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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: Mr. Sean Casey





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

Thursday, February 25, 2021

• (1530)

[English]

**The Chair (Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.)):** I call this meeting to order.

Welcome to meeting number 19 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities.

Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format pursuant to the House order of January 25, 2021. The proceedings will be made available via the House of Commons website. The webcast will always show the person speaking rather than the entirety of the committee. Pursuant to the order of reference of Wednesday, February 17, 2021, the committee will commence its consideration of Bill C-220, an act to amend the Canada Labour Code with regard to compassionate care leave.

I welcome our witnesses to begin our discussion with five minutes of opening remarks, followed by questions.

We have with us Matt Jeneroux, the member of Parliament for Edmonton Riverbend. Representing the Canadian Cancer Society, we have Kelly Masotti, and once she has her technical issues resolved, Helena Sonea. Ms. Masotti is the vice-president of advocacy, and Ms. Sonea is the senior manager of advocacy. We also have, from the Canadian Grief Alliance, Paul Adams.

For the benefit of our guests, I'll make a few additional comments. Simultaneous translation is available. You have the choice at the bottom of your screen of floor, English or French. When speaking, please speak slowly and clearly. When you're not speaking, your mike should be on mute.

We're going to start with the sponsor of the bill.

Mr. Jeneroux, welcome to the committee. You have five minutes for your opening statement, and you have the floor.

**Mr. Matt Jeneroux (Edmonton Riverbend, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's good to be in this seat for once.

Before I get started on my remarks, I want to simply say a huge thank you to you and the members of the committee for agreeing to make Bill C-220 a priority. To interrupt your ongoing business to study our bill means so much to me, but also to the many stakeholders. Again, thank you.

It's an honour to appear before this committee to discuss my private member's bill, Bill C-220. I'm also very pleased to appear alongside my friends, the Canadian Cancer Society and the Canadi-

an Grief Alliance, who I know will help answer any questions we might have about this bill.

Currently the issue facing many families when facing the death of a loved one is the amount of legislated leave. Right now, under Canada's labour code, Canadians are only able to take five days, with only the first 72 hours being paid. This has gotten better with the passing of bereavement leave, but we've all heard that it's simply not compassionate enough. The leave still ends within days of a loved one's death, leaving little time to take care of practical necessities such as funeral and estate planning, and most importantly, to grieve.

I've heard from many people who have taken the leave that having to return to work so soon after the death resulted in more lost work time down the road. They ended up having to take more time off to process the death and to grieve. Bereavement has become a topic that we as representatives must continue to discuss. We've seen 20,000 Canadians die from COVID-19 in the last year. Many have had to say goodbye to their loved ones through a paned glass window, and those are the lucky ones. That leaves thousands of Canadians to grieve while trying to juggle their jobs and other personal responsibilities.

Grief impacts all people differently, and while some people might want to return to work quickly, that's not always the case for others. It's important to have bereavement supports in place for Canadians, especially as our population ages. Now is an important time to be talking about grief and its impact on workers. Every Canadian will be impacted by grief at some point in their lives, and this fact has been especially poignant during COVID-19.

My final topic that I'd like to touch on before I turn the floor over to the experts is the nature in which this bill was drafted and is now in the process of being amended. I've said it in the House of Commons, I've said it in public and I've said it during countless media interviews, but a real success of this bill has been the collaboration around the importance of supporting grief. I again thank the many stakeholders who have weighed in over countless hours while we explored this topic, especially our friends in the Canadian Hospice Palliative Care Association, and particularly the Alberta Hospice Palliative Care Association, where this idea all began.

I also think it's important to recognize the tremendous support offered by the Minister of Labour and her parliamentary secretary, the member for Mount Royal. This is a real story that really does need to be told. Working across the party lines with the Bloc Québécois member for Thérèse-De Blainville and the NDP member for Elmwood—Transcona is a real example of parliamentarians working together to truly make our country better.

It's because of all their tireless advocacy that we today have an opportunity to make more bereavement supports available to working Canadians. Enacting these changes will help millions right when they need it the most.

Thanks again for having me at your committee.

● (1535)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Jeneroux.

Next we're going to hear from the Canadian Cancer Society, with Ms. Masotti for five minutes, please.

**Ms. Kelly Masotti (Vice-President, Advocacy, Canadian Cancer Society):** Good afternoon, Chair, committee members and fellow witnesses.

My name is Kelly Masotti. I am vice-president of advocacy at the Canadian Cancer Society. Hopefully my colleague Helena will be joining us at some point in time today.

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss with you today Bill C-220, an act to amend the Canada Labour Code regarding bereavement leave.

As you study the bill, we are pleased to share with you perspectives on the ways a change in legislation of this kind could have an impact upon the many Canadians who are diagnosed with cancer every year and upon their loved ones.

This legislative change was needed prior to COVID-19. Our health care system is evolving quickly, and elected officials and governments across the country have shown incredible leadership. For that we thank you and encourage your continued response to the evolving needs of Canadians.

The Canadian Cancer Society has long advocated for increased awareness and flexibility concerning the needs of caregivers, and specifically for amending current bereavement legislation and regulation to be more flexible. The proposed bill does just that. It amends the existing framework to better meet the needs of Canadians, to be more practical and to address grief and bereavement.

Prior to a loved one's passing, some caregivers' responsibilities include managing medications, equipment, home care visits and medical appointments; personal care; preparing meals; cleaning; handling banking and financial management; and keeping family members and health care providers up to date.

Many Canadians every day undertake this important, invisible role. While improvements are being made, there is a lack of recognition of the role of caregivers and the role of the formal health care and social services they intersect with every day.

The peripheral role assigned to a caregiver by a health and social service system can often leave caregivers feeling discounted, deval-

ued and not respected. Caregivers are as diverse as the Canadian population, but policies and programs that affect them seldom take into account or address this diversity.

Imagine being a caregiver every day to your loved one, managing their day-to-day care and, following their passing, being expected to return to work immediately afterwards because you have either no or inadequate paid bereavement leave. Family members, potential recipients of compassionate care leave, may need support as they grieve the loss of a loved one and try to manage numerous strains and stresses on their mental health.

According to a recent Statistics Canada report, one-fifth of caregivers provided 20 or more hours of care to an ill family member or friend, most likely an ill spouse or child. Additionally, 68% of the surveyed caregivers said they would have liked to receive greater financial supports.

The economic value of unpaid caregiving in Canada exceeds \$25 billion annually. As mentioned previously, the needs of caregivers and bereavement leave are issues that needed to be addressed prior to COVID-19. COVID-19 has had impacts upon caregivers' ability to attend and support their loved ones receiving cancer treatment in a hospital setting and treatment at the end of life, and being able to say goodbye. There is increasing evidence generated by our support services, our patient and caregiver surveys and research by academia suggesting that throughout the COVID-19 pandemic caregivers are feeling increased amounts of burnout, stress, anxiety and frustration. These are having a significant toll on their mental health.

A recent Ipsos poll conducted by CCS at the beginning of February found that approximately eight in 10 Canadians are supportive of providing financial support for a family caregiver of someone facing a progressive, life-altering illness such as cancer. Failure to provide adequate supports and time to grieve can result in negative outcomes for the person and their mental health and increased downstream costs to the health care and employment sectors.

Bereavement programs are often part of the comprehensive care offered as part of palliative care—another gap in the health care system that needs improvement.

By making leave for caregivers more flexible, more Canadians will have access to the time necessary to heal, minimize economic hardships and help take care of some of the most practical business, such as planning a funeral and contacting banks and services providers following a loved one's death.

● (1540)

In summary, the Canadian Cancer Society supports the efforts of MP Jeneroux to highlight the need for greater bereavement support for Canadians, especially caregivers.

Thanks again to the committee for your time and energy today as you consider this practical and positive change to provide people time to grieve for a loved one.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Ms. Masotti.

I understand that during your remarks, your colleague joined us. She'll have a chance to support you in the Q and A part of the meeting.

**Ms. Kelly Masotti:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Next we're going to hear from Mr. Adams, on behalf of the Canadian Grief Alliance.

Mr. Adams, you have the floor for five minutes.

**Mr. Paul Adams (Member, Canadian Grief Alliance):** Mr. Chair, honourable members, thank you for inviting the Canadian Grief Alliance to speak to you today.

We are a coalition of grief experts and 150 leading health organizations, including the Canadian Medical Association, the Canadian Nurses Association and the Canadian Psychiatric Association. We came together last spring to ask all levels of government to urgently turn their minds to this issue of grief in the context of COVID-19 and in anticipation of the deadly toll we have seen since then.

Grief is obviously not an issue just when there's a pandemic. Even in ordinary times, we as a society have been neglectful of the grieving, and that's why the CGA is pleased to be here today to support this legislation. We want to extend our thanks to Mr. Jeneroux for introducing the bill and to all of the parties for supporting it.

Almost every one of us has suffered grief in our lives: the loss of a mother or father, a spouse or a partner, a child or perhaps a close friend. If we have the time and the space to grieve, and if we are lucky enough to have the support of family and friends, after a time we rejoin the trajectory of our lives, even if the ache of loss never entirely disappears.

What the research tells us is that when grief is complicated, if circumstances prevent us from having the space or the support to grieve, it can transform into depression or anxiety, dependence or addiction, and self-harm or the thoughts of it. When this happens, it can create burdens in the workplace in terms of productivity and days of work lost. Of course, it imposes a weight of avoidable anguish on the grieving and those close to them.

So far as the law is concerned, many Canadians are entitled to as little as five days' leave when they have lost a family member, and fewer than that with pay.

If you will forgive me for being personal here, I lost my wife, Suzanne, to breast cancer four years ago. Five days is not long enough to organize a funeral. It would certainly not have been time enough for a family like ours, with two teenage children, to regain its equilibrium. I was lucky enough to be in a circumstance that allowed me to take several weeks away from work, and I could afford to do it financially. I truly believe that time was critical to allowing me to return to work a few weeks later and be fully productive, just as it was for my kids to return to school and resume learning. Those precious days helped us get some of our balance back and not fall out of our orbit, as might otherwise have been the case. As a parent,

I shudder to think what the consequences might have been for my teenage children had we not had the time to grieve together.

This bill will create a right for a significantly large number of Canadians to a more generous period to grieve, to collect themselves and to rejoin the world of work. The bill does not concern itself with all the issues that the Canadian Grief Alliance believes must be addressed for a truly effective national grief strategy, for which we have also advocated. We believe nonetheless that if passed, it can be a beacon to legislators such as yourselves to do more, and to the provinces, which also must do their part.

Ultimately, we believe that bereavement leave should be paid leave, whether through employers or employment insurance. A right is not a right if you cannot afford to access it.

We also believe that there needs to be a network of grief services to support those for whom existing social networks are inadequate. However, the passage of this bill would represent a significant step by the Parliament of Canada toward recognizing that grief is a collective, and not just an individual, responsibility. There is an irreducible sum of grief that no family or friend or parliament can wave away when you have lost someone close to your heart, but there is a great deal that all of us can do to ensure such suffering is no greater than it needs to be.

Thank you very much.

• (1545)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Adams.

We're going to proceed now with questions, beginning with the Conservatives.

Mr. Vis, you have six minutes, please.

**Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to both witnesses for joining us today.

Thank you, MP Jeneroux, for bringing this bill forward. I was happy to jointly second this legislation, and I am pleased to be able to review it further in committee today.

When I first was acquainted with this bill last year, it struck a chord with me. Mr. Adams described a personal circumstance, and I had one too. In 2008, I was a graduate student at Carleton University in Ottawa, and my sister's husband passed away suddenly. My sister was 29 years old and was left with four kids alone. My sister was living in Washington state at the time, and although I wasn't an immediate family member of my brother-in-law, it would apply to my mother, who had to return to work sooner than she would have liked.

This legislation is very important and does strike a chord with a lot of families like my own who have gone through tragic and sudden loss and are left with big questions about what to do, how the bills are paid, how to do insurance claims and having the time to sort through all that, let alone finding the space, as both witnesses rightly mentioned, to mourn the loss of a loved one.

Thank you for sharing that, and thank you for indulging me with my own story.

Mr. Adams, for the sake of people listening today, how is compassionate care leave different from bereavement leave under the Canada Labour Code?

• (1550)

**Mr. Paul Adams:** I'm afraid I'll have to defer to Mr. Jeneroux on that. I'm not really an expert on the technicalities.

The alliance really believes that we need to move on a whole bunch of fronts to improve the provisions for the bereaved.

**Mr. Brad Vis:** Okay.

MP Jeneroux, would you like to distinguish the two for us, please?

**Mr. Matt Jeneroux:** Yes, for sure.

Thanks, Paul and Kelly and Helena for joining here.

The compassionate leave under which the bill was first developed solely looks at the caregiver, and rightfully so. However, when in conversations with the minister and the parliamentary secretary about extending bereavement from just the compassionate leave, which deals with just the caregiver.... The full bereavement leave deals with those...with sudden death, for example, a car accident, a homicide, cases in which you wouldn't have that caregiving time at the front end of a loved one's death.

**Mr. Brad Vis:** How many people do you believe, MP Jeneroux, would be impacted by this move to extend the length of leave past the death of a loved one?

**Mr. Matt Jeneroux:** Right now we know that there are about 11,000 individuals who take compassionate care leave every year. To extend this to the death of a loved one outside the scope of caregiving, the number would obviously be much larger. We don't know in terms of who's going to die in the future and how much time is going to be generally spent with them, but we're seeing with an aging population that it's just going to continue to go up and up as we see the numbers taking the bereavement leave.

**Mr. Brad Vis:** Thank you.

What has the response from the stakeholder community been to this bill since you tabled it in February 2020, and will the amendments to bereavement leave still allow for flexible caregiving?

**Mr. Matt Jeneroux:** I'll answer the second part, and then maybe I'll turn it over to Paul or Helena or Kelly to talk about the stakeholder aspect.

**Mr. Brad Vis:** Thank you.

**Mr. Matt Jeneroux:** Seeing the response from stakeholders has been just remarkable. Lots of people have come out of the woodwork to show why this is important. The Canadian Grief Alliance is

very key as a brand new organization that encompasses so many different organizations and really shows the full scope of them. I think, in the interests of time, I'll just turn it over to them.

**Mr. Paul Adams:** If I could just say briefly, a critical part of why we wanted to address the issue of grief is that I think it falls in a kind of ground that people don't fully understand. Grief is a normal, natural process. It's not a mental illness. It's not in itself a sign of ill health. In fact, it's just the opposite, but we do know that it can turn into something more serious—a serious mental health issue—and that's why we were concerned, especially in the context of COVID-19.

I talked before about the complexity of grief leading to other difficulties at times. Of course, it's not just the people who have lost loved ones to COVID during this pandemic, but it's anyone who has lost a loved one, whether it's to cancer or another disease, who may not be able to be with their loved one, may not be able to have a funeral in a normal way, may not be able to gather with their family and friends.

**Mr. Brad Vis:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. That's all from me.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Vis.

Next we have Mr. Long, please, for six minutes.

**Mr. Wayne Long (Saint John—Rothesay, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and good afternoon to my colleagues.

Matt, it's great to see you. It seems like it was many years ago that we sat together on ethics, you and Pat Kelly, and all of us on the Liberal side. We did great work there. I just want to congratulate you on this. You certainly have my respect for bringing this forward.

Now MP Falk and I were a part of HUMA in the last Parliament. The study was launched for M-110 by MP Richards, which was the study for parents suffering the loss of an infant. During that study, through testimony that I will say was certainly compelling and absolutely heartbreaking, we certainly saw then the need for governments, our government, to show more compassion and flexibility when it comes to bereavement leave.

I have some questions. I'll ask them, and they can be for Mr. Adams, Ms. Masotti, Ms. Sonea or you, too, Matt.

My first question is this. Our government is taking the necessary steps to ensure that when workers are experiencing a tragic event in their lives there are supports in place. Can you tell us about the proposed amendments, and how you feel they will make this bill better and ensure that workers are supported?

Maybe, Matt, we'll start with you.

• (1555)

**Mr. Matt Jeneroux:** Thanks, Wayne.

I really appreciate it. Those were fun days on ethics for sure, as new members of Parliament.

**Mr. Wayne Long:** Yes, absolutely.

**Mr. Matt Jeneroux:** Again, the original intent of the bill, looking at compassionate leave, was built on some of the work I did at the Alberta provincial legislature, but what it turned into was very specific to caregiving and how caregivers are supported, which is important and needs to continue to be part of the conversation.

With the reach-out from Parliamentary Secretary Housefather and Minister Tassi, we said, “Why don't we look at broadening it to include everybody who would go through bereavement?” Again, it's for those sudden instances, a sudden diagnosis of cancer where we don't have the ability at the beginning to do that caregiving. It helps to expand that general scope.

**Mr. Wayne Long:** Ms. Masotti, Ms. Sonea or Mr. Adams, is there anything you'd like to add to that or comment on?

**Ms. Kelly Masotti:** I don't have much to add. I would agree with what Mr. Jeneroux just said. Any level of additional support for caregivers would be welcome. We know that when individuals are diagnosed with cancer, rates of anxiety and depression skyrocket. Throughout our surveying over the last few months, we're seeing the same for caregivers, who also experience those same levels of anxiety in helping and caring for their loved ones.

Broadening the bill, and the amendments suggested, are wise. Any additional support for people in a time of crisis is something we should all be very proud of and support.

**Mr. Wayne Long:** Absolutely, it's very much needed.

Mr. Adams, do you have anything you'd like to add?

**Mr. Paul Adams:** I'd just add quickly that we have a gap in the research. We don't really understand right now fully the burden of grief, how many people grieve or the pace of grieving. Certainly there isn't much in Canada to know with precision how much time people need. Those needs would be various. I don't think we know that. We absolutely applaud the changes and we hope that by being more expansive it will touch more people. However, we also hope that in time we can have more research in this country so that we understand more precisely what the needs are.

**Mr. Wayne Long:** Thank you for that.

We'll go back to you, Matt.

One of the proposed amendments we made to Bill C-220, the act to amend the Canada Labour Code, is to extend bereavement leave by five days, for a total of 10 days. We just talked about that earlier. Can you speak to the importance of expanding bereavement leave, and how this will ensure that employees are given the time they need to grieve and focus on practical necessities in the event they lose a loved one?

Mr. Adams, you certainly commented on that but, Matt, I'll let you go first.

**Mr. Matt Jeneroux:** I'll just be brief.

Similar to my previous answer, it expands that scope a lot more. Part of what we were seeing with the hurdles in the original legislation was that, as we all know, as members of Parliament we can't expand the EI component. We can't force the government to spend money. That was always a piece of the original legislation. All pri-

vate member's legislation will not allow you to move along in that step, which obviously is a needed step. It's hopefully a next step, after we are able to pass this bill.

Right now, to be able to bring that to the 10 days, it sets that standard across the country, which we see 95% of the time provinces follow along with as well. It allows us to build that standard across the country.

• (1600)

**Mr. Wayne Long:** Thank you for that.

Is there anything you'd like to add, Mr. Adams?

**Mr. Paul Adams:** I just want to support what Mr. Jeneroux said. We see this legislation as setting a standard and setting a pathway for further steps, and at the provincial level as well.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Do you want to let the Canadian Cancer Society have a brief comment on this?

We're past time, but if you have anything to add, Ms. Masotti, go ahead.

**Ms. Kelly Masotti:** I don't have anything to add other than “I agree”.

**The Chair:** Great.

Thank you, Mr. Long.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Chabot has the floor now for six minutes.

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

Welcome, dear colleague, and I'd like to thank you for coming to tell us about your bill.

I'd also like to thank the other witnesses for being here with us today.

As you mentioned, the fact that we were able to get this bill on the committee's agenda means that it can get to the House more quickly for adoption.

After your bill was introduced, I had the opportunity to comment on it as a colleague and parliamentarian, and I was very much in favour of it. It might not change the world, but it's a subject that means a lot to me and about which I get very emotional. I'm sure you're aware that we're already very much in favour of the bill, and I can tell you that we'll also be in favour of the proposed amendments.

There are benefits for caregivers, but most people receive employment insurance compassionate care benefits. The problem with both of these types of benefits is that they stop as soon as the person dies, and the caregivers have to return to work. Now the bill that you have introduced is designed not only to protect, but especially to support, people providing care to their dear ones as they go through life, for days, weeks and sometimes even months. It's important to be aware of the situation. No one should be penalized for suddenly having to return to work without having had the time to grieve. On that point you have our full support.

I have six minutes, but I don't know whether I'll have any specific questions for you. If you have other points to make, I'd be glad to give you time to explain them.

I fully understand what you're saying about grieving. It's true that people don't talk about it much, as grieving is generally a private matter. Everyone experiences grief in their own way. The pandemic has made the process even more painful. Though I have not experienced it personally, I understand what it can represent. People need to have time and flexibility. We can certainly do more in this area, and that precisely is the intent of the bill.

As I have no questions, I'll turn things over to you.

[*English*]

**Mr. Matt Jeneroux:** Thank you, Madam Chabot.

Our first conversation that we had about this a few months back was enlightening from my perspective, in terms of where the conversation on the bill went.

It's scary to a lot of people to talk about the death of a loved one and to think about that period of time. I spoke to former Senator Carstairs who said that everybody dies and sometimes it's something you don't want to think about. You don't want to think about your loved ones passing away. The importance of having this conversation and the importance of Parliament voting in unanimous support of it is just that it means so much, not just me but to the entire stakeholder community.

If it's okay with you, Madam Chabot, I will allow the Grief Alliance or the Cancer Society to weigh in on some of that.

● (1605)

**Mr. Paul Adams:** Madam Chabot, you said that this won't change the world. I agree with you that it doesn't, but it's the beginning of a change. The analogy that I would use is if you go back 30 or 40 years, there was effectively no maternity leave in Canada. We gradually expanded it in an iterative way over a number of reforms to a place where Canadians are more comfortable with where we are that way.

That's how I see it. As the alliance, we think that besides those immediate things that people may need that will allow them to grieve with their families or friends, we also have to think about many people who are in difficult circumstances and may not have adequate supports. Particularly when you think about this time of COVID, there is nothing to say that if you lose a loved one, you may not also have lost a business or a job or some other thing may have befallen you in your life. Those are complex circumstances.

We think there needs to be services to support the grieving. I don't want to get too much into it now, but we think they are different from standard mental health services because grief is a natural process. It's not a mental illness or something.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Adams.

[*Translation*]

Thank you very much, Ms. Chabot.

[*English*]

Next is Ms. Gazan, please, for six minutes.

**Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP):** Thank you so much, Chair.

I just want to start out by thanking Paul Adams for his very touching sharing about his wife.

To Kelly Masotti, as somebody who lost both of her parents to cancer and has two sisters who are breast cancer survivors, I can't tell you how much admiration I have for the important work you do caring for families, especially through the disease of cancer.

My question is for either one of you. We know that women still perform a disproportionately high amount of care work within their families should a loved one get sick. We also know that women tend to have lower earnings than men. This difference is even more pronounced in the case of racialized women. They are the ones most likely to need this leave and the least likely to be able to afford it. Making parallel changes to EI is then even more important.

Do you believe it's important to make parallel changes to EI, especially considering that these factors predominantly impact women?

**Mr. Paul Adams:** Absolutely. We believe, as I said in my opening presentation, that a right that you can't access because you can't afford it is not fully a right. I had that privileged circumstance. I did not have to worry in the same way that many people do about losing a job or losing pay. That was what enabled us to get through it.

We really deeply believe that this is an important next step. We've created the space, but now there needs to be some mechanism to allow people to occupy that space.

Beyond that, we would say that there are communities in Canada, particularly indigenous people, who come with a burden of grief to these individual moments in their lives. They may need services that are specific to their needs and are different from those that somebody like me might be eligible for.

● (1610)

**Ms. Leah Gazan:** Thank you so much.

Ms. Masotti, do you have anything to add?

**Ms. Kelly Masotti:** This is an easy position to be in right now, because I feel as though I can continuously just say that I support the comments of Mr. Adams and Mr. Jeneroux. Absolutely, we need to look at the EI system and make sure that there is a parallel commitment there.



Not to detract from the discussion right now, our organization hopes to see a comprehensive approach to all levels of care. While it is important to see this at the end, when we're talking about grief, it's also important for the cancer patient and the caregiver.

The Conservatives introduced the compassionate care benefit, which was passed in 2016. The Liberals supported it, as did our organization. As you are looking at this, it is so important to see it as a comprehensive approach. We need support for the patients. We need support for the caregivers. We need an extension to the EI sickness benefit. We need to ensure that on the compassionate care benefit we see changes to the labour code.

There are so many changes that need to be made to provide these practical supports for patients and caregivers alike when they're going through such challenging times or when they are preparing to return to the workforce. This is such an important issue, and I support the comments of Mr. Adams.

**Ms. Leah Gazan:** Thank you so much.

My next question is for MP Jeneroux. I will start by thanking you for introducing this very important bill. It's certainly long overdue and I commend your efforts in that regard.

As we know, in order to benefit from additional leave, Canadians must be able to afford it. Parallel changes to the employment insurance compassionate care benefit would help Canadians so that they can continue to collect the benefit during the additional leave period created by this bill. We want all Canadians to be able to access additional leave provisions without fearing the financial implications, and we recognize that these financial concerns will impact women disproportionately as they tend to do more of the care work and earn less income.

I know it's an extension to the question I asked, but do you also believe parallel changes to the EI compassionate care benefit should follow to mitigate these financial pressures?

**Mr. Matt Jeneroux:** Yes, and thanks, MP Gazan, for that.

That's one of the key aspects of this bill. Not losing sight of the caregiver is the one thing I really want to make sure we're focused on, but also what comes next.

As you know, and in the conversations I've had with your colleague MP Blaikie, there is the need for EI to follow this bill. As private members, again, we can't change EI. We can't tell the government that it needs to spend more money, even though I know you and I both would probably want to do so at some point in our days. However, we want to make sure that, outside the scope of our private member's bill, that's what follows next.

I've had very encouraging conversations with the minister, parliamentary secretary and others as to those next steps.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Jeneroux and Ms. Gazan.

**Ms. Leah Gazan:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Next we'll go to Mr. Tochor, please, for five minutes.

**Mr. Corey Tochor (Saskatoon—University, CPC):** Thank you very much, Chair. As just a heads-up, I don't think I'm going to be taking my full five minutes here.

I wish to give a round of thanks to everyone who made this bill possible, and obviously to Matt for bringing it forward.

I thank you.

To the witnesses, you can see around the table that we have non-partisan support for this, which is very encouraging.

Matt, when do you think this bill is actually going to be back and hopefully get royal assent?

**Mr. Matt Jeneroux:** Corey, that's the key question, for sure.

Hopefully all things go well today and then after today it goes back for report stage to the House relatively quickly, and any sort of procedural measure we could use to do it quicker, the better.

That's the question I get from stakeholders all the time as well. When does it get to the Senate? When does it pass the Senate? When does it become law?

A very astute amendment that was jointly submitted by both MP Housefather and me was the three-month waiting period for implementation. After it passes, it allows a number of groups, organizations and the workforce to know they have that three-month implementation period once it becomes law. That's one of the amendments tabled, and I think it's a very smart one to ensure that it doesn't surprise a lot of stakeholders that you'll now be allowed two weeks of bereavement leave.

• (1615)

**Mr. Corey Tochor:** I guess this is more of a comment to the Liberal members who are on here. I encourage you to talk to your leadership about getting this fast-tracked. The leadership can move on this as quickly as they would like. I believe we would find the Senate very open to debate and hopefully quick passage as well. There's no reason this can't be done before the upcoming election. This is too important to die. No pun intended—that's terrible. We need to ensure these supports are out there.

A question came up when we were talking about next steps with the provinces. Just to get the lay of the land, I'm not sure who would be the best person to talk to. It might be Paul, if you've done some work nationally or looked into this.

Are there provinces that have augmented their supports during this time period? Maybe some provinces have better support programs out there for grieving people.

**Mr. Paul Adams:** I'll defer to Mr. Jeneroux, but I think there are quite a variety of approaches across the country. The importance of this legislation is that a lot of provinces look to the federal government in terms of providing models.

As Mr. Jeneroux suggested, we hope those that aren't providing this level of relief to the bereaved will step in and follow suit.

**Mr. Matt Jeneroux:** I'll comment quickly on that too, Corey.

We've already had some conversations with different provinces, and they've pretty much given the same sign that, yes, once things happen at the federal level, they will relatively quickly—I think our statistics show 95% of the time—follow what we do at the national level.

That will be important, because as soon as they fall in line, every Canadian across the country, according to their employment standards acts, will have that opportunity to access the bereavement leave.

**Mr. Corey Tochor:** Thank you again, Matt, for bringing this forward.

To our witnesses, this is consensus across party lines and from coast to coast. I sure would not want this not to be passed, because it would die on the Order Paper if we had an election before it got passed. I would encourage everyone to do their part to make sure leadership knows that this should come through as quickly as possible.

Thank you, everyone.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Tochor.

We'll go to Mr. Dong for five minutes, please.

**Mr. Han Dong (Don Valley North, Lib.):** Thank you very much, Chair.

I want to thank all the witnesses for coming forward.

To my colleague from the Conservative party, MP Jeneroux, congratulations on introducing this bill and being so consistent on pushing and shepherding this thing forward. I commend you for your dedication in voicing the opinions of many individuals who have experienced this, because it is a tragedy for any family to lose a loved one and have to worry about financial support. This is a very timely bill.

MP Tochor's question is a very important one. This is one of those very few bills that attracts support from members of all parties. We are in a minority situation, so it's great to see such a bill come forward from time to time, making sure Canadians are getting the support they expect from their parliamentarians.

I'm a new MP, and you obviously have a lot more experience in this in terms of legislative procedure. Is there anything we can do together to make this bill pass and go forward quickly, to guide public policy toward providing actual support to individuals who may find it beneficial? We know that this will perhaps guide some changes in the EI system—the calculation of EI and the formula—and we have also seen recent changes in EI providing additional support to Canadians, so there will be a cost factor in this as well.

What's your vision on this, and how can we move this as fast as we can to make sure Canadians will get the right support?

• (1620)

**Mr. Matt Jeneroux:** Thanks, MP Dong.

I still consider myself a newbie. I have one term under my belt, but certainly it's my first time through this process. I'm kind of learning as we go as well.

The next step is obviously the third reading and getting support in the House. If we're all onside with that and with the amendments, it would then go to the Senate. I started making calls to a number of the senators I know to encourage them, when it does come, to help see it through the process. I would implore you and others to do the same in terms of helping that along.

As MP Tochor showed, if or when there's an election, these sorts of things die on the Order Paper. The story of how this started, from the beginning through to the amendments from the minister and the parliamentary secretary, is a good news story to share with Canadians. I would hate for all that to be put aside if we don't get it through the Senate.

**Mr. Han Dong:** Thank you for that.

In terms of the EI portion, if passed, it will bring some changes to the EI system.

Can I get your thoughts on this? Do you think there are expectations from the public, first in terms of changes to the EI system, and then for Ottawa to approve this as quickly as we can?

**Mr. Matt Jeneroux:** I think you've seen, even from the stakeholders today, the expectation that EI will change and follow suit. With bereavement right now, EI covers 72 hours of grieving. If you put it in that perspective, thinking about the death of someone who is very near and dear to you, 72 hours really isn't a lot of time. Under a private member's bill, we can't include that as part of the scope of this bill, but a unanimous vote in the House shows that support for the minister. I should be clear that it isn't Minister Tassi. It's Minister Qualtrough who is responsible for the EI component.

To be clear, the next steps will be to follow suit with EI to make sure, at the very least, that it's covering those two weeks.

**Mr. Han Dong:** Thank you.

I have a very quick question.

To all panellists, do you see the coverage being for one caregiver or could it be expanded to cover multiple caregivers? During COVID, especially, we've seen that all families pull together to support individuals in this care.

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Mr. Adams, very quickly.

**Mr. Paul Adams:** We certainly believe there are others, in addition to the caregiver, who are bereaved and need the time. We also believe that if EI steps up and supports this measure, we're going to see the provinces fall into place very quickly. That's the key order of business.

**Ms. Helena Sonea (Senior Manager, Advocacy, Canadian Cancer Society):** I would like to briefly add—

**The Chair:** Quickly, please....

**Ms. Helena Sonea:** We would really hope to see this change come through separately and not as part of a larger reform to the overall EI system. We want to keep these two issues separate to ensure a very quick implementation.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Sonea.

Thank you, Mr. Dong.

**Mr. Han Dong:** Thank you.

[*Translation*]

**The Chair:** We'll go now to Ms. Chabot for two and a half minutes.

**Ms. Louise Chabot:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I apologize to the witnesses, but I'd like us to be able, during this public meeting, to debate the three motions I introduced. I leave it to you, Mr. Chair, to decide upon the appropriate moment to do so. I wouldn't want our discussions to interfere with this initial hour for the witnesses.

Is this the proper way to proceed?

• (1625)

**The Chair:** Yes. Thank you, Ms. Chabot.

We could, if it suits you, discuss your motions after the evidence, out of politeness for the witnesses.

**Ms. Louise Chabot:** That's exactly what I was hoping for. Thank you.

I believe I have a minute left?

**The Chair:** Yes.

**Ms. Louise Chabot:** I want to point out that I fully share the idea that this bill would move us one step forward into the future. That's how we've been able to move our social programs forward.

Under the current provisions, caregivers have to return to work when the person they have been caring for dies, which is ridiculous. The bill would change that. Caregivers would no longer have to fear losing their job or having problems at work because of the circumstances.

My view is that we should go even farther than this bill proposes. Amendments to employment insurance are in fact possible. We are also currently conducting a study to review the whole EI system. It provides regular benefits for workers, but also special benefits such as sickness benefits, which we would like to see increased to 50 weeks. We are also looking into making the eligibility conditions for compassionate care benefits more flexible. It is therefore possible to do more.

Nevertheless, my understanding is that the current strategy is to focus on what changes we can make quickly. We want a major change to be set in motion right now.

Is that your view as well?

[*English*]

**Mr. Matt Jeneroux:** Yes.

**Mr. Paul Adams:** Absolutely.

**Ms. Helena Sonea:** We also fully agree.

[*Translation*]

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Chabot.

[*English*]

Next we have Ms. Gazan, please, for two and a half minutes.

**Ms. Leah Gazan:** Thank you, Chair.

It's so nice to be at such a collegial meeting with everybody agreeing. I've never seen this, as a new member of Parliament.

MP Jeneroux, under their current form your proposed amendments do not alter the maximum entitlement of 28 weeks of compassionate care leave. Therefore, an employee who has taken 27 weeks of compassionate care leave is entitled to only an additional week after a death.

If the principal goal of the bill is to ensure that all Canadians can provide compassionate care beyond the week following death, do you have any thought of proposing an amendment that is contingent on the number of accumulated weeks of compassionate care provided prior to death?

**Mr. Matt Jeneroux:** Thanks, MP Gazan. Yes, it's nice to have collegial support at committee at times.

Under the original bill and how we structured it, the thinking was that if you've already spent a significant amount of time with a loved one, you then would only need generally a week or two to take care of the funeral arrangements, some of the financial considerations and those sorts of things. That's because you would have had a lot of time on the front end. In the structuring of it, not having a lot of time towards the end and then having more time post-death was the thinking of the original concept. With the proposed amendments from the parliamentary secretary and me, jointly submitted, it shifts from that "compassionate care leave" header, if you will, under part III of the labour code, to "bereavement leave".

You're right that in compassionate leave, I think particularly caregiving is an important aspect that we don't want to lose sight of in the conversation. It really does allow that more fulsome scope of giving those two weeks to everybody, if you're a caregiver or not, for the type of leave to grieve.

• (1630)

**Ms. Leah Gazan:** Thank you very much.

My last question is for anybody on the panel. We know that having time to grieve, making funeral preparations and even wrapping up an estate after the death of a loved one are important for the well-being of Canadians. I know that our party, the New Democratic Party, has supported Canadians on compassionate care leave in having a little extra time for these things before having to return to work after the death of a loved one.

Can you speak about the importance of care work?

**Mr. Paul Adams:** By the time my wife died, I had been deeply involved in caring for her for a long time. The moment when she died brought me into a new phase of grief, which of course started before the very end.

You then have the additional burden, as you say, of planning the funeral and winding up the estate. By the way, if you wanted time for that, you'd probably have to give somebody a year off. The important thing to say is that caregivers do have this additional state of exhaustion and building grief that is on top of what may afflict other people who are close to the person who's passed.

**Ms. Leah Gazan:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Gazan.

Ms. Masotti, do you want to offer a short comment?

**Ms. Kelly Masotti:** I'm going to pass this over to my colleague, Helena. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Ms. Sonea, please comment briefly, if you could.

**Ms. Helena Sonea:** We know that caregivers are that invisible workforce for Canada.

We also know that throughout COVID-19.... Some of the surveys that CCS has conducted with caregivers over the past year have told us that 85% of caregivers feel more anxious and burnt out than they felt prior to COVID.

We would certainly just want to reiterate the support for this bill.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Vis is next, for five minutes.

**Mr. Brad Vis:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I wasn't sure if I was going to have any more time.

I have one other question for MP Jeneroux before we wrap up very shortly.

Have you heard anything from small businesses or larger employers about the impact this might have on the day-to-day operations of their businesses? How have you sold this change to bereavement leave to employers?

**Mr. Matt Jeneroux:** Thanks, Brad.

I honestly haven't had to really sell it to employers. I think a lot of employers just understand the importance of supporting a loved one.

This sets the standard across the country for what employers can do. A lot of employers are generous. A lot of small businesses will often say to take all the time you need. They want to make sure you come back in a strong mental and, sometimes, physical capacity. Even though it has an impact on the work life, I would say the conversations I've had have been very understanding.

Actually, this committee did a report. Those of you who were on it in the last Parliament will remember the February 2019 report, "Supporting Families After the Loss of a Child", which MP Long referenced. It suggested that the costs associated with employees returning to work when they're unable to do so properly are higher than the costs due to the absenteeism.

The thinking that it would be important to support the employees was certainly the testimony heard at this committee at the time.

**Mr. Brad Vis:** Thank you, Matt.

For our witnesses, do you have any final comments you'd like to share with the committee before we wrap up?

**Ms. Kelly Masotti:** I would just like to thank you for inviting us to appear today. This is such an important topic for discussion. Like the other members, I would like to encourage that this be moved through committee and the Senate quickly.

Thank you so much.

**Mr. Paul Adams:** Yes, we just want to applaud the committee, Mr. Jeneroux and all the parties for coming together.

This is a really important reform. We're so pleased to be part of this process.

• (1635)

**Mr. Brad Vis:** Helena, do you have any final comments?

**Ms. Helena Sonea:** I'd just thank everyone very much for your time and energy. This is practical support for many Canadians diagnosed with all different types of diseases every year. It's especially important as the world shifts through our new COVID era.

Thank you so much.

**Mr. Brad Vis:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. That's all for me.

**The Chair:** The last person to pose questions will be Mr. Housefather, for five minutes.

Go ahead, sir.

**Mr. Anthony Housefather (Mount Royal, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I don't think I'm going to need five minutes.

I want to thank Paul, Kelly and Helena for coming before the committee.

Paul, thank you for sharing that very poignant, lovely story about Suzanne. I'm deeply sorry, even if it's four years later.

Kelly and Helena, thank you so much for the incredible work that you're doing at the Canadian Cancer Society. I've worked with you often and I really appreciate the work that you do.

Matt, I want to congratulate you. It's rare that an individual member of Parliament is able to achieve consensus on a bill and get it through the House of Commons, and hopefully, the Senate as quickly as possible to become law. Kudos to you and thank you for showing Canadians that, as opposed to the drama that they often see in question period, there are ways for committees and parliamentarians to work together, pragmatically, to achieve consensus and create a good bill. I think we're going to be doing that here today.

I just wanted to say a couple of things. First, as everybody understands, because Mr. Jeneroux has submitted a private member's bill, it's not a money bill, so we're not able to amend the bill to extend paid leave. We can only amend this bill to extend the unpaid portion of the leave. We tried to look at the way we could provide it to the most Canadians as possible. We've agreed that the best way to do it is with bereavement leave, which encompasses everybody who's losing any family member, and will also now include caregivers. Instead of a caregiver getting a certain amount of time, depending on where they were in the 28 weeks, all caregivers and all individual Canadians who lose immediate family members can get the two weeks, of which three days are paid and seven days now would be unpaid.

Secondly, Matt, I was just wondering if you would tell the story that you originally told in the House of Commons as to why this was so important to you, and why you introduced this bill.

**Mr. Matt Jeneroux:** Thanks, Anthony.

I echo everything you've said about the drama of question period being just that kind of 50 minutes that we all experience. There's a lot of good work that happens at committees and, honestly, having Anthony reach out to us very early on, and then dealing with the minister's office, as well, has just been nothing but a smooth process in terms of getting, hopefully, a good piece of legislation out of this.

On the story, it feels like I've told it a million times but it's never one that I tire of sharing. It stems from when I first left university. I got a job at an organization here in Edmonton, and I was competitive with a number of other individuals who had been hired with me, basically five of us for two jobs. Right around that time, my grandma had dementia and Alzheimer's, and started deteriorating rapidly. My grandma and I were very close. I had the opportunity to either go and spend her final days with her or stay at work and try to climb the corporate ladder, if you will.

I ended up making a decision that I regret to this day. I stayed at work and tried to climb that corporate ladder. Unfortunately, grandma passed. I didn't get a chance to spend the time with her or say goodbye to her, but I always wondered if there was something, a way somehow, to encourage others not to have to make that decision. In knowing that there were protections in place, they wouldn't have to make those decisions in the future. These are the reasons I have really pursued compassionate care leave and bereavement leave to a level that, I think, we're close to helping out more Canadians.

**Mr. Anthony Housefather:** Thanks so much.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Chair, there appears to be consensus on the bill we are reviewing, and on the proposed amendments, as Ms. Chabot explained.

Would it be possible for the witnesses to stay with us, so that we can propose and adopt the amendments, and then discuss Ms. Chabot's three motions?

• (1640)

**Ms. Louise Chabot:** I'm certainly prepared to do that.

**Mr. Anthony Housefather:** Thank you very much.

[*English*]

Thanks so much again to all of you.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Housefather.

[*Translation*]

Thank you, Ms. Chabot.

[*English*]

Colleagues, that finishes our rounds of questions. We're now ready to proceed to clause-by-clause study, following which we will entertain the motions presented by Madam Chabot.

At this time I would like to say to our witnesses, thank you so much for being with us. Thank you so much for the work that you do and for your support of this bill. We are now going to proceed with clause-by-clause consideration of the bill. You are welcome to stay, but you're free to leave.

We are now going to suspend very briefly, because we are going to bring in a couple of officials to provide us with any assistance we need as we go through the clause-by-clause study.

Just for the benefit of the parliamentarians participating, these officials aren't present to be questioned or to provide testimony, but simply to support us, if anything comes up in the course of our clause-by-clause examination that requires further policy advice.

Thanks to everyone. We are suspended.

• (1640) \_\_\_\_\_ (Pause) \_\_\_\_\_

• (1645)

**The Chair:** I call the meeting back to order.

Today's meeting is to consider Bill C-220, an act to amend the Canada Labour Code regarding compassionate care leave.

Before we begin clause-by-clause study, I would like to welcome Douglas Wolfe, acting director general, and Sébastien St-Arnaud, manager of strategic policy, analysis and workplace information directorate, from the Department of Employment and Social Development. They are available to answer policy-related questions in the context of the bill.

Colleagues, you have the bill before you. We will proceed now with clause-by-clause.

(On clause 1)

**The Chair:** I understand that an amendment has been submitted called LIB/CPC-1.

I invite Mr. Housefather to speak to the amendment.

**Mr. Anthony Housefather:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'll turn it over afterwards to Mr. Jeneroux, if he wants to add anything.

I would advise colleagues that this is quite historic. I believe this is the first time that a committee has actually seen a motion of amendment labelled LIB/CPC-1. It's almost always LIB-1 or CPC-1, and it was actually quite tricky to find a way to make sure that this was done this way.

I want to thank the staff in the clerk's office, who found a way to create a joint amendment from two different parties. I hope this happens more often in the future.

This is the substantive amendment we're offering. It basically changes the bill such that, instead of extending compassionate care leave, it extends bereavement leave by five additional days. Instead of five days of bereavement leave, now everybody eligible for bereavement leave can have 10 days. It also extends bereavement leave to include all those employees who were on compassionate care leave or leave related to critical illness at the time that their loved one passed away.

It thus extends the universal bereavement leave and it extends bereavement leave by five days. I think this well achieves the objective of Mr. Jeneroux's bill but also creates a level of fairness, so that everyone who is on compassionate care leave gets 10 days, and a wider universe of people also get 10 days.

I hope everyone will support it.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Housefather.

Mr. Jeneroux.

**Mr. Matt Jeneroux:** I think you guys have heard lots from me today.

I'll just echo what Anthony said. I think creating this larger scope really does make a ton of sense. The focus of compassionate leave, obviously, was upon the caregiver. We're not losing sight of the caregiver. The caregiver's case stays the same, and that's an important piece of this. Expanding it to all types of bereavement, however, is, I think, very key.

Thanks again to Anthony, and particularly to Minister Tassi, for proposing this amendment.

**The Chair:** The floor is open for debate on the amendment. Please use the "raise hand" function, if you wish to intervene.

Seeing no hands raised, I presume we're ready for the question.

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

(Clause 1 as amended agreed to)

**The Chair:** We're now ready to proceed to clause 2. I understand that there is an amendment entitled LIB/CPC-2.

In the interest of fairness, I think we'll start this time with Mr. Jeneroux, as one of the co-sponsors of this amendment.

Mr. Jeneroux, would you like to speak to the amendment, please?

• (1650)

**Mr. Matt Jeneroux:** Thanks, Mr. Chair.

In part of the testimony, I touched on the importance of adding the three month piece after the bill receives royal assent. Allowing for collective bargaining agreements and others sorts of administrative details to be ironed out before it comes into force makes a lot of sense. I think it was astute of the parliamentary secretary to catch that and make it a part of this legislation.

**The Chair:** Mr. Housefather.

**Mr. Anthony Housefather:** I've nothing more to say. Mr. Jeneroux covered it all.

**The Chair:** You have the amendment before you, colleagues. Are there any further interventions? Seeing none, I guess we're ready for the question.

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

**The Chair:** That brings us to the title.

**Mr. Anthony Housefather:** Mr. Chair, don't we have to vote on clause 2 before we get to the title?

**The Chair:** I'm not sure there is a clause 2 in the bill—

**Mr. Jacques Maziade (Legislative Clerk):** Mr. Chair, would you like me to explain?

**The Chair:** Yes, go ahead, please.

**Mr. Jacques Maziade:** The LIB/CPC-2 was a new clause. When you adopted the amendment, you adopted the clause at the same time. There's no need to vote on clause 2.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

While we have you, I know the notes before me indicate that there is not a requirement to vote on LIB/CPC-3, which relates to the title. Perhaps you can provide an explanation to the committee as to why that is not necessary. I don't understand it.

**Mr. Jacques Maziade:** No, it's fine. I think you can go ahead and ask the mover to move LIB/CPC-3 and ask the question for the adoption of the amendment. After that, you can ask the question for the title as amended.

You can go ahead like this. Forget my note.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Colleagues, in case you're wondering, that was the sage advice of the legislative clerk who I did meet with earlier today to take me through some of the procedural and legal technicalities. He's here to support us and the chair, as are the witnesses on the screen.

That brings us then to LIB/CPC-3.

Mr. Housefather, would you like to speak to that amendment as it relates to the title?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Anthony Housefather:** Yes, Mr. Chair.

The purpose of the amendment is simply to alter the title to reflect the changes that we have already made to the bill through amendment LIB/CPC-1. The title would now refer to "bereavement leave". I know that my colleague Ms. Chabot did not think that this was the right wording, and I might be in agreement with her. However, Division VIII of the Canada Labour Code is entitled "Bereavement Leave", and for consistency, that is what we are proposing.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Housefather.

Do you have something to add, Mr. Jeneroux?

[*English*]

**Mr. Matt Jeneroux:** Yes, I'm in agreement. I saw Madam Chabot's note as well. If it's throughout the rest of the act, it makes sense to keep it consistent.

**The Chair:** Are there any further interventions with respect to LIB/CPC-3?

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

**The Chair:** That brings us to the title.

Shall the title, as amended, carry?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

• (1655)

**The Chair:** Shall the bill, as amended, carry?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

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

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

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

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, colleagues.

Mr. Jeneroux, congratulations on getting the bill to this stage.

It really is a testament to your ability to work across party lines and, really, it is gracious of you also to share the credit for that because it is deserved all around. All too often we're politicians, but from time to time we're parliamentarians. This is one of these days, and you have made us all proud.

Thank you.

**Mr. Matt Jeneroux:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Again, I highlight my comments at the beginning, thanking you for making this a priority.

Since we have them here, Mr. Wolfe and Mr. St-Arnaud, thank you. I know it has probably put some work on your desk with this coming forward, so I do appreciate all the time you spent on this too.

**Mr. Adam Vaughan (Spadina—Fort York, Lib.):** Well done, Matt.

**The Chair:** Once again, to our friends from ESDC, you're welcome to stay, but you're free to leave.

We are now going to move to the consideration of the motions brought forward by Madam Chabot.

[*Translation*]

Over to you, Ms. Chabot.

**Ms. Louise Chabot:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I hope that you've noticed I'm doing my absolute best with my mic.

These three motions, which were translated and introduced appropriately, are routine motions. If I had to describe them, I would say that they are considerate—motions of consideration. Their purpose is to improve our governance as parliamentarians, but also to support the work of our interpreters in the course of our deliberations in both official languages. I would like, moreover, to take this opportunity to thank them.

The first motion pertains to documents.

Should I present all three, Mr. Chair?

**The Chair:** It would probably be better to present them one at a time.

**Ms. Louise Chabot:** Okay.

The first motion concerns documents from elsewhere. Its purpose is to ensure that all documents submitted for committee business that do not come from a federal department or that have not been translated by the Translation Bureau be sent for prior linguistic review by the Translation Bureau before being distributed to members of the committee.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Chabot.

As usual, I would remind committee members to raise their hand if they wish to intervene.

Before continuing, I have a procedural question for our clerk.

[*English*]

Madam Clerk, can you offer any comment with respect to the motions and how they interact with what we've already done?

**The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Danielle Widmer):** In terms of the motion for the translation of documents, it's really just a matter of the will of the committee in terms of managing to ensure that the quality of the communication is there for all members in both official languages.

This motion speaks specifically about documents from the clerk, for example, and whether those documents need to be translated as well. Really, it's the will of the committee as to what you choose to do, but it's a matter of ensuring the communication is as efficient and smooth as possible in both languages. That is the key quality of this motion.

• (1700)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

I recognize Ms. Dancho, please.

**Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I thank the member for bringing forward this amendment. I recognize the importance of respecting both official languages in Canada, and I deeply appreciate the goal she is trying to achieve with these motions.

One concern I have with this motion—and one thing that I'd like to see changed—is that members' offices are also excluded. I would put forward an amendment, a motion to amend this motion so that it reads, “That all documents submitted for Committee business that do not come from a federal department or a member's office or that have not been translated by the Translation Bureau be sent for prior linguistic review by the Translation Bureau before being distributed to members.”

I know that a very similar amendment was put forward at the Canada-U.S. trade committee and was appreciated by the committee and implemented, so I ask the committee to consider this amendment.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Dancho.

The amendment is in order.

The debate now is on the amendment. Are there any submissions with respect to the amendment proposed by Ms. Dancho?

Mr. Housefather, please.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Anthony Housefather:** Mr. Chair, I would simply like to explain the amendment to Ms. Chabot in French.

It's an amendment that we adopted Tuesday evening by the Special Committee on the Economic Relationship between Canada and the United State, and moved by Ms. Alleslev.

The motion is intended to address documents from third parties that have not been translated by the Translation Bureau. I fully agree with it. At this other committee, an amendment was adopted for this very motion to provide an exception and to exclude from the scope of the motion documents from the office of a member of Parliament or a reliable parliamentary source, because generally, these have already been translated by the Translation Bureau. Hence, only other documents from third parties now require revision by the Translation Bureau before being submitted to Parliament.

I therefore support Ms. Dancho's proposed amendment, because I believe it reflects the intent of the initial proposal, and also because this amendment has already been adopted by the other committee.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Housefather.

Over to you now, Ms. Chabot.

**Ms. Louise Chabot:** Thank you for having understood my intentions so well. We also learned that some members' offices had translation services.

I am therefore in favour of your amendment, Ms. Dancho.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** That being the case, I think we can now consider this a friendly amendment and move straight to the amended motion.

Are there any further interventions with respect to the motion?

Seeing none, I think we're ready for the question. You have the motion before you. The amendment is to include “members' offices” to broaden the potential source of the documents that need to be translated. As I said, I believe we're ready for the question.

(Motion agreed to [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

**The Chair:** Thank you, colleagues.

[*Translation*]

The first motion is carried.

Please bring your second motion, Ms. Chabot.

**Ms. Louise Chabot:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The second motion concerns technical tests. Even though things are getting better than they were at the outset for our committee, technical problems are still a major problem.

During committee meetings and when witnesses are appearing, we need to conduct technical tests to make sure the equipment is working. On a number of occasions when tests weren't carried out, we couldn't hear the witnesses.

That's the reason for this motion. Each witness who is to appear before the committee is to be informed that technical tests will be required by the House. Internet connectivity and the equipment being used must also be tested to ensure the best possible sound quality. That includes not wearing the headset properly. At the start of each meeting, the committee is to be advised of any instances in which witnesses have not performed the required technical tests. This will ensure that the committee is informed about any problems that might arise.

● (1705)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Chabot.

We can now debate the motion.

Remember to use the “raise hand” function if you wish to intervene.

[*English*]

Are we ready for the question? Okay.

(Motion agreed to [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

[*Translation*]

**The Chair:** On to the third motion now.

Ms. Chabot, you have the floor.

**Ms. Louise Chabot:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.



The third motion pertains to substantive motions introduced in the course of the committee's work. Its purpose is to require that the text of any substantive motion or any motion in amendment of a substantive motion be distributed in writing in both official languages to all committee members before the committee begins debate on such a motion.

I should point out that we recently experienced a situation like this, and adjusted to it quite well. Mr. Vaughan had brought an amendment, and we requested that the motion be translated and sent to us in writing.

The goal is not to prevent debate, but to ensure that when the time comes to vote, we have the written text in both official languages.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Chabot.

[*English*]

Colleagues, you have the motion before you. Are there any interventions?

Ms. Dancho, please.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Raquel Dancho:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I have some serious doubts about this motion. In fact, I don't think that what my colleague is proposing will work very well.

For instance, earlier today, barely 10 minutes ago, I put forward an amendment to my colleague's motion. Even though she didn't have a translated version, it all went very smoothly.

Members are entitled to propose amendments or sub-amendments on the fly during a committee meeting. This is part of parliamentary privilege. That's why I don't think what my colleague is proposing in her motion will work.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Dancho.

Back to you, Ms. Chabot.

**Ms. Louise Chabot:** Ms. Dancho, you're right to mention that we have the right to propose amendments to substantive motions during debate. However, there are rules requiring that motions be tabled 48 hours in advance.

The goal is to ensure that the wording of motions being voted upon are properly understood. When everything happens quickly, and the motion is moved only verbally and not translated, it's sometimes difficult to keep up. Fortunately, we have not encountered such situations here very often, but we need to use all means available to us so that we can do our work and vote in an informed manner, whether in committee or in the House.

**The Chair:** Over to you now, Mr. Housefather.

**Mr. Anthony Housefather:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

This motion was rejected by the Special Committee on the Economic Relationship between Canada and the United States for precisely the reasons just mentioned by Ms. Dancho.

We've just had an instance of Ms. Dancho proposing an amendment to Ms. Chabot's motion, and we never heard anything about

the clerk sending everyone an email containing the English and French versions of the amendment. And it's difficult for the clerk to translate such proposals herself.

The current process already states that motions requiring prior notice of 48 hours must be translated.

As for our committee, it's up to the chair to ensure that everyone has properly understood the motion or amendment before moving on to the vote. If a member of the committee has not clearly understood the meaning of a motion or an amendment, the member should point this out and request a translation. This process has worked well so far and I don't think it's necessary to adopt this motion.

If we begin to see problems arising as a result of motions or amendments being voted on without being properly understood, then I could see why such a proposal might be useful. However, in view of the motion's wording, I think that it would slow down our work unnecessarily.

Perhaps Ms. Chabot could have another look at the matter and decide whether the motion is really necessary. Given the current wording, I would have to vote against it, because it's too onerous.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

• (1710)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Housefather.

[*English*]

Ms. Gazan, please.

**Ms. Leah Gazan:** I'd just like to echo the comments of my respected colleagues Anthony Housefather and Raquel Dancho.

I, as well, will not be voting in favour of this motion.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Gazan.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Chabot, you have the floor.

**Ms. Louise Chabot:** I don't want to prolong the debate, but I believe it's important that motions being put to the vote be clear.

I'm prepared to propose an amendment to my own motion that would not make it applicable prior to the start of committee debate, but rather prior to the vote. The goal is not to prevent debate while awaiting the written motion in both official languages. It is rather to make sure that the motion or amendment has been properly understood when the time comes to vote on it.

**The Chair:** Ms. Chabot, there is a minor technical problem. Well, it's not really a technical problem, but rather a procedural problem: you cannot propose an amendment to your own motion. It would have to be done some other way. For example, you could withdraw your motion and present a new one. Another member could also propose the amendment to your motion, but you can't do it yourself.

Does the clerk wish to add anything?

**The Clerk:** You are correct, Mr. Chair. If someone else wishes to propose an amendment, that's possible. Ms. Chabot could also withdraw her motion and present a new one.

**The Chair:** Back to you, Ms. Chabot.

**Ms. Louise Chabot:** Can I present a second motion now, or must we deal with the current one first?

**The Clerk:** If the members of the committee consent unanimously, then you could definitely withdraw your motion and propose a new one.

**The Chair:** Don't we need to first withdraw the motion under discussion?

• (1715)

[English]

**The Clerk:** Could you repeat that, Mr. Chair?

**The Chair:** For the sake of good order, given that there is a motion on the floor before us, would it not be necessary for Madam Chabot to either have the motion defeated or to withdraw it before presenting a new one?

[Translation]

**The Clerk:** All that is required to withdraw the motion is the unanimous consent of the committee. After that, Ms. Chabot could propose a new motion that incorporates the desired changes.

**The Chair:** Okay, I understand.

[English]

Do we have consensus to allow Ms. Chabot to withdraw this motion? All I need is unanimous consent to withdraw the motion.

(Motion withdrawn)

[Translation]

**The Chair:** You have the floor, Ms. Chabot. You can now present another motion, if you wish.

**Ms. Louise Chabot:** Thank you.

The rest of the wording remains the same, but the amended portion has not yet been translated into the other language:

That the text of any substantive motion or any motion in amendment of a substantive motion be distributed in writing in both official languages to all Committee members before the Committee begins debate on such a motion.

[English]

**The Chair:** Mr. Housefather.

[Translation]

**Mr. Anthony Housefather:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

With respect, my dear friend Ms. Chabot, I would like to point out that the same amendment was proposed in the Special Committee on the Economic Relationship between Canada and the United States, and rejected by the majority.

Let's take as an example the new motion like you've just presented, Ms. Chabot. We haven't received it in writing in English. If what you are proposing were to be applied, then the clerk would have to find a way of sending an email to all members of the committee to provide them with the text of the motion in English. Who would translate it? Would it be me, or you, or the clerk?

**Ms. Louise Chabot:** You could do it, Mr. Housefather.

**Mr. Anthony Housefather:** Indeed, if amendments had to be translated on the fly, I can promise you that I would always be happy to translate for you. And of course the interpreters are doing so as well.

You might therefore want to reconsider this motion, and determine what you are really trying to achieve, and then submit a new proposal, because I don't think this one works. It would slow us down. In addition, the clerk of the Special Committee on the Economic Relationship between Canada and the United States said that she was very uncomfortable about the idea of having to translate the documents herself.

**The Chair:** Back to you, Ms. Chabot.

**Ms. Louise Chabot:** I know that a similar proposal was rejected by another committee. Be that as it may, I have the privilege of being able to bring this motion to our committee and to request the support of my colleagues, if they feel it would be useful to the committee.

Furthermore, by rewording my motion in this way today, as procedure allows me to do, I was very much aware of the fact that it ran counter to the very purpose of my motion.

Indeed, the goal of my new motion is to allow what we are doing at the moment, which is to permit members of the committee to debate a motion without having a written version in both official languages. On the other hand, it's important to have the motion translated into both official languages when the time comes to vote, to ensure that we understand correctly. That was my concern.

I am therefore not withdrawing my motion. I will leave it to you, my dear parliamentary colleagues, to deal with it as you see fit.

[English]

**The Chair:** Ms. Gazan.

**Ms. Leah Gazan:** In agreement with my colleague, Anthony Housefather, I will also not be supporting this motion.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Are there any other interventions on the new motion?

Seeing none and sensing that we do not have consensus, I call the question and ask the clerk to proceed with a roll-call vote.

• (1720)

(Motion negated: nays 10; yeas 1)

**The Chair:** Is there any other business to come before the committee?

Is it the will of the committee that we adjourn? I see consensus.

Before we adjourn, we have this evening, colleagues—now—a scheduled meeting of the subcommittee to proceed in camera. For those of you who are on the Subcommittee on Procedure and Agenda, take 10 minutes to stretch your legs to give us time to get switched over, and then please log in with the separate credentials that you have been given for the subcommittee meeting. They are not the same as the ones for the meeting we are in now.

If everyone could please log out... Those of you who aren't on the subcommittee, have a wonderful evening. Those of you who are, please, in 10 minutes, log back in.

We are adjourned.

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