(Preamble agreed to: yeas 6; nays 5)

The Chair: Shall the title carry?

Let's have a recorded vote.

(Title agreed to: yeas 6; nays 5)

The Chair: Mr. Cormier, did you have a question?

Mr. Serge Cormier (Acadie—Bathurst, Lib.): I think the clerk forgot me for the vote, but it's a yes for me.

The Clerk: I apologize, Monsieur Cormier.

The Chair: Shall the bill carry?

We'll have a recorded vote on the carrying of the bill.

(Bill C-322 agreed to: yeas 6; nays 5)

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

(Reporting of bill to the House agreed to: yeas 7; nays 4)

The Chair: It has been my practice, but I need the direction of the committee. Is it agreed that MP Cormier present the report on Bill C-322 to the House that has been adopted by the majority?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: There's consensus on Mr. Cormier's reporting the bill to the House.

Members, we're going to suspend for a few moments to...

Mrs. Gray.

● (0910)

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

While we have just a little more time here, I would like to give verbal notice of the following motion:

Given that, a recent report from the Salvation Army indicates that:

1. nearly a third of Canadians continue to feel pessimistic about the future of their personal finances;
2. one in four Canadians continue to be extremely concerned about having enough income to cover their basic needs;
3. Canadians' extreme concerns about the cost of living continue and are not subsiding;
4. about one in 10 Canadians continue to be extremely concerned about basic human needs, such as shelter and food, or being affected by a natural disaster or emergency;
5. mental and physical wellbeing continue to be an extreme concern among roughly one in three Canadians, as is being able to afford activities they want to do;
6. three in four Canadians continue to face food security challenges, with nominal upward trends. This wave, more have skipped or reduced the size of at least one meal because they couldn't afford groceries;
7. among those who accessed a food bank in the last year, over half (61%) were first-time users;
8. nearly one in three Canadians faced challenges managing limited financial resources in the past year, with nominal upward trends across all challenges;
9. over half of Canadians faced issues impacting their health, increasing Canadians' deprioritization of medical expenses due to costs;
10. the number of Canadians facing housing security challenges has increased, with more needing to move in with family because they can't afford housing or were living in unsuitable housing conditions;
11. and while many feel they can meet their financial needs in the next 12 months, over three-quarters are stressed out about the increase of the cost of living; that the committee recognize and report to the House that Canada is facing a rapidly worsening affordability, housing, and food insecurity crisis and, pursuant to Standing Order 108(1)(a),

that the committee invite the Minister of Finance and officials, as well as representatives from the Salvation Army to appear before the committee to testify in relation to these findings, as soon as possible, for no less than two hours each, and that the committee find additional resources if necessary to facilitate this meeting.

Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am giving verbal notice that I will be bringing this forward. In particular, considering that today we were talking about food costs and food insecurity and how families are struggling to afford to feed themselves, I think this is really appropriate at this time. The numbers and the comments that came out of the report from the Salvation Army were quite shocking.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Gray.

Ms. Ferreri, go ahead, and then it will be Madame Chabot.

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

I would also like to give verbal notice of a motion:

Given that a recent report from Food Banks Canada indicates that

- a. Canada has reached a critical turning point as poverty and food insecurity worsen in every corner of the country;
- b. nearly half of Canadians feel financially worse-off compared to last year;
- c. one in four 4 Canadians is experiencing food insecurity; and
- d. 33.3% of Canadians are experiencing an inadequate standard of living, while 23.7% of Canadians are experiencing a severely inadequate standard of living;
- e. and, that Food Banks Canada has graded the federal government's commitment to addressing this crisis as a D,

that the committee recognizes, and reports to the House that Canada is facing a rapidly worsening affordability, and food insecurity

crisis, and, pursuant to Standing Order 108(1)(a), the committee invite the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and officials, as well as representatives from Food Banks Canada to appear before the committee to testify in relation to these findings, as soon as possible, for no less than two hours each, and that the committee find additional resources if necessary to facilitate this meeting.

Thank you, Mr. Chair, for letting me put that on verbal notice.

We are the Standing Committee on Human Resources and Social Development. This is a critical issue across the country right now. It is our duty as elected officials to do everything we can to have these tough conversations to ensure that people are able to eat.

This is dire. I don't know what else to say other than that word. I got to co-sponsor the breakfast and launch of the report card from Food Banks Canada. Not one NDP member was there. I think this is a great opportunity for us to actually do this, to figure out what we can do in terms of making life more affordable. It's pretty shocking in Canada when we can't afford to feed our kids and ourselves.

I appreciate that, Mr. Chair.

Thank you.

• (0915)

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Ferreri.

Madame Chabot, go ahead, please.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Louise Chabot: On a completely different note, before we take a few minutes, I would have liked instructions on dissenting or supplementary opinions on the bill that was just passed by the committee. I imagine the clerk will let us know.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Madame Chabot.

You are correct. It is the directive of the committee to put a timeline on that. I'll ask the clerk to speak to it.

The Clerk: Yes, supplementary and dissenting opinions can be attached to any report that the committee presents to the House. The committee would need to determine a deadline that it would want to impose on itself for accepting dissenting and supplementary opinions.

Because the committee requested an extension from the House.... Technically the 60 sitting day deadline was on Monday, but with the extension, the committee has an additional 30 sitting days.

The Chair: Is it the wish of the committee to pick a date to deal with the issue that Madame Chabot has raised?

What's your suggestion, Madam Clerk?

Let's look at the calendar.

The Clerk: There is flexibility. If the committee wants the report to be presented to the House next week, then perhaps it could be next Wednesday at the end of the day, or next Friday at the end of the day. That would allow the report to be presented during the week of June 10.

The Chair: Do we have agreement on next Friday as the deadline for submitting dissenting reports?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Good.

Madame Chabot, go ahead, please.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Louise Chabot: I agree.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair and Madam Clerk.

[*English*]

The Chair: Ms. Gray.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Could the clerk provide some instructions on that? It's a little different with a private member's bill than perhaps with a study.

Thank you.

The Chair: You are correct, Ms. Gray. The clerk will circulate the decision the committee made on the timeline as well as the instructions to clearly come back to the committee.

If there isn't anything further, I'm going to suspend for a few moments to move briefly in camera to conclude a discussion that was suspended on Monday when we lost interpretation.

We'll suspend for five minutes.

[*Proceedings continue in camera*]

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